Provisional Diagnosis – About A Boy

Theron R. Haynesworth

Longwood University

***Provisional Diagnosis***

Axis I: R/O Paranoid Schizophrenia, With Delusions

R/O Social Phobia

Axis II: Schizoid Personality Disorder – Cluster A Disorder

R/O Paranoid Personality Disorder with avoidant behavior

R/O Schizotypal Personality Disorder

Axis III: None

Axis IV: Psychiatric problems seemed to have developed in childhood. Death of father seems to have worsened the symptoms (left with large fortune) this seems to have reinforced solitary lifestyle and allowed fewer requirements for attachments.

Axis V: GAF= 55 (current)

The movie I chose to watch and render a character with a provisional diagnosis was “About A Boy”. The person I observed in this movie, who was also the main character, was a thirty eight year old man named Will. Will lives in London, England where he lives alone in a luxurious apartment and does not have a job due to his father leaving him a substantial amount of money with his passing. Throughout the film, Will demonstrated numerous observable acts that were abnormal and socially disruptive. Throughout both his social life and home life, he showed abnormal behavior and cognitive distortion. Through these signs I have diagnosed him with Schizoid Personality Disorder.

Very near the beginning of the movie Will is visited by a couple who are supposed to be friends of his but acts very distant towards them. While holding their first born child, he holds it at a distance and acts very wary of the child. A little while later the couple asks Will to be the godfather of their second child but he adamantly declines stating that he really is that shallow so that he can avoid intermingling with the couple. When in other’s company, Will seems uninterested and constantly anxious to leave and go home. He demonstrates this when going out with a woman and initially seems interested but when she proceeds to break up with him, he is ecstatic at the very idea.

Throughout the film, Will exhibits an attitude that perceives others as outsiders and views him to be someone who is “plain” and not cared for by anyone. He believes this is the ideal living style and that everyone man has their own “island paradise”. When conversing normally with others, his thoughts tend to be negative assuming the worst of the person he is talking to. He instantly assumes that no one would want to spend time with him or become his friend and is taken aback when someone shows kindness to him. He shows this attitude throughout the film.

Through careful observation of Will’s mannerisms, speech and observable behavior, he is clearly impaired. He lacks friends and usually refers to others he seems more than not as associates and unimportant. His response to interacting socially with others or groups of people is to get out of the situation as quickly as possible and go home to be alone. He believes that his solitary lifestyle is not an impairment of living but as he describes it “an island paradise.” Will has the notion that if others are involved in his life, it will only become complicated and that feeling for someone or being felt for is a hindrance.

Another noteworthy aspect of Will is that he perceives hours as thirty minute increments referred to him as “periods”. Despite doing nothing more than watching television or reading magazines for an entire day, he believes his day to be full and not free enough. Others around him that have daily jobs seem to be timewasters to Will. He often questions how people with jobs have enough time during the day and sees it as almost impossible to do anything otherwise.

There did not seem to be many developmental or environmental issues that caused Will to develop these symptoms and seemed prevalent even in his early development before his father died. A scene in the movie showed him seeing his father alive again in a convenient store but once he did a double take, his father was gone again. This may show that his father had some type of impact on his life but it is not specified as his did when Will was relatively young and probably did not learn to have those type of feelings for people as the only person in his life he cared for died.

To be diagnosed with Schizoid Personality Disorder, one must possess four of seven specific characteristics. Some of these include the lack of social activities as well as attachment to others, even family. Other symptoms include emotional detachment and indifference to compliments and insults from others. Will demonstrates all of the symptoms of Schizoid Personality Disorder.

Will does not care for relationships with others characterized when he does not care to hang out with Marcus or sympathize with him when it especially comes as an expense to him. When asked by Marcus whether he wanted to have sex with the women that he was seeing at some point he did not really seem interested in the idea and responded with “I Guess”. At another point in the movie, Will was being dumped by another woman he was seeing previously and during this, his only thought was that he could not wait to get away from him despite them having a relatively good time together.

Other symptoms of Schizoid Personality Disorder that Will exhibits is that he takes pleasure in very few activities. The most strenuous activity he will partake in all day will perhaps be reading a magazine or shopping at the local market. Other activities will include watching television or sleeping. He also lacks any close friends and when approached in such a manner, he responds with indifference. He demonstrates this when his friends who just had their second child ask him to be the godfather and he adamantly declines and called himself rather shallow.

Will also lacks the ability to perceive praise or criticism from others for the entirety of the movie. When others called him “plain” or “blank” he did not see them as insults but just accepted them and knew that these statements were true. Appraisal from others was also met with a blank expression from Will. Most scenes of the film depicted him responding coldly to others comments and he showed no affect when scolded for his inappropriate behavior.

The DSM-IV characterizes someone with schizoid personality disorder as having a profound defect in a person’s ability to have personal relationships. Individuals are entirely indifferent to criticisms and praise from others. Those diagnosed have a flat affect and don’t seem moved by anything. Schizoid Personality Disorder may have the same namesake as Schizophrenia but it is significantly less related to Schizophrenia than Schizotypal and Paranoid Personality Disorders.

Schizoid Personality Disorder has been present in both DSM-I and DSM-II but it included magical thinking which in now included under Schizotypal Personality Disorder. The DSM-IV goes on to say that Schizoid Personality Disorder has rarely been diagnosed because both Avoidant Personality Disorder and Shizotypal Personality Disorder are in the same area of impairment. Now Schizotypal Personality is quite different from Schizoid Personality Disorder in that it deals more with delusions or being paranoid. Avoidant Personality Disorder characterizes beliefs that one is or will not be accepted and fear of being judged by others.

The DSM-III separated Schizoid Personality Disorder and Avoidant Personality Disorder by measuring the level of an individual’s motivation for avoiding contact with others. A person diagnosed with Avoidant Personality Disorder desires close relationships but is afraid of being rejected. Someone diagnosed with Schizoid Personality Disorder however does not desire close relationships and does not care for the feelings of others towards them. The DSM-IV states that most are not diagnosed with Schizoid Personality Disorder because it is difficult to find someone who lacks a complete absence of feelings for others and shows an absolute indifference to praise and criticism.

In correspondence to the level of impairment it seems Will’s Schizoid Personality Disorder is moderate to severe. He shows impairment at all times of the day and does not change this mindset even around others. Will was described by a female friend of his in the film as never having a relationship lasting more than 2 months and never possessing a job. He seems to have had an onset in childhood and has never had anyone to care for him enough to seek help for him.

I have greatly considered other diagnosis for Will that include Delusional Disorder, Paranoid Personality Disorder, Schizotypal Personality Disorder and Avoidant Personality Disorder. I have ruled out all three due to symptoms that are present while others are not. Delusional Disorder was considered because of marked nonbizarre delusions but Will does not demonstrate paranoid activities such as fear of someone following him or being poisoned. Schizotypal Personality Disorder includes magical thinking, odd and eccentric behavior as well as paranoid ideation and odd thinking and speech which Will lacks. I was seriously considering Avoid Personality Disorder for Will but he does not feel inferior to others or fear of being disliked or ashamed.

For treatment options, low doses of antipsychotic drugs may result in moderate improvement and antidepressants may also be helpful. However no sort of treatment has been developed into the extinction of this disorder. No systematic treatment through medication or psychotherapy has proven effective. At the ending of the movie “About A Boy” Will seemed to only open up slightly to others when you realized how much others were needed by him. My prognosis is that Will may get better due to others in his life around him but it is not for certain.

I believe “About A Boy” portrays Schizoid Personality Disorder very well. All of the symptoms are present in the movie and Will does a good job playing the part. Another noteworthy thing about the movie is that they do not include a wide range of other symptoms that can just about characterize many other psychological disorders. The staff of this movie did extensive research and did well with the representation of Schizoid Personality Disorder.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV-TR. Washington, D.C: American Psychiatric Association.