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Feminist Theory and Practice: Efforts to Maintain Human Values

Editor:
L. Dyah Purwita Wardani SWW



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“Feminist Theory and Practice: Efforts to Maintain Human Values”



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Rape Culture Pictured In Barbara Dee’s *Maybe he Just Likes You*

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Abstract: This study discusses how rape culture pictured in Barbara Dee’s *Maybe he Just Likes You*. Data is in the form of narrative quotes in the novel then analyzed using Hall's representation theory. The meaning is constructed through language that is analyzed using constructionist methods. To understand the author's critical point of view, Foucault's discursive technique applied to link the cultural discourse of rape culture within the novel with the context of reality. This research is a qualitative research which data are in the form of dialogue and narrative in the novel, relevant information used to support the analysis. The results of this study show how rape culture pictured in the novel and the factors behind the existence of the rape culture itself. From this research, it was found the occurrence of rape culture depicted through characters in novels.

INTRODUCTION

Rape Culture is a pervasive ideology that supports or excuses sexual assault [1]. It is part of life, just like death and taxes [2] According to National Survey of Family Growth, a nationally representative US government health survey, more than 3 million American women lost their virginity because they were raped [3]. There are several factors behind the occurrence of rape culture, but this research will only focus on victim blaming and toxic masculinity. The object of this research is a novel entitled *Maybe He Just Likes You* by Barbara Dee.

One of the greatest writers of middle-grade fiction is Barbara Dee. A middle school novel is written for readers between the ages of eight and twelve [4]. *Maybe He Just Likes You* is one of twelve novels she had written. This novel has won two awards; A 2020 ALA Notable Children’s Book and A Washington Post Best Children’s Book of 2019. Dee wrote the novel in support of the #MeToo movement which invites victims of sexual violence to speak up and fight for their lives. One issue to look at in the novel *Maybe He Just likes You* is a rape culture.

Mila, as the main character in this novel received a sexual harassment from a group of boys in her school. When someone is the object of unwanted sexual remarks, gestures, or acts due of their real or perceived gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation, this is known as sexual

harassment [5]. Mila got some unwanted hugs and any other unwanted touches that made her uncomfortable. Her friend, Zara, who had a crush on one of those boys does not stand up for Mila. Zara thought that this incident was very common among teenagers when they had a crush on someone, or often also called flirting. This is when victim blaming which is one of the indication of rape culture occurs. Victim blaming could make the victims afraid to speak up and tell what had happened to them. If victim blaming continues to exist, it can influence victims' self-perception, which can result in self-blame. Another factor behind the rape culture behavior is toxic masculinity.

Hall's representation theory is the main theory used in this research to analyze rape culture occurred in the novel *Maybe He Just Likes You*. Constructionist approach from Hall's theory of representation is the approach used in this research to construct the meaning. Foucault's discursive approach is also used to find the discourse of the novel. Connell's concept of masculinity used to support the analysis.

The goals of this study are to describe rape culture in the school environment portrayed in the novel using the representation theory [6] to find out the author's position on the issues contained in the novel. The contribution of this research to society is to learn more about what rape culture is and the signs of rape culture in society.

METHOD

This study is classified as qualitative for the data can be in the form of spoken words, written words, or visual images at this phase [7]. The data used in this research is based on words rather than numbers. *Maybe He Just Likes You*, a novel written by Barbara Dee in 2019 is the subject of this study, and the data are in the form of selected quotations and conversations linked to the topic of discussion, that is rape culture.

There are two kinds of data involved in this research, the primary and the secondary data. *Maybe He Just Likes You* by Barbara Dee as the subject of the study as the primary data. The data are in the form of narratives text such as dialogues and quotations within the short story above. While the secondary data are gathered from a variety of books, journals, and websites, with a focus on Stuart Hall's operation of representation theory.

There are some steps in performing the research that are based on data processing. The collected data were categorized in three categories. The first category is about victim blaming, the second category is data about self-blaming, and the third data category is about toxic masculinity. After categorizing the data, the researcher will bold specific words, phrases, or sentences that depicts those themes. In the following step, the researcher gave a code for the data that have gathered. The researcher used the letter D as the code for the data's number, the letter C for the novel's chapter, and the letter P for its page when encoding the data from the book. Examples are (D1, C1, P21), which refers to the initial data from chapter one on page 21.

After processing the data, the next step is to analyse the data to answer the research questions. To answer the first question, the first step is to describe how rape culture represented

in this novel. There are 3 points have discussed in the first question which are also signs of rape culture in the novel. These signs are victim blaming which can lead to self-blaming, and toxic masculinity behavior. In this case is how people around Mila including her close friends and teacher reaction to the sexual harassment that Mila had experienced. The representation theory by Stuart Hall used to construct the discourse of rape culture in the novel. The researcher has connected rape culture in the novel with the context of rape culture that occurred in the United States in 2015-2018. From 2015 to 2018, there were 3.3 million violent crime victims aged 12 or older, up from 2.7 million in 2015. The majority of these victims were sexual assault, aggravated assault, and simple assault victims [8]. To answer the second question to analyse Dee's social background and her answer in an interview related to the issue rape culture, the next step is to connect the analysis in the third step to the context of the US in the 21st century and to connect the analysis to the discourse of rape culture in the novel.

RESULT

Rape Culture Represented in *Maybe He Just Likes You*

Rape Culture is a pervasive ideology that supports or excuses sexual assault [9], in other words, rape culture is when sexual violence and abuse are normalized, played down and laughed off in the society. There are three components of rape culture are Power, Anger, and Hyper-Masculinity; Sexual Objectification of Women's Body; Systemic and Institutional support. However, in the novel *Maybe He Just Likes You* had found the power and hyper-masculinity components that makes this research only focuses to the first and third point to reveal problems of victim blaming and toxic masculinity.

Victim Blaming Pictured in *Maybe He Just Likes You*

Rape victims are usually held accountable for the horrific event that happened to them and are often accused of having caused it. Victims are accused for being viewed as docile (surrendering, accepting, and relishing the rapist's sexual attention). Because it is impossible to control one's lust, criminals are often thought to be innocent [10]. Victim blaming can be done by other people or the victims themselves (self-blaming). Therefore, in this research, the researcher found two kinds of victim blaming in the novel *Maybe He Just Likes You*. These are victim blaming done by other people and self-blaming. Victim blaming done by other people in Dee's novel is represented through the response of people around Mila as the main character to what she has experienced. It can be proven in the following data.

On the day Mila and her friends celebrating Omi's birthday, she gets an unwanted touch from Leo that makes her feel uncomfortable “I wriggled my shoulder, but Callum's hand was squeezing. And not leaving. Now I could feel my armpits getting damp.” [11]. Mila said that Callum had touched her without asking permission because she felt uneasy about his abrupt contact, which could be construed as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is offensive behavior or attention of a sexual kind that makes the victim uncomfortable [12].

Mila's reaction, "Okay, that was weird," to Callum's unwelcome touch shows that she was uncomfortable. Rather than standing up for Mila, Zara, who was close to Mila and saw what Callum had done to her, replied, "Oh, Mila, don't be such a baby." By saying that, she put the blame on Mila for being such a baby—a baby that could not take a joke and takes things seriously. Analyzed using Hall's representation theory, what Zara said represents victim blaming.

According to the constructionist approach written in Hall's representation theory, meaning is created in relation to oneself rather than being contained in things. Mila's friend assumes that the boys behavior is caused by their feeling towards Mila. This assumption exist because the society normalize teasing behavior when one gender attracted to other gender. Teasing occurs often among friends and close relatives [13] The boys think they are close enough to Mila so that they can tease her and they did not realizes that what they did can be considered as sexual harassment.

Omi and Zara even argued about which boy really has feelings toward Mila by saying "Or maybe Tobias just likes you, Mila," and Zara replied to Omi by saying "No, Callum likes Mila,". Omi make things worse with her sentence "Maybe they both like you," since she and Zara do not have any proofs so they assume that Tobias and Callum like Mila. They did not even listen to Mila when she says it is not true. They indirectly ignored Mila's feeling.

Mila makes it apparent in this chapter that she did not grant Tobias permission to hug her, yet he does it nevertheless. Zara blamed Mila instead of listening to Mila's explanation. "Well, Mila, no one can hug you if you don't let them,". If analyzed using Hall's representation theory, what Zara said represents victim blaming because even though Mila has already said that she did not grant Tobias permission to hug her, Zara is still cornering Mila and placing the blame for the sexual harassment that occurred. [14] in what Zara said to Mila can be considered as victim blaming since she showed no sympathy to Mila as a victim of sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment also happens when Mila attends Karate class with one of her school friend, Samira. "If it was me, I wouldn't allow it." this is what Samira says to Mila. She indirectly blames Mila for what happened to her. Sexual harassment that happened to Mila happened because she allowed it to happen, she allowed the boys to did that to her and did nothing about it. However, Samira said that she did not mean what she said by saying "I'm just saying, you don't have to put up with stuff like that, Mila. It's just really wrong, you know?" In fact, Mila had already done something to confront the boys and told them that she felt uncomfortable with their unwanted treatment. "I didn't 'put up' with it, Samira," I said, my throat tight. "I told Dante to move and he refused. What else should I have done?" What Mila said above could represents self-defense she did to protect herself.

The statements made by Omi and Zara are identical. What Omi and Zara said could represent victim blaming. Since Mila does not receive the necessary support from those closest to her, these kinds of answers make her frightened to speak up and seek justice for herself. Even worse, she gets in self-blaming.

"So here's the best I can do, under the circumstances. You're aware, I bet, that seventh grade boys can be very immature. They act like big shots, some of them, but they can

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say some gross and stupid things. And the truth is, they'll pretty much tease anyone or anything that moves.” Yes, but I know what teasing is. This is different. Mr. Dolan leaned toward me; his swivel chair squeaked. “It doesn't mean these boys are gross and stupid inside; mostly they're just showing off for their friends. So if that's what's going on, Mila, I can tell you from experience that the best course of action is to try to ignore them.”

When Mila finally has the courage to tell her teacher about the incident, instead of validating her feelings, Mr. Dolan excuses the teenage boys behaviour by saying the boys are immature and needed her attentions. “So here's the best I can do, under the circumstances. You're aware, I bet, that seventh grade boys can be very immature. They act like big shots, some of them, but they can say some gross and stupid things. And the truth is, they'll pretty much tease anyone or anything that moves.” What Mr. Dolan said represents the rape culture behavior by normalizing the boy's jerky behavior and asked Mila to understand instead. Because nothing has been done in response to Mila's report, she feels as though there is no purpose in reporting. Mila was trained to realize that teens frequently engage in these kinds of behaviors. Mr. Dolan did not view those actions as bullying or even sexual harassment. According to a recent epidemiological survey, 19.3% of women claimed having been raped at some point in their lives, and 43.9% of American women reported being the victims of different types of sexual violence [15].

“So was Ms. Fender. “Is there a problem over in the trumpet section?” she demanded. “Some reason to be rude to a fellow musician?” It took me a second to realize that by “fellow musician” Ms. Fender meant Samira, not me. “Sorry,” I said. “Dante was crowding my chair just now.” “I didn't mean to,” Dante insisted. “I was just trying to read the music. And Mila didn't need to react like that anyway.” “Overreact,” Callum said.” (P62)
“All right,” Mr. McCabe said. “Mila, can I hear from you why you kicked Callum?” “Self-defense,” I said. “That's stupid,” Callum muttered. “Because I didn't do anything.” “Yes you did! Of course you did! You grabbed my arm!” “See? And you overreacted again.” (P153)

Mila was accused of overreacting by Callum when Dante asked her to share her music but actually he had an ulterior motive to touch Mila without Mila's permission. Dante even lied to their teacher about the true circumstances, they accused Mila of being the cause of what happened. In order to maintain their excellent reputation, the boys chose to place the blame on Mila rather than themselves for what they had done. The similar situation happens where Callum accused Mila of exaggerating when their teacher tried to assist her to overcome the issue by encouraging her to tell the truth. “See? And you overreacted again.”

Men who felt powerless tended to less blame their victims, whereas women who felt powerless tended to blame their victims more [16] In the novel, Dante and Callum were portrayed as popular basketball boys. As the favorite student of his teacher, Callum has power in the school

area. This can increase victim blaming behavior because the perpetrator is someone who has power within the area (school area).

Mila was harassed by another boy at her school, Tobias. “That was when I felt it. Someone’s hand grabbing my butt. When confronted by Mila, Tobias denies the incidents and blames Mila for making things up. “No, you didn’t, Mila. It’s probably your imagination.” He confused Mila’s mind with his statement because there are no witness at all, so, he used the situation to defend himself and hide from his mistakes. “The two of us were alone in the hallway. No one to witness what had happened.” To prove that a rape happens was especially challenging if there were no eyewitnesses [17].

“Come on, Zara,” Omi said softly. “That’s not really fair.” Zara ignored her. “Look, Mila, there’s got to be a reason why they’re picking you. Those boys are super awkward and stupid sometimes, but they aren’t monsters, right? So maybe if you think about what you’re doing—” “I’m not ‘doing’ anything, Zara!” (P98)

One of Mila’s best friends, Zara, likewise downplayed her feelings and defended the boys who had been harassing Mila the entire time. She even asked Mila to look back and see if there was anything she did that might have contributed to the boys’ decision to pick on her. She gives the boys’ acts of rape a normalcy.

“Zara stopped walking. She crossed her arms. “Mila,” she said too loudly. “Can I ask you something? Do you think it’s possible that Leo was right—the boys were just fooling around? And maybe you were being a little too sensitive?” “No,” I said. “That’s not possible.” “Because it feels like you’re just criticizing everyone! Everything everyone does is wrong with you lately!” (P104)

“I’m waiting for an answer to my question,” Ms. Fender warned. “It was just Mila being psycho,” Dante said. “Overreacting the way she always does.” “To what?” Silence. “To what?” Ms. Fender repeated, her voice as sharp as broken glass. “Callum said something to me,” I said. My throat was so dry I could hear my voice croaking. “Right before we went onstage. It’s been happening a lot lately, not just with him, and I didn’t know what to do. But I guess I just... figured out how to speak his language.” Everyone was staring at me. “So you needed to trash the performance,” Dante said. “Not just for Callum. For the whole band.” Callum muttered. “A joke?” Ms. Fender said. She looked at Callum, then at Dante, then at me. “What kind of joke?” Nobody answered. “What kind of joke?” she demanded. “Mila just takes everything too seriously,” Leo said. “She’s way too sensitive.”

“That’s not true,” I snapped. “You know it isn’t, Leo.” (P199)

Those data showed that Zara as Mila’s close friend, and the boys as the perpetrators blamed Mila for being too sensitive for the way she reacted to what happened to her. “Can I ask you something? Do you think it’s possible that Leo was right—the boys were just fooling around? And maybe you were being a little too sensitive?”. “Nothing happened. Mila’s so sensitive about everything these days, and she just went crazy for no reason!”. “Mila just takes everything too seriously,” Leo said. “She’s way too sensitive.” Callum even called Mila crazy for reacting the way

she did. Worse, Dante called Mila a psycho. If the victim continuously receive unpleasant responses, this can lead to self-blame. The perpetrators usually hide behind the word joking, and the same thing happened to Callum. He hides his wrong doing by using the word joking. “Anyhow, it was just a joke,” Callum said. According to Hall’s theory of representation, what Zara and the boys said represents a victim blaming behavior.

Self-Blaming

One of the most harmful types of emotional abuse is self-blame [18], Self-blaming has a strong relation with emotions [19]. As an illustration, human experience unpleasant emotions like regret, shame, and guilt when we place the blame for failures on ourselves. These feelings are a necessary component of blame itself, not a side effect of it. It magnifies our real or perceived weaknesses, impairs us before we can even start to go forward.

The main character of this book, Mila, experiences self-blame as a result of the assault she endured and the responses of those around her. If self-blame is not addressed appropriately, victims of rape will always believe that if they had done something differently, the rape would not have occurred, which may slowly destroy a person's mental state (Snow, 1994). In Mila's case, she began to question her appearance and place the blame on herself.

“You mean a pinata,” Leo said. “And that’s just for little kids, moron. Anyway, Mila, if you don’t want to give me a birthday hug, it’s cool. My feelings aren’t hurt at all.” Dante laughed and slapped Leo on the shoulder. Callum kept smiling. I could feel the back of my neck getting damp and my heart speeding. What exactly was going on here? Whatever it was, it felt weird. And where was Ms. Fender? For someone with perfect timing, she should be walking in here right now. *Right now. Right... now.* “Whoa, Mila, don’t you think that’s a little nasty?” Dante was saying. “We all hugged Omi for her birthday, didn’t we?” *Nobody asked you to. Plus, you messed up the O.* (P18-19)

Leo wanted to make Mila feel guilty for not giving him a birthday hug by saying “Anyway, Mila, if you don’t want to give me a birthday hug, it’s cool. My feelings aren’t hurt at all.” He uses gaslighting to make Mila think that what she did was wrong and that she ought to have given him a hug when he asked. Gaslighting is a psychological trick used to make the target(s) question their own memory, perception, and sanity in an effort to create doubt in their minds [20]. What Leo said represents the act of gaslighting. Leo gaslighted Mila in order to get what he wants.

In the other hand, Leo’s friend, Dante, support him by cornering Mila using his words. Dante said to Mila “Whoa, Mila, don’t you think that’s a little nasty?”. What Dante said can be considered as gaslighting and can lead to self-blaming. Mila will doubt her own sanity since what he said can make her questioning herself, “Did I just hurt Leo’s feeling?”, or “Am I being too much?”.

“As soon as I’d had a glass of water and a handful of Korn Krunch (this sweet and sticky store-brand kind of snack Mom always bought), I went into the bathroom and stared at the mirror. What are the boys seeing? My sweater went all the way up to my collarbone,

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and all the way down to my hips. Nothing was showing, or poking out. And yes, I had boobs and a butt, just like plenty of girls in seventh grade—but no one had ever made any comments about them. At least, to my face. I wasn't fat, or skinny like Zara. Ugly, or pretty like Omi. As far as I could tell, I was just average-looking, really. Right smack in the middle when it came to seventh grade girls. Are people—and by people, I mean the basketball boys—seeing something about me that I can't? Am I missing something about myself? Something obvious?” (P33)

Mila begins to blame herself for her appearance in general and the clothes she was wearing after becoming the victim of sexual harassment at school from a group of boys. She also questioned why she allowed her friends to harass her in a sexual manner and what was wrong with her. Self-blame is arisen from a need to know "why me?" and that it can also become a destructive coping mechanism following a traumatic or extremely painful event. “So lately what I did was just keep wearing the fuzzy green sweater. Not only did it fit across my chest, but also it was long enough to cover the top of my jeans. Wearing the sweater, I didn't wonder how I looked, because I knew: basically like a fuzzy green potato.” In the data above, Mila starts to wonder what was wrong with the way she dressed. She even looked for what the boys saw in her so that they assault her. “What are the boys seeing? My sweater went all the way up to my collarbone, and all the way down to my hips. Nothing was showing, or poking out. And yes, I had boobs and a butt, just like plenty of girls in seventh grade—but no one had ever made any comments about them. At least, to my face. I wasn't fat, or skinny like Zara. Ugly, or pretty like Omi. As far as I could tell, I was just average-looking, really. Right smack in the middle when it came to seventh grade girls. Are people—and by people, I mean the basketball boys—seeing something about me that I can't? Am I missing something about myself? Something obvious?. From what Mila said in the data above, it represents self-blaming because she starts to blame herself. It could be seen that Mila feels something is wrong with her, but she could not see it just yet.

“So that whole morning, while I basically sleepwalked through science, math, ELA, and Spanish, I couldn't stop replaying the scene in the band room. The whole thing had felt strange and creepy, so why hadn't I just walked out of the room? Or even thought of a lame comeback (No hug, but I'll play you “Happy Birthday” on my trumpet)? Why hadn't I challenged Leo's birthday in the first place? The more I thought about it, the more obvious it was the boys had been lying.”(P22)

The victim experiences self-loathing as a result of being haunted by her past deeds, which include analyzing the part she played in the incident and analyzing her movements, attitudes, gestures, speech, makeup, and clothes (Snow, 1994). Mila reviewing her past action that she thinks could be the possibility for the boys to harass her. “The whole thing had felt strange and creepy, so why hadn't I just walked out of the room? Or even thought of a lame comeback (No hug, but I'll play you “Happy Birthday” on my trumpet)? Why hadn't I challenged Leo's birthday in the first place? The more I thought about it, the more obvious it was the boys had been lying. Mila blames herself for doing nothing back when she was harassed. This can lead the victim's mind to a series of "if only". A series of "if only" keep running through the victim's head. The

rape would not have occurred if I had not done this, said that, worn that skirt, walked down that street, or been so trusting (Snow, 1994). In Mila’s case, she regrets for doing nothing and wonders about what might have happened if only she had done something differently.

“Hey, Dante, watch your arm,” I said. “And please move over, okay?” Dante looked surprised. Maybe too surprised. “You want me to move over?” “Yeah. We’re supposed to be sharing this seat equally, aren’t we? And I’m getting squished.” “Oh. Sorry,” he said. Right away I thought: Okay, Mila, now you’re being paranoid. The seat isn’t wide enough; he can’t help it if he smooshes into you. And that pothole wasn’t his fault. Except the thing was, he didn’t budge. His legs stayed spread and his shoulder kept bumping. (P31) As soon as I said this, I knew I was wrong. Unfair to Mom, and fresh. What was wrong with me? Maybe Zara was right—I was being too hard on everybody these days. Maybe I was turning into Dad, always saying the wrong things, hurting everyone’s. (P157)

Data 17 and 18 are similar to each other. That is the moment Mila starts blaming herself for her actions. “Right away I thought: Okay, Mila, now you’re being paranoid. The seat isn’t wide enough; he can’t help it if he smooshes into you. And that pothole wasn’t his fault.” According to Hall’s theory of representation, what Mila said to herself represents self-blaming because Mila blames herself for being paranoid as she persuades herself that her response was excessive when, in reality, she could have handled the situation more composedly. The next data is about Mila blaming herself for being too hard on everybody. There are many factors that cause Mila to blame herself. One of which is the negative response of people around her to the harassment that happened to Mila. Self-blame was linked to less sympathy from those who found out about the rape and more reactions from official authorities, who usually react negatively to victims [21].

Toxic Masculinity

Within this newly popularized “post-feminist” feminist vocabulary, toxic masculinity is a prominent word that treats sexism as a character problem of some men [22]. According to the toxic masculinity theory, the idea of “manliness” encourages oppression, homophobia, and competition [23]. Toxic masculinity is when all of the aforementioned preconceptions of males as being aggressive, heartless, and the sexually violence give the harmful impact on both society and the individual [24]. When men are required to do things in a specific manner in order to be recognized as real men, this is where masculinity turns toxic. Using Hall’s theory of representation and Connell’s toxic masculinity theory, the researcher connect the data found in the novel with the context of toxic masculinity happened in the society to prove the data. Hall’s constructionist approach used to find the discourse.

In Dee’s novel, toxic masculinity occurs when the boys play a scorecard game. They get points for saying things to Mila, touching her body and her clothes.

“Omi twisted her hands. “So anyway, what he showed me was this sort of game the boys are playing. Like a scorecard.” “Uh-huh.” My mouth dried up. I felt cold. “And Mila, it

was about you. The points were for saying things to you, touching your body, your clothes—” Omi’s hand flew to her mouth, and she started crying. “I’m so sorry.” (P122)

From Omi’s statement, it can be seen that the boys are competing to harass Mila to get points. “The points were for saying things to you, touching your body, your clothes.” What the boys do represents toxic masculinity since the boys in the group participated to show their masculinity and not to be shunned by them because they were not considered masculine. Men who have been exposed to toxic masculinity are more vulnerable to feel entitled to women’s bodies, which leads to sexual comments and harassment directed at women as well as a greater tendency to believe rape myths [25]. It can be said that sexual aggression toward women is one of the result of toxic masculinity.

One of the boys knows that what they did was wrong but he did not want his friend to leave him. This statement can be proven by the data below:

“I knew it was wrong, the whole time,” Tobias said in between gasps. “I only did it because we were all doing it. And we were like a team, right? I mean, we are a team. And I thought if I said something, if I told you guys, ‘Stop, leave Mila alone, I don’t want to do this anymore,’ you’d be like, ‘Okay, fine, now you’re off the team.’” (P220-221)

Tobias said that he did not stop the assault on Mila because he was afraid that his friends would leave him because he refused to play the stupid game. He also claimed that he did it because all of his friends were playing the same stupid game. If Tobias had chosen not to play the game and had tried to stop it, his friends would have thought less of him because he does not consider a woman’s body to be an object.

The Voice of the Author

This sub-chapter provides an analysis of the critical position of Barbara Dee as the author of *Maybe he Just Likes You* (2019). Hall’s constructionist approach from the representation theory and Foucault’s discursive approach are applied to the data to determine the author’s alignment on the issue of rape culture. Dee’s background is also important to find the discourse.

Dee was raised in New York’s Brooklyn. She is aware of and involved in the issues that are occurring in the United States because she was born and raised there. One of these issues is sexual harassment, which frequently happens in schools to teenagers. The Education Department discovered that reports of sexual assaults at elementary, middle, and high schools in the United States increased significantly between 2015 and 2018 in *The Washington Post*.

In addition, Barbara Dee is the author of twelve middle grade novels, all of which are intended for readers in the eight to twelve year old age range. She wrote stories about teenagers’ struggles because she did not want them to face those struggles on their own without any adult guidance, she said in an interview with *Publishers Weekly*. In an interview with *Fairfax Network* [25], Dee added that it was critical for her to write a book that addressed the problem and assisted them in solving it.

The 2018 #MeToo movement served as inspiration for *Maybe He Just Likes You*. In response to news reports about American film producer Harvey Weinstein's sexual misconduct, the #MeToo campaign was launched in 2017. It draws attention to the issue of mistreatment and sexual harassment of women in the workplace [26]. *Maybe He Just Likes You* was also inspired by Dee's own experience with sexual harassment in middle school. Her action to write the novel *Maybe He just Likes you* represents her support toward the #MeToo movement.

As the main character of the book, Mila has been sexually abused by her fellow classmates. She doesn't know what's going on or how to handle the situation considering that she is a teenager who needs adult guidance. Mila served as a stand-in for Dee's teenage girls, who are searching for their identity and going through a lot of new experiences that call for adult support to resolve. Mila's friends support her in speaking up and addressing the issue, and Dee provides guidance on how to get through this situation in the book.

From the analysis above, it could be seen that Dee believes sexual harassment is an important issues that America society still facing even to this day. As an American woman and a part of America society whom herself was a victim of sexual harassment, through *Maybe He Just Like You* (2019) Dee wants to bring the issue that women and girls in America is still have to fight for their body authority and their right to be heard. Dee believes that this issue about sexual harassment needs more awareness in society.

CONCLUSION

Maybe He Just Likes You is a novel written by Barbara Dee and was published by Aladdin in 2019. In this novel has found an issue namely Rape Culture. There are several factors behind the rape culture behavior in society, two of the factors are victim blaming and toxic masculinity. Victim blaming happened when rape victims are held accountable for the incident befell them. Victim blaming can be done by other people, but when the society keep to put the blame on the victims, it can lead to self-blame. The second factor is toxic masculinity, comes from a hegemonic masculinity concept [27]. In the analysis, it has found 12 data for the victim blaming sub-chapter. Analyzed using Hall's constructionist approach, it was found that Mila has received victim blaming behavior from people around her. They blamed Mila for the sexual harassment that happened to her. Victim Blaming could lead to self-blame. It has found 6 data for the self-blame. Mila also started to blame herself for the accident befell her. This happened because Mila kept listening that people blamed her. Mila started to blame herself for what she wore, she looked back for the way she acted, and a series of 'what ifs' haunt her.

The second factor is toxic masculinity, 2 data has found for this sub-sub chapter. Toxic masculinity could be one of the reason for the existence of rape culture behavior in society. The perpetrators are a group of boys, the reason behind the assault was a score game. The boys played a scored game, they get a score for doing things to Mila such as touch her, and say things to her. If it is a game, member with the most-score is the winner. They compete among boys to win something, this is when toxic masculinity happened.

The last sub-chapter is related with the contextual background. Analyzed using Hall's constructionist approach and Foucault's discursive approach, it has found that *Maybe He Just Likes You* is a media for Dee to help teenagers around the world especially the U.S to overcome sexual harassment in the school area. Dee is a U.S citizen and she herself was a victim of sexual harassment when she was in the middle school. Sexual harassment case in the U.S was increase between 2015-2018. Dee wrote this novel in support of #MeToo movement in 2018.

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