



**Sexual Bullying and Cyberbullying in Jay Asher's *Thirteen*
*Reasons Why***

Evin Demirsoy

Degree Thesis 1, 15 hp

English for Upper Secondary School Teachers: EXE400

Department of Social and Behavioral Studies

September 2018

Supervisor: Åke Persson

Examiner: Celia Aijmer Rydsjö

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Introduction

School is a place where children spend most of their time, and it is important for them to feel safe in the schoolyard. Most would agree that it is the responsibility and duty of the school to provide safety for them. In his book, *Preventing Bullying in Schools: A Guide for Teachers and Other Professionals*, Chris Lee writes about an anti-bullying policy that is aimed to prevent bullying in schools and raise awareness on the issue (1). He argues that many children who have experienced bullying do not dare to talk about it. Furthermore, in their article, “Posthuman performativity, gender and ‘school bullying’: Exploring the material-discursive intra-actions of skirts, hair, sluts, and poofs”, Ringrose and Rawlings deal with bullying amongst young people and argue that “Youth bullying has been the subject of increasing investment, public concern, political pressure and academic exploration” (81). Therefore, it is possible to say that bullying among youths is not only a school issue, but it is also a public issue, since there are more people involved other than students and school, such as parents as well as politicians.

13 Reasons Why is a young adult novel written by Jay Asher (published in 2007), which I will analyze the bullying issue through. There are different forms of bullying, however, and in this essay, I will focus on two of them: the sexual bullying and cyberbullying that the main character Hannah Baker deals with. As will be discussed in chapter 1, cyberbullying and sexual bullying can have destructive consequences for the victims. This is seen in Hannah’s situation where she is seriously affected by the reputation she has been given in her school. As mentioned earlier, it is important that the school community provide a safe school environment for students, because when they fail at establishing safety, children are deeply affected as Hannah is. She experiences depression after being bullied by her friends. Later, because of the bullying, she feels mentally depleted which in the end leads her to commit

suicide. In one of his interviews, Asher states that he had not attempted writing such a sad story before: “I had never tried writing anything serious before that, and I did not like serious books, so my fear was that somebody would think it was too sad” (Biedenharn). Moreover, he mentions how adults underestimate cyberbullying and its affects, because it did not exist when they were young. Asher describes how the novel was written in the hopes that it can open discussions about bullying and suicide. He adds that these issues are highly topical in society and therefore should be discussed further. In the mini-documentary “Beyond the Reasons” he explains why these issues should be problematized: “The whole issue with suicide is an uncomfortable thing to talk about, but it happens, so we have to talk about it. And it is dangerous not to talk about it” (1:20).

It is my argument that this novel can be read as a warning to contemporary society regarding the seriousness of bullying amongst students in schools. I would suggest that the warning is aimed at those involved, such as, young people, parents, school staff and even media as well as politicians. It is particularly through the treatment of Hannah Baker that the novel brings up the consequences of bullying in a young adult environment. Before analyzing the issues, I will highlight important aspects of bullying as well as some reviews on how this novel has been read previously. Moreover, as this is relevant to my reading, there will be some background information regarding gender stereotypes, gender expectation, feminism, cyberbullying and sexual bullying, to help the reader understand the analysis in chapter 2. The aim of this essay is to explore sexual bullying and cyberbullying that Hannah Baker faces. Even though Hannah is the primary focus of this essay, it is impossible to know the way she was bullied without discussing the attitudes and the behaviors of the students that have bullied her. Therefore, I will first analyze the behaviors and the attitudes of the people who have bullied Hannah. Then I will explore why the characters acted the way they did and what impact their behaviors had in relation to Hannah’s bullying.

Chapter 1 – Gender Expectations and Gender-Bullying: An Overview

To provide a greater understanding of my reading of the novel, this chapter will focus on exploring an overview of gender-bullying, gender expectations and feminism. Furthermore, I will give an overview of previous research conducted on the issue of bullying, as well as a couple of literature reviews of the novel that illustrate how the novel has been read previously.

1.1 Previous Research

There are several studies on the topic of bullying. For instance, in their article “Best Practices for Preventing or Reducing Bullying in Schools”, Whitted and Dupper discuss different kinds of bullying in schools and explore the outcomes of bullying for the victim, the bully and the school staff. They discuss the strategies that can be used to prevent bullying in schools and argue that they should be implemented in every school so that students can feel safer in the school yard (170). The bullying prevention strategies involve parents, school staff, and other youths. Moreover, in their article “Appraisals and Coping Strategy Used in Victims of School Bullying”, Hunter and Boyle have explored the results of bullying and the strategies practiced by victims of bullying. Their research shows that students who were bullied more than once had no skills to employ useful strategies in coping with the bullying. Furthermore, as Hunter and Boyle suggest, they are usually afraid of telling about it to an adult since victims are often scared that the bully might find out about it. Therefore, when being bullied, many of them do not know what to do. Instead, they try strategies like wishing or hoping that someone will notice and help them to change things (87). By the same token, Patchin and Hinduja examine a new modification of bullying in their article “Bullies Move Beyond the Schoolyard: A Preliminary Look at Cyberbullying”, that is considered even more damaging than the “traditional” bullying. In recent years, cyberbullying has increased and become part of life.

The article explains the damage it can cause to the victim and discusses the destructive effects of it. Since cyberbullying happens over internet, the bully can hide his/her identity behind a screen, thus making it hopeless for the victim to find out who is targeting her/him and the reason behind it (149). From another point of view, in their article “School Staff Responses to Gender-Based Bullying as Moral Interpretation”, Anagnostopoulos et al., investigate the role of school staff members in preventing gender-based bullying. The authors argue that more studies should be conducted on how the school staff members respond to gender-based bullying since their reaction can be crucial (521). The authors present analyses of interviews they carried out with teachers and school facility. Their results have showed that, - even though the teachers felt forced to interfere when a female student is harassed by a male student, they were unwilling and doubtful about their duty for lesbian or gay victims of bullying. Therefore, the authors emphasize that the whole school community should inspect how their personal attitude can encourage gender-based bullying (522).

Thirteen Reasons Why was immensely popular when it was first published in 2007, and it did not lose its popularity after 10 years, which is why in the year 2017, the novel was adapted into a Tv-serial. Some people liked the show because they thought it brought up contemporary issues, while others criticized it due to its story and its images. On account of the controversy, the producers agreed on filming a mini-documentary show called “Beyond the Reasons”, where they had the opportunity to describe and argue for the choices made. In the documentary, mental health professionals, actors, actresses and producers are gathered to discuss uncomfortable aspects of the show (such as the intense scene of Hannah’s suicide). Thus, the viewers were given the chance to ask the producers about their choice of filming, as well as their ideas about the topics addressed in the show.

In her review of the novel, Tammy February states that she avoided reading it for 10 years, but when the Tv-adaptation was made, she was determined to read it before watching

its adaptation. According to her, by writing such a sad and heartbreaking story, the author wants to point out the acrimonious side of our society. She states that it has an important message to its readers regarding the issues it addresses and argues that, - it is a must-read book, because it makes one consider the ignorance of our society about the destructive effects of sexism and misogyny on women's daily life. Not only February has stated that *Thirteen Reasons Why* is a must-read novel, but also Kathryn Hughes, who writes similarly in her literature review. She states that the novel has been a great success in the United States because it manages to ask its youth readers to consider carefully how small things they do can affect someone else's life both positively and negatively. Therefore, she argues that the novel should be read by everyone, especially by teenagers.

As is seen, there have been several studies that have focused on different aspects of bullying, and some reviews on the novel. However, what I will do in this essay is slightly different. Indeed, this essay is unique because it uses the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* as primary source to explore the sexual bullying and cyberbullying that the main character Hannah Baker encounters in the novel, and this has not been studied before.

1.2 Gender-Bullying

Since cyberbullying and sexual bullying are the two types of bullying that I will explore, it is useful to offer some background about them. However, before that, I will present some information regarding the issue of bullying in general and the studies that illustrate how this topic has been dealt with in American schools. In her paper "Peer-to-Peer Bullying and Harassment: Background and Federal Response Efforts," Robbins states that even though the School Commission rejects a singular description of "bullying", units like the National Center for Education Statistics, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, have defined bullying in the following way:

[...] being made fun of; being the subject of rumors; being threatened with harm; being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on; being pressured into doing things [one] did not want to do; excluded [sic] from activities on purpose; and having property destroyed on purpose. (4)

Furthermore, the National Education Association has defined bullying as “intentional and repeated acts of a threatening” (4). A recent analysis of 43,000 students by the Josephson Organization of Ethics revealed that 47,1 percent of American high school pupils stated that they have been bullied in various of ways (5). The same study has further illustrated that 33,4 percent of the students considered bullying a serious issue in their school. The National Education Association carried out another study in 2011 which demonstrated that 87 percent of school staff have stated that they have observed bullying. In addition to these, the School Survey on Crime and Safety has reported that 25 percent of the schools announced that their students are being bullied on a daily or weekly basis. Consequently, bullying is a clear issue that concerns both students and teachers. Even though school should be a safe place for children, the numbers show that it is not.

There are different kinds of bullying. However, this essay will focus on two of them. The first one is sexual bullying, which according to J. New involves offensive sexual comments, sexual propositions, sexual gestures, or telling sexual jokes about a person’s body shape and appearance. Furthermore, according to Anagnostopoulos et al., this kind of bullying can include even more severe abuse in forms of physical violence and harassment. Therefore, it can have devastating consequences for the victims, since the bullying, moreover, contains insults, assaults, mental pressure and threats, all based on sexual activity or sexual preference. As a result, students who face sexual bullying experience high rates of depression, fear, lowered educational performance and may commit suicide (520), as will be illustrated in the next chapter.

Over the years, access to and popular use of new technologies like the Internet have resulted in a new way of bullying which is called “cyberbullying”. Robbins states that cyberbullying is about posting destructive information about a classmate on the Internet, or else contacting him/her directly via text messaging that includes threats or affronts towards the student. Because of this, the victims of cyberbullying feel either depressed or embarrassed to come to school and that usually results in a situation where the student cannot focus on her/his studies (7). Robbins defines this type of bullying as even more damaging than the “usual” form of bullying since cyberbullies can hide their identities behind fake accounts (6). Because of the anonymity, it is almost impossible to find out who does it or why. Moreover, since it usually occurs from a distant place, the bully does not see the effect of his/her actions, which is why cyberbullying is even more dangerous than the other-types. Dr. Hu, who is a psychiatrist at Stanford University, argues in the mini-documentary “Beyond the Reasons”, that parents do not realize how damaging and hurtful cyberbullying can be, because it did not exist during their time at high school. Thus, it is almost impossible for them to understand how it can impact their children, and therefore they underestimate it. Moreover, Hu argues that cyberbullying is even more destructive than the traditional form of bullying since it does not end when the school bell rings. It follows the person into her/his house (6:40). Selena Gomez, who is the executive producer of the Tv version of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, agrees with Hu and states in the mini-documentary: “when something is online, it is just there, and a picture can say a million different things. People come up and conjure up their own story, and it affects you, it hurts you” (4:10).

1.3 Gender Expectations

In their article, “Father Involvement, Gender Perception and Children's Gender Stereotypes”, Guder and Ata argue that even though it may be possible to refer to several factors in children’s social behaviors, hobbies and habits, parents are seen to have the biggest impact on

their development of their gender roles. Especially in early childhood, parents influence their children to a great extent. In this sense, a child's approach towards gender is related to his/her parents' stereotypes regarding gender (1637). For example, in many cultures girls are less valued than boys and other rules are applied to them. These rules are often designed according to the gender roles and gender expectations. As children grow up, they learn about stereotypes and they learn that they must act according to their gender roles to fit in society (1638).

Furthermore, parents are usually confronted with gender expectations when they want to buy an outfit for their children, as Kane exemplifies in her book *The Gender Trap: Parents and the Pitfalls of Raising Boys and Girls*: "Glamour Baby," "Daddy's Princess," "Born to Shop," "Diva," "Hot Babe," and "Pretty Girl" for the girls' bibs and "Wild One," "Little Toughie," "All Star," "Rebel," "The Boss," and "Trouble Maker" for the boys' bibs (1). These types of slogans encourage gender distinctions and reflect gender as a shared classification in their choice of outfit, hobbies and habits. Furthermore, Kane states that several studies have concluded that parents usually act in ways that support gendered paradigms and behaviors. Moreover, she argues that because of the distinction, boys and girls are considered to have other types of concerns, talents and capabilities (3). As will be discussed in chapter 2, the issue of gender distinction is illustrated in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* where the boys and girls in the school are divided into different groups with different interests and tendencies. In relation to this scenario, Kane states that this kind of distinction leads to a situation where instead of communicating with each other, boys and girls assume things about one another (4).

In her book *Boys and Girls: The Development of Gender Roles*, Beal argues that in society, we usually have stereotypical anticipations based on many different factors and that these anticipations affect how we treat people around us. Furthermore, she states that people in society label things and people based on many different factors. The label can be both

negative and positive, but either way, it generates a stereotypic expectation, which Beal expresses clearer:

We have a stereotypic expectation about people based on many factors, including age, ethnicity, social class, the types of work we do, and so on. Yet all our personal characteristics, gender stands out as most important and most prevalent. Others notice first if we are male or female before they see whether we are young or old, whether we are dressed nicely or in worn or whether we look friendly or distant. (5)

Killen et al. state that stereotypical ideas can lead to situations where boys and girls are expected to act in different ways as Grinberg and Larned illustrate in their article “This Is What Happens When Gender Roles Are Forced on Kids”. They explain that in many cultures, boys are seen as a threat to girls and therefore girls are expected to protect themselves from them. According to the authors, this belief should be avoided because it turns boys into “predators”, while girls into “potential targets”. Something similar is discussed by Kreager and Staff in their article “The Sexual Double Standard and Adolescent Peer Acceptance”. They state that boys are often expected to be sexually active, however, when it comes to girls, such behavior is discouraged because they can only have sex when they fall in love (3). As can be seen, there are different rules and expectations for girls and boys. Girls are not expected to be sexually active, while this is expected for boys. To put it differently, it is a society code that every girl and boy is expected to act in accordance with. Because they know that if they do not behave according to what is expected of their gender, they risk being bullied as Hannah Baker is, which will be discussed in chapter 2.

1.4 Feminism

From a general point of view, feminism is based on the awareness of society's unequal treatment of women. However, Beasley argues that feminism has various definitions, and that its essential meaning is controversial. Dictionaries generally describe it as the encouragement of women's rights established on a belief in the fairness and in the equal opportunity of the genders. Furthermore, it refers to people that are conscious of the inequality between the sexes and look to stop women's subjection for any possible reason (27). Feminist intellectuals consider feminism as presenting a dispute to a male mindset, since it contains a critical view of masculine supremacy and focus. As Theile puts it: "it is common knowledge among feminists that social and political theory was, and for the most part still is, written by men, for men and about men" (4). It also struggles against the kinds of sexual harassment that women and young girls experience in society, but that people choose not to talk about. Whisnant argues that all feminists agree on the idea that rape or other kinds of sexual abuse are serious crimes which should be fought against both legally and socially (5). He argues that people need to break the silence about these difficult topics and talk about them. Moreover, he adds that sexual abuse is a significant issue in contemporary society and therefore needs to be addressed.

In this chapter I have highlighted important aspects of gender-bullying, gender expectations and feminism as it is relevant to my reading of the novel. Moreover, I have pointed at some previous research on the bullying issue, as well as some reviews of how the novel has been read by others. In the next chapter, I will explore the attitudes and the behaviors of the characters that are involved in Hannah's bullying and discuss their actions in relation to the topics highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 2 – Sexual Bullying and Cyberbullying in *Thirteen Reasons Why*

This chapter examines the sexual bullying and cyberbullying that Hannah Baker encounters in the novel. Even though Hannah is the primary focus, my discussion will engage with the attitudes of five characters in the novel who are involved in Hannah's bullying. It is important to discuss their behaviors and attitudes for the purpose of understanding what Hannah went through. These characters can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of two characters who contributed to Hannah's bullying, the second group includes the one that started the cyberbullying and, the third group contains the ones that sexually abused her. Before moving to the discussion, a brief analysis of the novel's content will be provided in the next paragraph.

The novel starts out with Clay finding a box with his name on it and as he opens it, he sees a series of tapes recorded by his crush and classmate Hannah which he listens to: "Hello, boys and girls. Hannah Baker here. Live and in stereo" (7). Clay Jensen is an important character since he is the filter through which the reader gets to know what happened to Hannah. Additionally, he is one of Hannah's targets which shocks him since he believes that he always treated her with respect. At first, when he hears her voice, it confuses him; "No, I cannot believe it. Hannah Baker killed herself" (7). But as he listens, he realizes that she recorded them before she killed herself. Still, he does not understand why she did it. The tapes, however, are about to tell him why: "I hope you are ready, because I am about to tell you the story of my life. More specifically, why my life ended. And if you are listening to these tapes, you are one of the reasons why" (7). The people that these tapes address have played a part in Hannah's suicide and she wants to make them see that through the tapes. All the names that come up in the tapes subsequently listen to their parts and thus understand their role in her suicide. After having listened to each tape, every person should pass the tapes on to

the next person that follows his/her story. Additionally, Hannah planned the structure very well so that her story would reach out to everyone in her list as she warns the listeners:

In case you are tempted to break the rules, understand that I did make a copy of these tapes. Those copies will be released in a very public manner if this package does not make it through all of you. This was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. Do not take me for granted. . . again. You are being watched. (9-10)

In the novel, Hannah Baker is portrayed as a young and sensitive woman who is smart as well as attractive. She dreams about her life after high school since she wants to apply to college. However, when she faces bullying in different ways, she commits suicide. In the next part, I will examine the attitude of the people who are involved in the sexual harassment of Hannah as well as cyberbullying and, discuss their actions from the perspective of the topics that are highlighted in chapter 1.

Justin Foley was Hannah's first crush and she devotes a whole tape to him where she explains what role he played in her bullying. Hannah usually followed his schedule and classes in the hopes that he would notice her one day and ask her out. When they finally went out for a date, she wanted to give him her very first kiss as she states: "I simply wanted a kiss. I was a freshman girl who has never been kissed. Never. But I liked a boy, he liked me, and I was going to kiss him. That is the story, the whole story right there" (24). The next day after their date, Justin dumped Hannah without giving her a reason. However, things started to happen to her because of the story he told to his friends, as Clay expresses what he heard of people: "Hannah took off her shirt and let Justin put his hands up her bra. That's it. That's what I heard happened in the park that night "(25). According to Hannah, that was the starting point, in other words, the original basis of the rumors of her being called a "slut". Hannah knew that it was impossible to refute a rumor once it was spread. Everyone started to look at

her differently in school and called her “slut” behind her back which she expresses in the following words:

Eventually as they always will, the rumors reached me. And everyone knows you cannot disprove a rumor. I know what you are thinking [...] A rumor based on a kiss made you do this to yourself? No. 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. (30-31)

In the mini-documentary “Beyond the Reasons”, Langford, who plays Hannah Baker’s character in the Tv-serial of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, explains the importance of reputation in high school. Hannah’s reputation was destroyed when Justin had spread the false rumor about what occurred the night he met Hannah. According to Langford, it was an unflattering story because it caused a rumor that had a snowball effect for Hannah. She adds that it was the beginning of the end for her since that rumor had a permanent damage on Hannah’s reputation and she could not get rid of it. It caused her to become an object rather than a person in the eyes of the boys in school (3:40).

Justin was a popular boy in the school and he needed to remain so. He played in the basketball team and was usually hanging out with the “cool” boys from his team. When Justin went out on a date with Hannah, he was excited because it was a good thing for his reputation to go out with the new girl in school. Even though they only kissed on the date, he spread a whole new story around the school which built up Hannah’s reputation. Justin’s behavior can be related to gender expectations where he felt the pressure to have done more than a kiss. As mentioned above in chapter 1, boys and girls have different values and the novel illustrates that in Hannah’s case where her first kiss meant a huge moment for her, while for Justin, it

meant nothing but a factor that he could use to make a show of to his friends, to fulfill the expectations. After the rumor was spread, Hannah was called a “slut” while Justin was considered “cool”. People changed their views about Hannah and I would suggest that this was the starting point of her reputation since all the boys in school started to see her differently at that point.

Alex Standall comes next in line, - he was a close friend of Hannah’s. He, Jessica and Hannah were usually hanging out together, but when Jessica and Alex started to date, Hannah was left out. Even though Alex was a friend of Hannah’s, he is responsible for the sexual bullying Hannah faced in school. It started when boys in the basketball team hand out a list of Freshman Class titled “who is hot/who is not” where each one voted for the best part of girls’ bodies. When the list reached Hannah’s class, everyone started to stare at her and whisper things to each other, but Hannah did not know what they were talking about. However, it turns out that they were talking about Hannah and her ass, “you bet it is” (38). Because of Alex, who voted Hannah “best ass” in the Freshman Class, “you probably think you did a good thing right? How could anyone be angry at that?” (37). Hannah was objectified for sexual appraisal. Nevertheless, Alex had no idea that he was contributing to the sexual bullying of Hannah by putting her in that category. He did not think that it would influence her in this way. However, his action had a snowball effect for Hannah because after that day, boys started to check her back when she was walking by them in halls. Even Clay admits that later that day he checked out her back when passing her in the corridors and thought that she totally fit in that category. According to Hannah, when Alex put her in that category, he put a target on that part of her body as she states in her tape to him: “Every single event documented in here may never have happened had you, Alex, not written my name on that list. It is that simple.” (41). That list gave the boys an excuse to treat Hannah as a thing rather than a human being, especially after the false rumors about her sexual activity with Justin. She

later mentions Bryce, but refers to him as, -"one of many jerks I have run into over the years" (46). When Hannah comes across him in the store, he grabs Hannah by the ass and says, "Best Ass in the Freshman Class, Wally. Standing right here in your store" (48). Here it was, the beginning of various types of sexual bullying that Hannah was about to face later in the novel, and Alex had contributed. As Hannah explains it: "Alex, am I saying your list gave him permission to grab my ass? No, it gave him an excuse. And an excuse was all this guy needed" (52).

As mentioned above in chapter 1, the concept of feminism is founded on the perception of society's harsh treatment of women. When Alex voted Hannah for "best ass" in the freshman class, he objectified her for sexual appraisal which is against feminist ideas. I would argue that the novel constitutes a critique of society by problematizing the consequences of objectifying girls for sexual appraisal. It shows that such behavior can have serious affects for the victim, as it is for Hannah. Alex had no idea that his list would have such destructive affects for Hannah, since he only wanted to give her a compliment. However, the list added to her reputation and gave the boys an excuse to treat her as a sexual object. By voting her "best ass", Alex unintentionally put a target on that part of Hannah's body and he was not even aware of that until he listened to her tapes. He did not understand how it could affect her which can be connected to what is mentioned in the previous chapter about society's expectations of boys. Society expects boys to be "troublemakers" as we have seen Kane state in chapter 1. As is seen in Hannah's case, such expectations can become true, as it was for Alex where he caused big trouble for Hannah by categorizing her in that list.

2.2 Cyberbullying

Tyler is the character that started the cyberbullying that Hannah has encountered. He is a student photographer who is socially isolated from the students in the school. He had a secret

crush on Hannah because she was the only one who was kind to him. He loved taking photos of her because he thought she had a pure beauty and that she was very natural. However, after a while he started to stalk her, waiting outside her window at night to take pictures of her, which Hannah explains: “At the moment I stepped into my room...Click. We all know the sound a camera makes when it snaps a picture. And I always keep my window open, about an inch or two, to let in fresh air. Which is how I knew someone was standing outside” (80). This is the point where Hannah invites Courtney home to find out the identity of the stalker. Courtney is gay, which she was ashamed of, and Hannah had no idea about it. The plan was to get together so that they could catch the stalker. However, things went the other way when Courtney started to kiss Hannah. Tyler took an intimate photograph of them and published it online because he was jealous. “Why did not you leave me alone, Tyler? My house. My bedroom. They were supposed to be safe for me. Safe from everything else outside. But you were the one who took that away” (89). Hannah was already dealing with sexual bullying in the school, but when Tyler shared that intimate photo online, she was forced to deal with cyberbullying, which led to a mental breakdown for Hannah as she states: “School has not been a safe haven of mine for a long time, and after your photo escapades, Tyler, my home was no longer secure” (192).

As Robbins states in chapter 1, the Internet has resulted in the use of cyberbullying which is rather common in today’s society. The novel illustrates the significance of the issue by showing what it can cause in terms of damage to the victims. Since it usually happens from a distant place, the bully does not see the effects of his/her actions. However, through Hannah and her reactions, the novel implies that, - it is a dangerous issue and it needs to be addressed. Cyberbullying is even more dangerous than the other forms of bullying. As Gomez states in the mini-documentary “Beyond the Reasons”: “Once something is online, it’s just there, and a picture can say a million different things. And people come up and conjure up their own story,

or what they think is right. And it affects you, it hurts you” (4:10). This was the case with Hannah, where people started to think that she was living up to her reputation and thus judged her based on that image. Furthermore, gender-based bullying can be mentioned at this point since Courtney could not admit the fact that she was gay. It could be argued that the reason why she refused to admit her real sexual preference was because she was afraid of being bullied. As the study has showed in chapter 1, school staff do not know how to deal with gender-based bullying, - they are unsure about their duty when it comes to gay and lesbian victims of bullying. This is probably the reason why Courtney was afraid of encouraging this form of bullying since she knew she would not get help. Therefore, she stopped talking to Hannah after the picture came out. As a result, Hannah was being sexually bullied and, she was left with no friends, which was bad for her since she needed a friend that could support her to get through the process. However, after the photograph came out, she was forced to deal with cyberbullying by herself, which she was unable to do.

2.3 Sexual Bullying

The characters I have discussed so far are the ones that contributed to the bullying that Hannah faced in school. In this part, I will discuss the ones that acted upon the bullying, and assaulted Hannah sexually. Marcus Cooley comes next in line, who asks Hannah out on Valentine’s day. They agree to meet up on an ice-cream café after school, but when she goes there, she sits at the counter and waits for him a while without ordering anything. In the following sentence, she tells how uncomfortable she was feeling during the time she was waiting for him:

“Listen to the conversations around you. Are people wondering why you are sitting alone? ... I am sorry if this sounds pathetic, but you know it is true. You never gone there by yourself, have you? ... And deep down you know the reason

you have never gone alone... But if you go, and you do not order anything, everyone's going to think the same thing about you that they thought about me. That you are waiting for someone" (138).

When Marcus showed up, he was not alone. Hannah later discovers that the actual reason why Marcus came to see her, - was not because he wanted to talk to her. He started to touch her on her knee which made Hannah feel as humiliated as she felt when she was assaulted in the store: "There was your hand, on my knee. From out of nowhere. The same way I was grabbed in the liquor store" (141). It later turned out that the reason why Marcus came was to show off to his friends that he could get Hannah since she was "easy". His friends were sitting behind their table, and neither of them did anything to help Hannah when they saw her concerned face. Because they were there for one purpose, which was to see whether Hannah would go home with Marcus, since she was a "slut" in their eyes. But it did not turn out as they expected. Hannah pushed Marcus off the chair because he did not stop harassing her. Before he left, he called her "easy" (158) and thus, Hannah realized that she was a "slut" in the eyes of the boys in basketball team. After the incident, she states: "my heart and my trust were in the process of collapsing" (159), and therefore stops trusting in boys. Marcus's behavior makes her realize that her reputation would never leave her alone and that people would always react to it as he and Bryce did.

As Beal argued in chapter 1, we have stereotypical anticipations about people based on different factors. In Hannah's case, people had an expectation of her based on the reputation she was given in her school. Marcus had an expectation of Hannah because of her reputation, which led him to think she was "easy" to get. He expected that she would sleep with him. However, when things did not go as he was expected, he got angry. As seen, Hannah refused to live up to the stereotypical anticipation that people had of her based on her reputation, but this did not stop the boys from assaulting her.

All the incidents mentioned had a snowball effect for Hannah, and this is the point where she began to think about suicide. She started to think about how people's lives would be if she was not around and whether people would attend her funeral. However, she could still not let herself go completely, until she was raped. When she went to the party, she met Bryce, and she knew that something bad could happen, but did not care anyway. She wanted to let go entirely, and Bryce could make it possible for her to do that. This is the reason why she let herself be raped by Bryce, because thus she thought she could find the courage in herself to commit suicide. As she puts it:

“Not once had I given in to the reputation you had all set for me. Not once...Even though sometimes I found myself attracted to someone who only wanted to get with me because of what they had heard. But I always said no to those people. Until Bryce. So, congratulations, Bryce. You are the one. I let my reputation become me-with you. I was not attracted to you, Bryce. Ever. In fact, you disgusted me...You were touching me, but I was using you. I needed you, so I could let go of me, completely.” (264-65)

As mentioned previously in chapter 1, any kind of sexual harassment should be problematized and fought against. However, although these issues are highly topical in today's society, people choose not to talk about them, as we have seen Whisnant state in chapter 1. Therefore, the novel implies that society must break the silence about these hard topics and problematize them in other ways, or they will continue to happen. Hannah's experience with sexual assault can be connected to the #MeToo movement that was spread virally in 2017, and thanks to this campaign, we have finally seen people talk more about the issue of sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual abuse. The campaign began as a hashtag on twitter and became a global phenomenon. It supports the victims of sexual violence and inspires people to share and, speak up about their experiences of sexual harassment and sexual abuse (Shugerman). Thus,

by sharing their destructive experiences, women as well as men from different parts of the world, have shown that sexual violence is a major problem, which concerns everybody- Therefore, as the novel implies, the issue needs to be addressed and problematized in many ways.

In this chapter, I have discussed the attitudes and the behaviors of the five characters that Hannah mentioned in her tapes. Justin and Alex were the ones that contributed to the bullying Hannah faced in school, Tyler was the one that started the cyberbullying and Marcus and Bryce were the ones that assaulted Hannah sexually. I have discussed their actions in relation to the topics highlighted in chapter 1 and stated that, - Hannah represents the victims of bullying in American schools. In the next page, I will sum up the main points of my discussion and formulate a final statement.

Conclusion

It has been my argument that the novel *13 Reasons Why* can be read as a warning to current society regarding the seriousness of bullying amongst students in schools. Although there are different kinds of bullying, I have focused on two types, which are sexual bullying and cyberbullying. Hannah Baker is the main character of the novel who records a series of tapes before committing suicide. In her tapes, she addresses the specific people that have played a role in her suicide. In chapter 1, I have pointed to previous research about bullying in general and highlighted studies that illustrate the seriousness of the issue in young adult environments. In my opinion, Hannah represents the victims of bullying in American schools, where she goes through various types of bullying which in the end makes her commit suicide. Furthermore, I have highlighted gender expectations and feminism as they are relevant to my reading of the novel. Moreover, in chapter 2, I have dealt with the behaviors of five people that either had connection or contribution to Hannah's bullying. It was important to discuss their attitudes for the purpose of understanding what Hannah went through. I have connected their actions through analyzing their behaviors, using theories of gender expectations, gender-bullying and feminism.

The analysis shows the consequences of gender expectations through Justin's and Alex's behaviors. Since society actively encourages boys to be sexually active, Justin felt the pressure to conform, which led him to lie about his date with Hannah. Because of the rumors he spread, Hannah was called a "slut". Alex's behavior can be connected to gender expectations as well, where he thought he complimented Hannah, but rather confirmed gender expectations for her having the "best ass". Moreover, through Tyler, I observed that people who are bullied can themselves become bullies since he was socially isolated. I also explored the idea that gender roles are forced upon kids, and through the analysis, I showed how

Marcus and Bryce turned into predators by sexually assaulting Hannah, who became a target. Following that analysis, I connected Hannah's experience with sexual assault to the #MeToo campaign.

First, Hannah was a victim of rumors caused by gender expectations, which over the course of time turned into rape and then finally suicide. Bullying is a serious issue and the novel implies that clearly by highlighting the consequences of bullying in a young adult environment. Therefore, I read the novel as a warning to society. I would suggest that the warning is aimed at those involved, like young people, parents, school staff and politicians. Through Hannah, the novel shows the readers how much they can have an effect on someone else with their attitudes and behaviors.

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