Depiction Of Psychological Disorder In A Beautiful Mind

The film “A Beautiful Mind” is a drama inspired by the events in the life of John Forbes Nash Jr. From being a mathematical Genius to experiencing other corruptions, John Forbes Nash Jr., makes an astounding discovery early in his career and was almost on the verge of receiving international praise. However, as his path of growth continued it led him to some painful and crucial discoveries about himself that took a bit of a turn in his life. This film is eye-opening and creates a powerful take on the psychology behind the mind.

“A Beautiful Mind” characterization reflects in light of the story of John Forbes Nash Jr., a mathematical genius, who suffers from schizophrenia, specifically paranoid schizophrenia. This film is based on a true life story, and Nash who had his career at Princeton University as a mathematician, is known for being very intelligent in this subject. Nash is a less social, and egoistic man, who spent most of his time trying to figure out a specific equation in mathematics. Throughout the film, there were moments in scenes that portrayed John’s illusions were developed from different places and situations that were occuring and were only formed within his mind. This affected his relationship with his wife, Alicia, his supposed roommate Charles, Marcee, and Parcher whom are imaginary, and even as a student and professor. These moments and discoveries alluded to the fact that Nash has a severe illness known as schizophrenia.

Schizophrenia is a “disabling psychological disorder that can include delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech, and abnormal motor behavior” (Licht, Hull,Ballantyne 560). As a split mind disorder, and not a split personality disorder it showed how it caused much disorganized thinking, perceptions, emotions, and actions. For example, Nash experienced severe delusions and hallucinations that lead him to be diagnosed as having symptoms of the specific type known as paranoid schizophrenia.

Beginning in the film, as a graduate student, Nash introduced himself to other math students and tried to be friendly and make jokes with them. However, he ended up offending them and this caused some trouble and as a result of the situation he had to leave. For example, he would go up to some of the students and calls their work “unoriginal” and how he will come up with “an original idea and solve it” (Howard & Crowe & Harris, 2001, Scene 2). After he left them he went back to his room and his schizophrenic delusions started occurring. As his room was only for one person, himself, he supposedly however, was meeting his roommate Charles who is supposed to be a English graduate student. The room was for an individual person and even John’s expression seemed confused at was going on. Charles supposedly says to him, “You’re not easily distracted, are you” (Howard & Crowe & Harris, 2001, Scene 3-5)? In the film the scene was shown where Charles was introducing himself to John, however this was only a delusion in his mind and was not actually happening.

Additionally, further along in the movie, as a climatic point, Nash’s delusions take place when he is giving a speech about his mathematical research. As the speech is happening, Nash seems to see men in suits in the aisles of the room, whom he thinks are soviet spies that have come to capture him. As he is experiencing this delusion he runs out of the room so that he concludes he can escape, these supposed “spies” whom are chasing him. These men are

trying to capture him so that they can take him to a psychiatric hospital to help him with his condition. This whole delusion comes from the idea that Nash thinks and has set in his mind that he works for the Department of Defense for William Parcher, a government agent. He believes his job is to perform soviet code breaking, and that he is conducting this research and then sending conclusions to a secret government mailbox in envelopes. (Howard & Crowe & Harris, 2001, Scene 31). As he is brought to the psychiatric hospital inside, his wife Alicia, is alongside him to explain that there is no agent named William and no envelopes that are being delivered and opened. Alicia shows Nash that she even has discovered the documents.

Lastly another example, is when John is at home from the psychiatric hospital resuming his normal life with his wife Alicia. John had stopped taking his medication because he thought it wasn't allowing him to think fully and conduct his research properly, however once he stops taking it his schizophrenic symptoms come back again. In the scene, John was holding his baby and was about to give it a bath while his wife did the laundry outside. John almost drowned the baby as he is going through schizophrenia then and there when his wife notices and rushes in to rescue the baby that something seems different. As this is happening, Alicia noticed John was having an argument with Charles and William as if they are going to attack his wife, and he knocks himself into his wife as he is thinking it is William, so that he can save her and doesn't realize it's just her and no one is really going after her. As she almost runs out of the house, he realized he had an schizophrenic episode, and he explains to her that he realized what was going on.

This scene with John and his baby shows a negative message to this disorder. It concludes to this idea that one with schizophrenia may lose of a sense of feeling in this idea that everyone else can relate in a way that it was his fault and that it could happen to anyone in this situation even if they didn't have this disorder. It makes his wife Alicia seem as if she is blaming him more for being surprised by his mistake and instead of walked off and did laundry outside as if she couldn't expect anything to happen.

Nash is taken under a therapeutic approach in the film which includes insulin shock therapy. Additionally, he also takes medication to help his schizophrenia get better overall. For example, he was given Thorazine to help his positive symptoms. During the insulin shock therapy sessions, they were very violent for Nash because the therapists and assistants were required to restraint and hold him down because he would act very abruptly and lash out at once. John had, had this crucial treatment carried out on him a few times a week which showed some kinds of therapy sessions in how un-successful and not so ethical they really were for schizophrenia during that time. For example, Dr.Rosen tells John Nash, "Imagine if you suddenly learned that the people, the places, the moments most important to you were not gone, not dead, but worse, had never been" (Howard & Crowe & Harris, 2001, Scene 45). This shows that even through the biological effect schizophrenia has on individuals such as their mind going blank after certain situations and then going back to the same thought and memory it is more than that. It is more than the symptoms of these things not happening as the Doctor describes but this idea that there is much more hope for every individual. Then his wife Alicia, after a while was able to convince and show him that William was actually not a true government official he had been working for and didn't exist. This then came to let Nash realize he specifically had paranoid schizophrenia.

Throughout all of these examples and the entire movie there are positive and negative messages that the movie gives the public about people with this disorder. One positive

message during the film was in the beginning when John was connected with his imaginary roommate Charles. This is seen through hallucinations that are reflected in these scenes, such as he continuously communicates with him throughout the film and in a way that he always appears and comes so close to him to constantly plan to do something together or just have a conversation. This especially happens and Charles seems to appear in places throughout the film where Nash feels in a sense in his head and alone, or being disrupted by others. Although, we know that Charles is not there John brings him up in his mind, when he wants to feel better about himself and not feeling alone in his mind. This shows a positive message because it explains this idea that throughout this disorder, one still feels better even when feeling alone at times. Overall, a very well said quote that explains this part of positivity when John says to Alicia, “Perhaps it is good to have a beautiful mind, but an even greater gift is to discover a beautiful heart” (Howard & Crowe & Harris, 2001, Scene 20). There is this sense of weight that John wants to explain to her and overall others feeling that those with schizophrenia hold in the fact that every individual is a human and no matter what they are going through personally they know who they are and can find themselves through relationship with people, emotion and the power of the mind.

Overall, the film, A Beautiful Mind, was very intriguing in its ability to really focus myself and any audience on how much psychological effects of the mind are really put into perspective. Schizophrenia, as a psychological disorder was shown through the several delusions and hallucinations of John Nash Jr. This was shown through the characterization of himself and others such as his wife Alicia, his supposed roommate Charlie, William, Dr.Rosen, and many others. Even though, there were both positive and negative messages shown throughout the film, I think that it brings awareness that if anyone is going through this condition, they are not alone and it always best to see that there is more good then bad effects.