

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Speak is a story about Melinda Sordino, a high school girl who becomes a victim of rape. The story starts with Melinda attending a party, where many underage teenagers drink alcohol, with all of her friends. All of the sudden Melinda calls 911. When the police come, they end the party right away. Without asking Melinda what her reason for calling the cops is, everybody in the school isolates her because they think she ruins the party. Melinda's friends at school never care that Melinda is actually raped by her senior at the party.

Ever since the party Melinda stop talking at some point, and she becomes disconnected with the world. She starts skipping school, neglecting her study, feeling distrustful of people, withdrawing from her parents, and losing her identity. "I just want to sleep. The whole point of not talking about it, of silencing the memory, is to make it go away. It won't. I'll need brain surgery to cut it out of my head (Anderson, 2001, pp. 81-82)" Melinda drastically changes into a social outcast as throughout the novel she often refers herself as an outcast. The student almost considers Melinda as an invisible in school. Melinda has no one to talk to, even if some do try to approach her, she does not accept them with positive feedbacks. Thus make everyone becomes more further with her. Melinda becomes further and more distant from her school society that makes her lose her desire to speak. Sadly, not only do her friends ignore her, but her parents also deny her of any help.

Speak is a story about silence, Melinda Sordino's silence. The title of the novel is kind of ironic because although the title of this novel is *Speak*, but Melinda as the main character of this novel is always mute. Silence is common among rape victims. According to Millet, (1970), rape is a sexual abuse which allowed men to dominate women. The approval of rape myth itself justified the sexual dominance. Radical feminism always points out that women oppression happens as a result of unequal arrangement between genders and a result of male supremacy in which women's position is lower than men and men come first.

More radical views argue that rape must be recognized and understood as an important pillar of patriarchy. Radical feminists see rape as apparent from patriarchal construction of gender and sexuality within the context of broader systems of male power, and emphasize the harm that rape does to women as a group (Whisnant, 2004). Radical feminist concludes that rape is one of multiple forms of men's sexual violence and exploitation which reinforce women's oppression. They also expand the definition of 'rape' to describe that actually it is more than physical violence but it is about how male use women as sexual objectification.

Within this patriarchal society, a culture called rape culture exists because society has certain beliefs which are judgemental toward rape victims and the rapists (McEwan, 2009). When rape happens, usually the rapist will be getting more support from people rather than the victim herself. From the society point of view, sexual violence occurs because of the victim's dress or behavior. Somehow society spends great amount of time to find any reasons to blame the victim of rape. Millett (1970) states that the practice to

blame the rape victim is a result of patriarchal society's beliefs which puts men in superior position.

The rule here associates sadism with the male ("the masculine role") and victimization with the female ("the feminine role"). Emotional response to violence against women in patriarchy is often curiously ambivalent; references to wife-beating, for example, invariably produce laughter and some embarrassments (Millet, 1970, p. 44)

The idea of rape culture, victim blaming, and women's oppression become the main point of the book. The book itself is not only about rape but also depression. In the novel, Melinda believes in the perks of being silent. What has happened to Melinda is a typical experience of rape culture, where she as the victim keeps silent about sexual violence. Societal judgment also makes it hard for Melinda to reveal the truth and speak out because of dismissal and isolation. Rape culture comes with the idea that men entitled to women's bodies, which compromises the concept of approval or consent. Public usually comes with speculations about whether victims' behavior or dress could be responsible for their own assault.

The figures of rapes reported represent only a fraction of those which occur, as the shame of the event is sufficient to deter women from the notion of civil prosecution under the public circumstances of a trial. Traditionally rape has been viewed as an offence one male commits upon another - a matter of abusing "his woman." In rape, the emotions of aggression, hatred, contempt, and the desire to break or violate personality, take a form consummately appropriate to sexual politics (Millet, 1970, p. 44)

Kate Millett, who is quoted above, was fighting for equal pay or equal rights during second wave feminism, and protection against rape, marital rape, and abortion. She emphasizes the political basis of rape which is not mainly about power, but a crime against the view of women as second class citizen below men. The power structure of rape against women, in male dominated culture, victimizes the women victim and encourages the perpetrators to live without getting blamed.

As mentioned in the research methodology, the aims of this research are to explain how traumatic experiences in Melinda's life affect her psychosocial development, and how Melinda copes with that. Rape victims' retrieval from the abuse is often complicated by the society's failure to acknowledge the victim and the justice. In short, the justification of gender inequality is more related to male supremacy and rape myth acceptance where the victim is always at fault.

The idea of victim blaming comes from social justice. Victim blaming causes misconceptions about women 'wanting it' or 'asking for it', even if they already say otherwise. Most of rape victims believe that public will judge them if they come out with their story (traumatic incident) because they think no one would believe them. This same problem also happens to Melinda. Rape myth also increases public's misconception about the victim and the perpetrators. The rape victims, where 91% of them are women, are most likely to be questioned and blamed on what has happened to them, while the perpetrators are more likely to be excused from the problem (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2015). The normalization of rape is so enormous that often makes the victim getting blamed and laughed at when crimes are committed against them. Shame and

embarrassment from the society cause psychological trauma for the victims. Thus, being silent is the victim's only option to deny the reality and defend themselves.

To find out more about Melinda's suffering as the victim of rape, this chapter is divided into two sub-chapters. The first sub chapter focuses on analysing how traumatic experiences affect Melinda's life as a high school student psychologically and emotionally. Later, the second sub chapter focuses on how Melinda copes with the trauma she has.

4.1 The Psychological and Emotional Impact of Traumatic Events Happening to Melinda

Violence, particularly sexual violence, towards women can be physical or psychological. Although woman can be abused by strangers, but in most cases the abuser is someone the woman knows. Being sexually harassed can destroy the physical well-being and psychological health of a person. The victim usually refuses to talk to anyone and stays at home. They often blame themselves for what happened and try to justify that they somehow deserved it. They suffer from depression and many cases which lead them to suicide. The impact of sexual harassment can be long lasting and life-altering for the victims. Among victims of sexual violence, psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD and depression are common cases (Hyde & Else-Quest, 2012). Even though the term is different, there is no big difference between psychological or emotional impact. Emotional refers to feelings whereas psychological refers to both emotional and mental. Therefore, technically psychological impact should both include both emotionally and mentally impact. Melinda's traumatic experience affect her emotionally, causing difficulty in her life such as expressing her feelings and communicate with others. On the other hand, psychological impact is a situation where

Melinda can not decide what is fully right and what is wrong. For instance, when Melinda manipulated by her chaotic mind into believing false things about herself and thus makes her feel really bad.

4.1.1 Depression

Melinda's behavior in the novel clearly shows that she suffers from depression after the traumatic incident, the rape. Melinda hides away in an abandoned janitor's closet during the school day, where she goes to sleep or hides when she is feeling anxious. Her only safe place is the art class, where a kind teacher encourages her to express herself in art. Melinda feels safe whenever she is in art class.

Melinda felt depressed because she experiences the rape culture's victim-blaming, where the victim is always wrong for getting raped and the perpetrator is not fully wrong or right. As mentioned earlier, sexual violence against women is characterized by society's or peers' victim-blaming attitudes (Valentich & Gripton, 1984), which isolates the victim of the assault. Many of the sexual violence victims are often abandoned or ignored rather than receiving comfort and support, as it is typical in the case of other trauma. When society scorns the victim of sexual violence, the victim definitely gets depressed. In Melinda's case, her friends silently blame her by isolating her from family and friends even though she is not reveal the truth yet. The isolation makes Melinda get more depressed.

I know my head isn't screwed on straight. I want to leave, transfer, warp myself to another galaxy. I want to confess everything, hand over the guilt and mistake and anger to someone else. There is a beast in my gut, I can hear it scraping away at the inside of my ribs. Even if I dump the memory, it will stay with me, staining

me. My closest is a good thing, a quiet place that helps me hold these thoughts inside my head where no one can hear them. (Anderson, 2001, p. 51)

The quotation above shows Melinda's depressed feelings, she feels that she is not normal. She has a mixed feeling of wanting to run away and wanting to express her anger. She even imagines that no one would really understand or try to help her.

Becoming the victim of sexual violence is already bad; it is worse when Melinda does not have any support she deserves. Her surrounding pushes Melinda into the depth of depression. Not only her friends ignore her, but her parents are also not helpful. Melinda's parents are not getting along with each other. Her parents are busy business people, and they seem not to realize what is happening to Melinda. Her family life seems boring and uninteresting. Her mother, Mrs.Sordino works as a manager at Effert's, a clothing store that keeps her constantly busy, meanwhile her father sells insurance. Rather than attempting to understand and connecting with Melinda, her mother reacts with anger and frustration. Even when she sees that Melinda has intentionally hurt herself, she reacts coldly and dismissively. She also has a strained and distant relationship with Melinda's father.

While her mother corners Melinda about her behavior, her father is mean, strict and uninvolved with Melinda's well-being. He does not care about how his daughter feels, and he does not play much role in Melinda's life. Her father always seems on edge. It probably happens because Melinda's father work is not as demanding as her mother's, and it makes her father feels that his position is below Melinda's mother. Melinda's father is the typical representation of male power where male should be more superior than women in all terms: politics, society, and education.

Patriarchy is described as a state whose characters reflect the characteristics of masculine gender. Millet, 1970 used the term patriarchy in *Sexual Politics* to characterize a society dominated by masculinity and by men whose main purpose is to construct and maintain a certain power relationship over women, As to status, a persuasive assent to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female (Millet, 1970, p. 25). Male society always emphasizes the beliefs about gender power or gender roles where women should be more passive while men should be more active, or women are dependent while men are independent. The perceived sex differences have major impact on women who are trying to succeed in a world whose values are ruled and dictated by men.

Both of Melinda's parents show that they are disinterested with her daughter well-being. They are aware of her daughter condition but do not do anything much to help her. Mrs Sordino thinks that Melinda is being difficult and asks for attention to be spoiled. She continues to push Melinda with demands and questions that cause Melinda to withdrawn even further than she already is. Since her parents do not have the clue about what happened, Melinda's behavior frustrated them almost to their breaking point.

Melinda without doubt wants to tell her parents about the rape. However, Melinda is reluctant to reveal the incident because of her parents' unsupportive manners.

I almost tell them right then and there. Tears flood my eyes. They noticed I've been trying to draw. They noticed. I try to swallow the snowball in my throat. This isn't going to be easy. I'm sure they suspect I was at the party. Maybe they even heard about me calling the cops. But I want to tell them everything as we sit there

by our plastic Christmas tree while the Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer video plays (Anderson, 2001, p. 72)

Her mom goes as far as to say that Melinda is seeking for attention as the reason of her bad grades, silence, and skipping school. She feels like no one is going to help her at school and at home. Her mother is too busy with her job and activities that she has no time for Melinda's.

I open up a paper clip and scratch it across the inside of my left wrist. ... It looks like I arm-wrestled a rosebush.

Mom sees the wrist at breakfast.

Mom: "I don't have time for this, Melinda." (Anderson, 2001, pp. 87-88)

The quotation above clearly shows that her mother seems to be unconcerned in Melinda's well-being. Before the sexual assault, Melinda was an outgoing person, then all of the sudden she becomes severely traumatized and depressed. Melinda's parents should have noticed the drastic change right away and give help and comfort to their child.

The unsupportive parents are the portrayal or representation of unsupportive society towards rape victims. Victims always seek justice on their own. Since the victims are mostly women, people and media choose to corner them with sensitive question. Furthermore, as (MacKinnon, 1991) stated, women are often portrayed in both pornographic and mainstream media as enjoying and consenting to forceful and even violent sex. In 2004 in South Korea, there was a gang rape case in which five victims were gang raped by 41 male students but only nine gang members were arrested. Police who handled that case had come under strong criticism for reportedly making the young

victims of the sexual assaults felt insulted and ashamed during the investigation; for failing to protect the victims from their assaulters and even throwing insults at them. The victims tried to find their own justice, but they were ignored by the police. The situations were getting worse when the family member of the perpetrators threatened the victim, warning them to “watch out” because the victims reported their sons. The victims were also cornered by the police with question such as “did you try to seduce the guys?” or statement such as “you ruined our city reputation” (Rahn, 2004).

The devastating story that happened in South Korea is an example of the primary reason rape cases often goes unreported. Soraya Chemaly stated in the website, *Nation*, in 2014,

“Corey Rayburn Yung, associate professor at the University of Kansas School of Law, concludes that between 1995 and 2012, police departments across the country systematically undercounted and underreported sexual assaults.... After nearly two years of work, he estimates conservatively that between 796,213 and 1,145,309 sexual assault cases never made it into national FBI counts during the studied period. That’s more than 1 million rapes.” (Chemaly, 2014)

The data above shows that the police engage in domestic violence and sexual abuse misconduct. Reporting sexual abuse to officer is challenges for the victims because they have to face the aftermath by themselves. A victim must be emotionally strong enough to handle the reaction from family and friends. Consequently, after the abuse revealed, the victim’s life will change forever. Society’s rejection, isolation or betrayal may become the challenges that the victim must bear.

Rape is a serious crime. The victims of sexual abuse need fair treatment, respect and dignity from peers. Sexual violence is related to inequality. People who commit sexual violence usually target people who may have less power in the world, which are women. Sexual assault is not inflicted by “the system” as a whole, but by individual people. Nevertheless, women’s oppression does not originate with individual people, it comes from inequality. As Millett (1970) stated, the legal system, and other social structures define women as second-class citizens. Colleges and universities are known to be cover up rape accusations while mistreating young women who gather the courage to come forward to them (Roesch, 2014). Thus, after being raped, the victims may suffer the humiliation of being shamed and called “sluts” by their peers, which led to mental illness and suicide. The unsupportive society makes the victim of sexual abuse less willing to open up. In Melinda’s case, she is unable to reveal her sexual assault because no one really tries to ask her about what happened. Although Melinda's parents know that something is not right, they never try to reach out to Melinda or make Melinda feel comfortable enough to ask for their help and reach to them.

In short, the rape and Melinda’s inability to talk about it added with the treatments from Melinda’s friends and parents make her fall into massive depression. She often appears talking to herself, in her own mind. She has a lot of things to say about what is happening but she cannot let it out. She lets her mind fight with her own feelings. It feels like something will get worse if she tells her problems to the others. She thinks that nobody can help and understand her, a victim of sexual violence. She cannot feel anything anymore. She does not know how to place herself in society. She does not realize that she is the only one who makes those negative imaginations which make her

suffer a lot more. If she needs a change, she has to overcome those feelings. She should dismisses the part of her feeling “broken”, less important and less deserving than the others. Melinda’s situation is worsen by her friends’ and her parents’ treatments to her.

4.1.2 Excessive Self Consciousness

Beside the depression, the rape evokes Melinda’s excessive-consciousness. She feels distress, doubtful and lack of confident about herself over small things. After she unintentionally hears what her friends say about her, she feels like crying and upset about the comment she gets.

I am clanless. I wasted the last weeks of August watching bad cartoons. I didn't go to the mall, the lake, or the pool, or answer the phone. I have entered high school with the wrong hair, the wrong clothes, the wrong attitude. And I don't have anyone to sit with.

I am Outcast. (Anderson, 2001, p. 4)

After Melinda is raped by her senior, she blames herself for being such as a weak girl at the first place. She feels responsible for the incident when her friends blame her for ruining the party without asking her reason why doing so. She starts thinking that she deserves it. To make it worse, she has no one to talk to and it leads to distant herself from everything. She feels helpless and thinks that she is alone in this world. She excessively feels conscious of what happens around her.

Tears oozed down my face, over my bruised lips, pooling on the handset. "It's OK," said the nice lady on the phone. "We have your location. Officers are on the way. Are you hurt? Are you being threatened?" Someone grabbed the phone from my hands and listened. A scream—the cops were coming! Blue and cherry lights

flashing in the kitchen sink window. Rachel's face—so angry—in mine. Someone slapped me. I crawled out of the room through a forest of legs. Outside, the moon smiled goodbye and slipped away. (Anderson, 2001, p. 136)

Following the big trauma that Melinda has, it is harder for her to come out and tell everyone in the party what has happened to her. She consciously feels that her friends would judge her on what happened; find her fault instead of the rapist. The hurt from sexual violence is coming both physically and mentally. Psychologically, Melinda deeply feels dirty and is ashamed. Melinda's feeling of inferiority as a rape victim dominates her way of thinking and makes her keep feel dirty and ashamed as if the rape is happen because her fault. On the other hand, her change in thinking, emotion and behaviors that creates anxiety and impaired functioning affect her mentally. For some victims, it leads to long-lasting health issues and hardship in life.

Ruth Langsford, from the support group *Women Against Rape*, emphasizes on how women always put to blame whenever there is a case of sexual violence in the court system;

They still put the woman on trial, including her sexual history with other men, which is supposed to be banned and blame the woman for what happened to her and hold her accountable. (Langsford, 2010)

Victims of sexual violence become more and more afraid to come out open because the painful shaming from society which often put them in the remorseful and guilty position. Women empowerment program are needed in order to raise the position and condition of women. As mentioned by Millett (1970), sexual violence is more commonly found in cultures that see men as more superior being than women. In this

regard to rape that experienced by women, Burt, in *Cultural Myths and Supports for Rape*, explains that rape is the psychological extension of adominant-submissive sex-role stereotyped culture (Burt, 1980). Therefore, the society which are mostly patriarchal will put women into unfair position; the submissive position. It makes women unable to defend themselves, even from the injustice treatment against them.

Radical feminists identified men's violence against women, the key factor of patriarchal control are rape, child sexual abuse, domestic violence and various forms of harassment, and they also made an argument that sexual assault can not be understood outside of an analysis of patriarchy's ideology itself. The justification is always against the female victim. In a world where patriarchy exists, men hold all the power in society. Indeed, there are many reasons why victims of sexual assault may hesitate to speak out immediately after an incident. Society tends to blame victims, female victims, in particular, for what happens to them.

In fact, sexual violence should become the fault of perpetrator regardless what the clothes the victim are wearing or whether they are drunk. The misconceptions about women as victims falsely accused for sexual violence has been going on for decades although sexual violence can occur at any time and it is a degrading act. The reasons women victims stay quiet after sexual act are because of shame, and also stigma, and fear of not being believed by peers, and fear of being isolated. The victims worry about what their families would think later if they told the truth. Like what stated by Melinda, "It is easier not to say anything. Shut your trap, button your lip, can it. All that crap you hear on TV about communication and expressing feelings is a lie. Nobody really wants to hear what you have to say." (Anderson, 2001, p. 9)

Melinda is clearly struggling with the trauma she has. She has a good reason not to tell anyone about her problem. She does not have a single friend after the incident and she has distant relationship with her parents. She thinks that nobody would care about what happened to her. She thinks that no one will listen to her. Melinda's individual sense is shattered by the rape and makes her feel helpless in this world. Melinda develops excessive self-consciousness that she is a shame; that she is the one to blame for letting the rape happens at the first place, not the one who needs help. Melinda's excessive self-consciousness conveys too much stress and self-loathing in her adolescence life.

I look for shapes in my face. Could I put a face in my tree, like a dryad from Greek mythology? Two muddy-circle eyes under black-dash eyebrows, piggy-nose nostrils, and a chewed-up horror of a mouth. Definitely not a dryad face. I can't stop biting my lips. It looks like my mouth belongs to someone else, someone I don't even know. I get out of bed and take down the mirror. I put it in the back of my closet, facing the wall. (Anderson, 2001, pp. 16-17)

Melinda feels unhappy with her appearance, from her "muddy-circle eyes" to "black-dash eyebrows". She is apparently disgusted with her own mouth, which she says, "belongs to someone I don't even know." Most of Melinda's traumatic incidents severely affect her psychologically. Melinda is often seen biting and picking at her mouth. It seems that she is punishing herself for not being able to speak. She hates everything about her mouth and her appearance. A feeling which makes really clear that she is self-loathing. She can not bear to look at her own reflection in the mirror.

At teen age, Melinda does not have control over herself. She is passive, quiet and has no self-worth and always feels guilty after the incident. These circumstances cause a

constant battle in her head, which eventually leads to self-hatred. However, Melinda is not alone, a massive number of people also struggle with the victim-blaming situation. Melinda's symptoms of PTSD are related to her feeling dirty or ugly, dissatisfied with body or appearance.

Melinda's self-accusation increases her strong liability to scold herself for her "carelessness". She blames herself for the incident and why she lets that sexual violence happen to her. The belief that she is the one to blame for getting raped makes her doubt her own perceptions, invalidating her live experience. Every once in a while she thinks that her life is a mess and that she is worthless. She decides that she deserves everything that has happened to her. Her sign of PTSD is increasing from self-blaming to despair.

4.1.3 Inability to Concentrate

The traumatic events also lead Melinda into difficulty to concentrate especially when she is in the middle of the class. Melinda's report card is the primary example;

MY REPORT CARD

Attitude D Social Studies D Spanish C Art A

Lunch C Biology B Algebra C- Clothes C- English C- Gym C- (Anderson, 2001, p. 92)

Before the accident, Melinda was a diligent student and had good grades. The outcome of how she sees herself as a failure is her ignorance to her study. Melinda is unable to concentrate in her class. She becomes a rebel, she begins to cut herself from school and ditches her homework. She does not give any responses to any of her parents' questions and leaves people around her astonished because of this sudden change of behavior. She finds it more difficult to talk to her parents or her friends. She has a big

problem to decide what is supposed to say and what is right or wrong. She is afraid of rejection as she always labels herself as outcast.

According to Judith Worell in her book, *Feminist Perspective in Therapy: Empowering Diverse Women* (1974), both internal and external sources can affect a women's psychology and well-being. She addresses the core issues in feminist psychological practices also with the strategies for acknowledge the experiences and development of women throughout their lives. Melinda's external issues is that she was raped by her senior, and her internal issues is that she does not want tell anyone about it. As a victim of sexual violence she makes a visible wall between herself and other. She thinks that her life is unimportant after the incident. She finds that her life is miserable; that the trauma affects her mental health. She loses her ability to concentrate on her study at school.

4.1.4 Self-Mutilation

Because of the overwhelming and unbearable trauma, Melinda hurts herself deliberately many times. She has developed several self-mutilations to cope with the unfortunate incidents she has dealt. In one of the events, she cuts herself with a paperclip. Rather than helping her, her parents say that it is just Melinda's way to get their attention. Instead of seeing Melinda's wound as a plead for help, Melinda's mom warns her to stop being a spoiled girl and says that she does not have time for such behavior. Melinda feel hopeless, she hurts herself by cutting her wrist or biting her nail to express physically the pain she feels emotionally.

I open up a paper clip and scratch it across the inside of my left wrist. Pitiful. If a suicide attempt is a cry for help, then what is this? A whimper, a peep? I draw

little window cracks of blood, etching line after line until it stops hurting. It looks like I arm-wrestled a rosebush. (Anderson, 2001, p. 87)

According to Nevid (2005) in her book, *Abnormal Psychology*, self-harm is the act of intentionally hurting or causing pain to one individual, not usually done with suicidal intentions. Most of the time, self-harm is done to cope with emotional pain. Melinda has such an unbearable emotional pain that makes her want to harm herself. She does not have an intention to kill herself, it is just one of her ways to ask for help. The reason Melinda does self-harm is that she has to deal with unwanted feelings such as anxiety or depression; in her case she just experienced traumatic sexual violence. The physical pain that she causes herself temporarily erases her emotional pain. It is her physical expression of her self-hatred.

Some survivors of sexual abuse may use self-harm to cope with difficult or painful trauma. Self-harm is not necessarily a warning sign for suicide, in Melinda's story, it is a sign that she has survived a serious trauma. In rape case, women get the blame for everything. Along with eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia, self-harm most likely becomes women's issue. In *British Medical Journal*, a research conducted by University of Manchester found that self-harm among girls is increasing every year. Self-harm is three times more common for 10 to 19 year old girls than boys (Morgan, 2017). However, the study suggests that self harm does not always get the sympathy or attention it deserves. At some point, people can misinterpret it as "attention seeking", just like Melinda's parents mistaken her seeking for help with seeking attention. The message from women victims are often misunderstood, misdiagnosed, and mistreated.

Victim blaming is the most common and well-known rape myth, which directly holds the victim responsible for rape (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2015). Somehow, the society believes that woman may provoke the sexual assault. Rape myth also claims that women can avoid rape if they want to, therefore if a woman is raped, she obviously did not mind it or worse, she desired it. Victim blaming discourages sexual assault victim to reveal their incident, thereby the victims use self-mutilation to release all the overwhelming feelings they have. It is uncommon in our society to believe the victim right away after they disclose their incident. This can be devastating fact because victim blaming is the sole reason for the survivor to keep quiet about the assault and pretend it never happened. To avoid shame from family and public, survivor chooses to harm themselves and rather not talk about it.

Although self-mutilation, in the beginning, may be practiced in an attempt to avoid and/or control the emotional pain triggered by a particular social event, in time it may become a behavior practiced in and of itself (Levenkron, 1998). Consequently, self-mutilation can be seen as an addictive behavior in that the relief produced by the endorphins released in the body upon injury often act to anesthetize the individual's emotional pain, increasing the probability that this behavior will be repeated. In this book, Melinda uses self-harm to relieve the emotional pain she has. She feels numb and the pain of self-harm allows her to feel something. Melinda is overwhelmed with a painful emotion that caused by PTSD, she does not know how to handle it and to ask for help. This is why she self-injured herself.

Melinda shows her pain through self-harm, but her parents are still unable to see it. Their parents assume their daughter, who self-mutilate, do so out of a need for

attention. This might be true for some women, but it is different case for Melinda. Nowhere in her accounts that self-mutilation is performed in an effort to seek attention. Sexual assault is always traumatic. When the victims are raped, survival becomes their primary instinct, and they protect themselves as best as they can. Some women choose to fight back; Melinda chooses not to at first. Survivors like Melinda are silenced by shame, guilt, and the mistaken belief, reinforced by the society and police in general.

4.1.5 Losing Trust

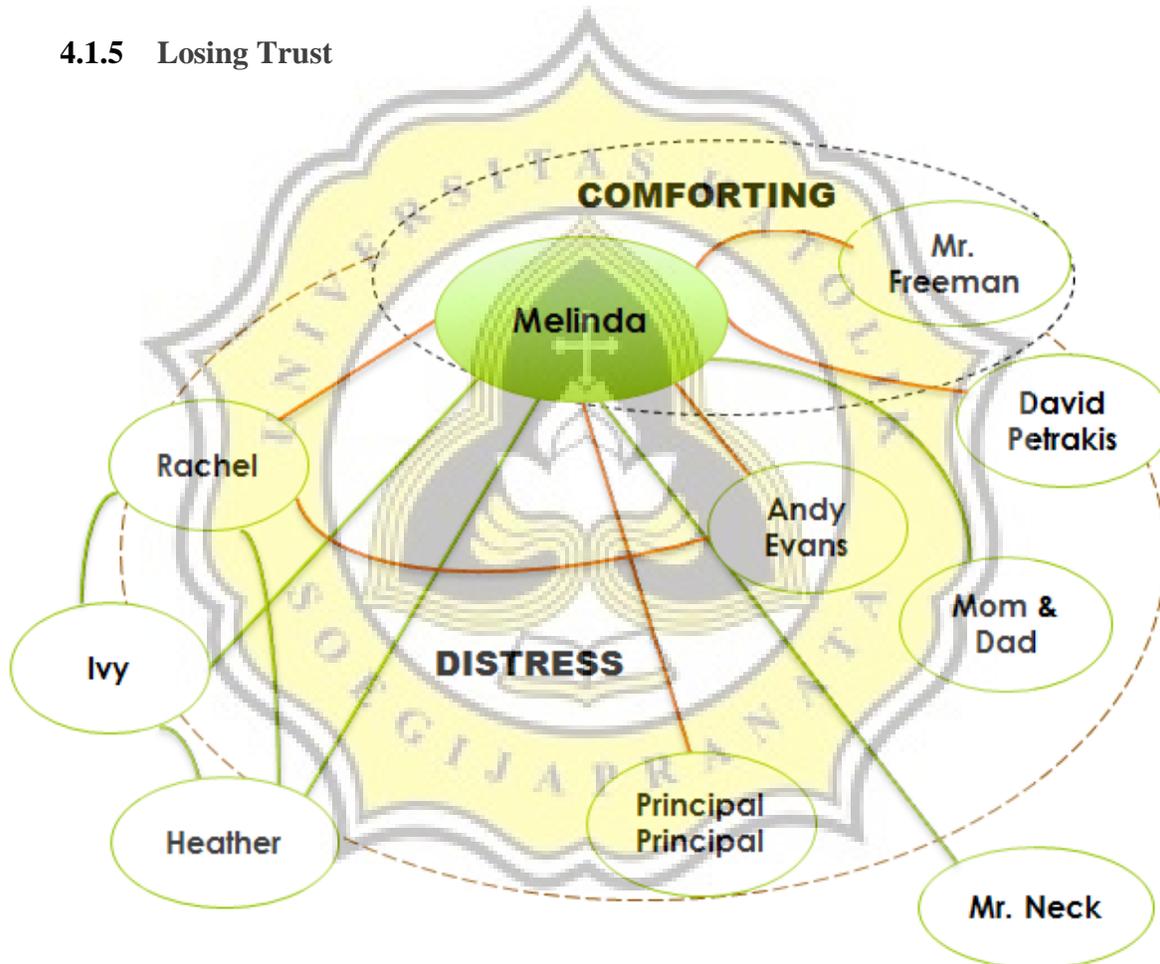


Figure 1 Melinda's relationship with people around her

Melinda keep her distance towards people around her, she even does not give her trust to anyone else after the traumatic indident. She feels that no one really cares about her well-being. Some people try to approach Melinda, for example; Mr. Freeman and

David Petrakis, but because she is not accept her reality just yet, she keep the distance with those people. The most significant aspect of the trauma that Melinda has is she lost her ability to trust people after the incident, “I have entered high school with the wrong hair, the wrong clothes, the wrong attitude. And I don’t have anyone to sit with. I am Outcast” (Anderson, 2001, p. 4). Because of the past incident, she feels that her trust had been betrayed. Once by the rapist and second by people who isolate her when she asks for help. Instead of getting help she deserves, people choose to leave Melinda alone. The wound that Melinda has is getting deeper because of this unfair treatment. As a result, Melinda has given up her social life and withdrawn herself from family and friends, “If we get raped it’s our fault, and if we get bashed we must have provoked it, and if we raise our voices we’re nagging bitches...for lots and lots of other reasons we are part of the women’s liberation movement (Anonymous, 1987).”

When sexual assault happens on women, they can never win; that always leaves women feeling powerless. The social blaming of women impacts every girl, not just the women who is individually blamed. If the perpetrators has friends, admirers, and social status, he has a defense against rape that can claim sympathy in the public eye. People choose not to believe in victims of rape because it is related to laziness and loyalty. The widespread disbelief of rape happens because people do not believe in women.

Radical feminism had been fighting to raise the statutory rape age in USA since 1970s. The purpose of radical feminism itself is to give the movement another push, demanding a range of other expansion to make the definition of rape gender neutral including ‘date rape’, and remove the outdated marital exceptions and virginity requirements. Researches conducted the study on how women have low self-esteem, they

are uncomfortable to speak their minds because they are afraid of appearing unfeminine or intellectually threatening to their male counter parts, and are insecure and willing to please (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Adding to that point, many victims of sexual abuse become less willing to reveal their trauma because the justification from the society. When the victim's confidence is shattered, it is not only her well-being that feels different but also the world appears different. Iris Marion Young in her essay, *Throwing Like a Girl*, discusses how women often "losing trust because of the little confidence she had in their capacity to do what needs to be done". Then she continues; "we decide beforehand-usually mistakenly-that the task is beyond us and thus give it less than our full effort" (Young, 2005). A victim of sexual abuse loses trust on people because others do not put trust in her at the first place. The victim can lose trust before they acquire trust, as if trust is never theirs to have.

For many women, rape or abuse may have contradictory with survivors' ideas of whom they can trust or where they are safe. The assault makes them think that all people are the same and that they can not be trusted. If they tell their story to someone, it is either people do not believe them or they get blamed. Female victims are so often seen as vulnerable and not heard. The story of them being sexually abuse is often being mistreated. If the victims choose to be silent, the silence becomes convenient for the men who treat women as they like. However, if the victims are speaking out, it becomes a shameful story or the victims are brutally trashed by public or media. At one time, when a victim of sexual abuse does no doubt trying to gather up the courage to report to tell their stories, the coverage from media is really dangerous and sometimes goes as far with victim blaming statement.

Futhermore, it has too often been assumed that a woman's appearance, attire, status, location, prior sexual history, or relationship with the man is being questioned; either the sexual assault happen because the victim's consent or not. When a victim dares to speak up to people she trusts, most of them will ask sensitive questions such as; "what clothes are you wearing?", "how can that happen?", etc. Myths about sexual assault get conveyed in many destructive ways. Survivors of sexual assault deserve support not isolation or victimization.

4.2 The Ways Melinda Copes with Her Problems

Speak reflects the complicated life of both as a teenager and a victim of sexual violence. The primary problem is what the main character faces in adolescence during her high school days. Adolescence sometimes pulls away from their parents because they think they can handle the problem all by themselves. That is natural and part of the maturation process. They are often uncertain how to reach back for their parents support, and parents are unaware of what they need or understand their action. Adolescents are very sensitive, because in that age they are not yet an adult but is no longer a child. When teenagers are going through adolescence, they always need help and attention from their parents in many ways. However, teenagers often just keep silent about their problems because they think the problems will burden other people. It is not an easy task in teenager life where they could create a place in which they felt protected enough to simply ask for help.

Melinda Sordino is both a teenager and a victim of sexual violence. As a victim of sexual violence, she has a psychological trauma. The consequences of sexual violence that Melinda has as a teenager are overwhelming. Not only that she withdraws herself

from society because of the humiliation but she also thinks that she is less-deserved than the others. She appears not to have any support from their family and peers about her incident because she chooses not to speak to anyone about it.

Melinda lives in a world where women are sexualized and objectified from the very moment they step into this world. It is always women's fault. Women have internalised patriarchal norms so uncritically which leads women to put each other down instead of supporting each other and giving each other strength. Melinda does not have any friends to support her since the incident. Even her best friend isolates and ignores her plea of help. The treatment makes her believe that being alone is better than in bad company.

After all traumatic experiences and helplessness, Melinda develops several ways to cope with her trauma. Then, she becomes a survivor. The ways Melinda cope with her trauma are as follows:

4.2.1 Self Discovery and Self Expression

In one occasion, after rape incident, Melinda has a conversation with her father about a tree which located in front of their house. Her dad talks about cutting of a broken tree before the tree destroys her window,

DAD: "And that tree is sick. See how the branches on the left don't have any buds? I should call someone to take a look at it. Don't want it crashing into your room (Anderson, 2001, p. 167)."

...

Dad: "He's not chopping it down. He's saving it. Those branches were long dead from disease. All plants are like that. By cutting off the damage, you make it

possible for the tree to grow again. You watch—by the end of summer, this tree will be the strongest on the block." (Anderson, 2001, p. 187).

Her father's statement makes Melinda realize that a broken and sick tree needs to be cared and healed in order to grow. She can relate herself with the tree. She sees herself as a tree that needs to be healed; that she is a girl with a traumatic past and a pain. The same as tree, she also needs a healer. She needs a protection and care from anyone, but it has to start from herself. The first protection and care comes from Melinda's art teacher, Mr Freeman.

Mr. Freeman clearly knows that something is wrong with Melinda. Instead of asking insensitive questions like most people, he helps Melinda to discover herself first. For the time being, Melinda puts her little trust on him and since she also feels safe in the art room. In that particular room, she feels that her life has a meaning because her life does not revolve around the rapist, Andy Evans. Previously, she thinks that everything reminds her of the incident and the rapist. Art becomes a special place for her heart, a platform where she can speak without "truly speaking". Through art, she can express herself. It is the only happiness she has ever received in a while, "The closet is abandoned-it has no purpose, no name. It is the perfect place for me." (Anderson, 2001, p. 23). The art room also provides a mentor to guide her to success.

Another place that she finds comfortable with other than the art room is the janitor closet. The closet is a place for Melinda to forget all of her problems, find herself, and do the basic things like sleeping and eating. Melinda makes the janitor closet as a sanctuary by decorating it with posters and art pieces she feels connected to. The closet is also one of the places where she resolves her trauma. The way Melinda puts posters and art pieces

is a metaphor for her life; she decorates and makes it look pretty to hide the fact that she has a big and devastating trauma. Melinda wants to make her high school life looks great but actually it is not. Then the janitor closet becomes a place for Melinda to do whatever she wants to do without being judged by her peers.

Melinda feels more connected to herself when Mr. Freeman gives the student a task to draw a picture. At first, Melinda thinks it is easy to draw a tree, but the more she tries to draw a tree, the more she knows that she can not. Her feeling is too overwhelming. Trees have been used in religions throughout the world as a metaphor to represent life and death (Roman, 2014). Trees are the source for rebirth. A tree is a symbol for Melinda.

This looks like a tree, but it is an average, ordinary, everyday, boring tree. Breathe life into it. Make it bend “trees are flexible, so they don’t snap. Scar it, give it a twisted branch” perfect trees don’t exist. Nothing is perfect. Flaws are interesting. Be the tree (Anderson, 2001, p. 153).

Melinda, then, realizes that she has to overcome what has happened to her; that she has to talk about what happened. Melinda has many plans to gain her goal. She has PTSD because of the rape and she tries to overcome her fear. One of her ways to escape the pressure from her parents and her friends is her refusal to speak. But she is clearly also tired and really wants to quit thinking about the rape. If she wants to overcome the trauma, she needs to break the barrier that she made by herself. Little by little, she tries to overcome her fears by deliberately visiting Roger’s Farm, a place where she has been raped by Andy. This time, instead of feeling afraid or scared, she feels the contrary; she feels new.

Melinda wants to start her life over. She starts to recognize that her choice to draw herself and her feeling like a social outcast are wrong. She resolves her problems by absorbing herself in her artwork. She is being helped by Mr. Freeman who always gives support and help. Melinda is asked by Mr. Freeman to throw all of her emotions on the paper or canvas. She is a brave and strong girl. She still thinks that her life is still worthy so she does not choose to suicide anymore.

Women have been silenced, threatened, mistreated, shunned, and killed for daring to speak up or fight back. As a society we tend to excuse such behavior or blame the victims and often ignore the whole stories. Men from prominent media figures like Bill Cosby, Harvey Weinstein, and Donald Trump have allegedly been getting away with sexual harrassment or sexual assault for decades. Many activists and advocates have tried to reveal sexual assaults done by those public figures years ago. However, it took a really long time for people to take a notice and listen. Most assault are never reported, apparently because the victims feel like they have more to lose by doing so. The same situation happened to Melinda where the perpetrator who raped has a high societal status in school where Melinda is nobody, so it is understandable why Melinda takes the burden alone, but then she changes, she becomes the healed tree.

My tree is definitely breathing; little shallow breaths like it just shot up through the ground this morning. This one is not perfectly symmetrical. The bark is rough. I try to make it look as if initials had been carved in it a long time ago. One of the lower branches is sick. If this tree really lives someplace, that branch better drop soon, so it doesn't kill the whole thing. Roots knob out of the ground and the

crown reaches for the sun, tall and healthy. The new growth is the best part.”
(Anderson, 2001, p. 296)

Earlier, in the tree art project, Melinda has trouble with her tree because according to Mr. Freeman her tree does not look alive enough. The progress of drawing her tree, to her progress through school year and her becoming more independent on solving her problems occur simultaneously. Melinda knows that the silence is the actual condition that destroys her, hence she finally speaks about the trauma. Once Melinda does this, the tree, which is the metaphor of herself, can finally grow into the full beauty it is supposed to be.

IT happened. There is no avoiding it, no forgetting. No running away, or flying, or burying, or hiding. Andy Evans raped me in August when I was drunk and too young to know what was happening. It wasn't my fault. He hurt me. It wasn't.
(Anderson, 2001, p. 298)

4.2.2 Melinda Faces Her Fear

Melinda regains her confidence even though sometimes she is still afraid when she is thinking back about her traumatic event. During the summer, Melinda still feel really afraid and helpless when Andy comes near her, and throughout the school year Andy manages to continue harassing her and she is not able to say no to his disturbed of social behavior. After realizing the situation, Melinda has the courage to fight Andy back when he tries to rape her again for the second time. Melinda had never thought of fighting Andy before, she rather hid away rather than faced him. Later, she finally acknowledges that Andy is a monster that should not frighten her and he can not sexually assaulted her for the second time. She has the right to get past from fear, free from Andy,

the Beast. Melinda wants to grow and change, like the tree, she definitely does not want to be raped for the second time.

“No.”

A sound explodes from me.

“NNNOOO!!!”

I follow the sound, pushing off the wall, pushing Andy Evans off-balance, stumbling into the broken sink. He curses and turns, his fist coming, coming. An explosion in my head and blood in my mouth. He hit me. I scream, scream. Why aren't the walls falling? I'm screaming loud enough to make the whole school crumble. I grab for anything, my potpourri bowl—I throw it at him, it bounces to the floor. (Anderson, 2001, p. 194)

Melinda also wants Andy to know that he can not treat all girls as his sexual objectification as he wants them to be. Melinda already tries to tell Rachel before that Andy, her boyfriend, is the one who has raped her. She does not want her best friend to experience the traumatic incident. Confronting the perpetrator can be a powerful opportunity for survivors to claim their new recognition and beliefs of the abuse experience. Because of her self-growth, Melinda is able to confront Andy and overcomes her trauma. She is finally able to tell him that she has enough of the assault and the intimidation. That is a big deal for Melinda to say after her long silence. She is a survivor.

“You've been through a lot, haven't you?”

The tears dissolve the last block of ice in my throat. I feel the frozen stillness melt down through the inside of me, dripping shards of ice that vanish in a puddle of sunlight on the stained floor. Words float up.

Me: “Let me tell you about it.” (Anderson, 2001, p. 198)

At the end of the story, Melinda is able to conquer her fear and ask for someone’s help. When her art teacher asks her about her problem, she is ready to give him the answer. Due to this mentorship connection, Melinda is finally able to “speak” the truth by first accepting and challenging her trauma.

The writer makes a conclusion that Melinda not only suffers from traumatic violence but also women’s oppression. She gets depressed after the terrible incident that has happened to her. She also has to face isolation from the public for the crime that she did not committed. This study is different from the previous study, because the previous study more emphasizes on the effect of Melinda’s traumatic experience, meanwhile this study more focuses on psychological and emotional impact on Melinda’s life after the traumatic incident. The writer also points out the several forms of women oppression that Melinda has to endure.

