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Hannah Draws the Line

The television show “13 Reasons Why” uses interpersonal communication concepts within expressing character’s emotions, listening to each other and responding to conflict in the episode “Tape 1, Side B”. This is significant because the lack of effective communication contributed to character’s inability to understand and respect each other. It resulted in two bestfriend’s weakening their bond and developing unhealthy attributes in the relationship leading up to an altercation. This not only ended a friendship, but contributed to a teen’s suicide. As evidence in support of this claim, this paper analyzes the interpersonal communication scenarios between two characters in the episode, Hannah Baker and Jessica Davis, focusing on the following class concepts: Visual-Auditory Codes, Non-Listening, Emotional Intelligence, and Responses to conflict. This paper also examines how the Dialects Theory is demonstrated by these two characters during their interpersonal communication interactions. Communication can not only affect a person emotionally, but physically as well.

Hannah Baker and Jessica Davis are both 17 year old’s who attend Liberty High. They have a few things in common such as curly hair, a dark sense of humor, and a bad reputation at their old school’s. They meet when they’re summoned by the guidance counselor, Mrs. Antilly. She brought them together because they were both new to school and did not know anyone. After being introduced, the girls begin to meet up in school and hangout regularly at a local coffee shop, Monet’s. They bonded over conversations about shopping, boys, and life any time one saw another; in school and out. Then, Alex Standall was added into the bestfriend equation

when the girl's noticed he was alone at Monet's. Their friendship was preserved until Jessica and Alex stopped showing up to Monet's and began leaving Hannah out of things. Importantly, it damaged their future communication which determined their relationship.

I chose analyze this relationship because friendships are complicated and filled with conflicts. When a friendship begins to turn for the worst not only feelings get hurt. I was curious how their once flourishing friendship was fit to become toxic so quickly. The impact of lost relationships and support can be detrimental to a person emotionally. It was enough to be used as a reason why Hannah committed suicide. Personally, I think it is important to learn how impactful communication can be towards a person and their life.

Throughout the episode, both characters use nonverbal communication consciously and unconsciously. Otherwise known as Visual-Auditory Code Concept, gestures with different meanings. This consists of Kinesics, body position and facial expressions. Physical appearance, their characteristics, body size and features. Body artifacts, such as hair color, style, makeup, or jewelry. Paralanguage, how something is said, their vocal qualities and lastly; silence.

These two characters demonstrate this concept when Hannah is at her movie-theater job, "The Crestmont". She is working the booth and Jess walks up casually with a smile. They exchanged a few words, acting as if there wasn't tension between them. Hannah frequently displays a confused look and questions Jess. Then randomly, Jess' head twitches when Hannah goes to give her a free movie ticket. Hannah gives her a confused look. That tells Hannah she's nervous, her facial expression seemed uncomfortable and her eyes reverted to a different direction as Alex walked up beside her. She knew something was wrong by Jessica's body language and facial expression.

Their poor listening habits also affected their relationship negatively. The film displays monopolizing, which is talking without actually listening. In addition, defensive listening, considered as arguing or misinterpreting others words as an attack. Also ambushing, when someone retains information then manipulate it into something negative. The non-listening occurs after their relationship became distant, causing new perspectives on eachother. The two character's enact the concept when Jessica accuses Hannah of cheating with her former boyfriend while they were friends. While Hannah defends herself, Jessica uses defensive listening and misinterprets the situation. She will only shout accusations and be aggressive and unwilling to believe anything said during the conversation. This proves how emotions can distract us from communicating effectively, and how harmful the conversation was.

Another important concept shown is Emotional Intelligence. It is the ability to recognize and communicate your own and other's feelings properly. Hannah used this concept to help handle Jess' irrational emotions better. When they meet at Monet's and Jess continuously accuses her for something she didn't do. Hannah can recognize she is upset, but she wants to be supportive because Jess is hurt. At the same time she wants to calm Jess down and stop the situation. By possessing the ability to recognize one's feeling and control her own, she was able to handle the situation in an easier manner.

When the girls met they were close and communicated daily which effected how they tackled their problems. Another concept involved is Response to Conflict between them. This includes, Exit Response where the person withdrawals and walks out. Neglect, minimizing the relationship and deny aspects of it. Then Loyalty, staying committed even if it feels unpleasant. Lastly, the Voice Response consisting of addressing the conflict, being direct, and believing in

each other. The characters demonstrate the Exit Response during their aggressive altercation in Monet's when their friendship ended. Hannah defended herself and used kind words until Jessica calls her a "slut". Hannah responds with "fuck you", causing Jessica to slap her in the face. She withdraws from the relationship and walks out of the shop. This was traumatic for Hannah and added onto her stress and depression which participated in her suicide.

Hannah Baker and Jessica Davis also demonstrate the Dialect Theory in this episode. Website "Communication theory" states Dialects Theory consists of "People experiencing internal tensions inconsistently while being in a relationship. Over time the pressures will be recurring in nature and from this extreme tendencies, the relationship sustains". The theory focus' on the opposing wants by partners and the tension caused. The theory consists of Internal Dialects and External or competing demands. Oregon State exclaims "Relationships reflect tensions (conflicts, contradictions) that are played out in communication interaction (dialectical tensions)". Which explains why there is so much tension between the girls.

Internal Dialects could be applied to Jess by viewing how she express' emotion. She is judgemental when it involves herself. For example, their friendship ended over a rumor she couldn't bare to handle that involved the both of them. She is quick to act irrational when upset and refuses to accept or listen to her old friend. Before, she was accepting and used to show friendly affection with Hannah. This includes constantly approaching her in school, holding her hand, and giving hugs. But Hannah, is often sarcastic and not judgemental towards Jess. She doesn't make fun of Jessica's secrets and accepts who she is.

Importantly, External Dialects plays a major role in this episode. Hannah faced an external competing demand of being in crisis. Struggling with depression increased the tension in

her life and dealing with a loss of a friend did too. Another demand would be the new romance between Alex Standall and Jessica Davis. Jess did not publically negotiate this relationship and it hurt Hannah. After the girls became distant, they stopped contacting each other in general. Their function of friendship was damaged due to their lack of communication.

A specific time the theory explains how the character's behavior is when the girls meet at Monet's for a serious discussion. They're talking and Jess is attempting to get answers or an intrinsic reward out of shouting numerous accusations at Hannah. But, she is upset so her emotions overwhelm her ability to express and process her emotions.

Hannah was defending herself and wanted Jessica to listen to her but Jessica was in rage. She refused to consider anything said to her and kept being antagonizing with hurtful words. Hannah sighs while talking about Jessica, "you needed it to be my fault, so it was my fault". Hannah knew the tension was too strong for Jess to hear her out. Hannah intentionally expresses her emotions honestly to solve the problem. The entire conversation contains Jessica's harassment and Hannah's innocent plead. Jessica's comments continue, "enjoy it, because you will won't you, because that's what slut's do". Her eyes are teary but The push-pull force makes the situation stressful by opposing desires. Jessica wanted to make hurtful comments, while Hannah wished to resolve the issue between them. Also, terminate the rumor that was causing the aggressive altercation.

I have found each concept played a major role in the downward spiral of their communication. Including eye contact, facial expressions and their other meanings and body language. It wasn't always unhealthy but as time passed it increased. Their communication was overall negative. At first, they became distant over an additional member in their

friendship/friend group. Then their communication transformed into destructive. It was harmful and impactful, the whole episode is dedicated to how it played a part in her suicide. Their lack of effective communication caused distance, then suicide. Jessica was the second individual said responsible for Hannah's death. By applying the following class concepts: Visual-Auditory Codes, Non-Listening, Emotional Intelligence, and Responses to conflict it shows how impactful it can be towards a person. The episode gives insight into the mind of a suicidal child who is driven to harm themselves and displays how much communication can hurt a person.

The characters could do numerous things to improve their communication. One could be choosing how to express their emotions or handle a deep situation. They could do this by giving themselves time to process their emotions and think about the situation. Therefore it is calm and doesn't get out of control. Another thing would be to listen while another person is talking to you. To actually try and understand what they're saying and why. If something is misinterpreted it can change the outcome of the situations. Both characters shouldn't let their emotions dictate their relationship.

Dialectics Theory is important to the interpersonal communication between my characters because the episode revolves around their conflict with each other. The Theory focus' on the tension created between characters that causes the issues. When applying the theory you are able to view the characters from another perspective. Also, to understand the demands and different factors within the conflict and relationship.

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