

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS

This chapter will discuss the analysis of the data based on the theories that has been explained in previous chapter. The data are taken from Rachel Sontag's memoir book, *House Rules*. There will be two parts of discussion in this data analyzing. The first part will discuss the forms of Child abuse experienced by Rachel Sontag from her parents. The second part will discuss effect of child abuse to Rachel's behavior and characteristic.

3.1. Rachel Sontag's Abuse Experience During Her Childhood

As the oldest daughter of Sontag's family, Rachel gets abusive treatment from her parents. In *House Rules*, she delivers her experience of getting psychological abuse from her father and physical abuse from her mother. Her father abuses her the most but Rachel does not know the reason why she gets it. Rachel always wanders whether it comes from something she has that makes her father do the abuse to her because she is the only one who gets it rather than er sister, Jenny who almost never gets their father's attention or it is from himself.

Distinct from her father, her mother abuses her because of her manic depression disorder. She can lose her self-control and does not recognize anyone around her. If she gets angry of something and cannot control herself, she will release her anger by attacking someone and Rachel has got those attacks because she gets along with her when it happens. The forms of abuse that Rachel gets will be explained in the following discussion:

They find out that Lithium is kind of medicine that used to treat the manic episodes of bipolar disorder, symptoms include hyperactivity, rushed speech, poor judgment, reduced need for sleep, aggression, anger. It also helps to prevent or lessen the intensity of manic episodes (Sontag 55). The shocking thing is that the medicine is instructed by her own father which means that her father knows her mother's condition but never tell them.

During her childhood, Rachel becomes the object of anger release by her mother even though it is done under herself lose control. Mrs. Sontag is stressed with all treatments done by her husband including gives her the drug that slowly changes her behavior and the ability to respond something around her. However, she never be able to express her feeling to him because she is depended with him for having "normal-look" family. Therefore, she releases her anger when she is stressed by the situation around her to Rachel through physical harassment.

3.1.1.1. Choking

Rachel gets her first physical abuse by her mother in one night after she has debate with her father because she wears her mother vest to go to school. The problem is getting bigger as her father starts to say in sarcastic words to her. He also said that she try to control her mother because she wears her mother's clothes and calls her as an actress when she seemed about to cry. Rachel is very mad until she randomly says that what her father does to her makes her want to die but her mother suddenly says it to her father. Her mother gets influence from the tense situation between Rachel and her father and she feels angry.

behaviors and education. However, the way he educates them is supposed to be in wrong way where he often speaks in sarcastic, cruel and intimidate to them.

Instead of her sister – Jenny – Rachel is the one who gets the abuse the most while Jenny is almost being “invisible” to her father; even though she does a mistake, she just only gets her father’s silence.

It is very different from what happen to Rachel when she has a mistake. Her father seems to consider Rachel as “the wrong one” every time Sontag’s family have problem. She will get several kinds of verbal harassment and treatments that make her feels very stressed emotionally. The condition becomes more terrible because there is no one who supports her or stops her father’s treatment to her even her mother only can be quite and do nothing.

3.1.2.1. Rejecting

The first form of psychological abuse that Rachel gets is rejecting. Rejecting acts toward children can influence their emotion development, for instance, they may lose being loved feeling by parents and closets people. They also can lose their self-confidence to have interaction with other people and the most serious damage is they getting afraid or even trauma with society. A child who gets rejecting acts from his/ her parents or other caregivers may feel that they do not want his/ her presence to be a part of them. Some acts that indicate to rejecting a child are harsh criticism, refusing love, labeling, belittling, humiliating, screaming or swearing and others.

“So what are you doing here?”
 “What do you mean?”
 “What do you mean, *what do I mean?* What are you doing leaving the scene of the accident?”
 “I came to tell *you.*”
 “You don’t run away from the scene of a crime. You just don’t!”
 “Dad, the cops are there.”
 “You don’t do that.”
 “Okay.”
 “No. It’s not okay. You just don’t.”
 “It was a block away.”
 “You don’t get it. You really don’t get it. You LEFT the scene of a crime.”
 “I was told to come get you.”
 “Just turned your back and walked away.”
 I looked at my shoes.
 “That’s really, really stupid, Rachel.” (Sontag 12).

In *House Rules*, Rachel gets various rejecting acts from her father, the only person who does it to her. In quotation above, her father criticizes her harshly for doing something wrong that he sees as a mistake. It happens when Rachel was 13 years old. She and her mother almost got a car accident in the way they go to band practice. After the police come, her mother asks her to get her father because their spot is not far from their house. Rachel goes to get her father and tell what was happen, but her father blames her for leaving the scene of accident. Even though Rachel tell him that the police was came, her father still criticizes her by saying sarcastic words and stressing his tone in order to remind her that she is wrong.

Another harsh criticism that her father does to her is when they are in a trip to France. Rachel is responsible to hold her family tickets and passports. When she still holds the tickets and does not put it in her pack, her father starts to criticize

father sees that Rachel wears lipstick at that day. However, instead of saying that he does not like to see Rachel wears lipstick, he prefer to say it implicitly with harsh comments. Her father also threatens her that she will get slap.

“There’s a girl who hates herself inside.”
 “That’s a little much, Dad.”
 “That’s a little much? That’s nothing. I’ve seen you before with that stuff on your lips and you know what you look like?”
 “A circus clown?” I volunteered.
 Jenny retreated into laughter.
 “A prostitute,” he said.
 I considered this for a moment.
 “That’s right,” he said. “A hooker.”
 “Maybe you just don’t like the color,” I said. “Maybe something more subdued. A coral or a mauve, something in that family.”
 “Do you want to get slapped?”
 “No,” I said (Sontag 39).

The worst labeling that Rachel gets from her father is when her parents are going to divorce. Her mother is the one who wants to get divorce from her father because she cannot hold all her husband treatments anymore. When the divorce paper comes, Rachel is called by her parents to meet them at the living room. At first, Rachel thinks that as the oldest daughter her parents want to discuss it with her, but her father accuses her as the one who manipulate her mother to leave him. Her father does not believe her even though she tells the truth and keeps blame her. He calls Rachel as the liar and cheater

“In that case, can I go to bed?” I asked.
 “No, no,” Dad said. “We’re just beginning. Tell me now. Did you know about the divorce?”
 “No,” I said. “I told you.”
 “You’re a liar.”
 “I didn’t know about the papers, Dad.”
 “And a cheat.” (Sontag 153).

or another urgent activity. Rachel and Jenny will be punished if they home late even if it is only in few minutes. There is no toleration for anything.

Isolating to children may includes prohibition for children to do certain activities outside of house or not supporting children's hobbies and activities they interested in. Rachel gets isolation treatment from her father in the form of prohibition and limitation to have social interaction with her peers. Her father also give her curfew and allow her to sleep over at her friend's house only once in a month.

The first isolating to Rachel is limitation to do outdoor activities except for school and certain extracurricular. She is allowed to go out if she has specific need and required with specific clear reason. Her father is really strict about the curfew and she does not allowed to go out if she has unfinished homework. This act is limited Rachel to develop either her individual and social ability as a human. Rachel rarely interacts with other people. She also does not have many friends and only close to her cousins. Her father breaks Rachel's right to get interaction with other people and her peers.

My time at the library was limited. I was only allowed to go when I had a specific project that required research. Always, Dad requested an outline of how I would use my "unmonitored" time at the library. It was this unmonitored time that would ruin me, Dad was convinced (Sontag 8).

Besides limiting her interaction with other people, Rachel's father also limits her participation in School Theater extracurricular. Rachel is very interested with acting and has much participation in play auditions. She never gives up even

though getting rejected many times. Once, she is accepted to join in her school musical and has to exercise intensively after school hour ended but her father does not allow her. Her father limits her individual freedom to develop her creativity and interest in acting. Limiting children to develop their interest is including in children rights violation. Children may not be able to develop their skill and passion of something.

Dad wasn't happy about the arrangement. He'd worked hard coming up with a working set of household rules, which would have to be amended if I was in the musical. After a few long nights of negotiations, he gave in. I had Mom to thank. She fought fiercely for me, highlighting the importance of extracurricular activities: how they'd been proven to help kids focus on their schoolwork, how things like this would make a difference when I applied for college. (Sontag 38).

Rachel is also limited to have interaction with her peers. After she has performance as a tree in her school musical, her friends want to congratulate her by held a party for her. Rachel is very happy and gives her deal to drive downtown to a restaurant. She calls her parents to permit them for a later curfew. Her father does not allow her but Rachel does not hear them. Her parents decide to pick her up because her father does not give toleration for home late after her curfew. Rachel is mad and because she is embarrassed in front of her friend but her father says that they are not even her friends.

“Why'd you have to embarrass me in front of my friends?” I asked when we were almost home.

“Did you hear what she said Ellen? ‘In-front-of-my-friends!’”

Dad parked the car. The engine stopped rumbling and all of a sudden our voices sounded very loud.

“They're not your friends, Rachel. Didn't you see them laughing at you? It was all over their faces. Those people don't

daughter who gets all the abuse treatments either from her father or mother. Her sister Jenny tends to look “invisible” where she is almost never get harsh critics or humiliation from her father. Despite she is the youngest daughter, it seems like their parents only blame Rachel for everything wrong that happen in their family. Rachel also becomes the only daughter who gets concern from her parents for all of her behaviors. Even though Jenny ever do a mistake, her father usually just let it go but give her his silent.

Rachel’s jealousy to her sister Jenny makes her wants to do something where her sister can get their father’s anger. At their trip to Europe, Rachel and Jenny are responsible for each to hold tickets and maps. Jenny who is little bit improper accidentally loses the maps. Actually, Rachel knows it when Jenny leaves the maps under her seat before they leave the airport, but she let it go and does not tell anyone. She wants Jenny get their father’s anger for being irresponsible and feel the same way with her.

Only once, halfway down the aisle, did I think of mentioning those maps, but instead I let Jenny walk away, feeling sick and delighted by her stupidity, “negligence” as Dad liked to call it. I grabbed Mom’s hand, my walk turning into a gallop, as we made our way off the plane (Sontag 21).

Rachel is also jealous with her friend, Nathalie. She is envy with her for being a father who is full of love and really loves her. She wants to have a figure of father as the same as like Nathalie’s father who will kiss her before she sleep, showing love for his daughter, always support her and give her nice advice.

Rachel also hate Nathalie’s attitude to her father where she seems to be bored with

Rachel also searches for release of her anger by joining Tae Kwon Do. She uses it as psychological escape from home because she can go out from home without any argument from her father. By Tae Kwon Do, she can physically release her emotional anger from what she feels because of child abuse she experiences in the house. It shows how she actually feels very angry and want to rebel from the abuse she gets but she cannot do it.

Tae Kwon Do was the one activity Dad granted me without argument, perhaps because Uncle Arthur picked me up and brought me home. No one seemed to guess that thoughts of Dad inspired my fierce sparring and board-breaking, that Tae Kwon Do was my physical release, my psychological escape from home, the only thing that drained the anger from my body. (Sontag 34).

3.2.4. Behavioral Change

The abuse also gives the influence to her behavior. She begins to do some bad behaviors as her release. She does it quietly without her parents knowing. The reason why she does such behaviors is as her protest form or emotional release of what she feels during the abusive treatments she gets. Rachel who is actually an obedient girl starts to change behaviorally by doing some behaviors that still illegal for her age.

Rachel starts to consume alcohol when she is in senior high school. It is happen when she is at sleep over night in her friend's house. When they pass through in a street, two boys in a car offer them drink. Rachel who is very interested in having drink thinks that this is her only change to get something new in her life, where she is free outside of her house. All the stress that she gets

makes her want to try everything that seems to be impossible for her if she is in the house. She is drunk at her first time having a drink where she drinks more than two glass of whiskey. She is not only drink, but also smoke a cigarette.

The boys joined us at a booth inside Bennigan's, where we passed the flask back and forth underneath the table. There was some talking, but I don't remember what was said. It was my first time getting drunk, and even then I was nostalgic about first times, imagining how I might describe this night years after it had passed, irritated that Nathalie wouldn't just let herself go.

"Why'd you drink all that tonight?" Nathalie asked later, as we climbed into her bed.

I closed my eyes. Colors erupted from blackness. "Because I could." (Sontag 48).

She is not only had a drink at her school age, but also consumes drugs called Acid. Acid or also known as LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide) is a psychedelic drug known for its psychological effects. It is involved in hallucinogenic drug where the consumer of this drug may feel include altered awareness of the surroundings, perception, and feelings as well as sensations and images that seem real though they are not (en.wikipedia.com). She uses this drug at her last year of senior high school after the death of her grandmother.

The reason why she uses this drug is her depression about being home. All that she wants to do is get out of that house as soon as possible and it can be happen if she enters to college that far away from her house. However, the problem is her father. He only will pay her intuition fee if she enters to a women college. Even though she gets a scholarship at Simmons in Boston, her father does not allow her because he thinks that Rachel will be able to control herself in a city.

By this opinion, Rachel concludes that she gets the abuse treatments without any reason because as long as her observation she never do bad behavior that can be the reason for her to get abuse even her closest people around her think the same thing. Her school counselor said that there is something wrong with her father that make him treats her like that and she even helps her to get the solution for her problem. She gets helps to get out of her house and stay in a child institution to decrease her intention doing interaction with her father.

The structure of this memoir book shows about child abuse that Rachel experience during her childhood. Rachel writes her experience that may represents other children in the same time who get the same experience that is get abuse from their own parents. Child abuse becomes one of social problem in society that takes children as the victim. The abuse becomes more terrible because it has done by the closest people of the children such as parents or other family member.

Rachel's World view of this memoir book is the wrong side of child abuse done by parents to their own children. Even though many people think that parents can do some harsh treatment to their children to discipline them, but it still wrong to do. Children who should get love and protection from any danger from their parents but they even get the danger from their closest people; people where they lean on in this world because they still weak to stand alone in this world. Children abuse can give bad impact to the children and without people know it can influence them until they grow up. Rachel delivers to the readers her own experience getting the abuse and she clearly give them the evidence about how terrible the abuse she gets until lead her to do some bad behaviors since early.

Rachel also tells the readers how she has to live under stress and afraid feeling because of the abuse treatment. She represents other children at the whole of the world that they also feel the same feeling when they get abuse from their parents.

Rachel also represent in her memoir book children's hope for love and protection that should they get from their closest people. Parents who should educate them well because their treatment to their children will influence their development either in emotionally or behaviorally that will they bring until they become adult. She gives a world view to the readers especially parents to treat their children properly. Parents should do good parenting to their children because they are the new generation of human being. All treatments they get will influence their future either individually of socially.