**Interpersonal Relationships**

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Interpersonal relationships are the fabric which holds a society together. Social interactions between people and the relationships that are created, sustained and nurtured through these interactions form the larger web which connects the individuals to form a society. Interpersonal relationships of various types are created and strengthened by virtue of repeated communication between the two parties. These relationships are mainly divided into categories such as familial relationships, friendships, romantic relationships and professional relationships. These categories can then be further divided into sub-categories which cover every facet of human interaction and all the interpersonal relationships those can create. Since it has been established that interpersonal relationships essentially build the social framework, it is important to acknowledge that this value is given proper attention in art. The expression and description of interpersonal relationships with all their complexities is quite prominent in all art forms. However, the entertainment arts which aim to perform, have shouldered the greatest portion of this responsibility to depict these relationships. It is hence a frequent occurrence that TV shows and films are critiqued for their portrayal of ‘real’ interpersonal relationships.

Finding interpersonal relationships in TV or films which show conflict is quite easy. However, the characters who caught my eye in this regard are the two sisters in TV show ‘Fleabag’. (Waller-Bridge, 2016) The show is from the perspective of a woman who runs a sinking business and is trying to cope with trauma by using humor and casual flings. As early as the first episode, conflict between Fleabag (her real name is never revealed in the show) and her sister (Claire) is firmly established as they meet at a feminist talk sponsored by their father. The familial type of interpersonal relationship is important here. Fleabag tells the audience that her sister is exceptionally successful, good looking and dresses well. She also ditches her original plan of asking Claire for money. Fleabag realizes she is wearing Claire’s stolen blouse and has to return it. The conflict of money, beauty and success is hence firmly put in place from the start. The conflict slowly moves away from total bitterness as Fleabag helps Claire’s husband buy her a birthday gift in episode three. The conflict almost shatters when in episode five, Claire agrees to give Fleabag the money she needs, accept a promotion in Finland and leave her lying husband. It builds again when Claire moves back to her original plan in episode six after leaving Fleabag stranded. This rise in conflict after an agreement relates to the interdependence theory where conflict is more profound and likelier when the two parties are increasingly dependent on each other. (Hample, 2019) In episode one of series two, it is revealed that the two sisters have not talked for a year. Claire has a miscarriage and takes it out at Fleabag but later resolves it by going to the hospital with her. Growing attachment brings clearer perspective to the conflict when in episode three, Claire reveals that Fleabag is funnier, quirkier and more interesting than her which makes her insecure. This relates to the idea that the specific tone and dialogues of a conflict are unique to the type of relationships. The two sisters slowly reach a quiet resolution when in episode six, Fleabag convinces Claire to leave her husband for a colleague and Claire makes a subtle declaration of love for her sister. The rational dialectics theory in terms of openness vs closedness also relates to this relationship.

The second interpersonal relationship of interest to me was the romantic relationship between Detectives Jake Peralta and Amy Santiago in the police comedy TV show Brooklyn Nine Nine. (Goor, 2013) There can be a wide range of angles to a romantic relationship in terms of interpersonal relationship theories. However, the idea that the relationship between Jake and Amy is especially significant is because of the fact that there is next to no conflict between the two parties. Although it is virtually impossible to find a TV relationship with no conflict since TV shows tend to mirror the real society and there is always conflict in an interpersonal relationship in real life. The only real relationships with minimal conflict are those in the orientation stage according to the social penetration theory. However, since Brooklyn Nine Nine is a comedy, the primary romantic relationship it has displayed has almost no conflict. This plays out in accordance with the uncertainty reduction theory as from the first episode in season one, context is built when light flirting is seen between Jake and Amy. There is casual flirting and random compliments from both parties until episode thirteen where Amy has to go on a fake date with Jake because she lost a bet. Their uncertainties about their feelings for each other slowly fade away as the episodes move along until Jake admits his feelings in episode twenty-two. Uncertainties flare up again as Jake returns from being undercover until Amy confesses her feelings in episode nine of season two. Their relationship officially begins in episode twenty-three. The fact that there is hardly any conflict is slowly established as the show moves along and both parties give each other the space that automatically resolves any conflict. In episode seven of season three, Jake concedes to Amy and agrees to buy a new mattress. In episode twelve season four, Jake gives up a bet and lets Amy win so he could move in with her. Amy helps lead a rescue mission for Jake in season four episode two and Jake supports her through her exam in season four episode eighteen and later with a sexual assault case in season six episode eight. The relational dialectics theory is relatable in the context of this relationship as there is a blend of connectedness and separatedness, certainty and uncertainty and openness and closedness.

# References

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