12 Monkeys Module Two Assessment

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Author Note

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This paper will summarize and assess a ten minute clip from the movie, Twelve Monkeys. The focus will be on the listening skills and the culture of the characters. The paper will identify listening techniques exhibited by the characters and examine the role that culture plays.

The clip begins in the holding cell of a Baltimore jail where James Cole is chained to the floor. James has been picked up for acting insane and fighting with police. The on-call emergency psychiatrist, Dr. Kathryn Railly, arrives to assess what should be done with James. Next, James is transported to a psychiatric hospital where he is introduced to Jeffrey Goines, a young patient with radical views, who has been asked to give him a tour of the mental ward. The clip ends with James being interviewed by a panel of psychiatrists who are attempting to evaluate him further.

During the first interpersonal communication that James Cole and Dr. Railly have, Dr. Railly displays excellent, formal, effective listening skills as she makes eye contact, focuses on the words James is saying and also pays attention to the desperate nature of his nonverbal communication. She is evaluative as she listens comprehensively and empathetically (Sole, 2011, p. 49). She acknowledges James’ claims and asks for clarification. James is unable to maintain eye contact, focus and communicate his message clearly due to internal noise; the medication he’s been given and the trauma he’s endured, which results in an internal barrier in the interpersonal communication process with the doctor (T. Petricini, reading, May 14, 2019). His listening skills are affected likewise and additionally, he doesn’t acknowledge the doctor’s feedback.

During the next scene James is having informal interpersonal communication with the patients while Jeffrey is giving him a tour of the ward. James’ listening skills have improved as the previous effects of the noise wears off. Although he now listens intently to interpret and evaluate, he doesn’t provide any feedback (Sole, 2011, p. 49). Also, he is engaging in intrapersonal communication at the same time; as he stares into space, in contemplation. The noise that exists in the environment of the mental hospital, creating external barriers distracting from the messages, include loud obnoxious cartoons that are playing, and outrageous behavior by the patients (T. Petricini, reading, May 14, 2019).

In the final scene analysis, James is having a group communication with a board of doctors. The doctor’s mostly employ good comprehensive and evaluative listening skills as they make eye contact and ask for clarification; but on the other hand, they do interrupt and don’t show a lot of patience (Sole, 2011, p. 49). There are internal communication barriers in the biases they hold that James’ is mentally insane (T. Petricini, reading, May 14, 2019). The biases of the doctors and James’ emotional state of confusion are noise that prevent James’ message from being clearly received.

In each of these situations, the internal communication barriers could have been removed by creating a calmer environment. If the police officers were able to have spent more time calmly talking to James before becoming physical with him, they may have been able to communicate effectively without contributing additional trauma causing the need for medication. A calmer environment in the mental hospital would have prevented the distractions of the television and outrageous actions of the patients. Additionally if the board of doctor’s would have kept an open mind about James’ mental state, they would have had more patience to listen more effectively and they may have determined that James’ was not clinically insane.

If I were to counsel James on his listening skills, I would tell him that he needs to pay closer attention to the words that people are saying to him and respond appropriately with feedback (Sole, 2011, p. 50). I would explain that this is necessary in order for people to be able to focus on his message and accurately evaluate his feedback. I would tell him that maintaining eye contact, focusing on the meaning of their question and responding with feedback that pertains to their message would be the best way for him to do this (Sole, 2011, p. 49).

The cultures of the main characters of the movie are on opposite ends of the scale. James comes from a high-context, futuristic, somber, American culture, where his population is forced to be very dependent on one another (collectivism) and little speaking is done whereas Dr. Railly and Jeffrey are living in blissful 1990’s America, which is much more of a low-context, expressive, individualist culture (Sole, 2011, p. 40). Although Dr. Railly and Jeffrey are living in the same time and country, their subcultures are at opposite ends of the scale (Sole, 2011, p. 40). Dr. Railly’s subculture is scientific, professional, authoritative and orderly whereas Jeffrey’s sub culture in the mental institute is very unprofessional, childish, belligerent and chaotic. James Cole was forced into his futuristic underground culture, by threat of death, as an eight year old boy. At some point he made choices that forced him to be arrested and live in a prison subculture that was very depressed, isolating and violent. James chose to volunteer to enter the culture that Dr. Railly and Jeffrey share in 1990’s America but was then forced into Jeffrey’s sub culture at the mental institution.

James’ culture causes him to react emotionally, distracting from his message (Sole, 2011, p. 50). Dr. Railly’s culture is biased against time travel causing her to prejudge and ignore James’ message (Sole, 2011, p. 50). Jeffrey’s culture is out of touch with reality causing endless distractions from effective listening. When considering the diverse cultures that each individual in a communication process could be affected by, it is understandable how messages can be misinterpreted.

References

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