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Project 2—"A Beautiful Mind"

The movie *A Beautiful Mind* tells the story of John Nash, a mathematician who wins the Nobel Prize for Economics. This could be a nice story in itself, but the twist that makes it so awe-inspiring is the fact that John Nash is a schizophrenic. The movie shows what it is like for him to live with his schizophrenia and how he is able to overcome his disability to be successful.

The main message of the film is that Nash did not allow his schizophrenia to keep him from being productive and successful. When he was diagnosed with his disability and when it began to present a major problem in his life, he found ways to overcome it and move forward. This would not have been possible, however, without the support and love from his family and friends. His wife is shown to be a constant support, and he leans and relies on her to stand by him. The movie makes it clear that if not for her, Nash would not have had the courage or wherewithal to continue fighting his delusions.

Nash is not a very easy character to like, especially at first. He is blunt, caustic, and rather anti-social. As he says to his roommate, "I'm quite well-balanced; I have a chip on both shoulders. I don't like people much and they don't like me." His behavior begins to make more sense when his schizophrenia is revealed. He is determined to work through his exceptionality and find a normal way to live. He rejects his medications after a time because the side effects were keeping him from connecting with his wife. That relationship was important enough to him that he was willing to work twice as hard in order to keep it. This portrayal of Nash is different than what most people associate with schizophrenia. He is not a deranged lunatic who hears only voices in his head; he is a real person with relationships and aspirations who has to work harder than most people in order to keep them alive.

Schizophrenia was not really touched on much in class, other than that it is a low incidence behavior disorder. Nash showed many of the characteristics of a behavior disorder, though. As stated before, he was a loner who did not interact much with society. He was deemed eccentric at best by some of his colleagues. One of the results of his schizophrenia was that he experienced excessive worry and phobias. His delusions caused him to be terrified that the Russians were going to find and kill him and his family.

Overall, the film was successful from a learning perspective. It showed what the world was like to Nash living with his exceptionality—until about the middle of the movie the viewer has no idea that both Nash's roommate and the man that he works for are delusions that his mind has created. They seemed real to him and subsequently for the viewer. It also shows what many would not think of—how devastating being diagnosed with schizophrenia can be. As the doctor tells Nash's wife, "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. What kind of hell would that be?" The movie shows the struggles that a person in Nash's position faces. When he tries to return to normal society, he is mocked by some. The side effects of the medicine that was supposed to make his life easier were causing his relationships to falter. And ultimately, Nash had to face the fact that his delusions would never go away. There was no cure-all. He just learned how to live with and in spite of his schizophrenia. He is able to accomplish this with the support of his family and friends, and John Nash is shown in the end to indeed have *A Beautiful Mind*.