What is Brotherly Love?

The bond shared between brothers happens to be something very special and rare. Finding a true example of this in today’s society can be very hard. In order to see what these relationships look like we rely on film. In the movies *Rain Man* (1988) and *Dominick and Eugene* (1988), these types of bonds are portrayed with an added twist. Both movies are centered on the lives of individuals with disabilities. Mainstream media often portrays these types of situations in different manners. Sometimes the effect can be positive and at others completely negative. The way that each character appears can influence the effectiveness of the movie. The problem comes from trying to determine if the actor convinced the audience that they had the disability. The impact that each role influences the relationships and bonds that the brothers have between one another.

The problems that each set of brothers in the movies encounter, differs in many aspects. Barry Levinson (*Rain Man*) and Robert Young (*Dominick and Eugene*) have portrayed the relationship in two completely different tones. On one hand, *Dominick and Eugene* keeps a serious tone and sticks strongly to a drama format. *Rain Man* combines elements of a drama and a comedy to get the audience’s attention. Both methods effectively display the limitations and lives of individuals with disabilities. Each movie has its own approach that emphasizes the impact that a disability can have on a brotherly bond.
One might question the genuineness of the relationship between Charlie and Raymond Babbitt. Charlie only exploits the gifts that his brother has in order to benefit himself. The selfish manner that he exhibits lets the audience know that his main priorities are only things that benefit him in one way or another. In the time that he could have bonded with Raymond, he chose to take advantage of the gifts that an autistic savant can have. A prime example of this would be how Charlie used Raymond to count cards in the casino. Actions like these question the ethics that Charlie has regarding his brother. Raymond has become so accustomed to his everyday routine that he can not truly understand that he has a brother. That puts more strain on the relationship that the two have together. From watching the film, it seems that Raymond does not have the ability to display emotions.

_Dominick and Eugene_ focuses on the mutual dependency that exists between two brothers. Eugene needed Dominick to give him financial support during his time in med school. On the other hand Dominick relied on Eugene to make sure that everything was going in order. This movie differs in many ways from Barry Levinson’s interpretation. To begin with, Dominick does not have a true mental disorder. The disability that he had was due to the physical abuse that he received from his father. A hit to the head prevented him from developing past the mind set of a young child. Only, Dominick has to survive on his own as Eugene leaves to do his residency at Stanford University.

The following scenes show the relationship that each director gives of brotherly relationship. In _Rain Main_, the scene at the casino represents how Charlie uses Raymond only to benefit himself. The confusion of the lights and sounds at the casino represents the confusion between the two characters. In _Dominick and Eugene_, the scene where Eugene explains to Dominick why things are the way they are gives the audience an understanding of how much the
two need each other. The dark, shady background represent the past that they have together.
The only light that appears comes over Eugene’s back, as if to show him as Dominick’s guardian
angel.

Other factors play in the relationships between both sets of brothers. The disability itself
plays a major role in the ability of the two to bond. In Dominick’s case, no true disability can be
diagnosed. All of his problems arise from the fact that some things are moving too fast pace for
him to understand. Raymond represents an autistic savant. The problem with the way Levinson
portrays Raymond, comes from the fact that savants do not possess all of the skills that are
presented in the movie. Most of the time they might have just one skill like advanced
mathematics or artistic capabilities. A common trait associated with individuals with autism is
that they lack the social skills needed to express emotions. Without these skills the two could
never connect on an emotional level. Autistic individuals often repeat the same routines; they
can not handle the stress that comes with having to incorporate new people and surroundings into
their lives.

Critic Roger Ebert, of the Chicago Sun-Times gives a description of what it might be like
to share a relationship with an autistic individual. He states, “Is it possible to have a relationship
with an autistic person? Is it possible to have a relationship with a cat? I do not intend the
comparison to be demeaning to the autistic; I am simply trying to get at something. I have useful
relationships with both of my cats, and they are important to me. But I never know what the cats
are thinking. That is precisely the situation that Charlie Babbitt is faced with in Rain Man.” The
comparison that he makes about the cats, can represent what it would be like trying to connect
with an individual with autism. Meaning that even with all of the attempts made to connect to an
individual with autism; you may never truly understand what they are going through.
The techniques that were used in both of the movies were cleverly dispersed to show the
different moods and attitudes throughout the movie. A good example of this would be the close-up
and over-the-shoulder shots used in *Dominick and Eugene*. In *Rain Man* focused more on the
musical scores to display the tension between the two. Shading and lighting were used
effectively in both films to display the dark pasts that were present. Another key technique was
the use of the American shot.

As with any movie, the skill that each actor possesses can determine the effectiveness of
the film. The ability of Raymond and Dominick to portray someone that faces a disability helps
to reinforce the concept that Levinson and Young try to express. As the role increases in
intensity, so does the relationship that can be seen between the brothers. The influence of the
media shapes the idea of what America thinks of these types of situations. The directors were
effective in displaying two types of scenarios between brothers with disabilities. Movies of this
nature are needed to open the eyes of individuals who do not understand what it would be like to
live in these types of situations.