CONSTRUCTING STIGMA THROUGH AUDIO RECORDING IN "13 REASONS WHY"

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ABSTRACT

Technology, even a simple one like papers and pens, cannot be denied being able to deliver ideas, thoughts or mere expression of one's feelings. Audio recorder such as cassette in 21th century is an old school medium in delivering messages and related to that anyone can record not only music but also ideological messages as occurred in "13 Reasons Why" novel. As a transferred student who cannot adapt with regulations that applied in the school often being alone in the school, Hannah Baker recorded her own statement of being judged by other students. The other students make rumors about her, and since everyone have no information they automatically accept the rumor and construct it as stigma. It somehow leads Hannah's character to alter her personality and behavior which next she documented it on a cassette. In order to discuss how a stigma constructed within Hannah's character and its deliverance through audio recorder, Jahn's theory of character and Goffman's ideas on stigma are applied. The data are analyzed by using descriptive research method which divides Hannah's action and reaction recorded on the cassette. In conclusion, as a victim of other students' stigma, Hannah has finally constructed another stigma towards other students as well through an audio recording.

Keywords: *audio recorder, character's development, stigma*

INTRODUCTION

When a society has their own norms and rules, most of the time they have difficulty to accept new people or new customs brought by strangers. They have particular norms and rules in order to protect their society and such condition becomes more complicated by technology usage within the society. The technology is unnecessarily a high tech one, since newspaper, television and radio broadcast are also part of technology which helps people in sharing information. Yet simple technology such as cassette is able to share many information or just merely entertainment.

However, in daily life spreading information mouth-to-mouth is more common, particularly among teenagers life. Thus when a person comes to a new society such as school environment, her/his existence will be easily noticed by the society and make them to pay attention on her/him. The situation encourages her/him eventually to follow the rules so they can be accepted and blended in the society. Meanwhile those who are unable to following the rules they will always be strangers in the society or a worst case is people look down to them. School as a miniature of society has its own norms and regulations and everyone should follow the regulations made by government, school council and teachers. Somehow, there is another regulation made by students to divide other students into several groups—nerd, popular, smart, etc. In another hand they teach everyone to know their own position.

Transferred students mostly become the victims of this situation since they do not have any knowledge on how things happened in their new environment. Some of them may adapt properly and easily blend in their school environment. Yet, for those who cannot follow the regulations and enable to get along, problems emerge constantly in their life. Such inability makes or forces them to feel inferior among the other students. They do not get the hierarchy that already set up by the other students then they do not join any groups in the school. They do not get used to the regulation and just being an outsider. Since they do not interact much and often being alone, other students just judge the transferred students based on their own thought, that could be true but mostly were wrong because they do not know each other.

Such phenomenon is happened in Jay Asher's novel 13 Reasons Why experienced by Hannah Baker. Hannah's character is changing throughout the story. It is developing since she becomes a transferred student because her family is moved due to their job. As a transferred student, Hannah is unable to adapt with her surrounding, and make other students to start making a rumor about her. The rumor makes her to be assumed as a bad person. Since others students have no information about her, they automatically accept the rumor. Such condition is leading to an issue of stigma. It happens quite often in school environment;

students are just labeling others based on what they see and have no eagerness to know each other even though they are still judging each other. Goffman as quoted by Lennard J. Davis (2017:133) mentions stigma as an attribute that makes a person different from others in social category, and it reduces to a tainted or discounted status. It means that bad or negative perspective towards a person from another society will cause the person to have "label" or "name". This labeling may influence the person character and change her/his to be worst. It started with a rumor that causes her status tainted. However, as a transferred student, she does not make any struggle to protect or refuse any stigma towards her. Finally, it gives her negative experiences during school.

Her experiences as a transferred student have changed her into a different person. Such condition can be identified as a round character. Jahn mentions that a round character tends to develop in the course of the action and is not reducible to a type (Jahn, 2017:N7.7). It means the character is developing due to actions that make them whether intentionally or not to change in the outcome of the story. But, it is not reducing their quality as the character. Related to the issue, there is previous research discussing about stigma. Angelina Ayudila, et al (2016) entitled "Analisis Naratif Karakter ODHA (Orang Dengan Hiv/Aids) Dalam Film "Mika" " discussing about character with HIV/AIDS is not as described by media. Even though, the issue is similar, Ayudila et al is focusing on how the stigma can be changed. Meanwhile, in Hannah's character she does not refuse the stigma that labeled on her. She know the stigma is not true but she choose to be silenced instead of denying the label, which later on causes more complicated problems for herself. However, she is successfully creating new stigma by making her personal statements using an audio recording. She records her voice on cassettes, and cassette itself has been stated as a part of culture that creates social changes. It had turned a new popular culture into a massive manipulation, deculturation, and homogenization (Manuel, 1993).   Thus, based on the description above, this research is focusing on stigma on Hannah Baker's character by using Goffman and Jahn's concept. Thus, this current study is entitled "Constructing Stigma through Audio Recording in "13 Reasons Why".

To complete the research, the method that used in this study is descriptive research. This method is used because this study is explaining taken data. As Fox (2007:45) stated that,

> "Descriptive research is aimed at casting light on current issues or problems through a process of data collection that enables them to describe the situation more completely than was possible without employing this method."

The quotation above shows that descriptive research is applicable in social sciences and humaniora. So that to elevate particular issue such as stigma this type of method is assumed proper to be applied. In discussing the stigma, data are taken by reading and highlighting particular phrases. Next, the data are analyzed to show the stigma on Hannah Baker's character and new stigmas created by Hannah herself.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

To analyze the issue of stigma on Hannah Baker's character, this part is discussing data taken from the novel which show stigma's symptoms. The first data taken from the first tape side A show Clay Jensen is listening to Hannah's voice.

"hey!" you [Justin] said. "Aren't you going to say hello?"

I [Hannah] smiled, took a breath, then turn around. "Why should I?"

"Because you always say hello."

In this tape, Hannah is describing how Justin finally spoke to her. He never speaks to her before, because Hannah always the one who say 'hello' to him first. Hannah stop saying 'hello' and it makes him curious, because the image of Hannah does not match his expectation.

The phenomenon which Hannah always says 'hello' becomes the first label that labeled to her. The label makes her looked innocent and easy to be manipulated. For the students Hannah is an untouchable transferred student, so that whoever gets her attention has successful to achieve a great thing which become the trigger of bad stigma on Hannah character.

Next, Hannah is describing how her relationship with Justin becomes the trigger of some bad events experienced by Hannah.

A rumor based on a kiss ruined a memory that I [Hannah] hoped would be special. A rumor based on a kiss started a reputation that other people believed in and reacted to. And sometimes, a rumor based on a kiss has a snowball effect.

A rumor, based on a kiss, is just the beginning.

This data is showing how a rumor on Hannah can grow to something bigger such stigma. Actually, what Hannah experienced is such a common behavior among the highschooler to kiss their boyfriend or when they like each other. But, in Hannah case Justin

do not truly like her, but he just want to used her as trophy. Justin bragging to the whole school about his success kissing Hannah, and make the reputation of Hannah in the school deteriorated. This event then trigger the stigma on Hannah character. The stigma is so bad that people assumed her as a 'slut', it is shown in the data below:

> I [Hannah] know what you're all thinking. Hannah Baker is a slut. Oops. Did you catch that? I said, "Hannah Baker is." Can't say that anymore.
>
> Wrong.
>
> Hannah Baker is not, and never was, a slut. Which begs the question, What have you heard?

In this data Hannah is telling whoever listens to her cassette the stigma of herself as a 'slut' is not true. Which mean she already know what people think about her. But, instead of denying it right away, Hannah chooses to remain silence. The silence of Hannah makes the stigma getting bigger every time she involved into something. Because people always connected whatever Hannah do with her label. In the previous data Hannah called that as a *"snowball effect."* So, here is another data from Hannah tape recorder to prove the snowball effect that Hannah mentioned before.

> You [Alex] needed a name to put down opposite Jessica's. And since everyone at school already had a perverted image of me [Hannah] after Justin's little number, I was the perfect choice, wasn't I?

In this data Hannah is explaining how her name was put in the "Who's Hot and Who's Not" list made by Alex. The list is not supposed to hurt Hannah because the one that Alex wanted to hurt is Jessica. Hannah, Alex, and Jessica used to be friends, but when Jessica and Alex started a special relationship it broke their friendship. Jessica thought Alex and Hannah like each other and with her jealousy, Jessica then choose to broke up with Alex. This makes Alex angry and wanted a revenge, which he do by making the 'Who's Hot and Who's Not' list. He put Jessica on the 'Not' list and Hannah on the 'Hot' list opposite Jessica's name. He chooses Hannah's name instead, because Hannah and Jessica are friend and it can deeply hurt Jessica.

Besides that, Hannah's label as a bad girl suit perfectly with the 'Best Ass' in the freshman year. Hannah as an untouchable transferred student makes another student need something to make an approach to Hannah. The list finally gives them the excuse to approach to Hannah.

There is some other name in the list but, it is not affected them as much it is affected Hannah. The bad impact of the list to Hannah is related with the stigma that put into her in the first place. This is what Hannah called in the previous data as the "*snowball effect*". But, the effect does not stop there because the "*snowball*" is keep rolling. Alex had no idea that the list lead to someone ended up assaulted Hannah.

> Alex, am I [Hannah] saying your list gave him permission to grab my ass? No. I'm saying it gave him an excuse. And an excuse was all this guy needed.

What Hannah trying to say is that the list could give someone an excuse to touch and assaulted her. Without the list nobody will paying attention to Hannah. But, the list makes people curious about her and trying to prove her as the "best ass" in the freshman year. Since Hannah had already stigmatized as pervert it makes people only see her certain body parts, such ass.

Not only being assaulted by someone that curious about her, the list also lead to trust issue between Hannah and her friend, Jessica.

> And why should you [Jessica] believe me [Hannah]? Why would anyone not believe a rumor that fits so nicely with the old rumor? Huh? Justin? Why?

As Hannah mentioned in her cassette about Alex, Jessica's name is opposite her name in Alex's 'Who's Hot and Who's Not' list. It started to break the friendship between Hannah and Jessica. Because Jessica thought Hannah and Alex work together to makes her looks bad. Jessica do not hear any clarification Hannah trying to explained, instead she choose to trust the rumors about the relationship between Hannah and Alex. Because for Jessica it is easier to believe the rumor than trying to prove Hannah is innocent. Jessica needed the rumor to be true to makes her feel safe. By believing the bad rumors about Hannah, all the events that happens between Hannah, Alex, and Jessica. Hannah's bad stigma It is shown through Clay's comment on Hannah's voice record.

Next data, when Clay is commenting when he heard Hannah voice record telling about her story and Jessica.

> Jessica could have heard so many rumors about Alex and Hannah. But none of them were true.

From Clay's comment when hearing Hannah tape shown that some people actually realize the rumor about Hannah is not true, included Clay. Thought the rumors is not true it is still affected on how Clay interacted with Hannah.

> But, why? Why, whenever anyone saw us, did I [Clay] pretend it meant nothing? We were working, that's what I wanted them to believe. Not hanging out. Just working.
>
> Why?
>
> Because Hannah had a reputation. A reputation that scared me.

In the previous data, already known that Clay did not believe the rumor about Hannah. But, although he did not believe the rumor still, he afraid Hannah reputation might affect him if people see him close with Hannah.

The previous data about how people treat her after sees the list is mentioned by Hannah in data below.

> But, this tape is not about your motivation, Alex. Though that is coming up. This tape is about how people change when they see your name on a stupid list. This tape is about...

The stigma about Hannah keep people to used her as their as trophy that they have complete a task. The example is in Hannah cassette about Marcus.

> And that's why you're on this tape, Marcus. You turned around just in case. Just in case I, Hannah Baker—Miss Reputation—was waiting for you.

On 'Oh My Dollar Valentines' where all students at Hannah's school filled a survey and get their top five soul mate, Marcus lied about his list, he told Hannah that she is on the top of his list and ask Hannah to go out. But he did not come on time and when he finally came he did not came alone. He wanted to prove to his friends that Hannah is really a bad girl that can easily ask to go out.

Next data is showing Hannah's angers over Alex. People could have forget the incident between Hannah and Justin if Alex do not put Hannah's name on his list. Alex's list triggered everyone to thinks the bad things about Hannah with Justin's incidents as the source.

> Okay, I [Hannah] just looked over every name—every story—that completes *these tapes. And guess what.* **Every single event documented here may never have** happened **had you, Alex, not written my name on that list.** *It's that simple.*

In this data Hannah is emphasizing that all the bad events she have to get through are all started with Alex. Alex "Who's Hot and Who's Not" list triggered everyone in Hannah's school to believe and accept every rumor about Hannah that lead to students labeled Hannah with stigma. Because if Hannah is on the Hot list, then it is a perfect labeled for her that already labeled as a 'slut' before. The list become some kind of the proved that the labeled is suit with the stigma on Hannah.

With all the events that happen to Hannah with Justin, Alex, and all the incidents that follows, causes Hannah to stigmatized as a bad person. The stigma on Hannah makes Hannah character to change throughout the events. It makes her have suspicion on every one that interact with her, that they just wanted to know the 'bad Hannah'. Hannah realize the changes of herself because she choose to do so. It is shown in data below. This data is taken from the conversation between Hannah and Mr. Porter (counselor at Hanah's school).

> It's hard because I [Hannah] don't know who's going to . . . you [Mr. Porter] know . . . get me next. Or how.

This showing how Hannah is anxious about what will happen and how people will treat her. That is why Hannah trying to talk to Mr. Porter, to find the solution for her problem. But as she talk to him, Hannah don't feel like Mr. Porter give her the advice that she needs so she just walk away. Mr. Porter offer her to forget everything and just move on, but Hannah interpret Mr. Porter solution as suicide. Because in Hannah's point of view to get over everything that happens to her, suicide is her only choice. Hannah's also stated she already make herself clear that she has a very hard time to accomplish her problem, shown in data below.

> *I [Hannah] think I've made myself very clear, but no one's stepping forward to stop me.*

> *A lot of you cared, just not enough. And that . . . is what I needed to find out.*

The data show that what Hannah really need is someone that would stand for her, not just sympathy. Also Hannah knows there are people that care for her, but for her it is not enough to stop her from suicide. It can be concluded that every events that Hannah have to face is already too much for her to handle.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion, there are several conclusions that can be concluded. Hannah as the main character told every story about her via tape recorder that she record before she choose suicide and end her life. In every side of the tape Hannah mention a name and why is that name become the reason of her suicide. Those facts create new stigma which then spreads among her friends. From the data taken, the beginning of all the bad events happened to Hannah is label that grows into stigma and everybody believed in. The stigma on Hannah character make her life complicated because people only see her based on what they heard. In the end what makes it worse for Hannah is that she did not trying to deny anything that labeled to her. Instead of denying the label Hannah just let the label to disappear over the time, but instead of disappear the label grow into a bigger problem such stigma. The stigma then triggered Hannah's character to change.

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