Authoritarian Parenting in Shaping the Characteristics of Ruth Young in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

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Abstract

This undergraduate study discusses The Bonesetter's Daughter, a novel which was written by Amy Tan. It tells about the life of a mother, Luling Young, and her daughter, Ruth Young. This study focuses on Luling and Ruth in their past and present conditions. Throughout Ruth's life, Luling practiced an authoritarian parenting style which appealed to the researcher to analyze the cause and effect of Luling's parenting style in shaping Ruth's characteristics and behaviors. Two problems were formulated to limit the study. The objectives of this research are to answer: (1) how Luling Young showed the authoritarian parenting in the novel, and (2) how the authoritarian parenting shaped Ruth Young's characteristics.

The first analysis of the study shows that as an authoritarian parent, Luling Young is low on affection, high on behavioral control and high on psychological control. Luling rarely communicates well and shows physical affections towards Ruth. She is also highly demanding and controlling in Ruth's life. Besides, she is quick-tempered over small problems and sometimes shows love withdrawal. Those acts of authoritarian parenting style influence Ruth's characteristics. The first effect is Ruth's internalizing behaviors. Due to the combination of Luling's low affection and high psychological control, Ruth has anxiety, is fearful, suicidal and skeptical of her mother. Those are happened because the restriction and oppression which are given by Luling affect Ruth's mental state. The second outcome is Ruth's externalizing behaviors which come from a combination of high behavioral control and high psychological control. Ruth becomes hesitant in talk, explosive-tempered and suicidal. Therefore, Luling Young's practice of an authoritarian parenting influences the characteristics-shaping of Ruth Young.

Keywords: *authoritarian parenting, characteristic shaping*

Introduction

Family is the base for people to learn about human and life since their birth before they step out into larger extent which is society. Being small, helpless and absolutely dependent on someone else to survive, babies must be fed, clothed and comforted. They also have to be taken care of in order for them to develop into independent adults with personalities of their own. Those all happen in a family. A family holds the main role to explain the importance of two variables in children's personality development which are nature (hereditary) and nurture (environment) (Popkin, 1987: 33). Thus, parents are surely related to the nature (hereditary) factor of their children. Additionally, parents are also responsible for nurture (environmental) factor since family is a strong foundation to the children before they face the society. The children go through their first steps along with their home surroundings, upbringings, nurturing and experiences from their parents. Almost all of the children's early environmental influences come from their

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family, especially the parents. For that reason, the kind of atmosphere that exists in the family's daily living really matters.

David Streight in his book *Parenting for Character* (2008) stated that parents, as a family, have the role and power to create their children's future where kindness, fairness, and consideration of others are the norm. Those can be created through parenting system because parents have the positions to assert power in the course of their style of parenting which later can shape how their children turn out to be. There are three models of parental control as stated by Diana Baumrind which is quoted by Aunola and Nurmi in the article titled *The Role of Parenting Styles in Children's Problem Behavior* (2005). They are permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parenting. Luling in the novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter* performs authoritarian style of parenting. Compared to the other two, authoritarian parenting style is more controlling and demanding. The parent attempts to control, shape, and evaluate their child's behaviors and attitudes according to a set standard of regulation, usually an absolute standard by a higher authority. The parent values obedience as a virtue, and favors disciplinary as forceful measures to control self-will at points where the child's actions or beliefs conflict with what she thinks is right conduct. She believes in keeping the child in his place. She regards the preservation of order and traditional structure as a highly valued end in itself. Children are expected to obey the parents' strict rules. Failure to follow such rules usually results in punishment. Authoritarian parents don't explain the reasoning behind these rules and say "Because I said so," instead. These parents are obedience- and status-oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation (Baumrind, 1966: 890).

In their article, Kaisa Aunola and Jari-Erik Nurmi discuss the relation between parenting styles and the outcome behaviors from children. This article has 2 variables to show the causes and effects of each parenting style which will be used to analyze the data in this study. The first variable is called parenting style dimensions which are the parent's acts and consist of parental affection/warmth, behavioral control and psychological control. Those dimensions are the causes of the next variable. The second variable is the children's problem behaviors which are in the form of externalizing and internalizing behaviors in children (Aunola and Nurmi, 2005: 1144-1145).

Aunola and Nurmi (2005) stated that parental affection/ warmth, behavioral control and psychological control are three parenting style dimensions. Parental warmth/affection shows through the parent's affection such as their responsiveness, involvement and supportiveness to their child. It also refers to parent and child interactional warmth and bond. Diana Baumrind in *Parenting for Character* (2008) stated that the difference between each parenting style is the issue of power assertion. Parents must at times use their positions of authority to assert power. To prevent harm, they must do what they can do to control the child's behavior. There are two different kinds of power assertion; those are behavioral control and psychological control. Parental behavioral control consists of the maturity demands, monitoring and limit setting from the parent to the child. It includes the regulation of the child's behavior through firm and consistent discipline. The last, psychological control is the love withdrawal and guilt induction by the parent. They control the child's emotions and behaviors through psychological means (Aunola and Nurmi, 2005: 1144-1145). Each of those three dimensions is divided into a measurement of low and high level.

The combination of parenting style dimensions influences the child development. While the authoritative parenting is characterized by high level of both parental affection and behavioral control and permissive parenting is characterized by low level of both parental affection and behavioral control, authoritarian parenting has low parental affection, high behavioral control and high psychological control. If some of those parenting style dimensions are combined, they resulted in two types of children problem behaviors. The first kind of the problem behavior is internalizing behavior in the form of children's withdrawal, fearfulness, self-consciousness, inhibition and anxiety. The negative emotions of the children are directed

at themselves rather than others. It is caused by the excessive and overly strong self-regulations. Actions of every parenting style are imprinted in children's psychological state. Externalizing behavior, by contrast, is when negative emotions are directed against others as anger, aggression and frustration. Children with externalizing behavior have underdeveloped self-regulation abilities which lead to uncontrolled behaviors (Aunola and Nurmi, 2005: 1144-1145).

According to the novel, Luling Young applies the authoritarian parenting style. This study will later explain the act of authoritarian parenting which has low level of affection, high level of psychological control, and high level of behavioral control which is performed by Luling to her daughter, Ruth.

Luling Young's Authoritarian Parenting

1. Low Affection

The first identifying mark of authoritarian parenting is the low level of affection. Parental affection can be shown through the parent's care such as their response, concern and support to their child. They can also give warmth and attention to show their love to their child. A high level of affection means a positive relationship between the parent and child. It can be seen by the actions of telling their child that parents appreciate what their child tries or achieves and showing that the parents love their child. Meanwhile, one of the characteristics of authoritarian parenting is the low level of affection. According to Diana Baumrind in *Parenting for Character* (2008), authoritarian parents are demanding, but unresponsive. They lack warmth, tenderness and show little concern for their child's perspective. Luling Young throughout *The Bonesetter's Daughter* shows the act of low affection to Ruth Young.

> *It was a nice thought, but Ruth rarely exchanged embraces with LuLing. When she tried, her mother's shoulders turned rigid, as if she were being attacked* (Tan, 2001: 31).

Ruth has this thought when she is in a conversation with Agapi Agnos, her client. The statement that Ruth's mother has been angry and depressed all her life appears between their conversation about the elderly relation with inattention and anger which lead to depression. Hearing that, Agapi suggests Ruth to get her mother a thorough checkup and give her mother a great big healing hug. Ruth then has a thought in reacting to those words. She admits that she hugs her mother once in a blue moon. It shows that Luling as a mother never expresses her love physically and directly to Ruth.

> *"News from the gods," LuLing murmured. "I won ten million dollar! Open and see."*
> *LuLing beamed, then added, "I win all for you."*
> *Ruth felt a twinge in her chest. It quickly grew into an ache. She wanted to embrace her mother, shield her, and at the same time wanted her mother to cradle her, to assure her that she was okay, that she had not had a stroke or worse. That was how her mother had always been, difficult, oppressive, and odd. And in exactly that way, LuLing had loved her. Ruth knew that, felt it. No one could have loved her more. Better perhaps, but not more.*
> *"Thanks, Ma. It's wonderful. We'll talk about it later, what to do with the money. But now we have to go. The doctor said we could still come at four, and we shouldn't be late."*
> *LuLing turned crabby again. "You fault we late"* (Tan, 2001: 38-39).

The quotation above happens when Ruth tries to find Luling's lost purse. It turns out that it is under a pile of new issues of magazines. Knowing Luling never reads any printed media, she asks the reason why there are dozens of magazines. Luling then answers it with handing an oversized envelope and telling that she wins ten million dollars for Ruth. The non-authoritarian parents commonly tend to express their happy feeling directly with being excited, asking further story and physical affection. However, the way Ruth reacts to the news by wishing she could hug her at the moment shows that both of them are uncomfortable in engaging physical contacts to show their affection to each other. When Ruth only thanks her, moves on to another topic, and Luling gets back to be

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cranky, it shows that there is a lack of mother-daughter's warmth which is shared between them.

> *By using Chinese words, LuLing could put all kinds of wisdom in Ruth's mind. She could warn her away from danger, disease, and death.*
> *Soon she felt familiar hands brushing over her head and neck. Her mother was lifting her, murmuring tenderly, "Ai-ya, how could you be so foolish? Look at you."*
> *She then saw her mother's face, the tears streaming down her cheeks, falling on her own face like wet kisses. Her mother wasn't angry, she was worried, full of love. And in her amazement, Ruth forgot her pain* (Tan, 2001: 47-48).

Six-year-old Ruth gets into an accident because she wants to rebel against her mother who prevents Ruth to stop befriending her only friend and not to play in the slide. Luling firmly warns her many times not to play with Teresa because Luling thinks she is full of germs, but Ruth insists to befriend her. One day, for the act of rebel, Ruth throws herself down the slide with head first and arms straight out which is considered as the only position that only the bravest and wildest boys will take. She falls into the sand with face first, bumping her nose, bending her glasses and breaking her arms. Instead of being angry, Luling gives her affection in this event by showing that she is worried about Ruth's condition. Out of all of the moments when Luling shall give affection, this is the only moment where both Ruth and Luling show their mother-daughter love to each other.

Low affection can also be seen in the way Luling solves the problems that happen between her and Ruth. While authoritative parenting style that has high affection is always warm and understanding the child's perspective according to Diana Baumrind (2008), authoritarian parenting makes no effort in communicating. The arbitrariness and rigidness of imposing demands of authoritarian parents make the relationships between them and their children distant, hence the low affection feeling which is felt by the children. In every problem, as a parent, she actually can teach Ruth how to handle and solve them. In the novel, Luling does not try to be close to Ruth by handling even a small problem between them calmly. Instead, all that Luling does are get mad and threaten Ruth to end her (Luling's) own life.

> *"You wish I dead? You wish no mother tell you what to do? Okay, maybe I die soon!" (Tan, 2001: 32)*

> *"You think she right, I wrong?" As had happened throughout Ruth's childhood, LuLing's fury escalated until she could barely speak, except to sputter the old threat: "Maybe I die soon!"* (Tan, 2001: 33)

> *"If I could change fate, I would rather kill myself than suffer without you. . . ."* (Tan, 2001: 53)

> *And then LuLing erupted with the ultimate threat: "Maybe I die soon! Then everybody happy!"* (Tan, 2001: 68)

> *Experience had taught her that her mother worried too much even when she had no reason to worry. If there was something really wrong, her mother would scream and pound her chest like a gorilla. She would do this in front of Lance and Dottie. She would dig out her eyes and yell for the ghosts to come take her away. And then she would really kill herself. This time for sure. She would make Ruth watch, to punish her even more* (Tan, 2001, p. 83).

> *"Why I have daughter like you? Why I live? Why I don't die long time 'go?" LuLing was huffing and snorting. Ruth thought she looked like a mad dog. "You want I die?"* (Tan, 2001, p. 98)

Those quotations happen every time Luling quarrels with Ruth. Conflicts are actually important experiences for children to express their own needs and opinions. Children can be taught about how to win/lose and when to retreat. Quarrels can be solved with an explanation of rules of behavior. They can also teach children that though there are two different opinions between them, the parents still love their children. The non-

authoritarian parents face the problems between their children with telling their children about what is right and wrong, saying sorry if the parents are the ones in fault, and correcting the children's wrong perspectives. Those actions are the reflections of high level of affection because parents want their children to balance between their attitudes and arguments, thus shaping the characteristic of their children to be open-minded. However, in this novel, Luling chooses to solve the problems terribly. The act of her wanting to end her life whenever a quarrel takes place makes Ruth feel like she is not loved by her mother. This habit of Luling also makes Ruth distant from her by limiting the things she tells to Luling because Ruth knows Luling sweats the small stuffs.

The low affection of Luling towards Ruth is shown through the speech, reaction and direct comments of Luling. The level of affection is categorized as low because throughout the whole novel, Luling shows her affection explicitly only few times which have been mentioned above. Meanwhile, Luling makes herself to be distant with Ruth by showing low affection in solving their problems with her threat to kill herself. There are low levels of connectedness, interactional warmth and closeness on their mother-daughter relationship.

The low affection as a parenting style dimension does not directly have effects on Ruth's behaviors. In order to discover the effect on Ruth, this dimension is combined with other dimensions of parenting system which are explained in the next parts.

2. High Behavioral Control

Behavioral control that the parents have for their children consists of the rules of child's behaviors. Those rules can be performed whether firmly with consistent discipline or loosely without strict supervision. This dimension can be in the forms of maturity demands, monitoring and limit setting which are performed by the parents. Another characteristic of authoritarian parenting system is having high behavioral control (Aunola and Nurmi, 2005: 1145). Behavioral control can be expressed with parent's statements that there are rules in their family. Parents also warn their child when the child violates the rules by being angry. Behavioral control can be regarded as monitoring or supervising of parents. It is open and immediately understandable. Children understand and respond properly to behavioral control, especially when it is accompanied by explanations. Parent's demands, limit setting and maturity command are shown with or without reasoning about rules and the consequences of misbehavior. In high level of behavioral control, the misbehavior of the child can lead to clear consequences and parental willingness to confront a child who disobeys. The controlling and demanding attitudes of the parent also show that the parent's behavioral control is high. This study highlights the analysis of Luling's high behavioral control towards Ruth throughout the novel.

> *Ruth, who was watching television, noticed after a while that her mother was staring at her. "Why you not do study?" LuLing asked. She had made Ruth practice reading and writing since kindergarten, to help her be "one jump ahead"* (Tan, 2001: 51).

> *Her mother took Ruth's television-watching as a sign that she had nothing better to do.*
> *The only time her mother didn't bother her was when she was doing her homework or studying for a test* (Tan, 2001: 76).

> *"Last year, report card, you get one Satisfactory, not even Good. Should be everything Excellent. Tonight better study* more." "But that was in PE!" Ruth wailed (Tan, 2001: 78).

Hall and Okazaki (2003) identifies that an authoritarian parent expresses higher expectations for the grades that their child earns on schoolwork. They are less satisfied with grades of B's and C's than the other parents are. Getting good intellectual performance and achievement are considered as parents' responsibility on their child, so authoritarian parents also help the children to reach the child's good school achievements.

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For example, parents may set aside a specific time for the children to do homework and restrict the amount of time they spend watching television (2003: 85-87). Based on the quotations from the novel, Luling applies the high behavioral control which is also considered as disciplinary actions and monitoring. It can be seen that Ruth is firmly demanded to do very well in academic matter. Luling requires Ruth to be excellent and even one step ahead all of her friends. She strictly states that she must get all scores to be excellent, not letting her loose to have even one satisfactory score though it is just in Physical Education class which does not require sharp mind. Luling also considers watching television as something meaningless. Luling expresses it by continuing making conversation with Ruth every time she watches TV, opposite to what she always does during Ruth's reading and studying. Luling applies a controlling behavioral action through this action because she demands Luling to ace every subject in the school and forbids her to watch TV.

> *She knew her mother was sneaking looks at what she had written, because one day she asked Ruth, "Why you like this song 'Turn, Turn, Turn'? Just 'cause someone else like?" Another time her mother sniffed and said, "Why smell like cigarette?" Ruth had just written about going to Haight-Ashbury with friends and meeting some hippies in the park who offered them a smoke* (Tan, 2001: 97).

At the age of fifteen, Ruth rebels by stealing Luling's savings which are hidden all over the house. She uses the money to buy make up, movie tickets, cigarettes and weeds. Ruth does all that because she thinks that she deserves the money after all the lawn-mowing, dish-washing and Luling's yells. Ruth always writes in her diary which she hides. Despite her efforts to hide it around the house, Luling always manages to find the diary and read it.

> *If she accused her mother of reading her diary, Luling would become evasive, never admitting that she had done so, while also saying, "A daughter should have no secrets from a mother"* (Tan, 2001: 97).

Luling shows that she is controlling by searching out Ruth's daily life. She wants to know what Ruth is up to at the moment, every day. Firstly, Ruth who is annoyed because she is given limited personal space tries to rebel against it. She starts to hide her diaries around but it is useless. In this condition, good communication should be a great approach to control and keep up with children's present condition. However, Luling's way to do so is by reading Ruth's most personal book. Instead of being well-communicated between the two, Ruth becomes more and more uncomfortable in sharing her thoughts. Based on Baumrind (1966), restricting the child's autonomy is the characteristic of authoritarian parenting besides keeping the child in place and assigning household responsibilities (Baumrind, 1966: 890).

In Luling's actions, it can be seen that she disciplines and monitors Ruth's behaviors firmly. She also demands on good academic achievements. Those acts of high behavioral control are the indicators of an authoritarian parenting according to Aunola & Nurmi (2005).

3. High Psychological Control

Psychological control consists of parents' action in response to guilt and expressing disappointment to their child. It is performed by the parents in the form of controlling the child's emotion and behavior through psychological means. The parents can withdraw their acts of love or induce guilt after the violation of regulations. It undermines a statement of "I believe a child should be aware of how much I have done for them," "I let my child see how disappointed and ashamed I am if they misbehaves." Luling applies a high level of psychological control to Ruth which is explained below.

> *And then came rambling about who told the secret, without saying what the secret itself was, followed by more rambling about how the person had died horribly, why this had happened, how it could have been avoided, if only such-and-such had not occurred a thousand years before. If Ruth showed impatience in listening to any of this, LuLing became outraged,*

> *before sputtering an oath that none of this mattered because soon she too would die anyway, by accident, because of bad-luck wishes, or on purpose. And then the silent treatment began, a punishment that lasted for days or weeks, until Ruth broke down first and said she was sorry* (Tan, 2001: 7).

After finding a script which is written in Chinese by her mother a long time ago, Ruth tries so hard to decipher it. It takes a very long time for Ruth to translate that. Realizing that, she then imagine how mad Ruth would be in knowing that Ruth finds it hard to read Chinese. Ruth would be scolded for not studying Chinese hard enough when she was little. The quotation above tells about Luling's habit of having a quick temper that Ruth knows so well because it happens so many times. Ruth knows beforehand that if she tells her mother that she has difficulty in translating the Chinese script, Luling will snap and bring unrelated problems between her scoldings. It states that Luling also shows the punitive act of psychological control by love withdrawal. Luling fumes and does the silent treatment for days or weeks. Baumrind (2008) stated that to get their child to behave and to preserve their hierarchical authority, the authoritarian parents use threats, punishments, criticism and guilt induction rather than moral explanations, negotiations or reasons. In the novel, Luling does it until Ruth gets the point of her mother's sanction. Ruth then ends the punitive psychological control with her initiative of apologizing for her fault.

> *LuLing always criticized any edges that touched the sidewalk. She also complained about the yellow urine spots, made by the dog from across the street. When she went away to college and came home to visit, her mother still asked her to complain to the man across the street almost as soon as she walked in the door. Ruth usually procrastinated, and LuLing nagged about more and more yellow spots, as well as Ruth's laziness, her forgetfulness, her lack of concern for family, on and on* (Tan, 2001: 31).

> *LuLing stared at her, silent for five full minutes. Then she burst like a geyser: "You wish I dead? You wish no mother tell you what to do? Okay, maybe I die soon!" LuLing found out and became apoplectic. "You think she right, I wrong?" As had happened throughout Ruth's childhood, LuLing's fury escalated until she could barely speak, except to sputter the old threat: "Maybe I die soon!"* (Tan, 2001: 32-33)

On page 31, Ruth seems so tired of being ordered around when she is in the house. Luling always forces Ruth to mow the seven-by-seven foot square lawn, scolds Ruth for the dog of the neighbor's urine spots, tells Ruth off because of her forgetfulness, her laziness and her lack concern of the family. It is a psychological control because Luling keeps nagging to Ruth about the yellow urine spot which is caused by the neighbor's dog. Ruth has already tried to solve it by complaining to the neighbor, but Luling keeps repeating her command to speak to the neighbor about their dog's problem. Luling's naggings on this problem become wider to the naggings about Ruth's being lazy, forgetful and lack of family concerns. Encouraged by her friend, Ruth feels distressed to be treated as if she were a six years old. Luling's reaction which is shown in quotation from page 32-33 after Ruth's speaking up is also a high psychological control. It shakes Ruth because Luling threatens to take her own life. This reaction can be counted as a love withdrawn because Luling threatens to leave this world which can make Ruth feel guilty and alone. It leads Ruth to believe that a parent's love is being withdrawn.

> *When Ruth was a teenager, her mother had once run off in the middle of an argument, declaring she was going to drown herself in the ocean. She had waded in to her thighs before her daughter's screams and pleas had brought her back* (Tan, 2001: 75).

One day when Ruth is in the beach, she has a flashback when her mother carries out her threat for all this time. The same reason is applied about Luling's high psychological control and love withdrawal in the quotation above.

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> *"Why I have daughter like you? Why I live? Why I don't die long time 'go?" LuLing was huffing and snorting. Ruth thought she looked like a mad dog. "You want I die?"* (Tan, 2001: 98)

Luling states that when she catches Ruth smoking inside the house. Being hard-headed, Ruth defends herself by saying that she is an American who has a right to privacy and pursues her own happiness, not her mother's. Luling responds once again with threatening Ruth that she wants to die if Ruth does not want to obey her. This is a high psychological control because, once again, Luling's threat of suicide distress Ruth mentally.

Luling's applying high psychological control is also considered as harsh punitive actions by parents to the child. Based on Diana Baumrind's (1966) theory, authoritarian parenting demands obedience with what the parent thinks is right. In this case, Luling requires obedience in everything that she asks for Ruth. Based on the analysis, the guilt-induction from Luling to Ruth in the form of familiarizing the death threat is on high level since Ruth's early age. She always uses it as a 'weapon' in all of their arguments which are mostly caused by the unfulfilled wills of Luling. It is a harsh punitive control with high level of psychological control because it is related to the psychological or mental of the children.

Luling Young practices an authoritarian parenting to her daughter, Ruth Young. There are three parenting style dimensions that are used. They are parental affection, behavioral control and psychological control. An authoritarian parenting system is indicated by the low affection, high behavioral control and high psychological control. Throughout *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Luling is considered as practicing authoritarian parenting because in raising Ruth she is low in affection, high in behavioral control and high in psychological control. Those three dimensions are then combined with each other to discover the outcomes of the authoritarian parenting which is received by Ruth Young that influences her characteristics.

Authoritarian Parenting's Effects on Ruth

The three dimensions of parenting styles which are parental warmth/affection, behavioral control and psychological control are used to discover the effects on Ruth's characteristics in this study. The combinations of either two or three of those dimensions result in internalizing and externalizing behaviors from a child according to Aunola and Nurmi (2005: 1144-1145).

1. Internalizing Behaviors

Internalizing behaviors as the children outcome of parenting style is associated with psychological control. It comes in the forms of depressed mood, anxiety and fearfulness. Aunola and Nurmi (2005) stated that parental affection prevents internal distress more when it is combined with a high level of psychological control. However, in Luling's practice of parenting, she has low level of affection and high level of psychological control towards Ruth. It means that the combination results in the internalizing behaviors of her daughter. Throughout the novel, the effects that happen to Ruth are anxiousness, fearfulness, suicidal thoughts and trust issue.

> *And Ruth knew she was referring to the nursemaid who had killed herself when her mother was a girl. Ruth had had nightmares about that, the ghost with long hair, dripping blood, crying for revenge* (Tan, 2001: 13).

> *And because the subject of the curse often came up when LuLing was displeased with Ruth, as a child Ruth thought the curse and her father's death were related to her. She had recurrent nightmares of mutilating people in a brakeless car. She always tested and retested her brakes before heading out in the car* (Tan, 2001: 60).

Luling always has a superstitious mind. She also expresses her beliefs in most of her conversations with Ruth. That is especially done when they are quarreling over Luling's regulations which are violated by Ruth. The

statements that Ruth is cursed and her father passed away because of a curse are always said by Luling. She also talks to and about Precious Auntie, her biological mother who passed away a long time ago, to Ruth. Those repetitions make an impression to Ruth's mind which becomes a problem to her psychological state. The fear hits Ruth in her unconscious mind, resulting Precious Auntie to come to her nightmare as a child. The concept of curse also haunts her mind until the present day for she is always anxious and fearful about having a car accident.

> *And just like that, Ruth had been upended, flung about, was unable to keep her balance. LuLing's threats to die were like earthquakes. Ruth knew that the potential was there, that beneath the surface, the temblors could occur at any time. And despite this knowledge, when they erupted she panicked and wanted to run away before the world fell down* (Tan, 2001: 32).

> *Since childhood, Ruth had thought about death every day, sometimes many times a day. She thought everyone must secretly do the same, but no one talked openly about it except her mother. She had pondered in her young mind what death entailed* (Tan, 2001: 75).

The phenomenon of Luling familiarizing Ruth with death and suicide since she is young is considered not good in parenting. According to an article titled *Suicide in Children– What Every Parent Must Know* by Eileen Kennedy-Moore Ph.D. from *www.psychologytoday.com,* most kids have heard about suicide since they are 8 or 9 years old. However, if a parent wants to bring up the topic, they should correct the misunderstanding and explain that suicide is never a good answer because it is actually a permanent answer to temporary problems. They should teach their child that their life is precious and the parent is willing to help in any of their child's problems. In the novel, the fact that Luling applies a method of repetition about suicide makes Ruth imprinted that concept on her unconscious mind about the decreased value of living. As a result, Ruth has a suicidal thought since a very early age, eleven. She starts to think that suicide is the only way out of her heavy problem. She always thinks that death is the way to get out of the big problems. The quotations show how often Ruth thinks about death which is abnormal for child around her age.

> *Didn't Mom ever realize, Ruth now mused, how her demands for no secrets drove me to hide even more from her?* (Tan, 2001: 97)

> *They could not trust each other. That was how dishonesty and betrayal started, not in big lies but in small secrets* (Tan, 2001: 97).

The quotations show Ruth's reactions of her privacy violation when she was 16 years old. Knowing that her mother reads her diary because she keeps bringing up about stuffs she writes in the diary, Ruth who is given limited personal space tries to rebel against it. She starts to move around her diaries but it is useless. Larry P. Nucci in the sub-chapter entitled *Maintaining Communication: A 2-way street* of a book *Parenting for Character* (2008) stated that the children are generally more willing to disclose their personal information to the less intrusive parents, even when it concerns involvement in drinking or sexual behavior. Parents with higher level of monitoring and controlling the personal domains results in higher levels of depression and negative behaviors in their children. It also makes the children form greater efforts toward their personal secrecy. Ruth dislikes how her mother tries to keep their two-way communication by violating her privacy. Instead of being well-communicated between the two, Ruth becomes more and more uncomfortable in sharing her thoughts. She then has a trust issue for her mother. This trust issue towards her mother pressures Ruth and makes her write unpleasant things for her mother which nearly kills her mother. It is explained in the next chapter of this study.

2. Externalizing Behaviors

The combination of high behavioral control and high psychological control causes externalizing behaviors. Aunola and Nurmi (2005) stated that a high level of maternal behavioral control decreases their child's

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external problem, but only if combined with a low psychological control, and that the positive impacts of behavioral control vanish if mother show a high level of psychological control at once. It has no impact if it is combined with high level of psychological control (2005: 1155). The effects of Luling's combination of high behavioral control and high psychological control in Ruth's externalizing behaviors are hesitant in talk, explosive-tempered and suicidal.

> *Ruth wanted to know right away, but she could not ask her mother. She knew from experience what happened whenever she asked her mother to render Chinese characters into English* (Tan, 2001: 7).
>
> *So Ruth did not ask her mother* (Tan, 2001: 8).

The quotations are a reaction from Ruth when she wants to ask her mother to help translating Luling's story in Chinese. The 46 year old Ruth still remembers well about her mother's high psychological control which has been explained before in this study. She becomes terrified to ask her mother for a favor because she is scared to be scolded for what she has not been done in the past. As a smart woman, Ruth learns and remembers her mother's reaction to her behaviors in the past. Ruth is quick to decide her choice about not asking her mother for things she does not understand, in this case Luling's manuscript that is written in Chinese. She then settles on finding a translator to translate it into English. Throughout the novel, Ruth also mostly keeps her words in her mind when conversing with her mother to prevent her mother's unwanted responses.

> *STOP!!!*
> *PRIVATE!!! IF YOU ARE READING THIS YOU ARE GUILTY OF TRESPASSING!!! YES! I DO MEAN YOU.!*
> *The week before Ruth wrote those fateful words, she and Luling had been escalating in their torment of each other* (Tan, 2001: 98).
>
> *"You talk about killing yourself, so why don't you ever do it? I wish you would. Just do it, do it, do it! Go ahead, kill yourself! Precious Auntie wants you to, and so do I!"* (Tan, 2001: 99)
>
> *She had cried while writing the words, full of anger, fear, and a strange freedom of finally admitting so openly that she wanted to hurt her mother as much as her mother hurt her* (Tan, 2001: 99).
>
> *That was why Ruth hated it whenever she and Art argued. She tried hard not to get angry. But sometimes she reached a breaking point and erupted, only to wonder later how she had lost control* (Tan, 2001: 9).

Ruth has a flashback about her sixteen year old self where she hides her diary, which is full of her writing about her daily activities, around the house. Knowing her mother can always find its hiding place, Ruth deliberately writes hurtful words which are mentioned on the quotations above that are addressed to Luling. Ruth becomes explosive when she is faced with big problems. She is not instantly angry on every trouble in front of her. Her anger gradually arises over time. In Ruth's manner and reaction, it can be seen that Ruth has an explosive temper because of her mother. From the quotations, it shows that the privacy issue over a diary happens for some time. The sentence *"The week before Ruth wrote those fateful words,"* (Tan, 2001: 98) shows that Ruth restrains her rage for a week before finally writing a message for her mother to commit suicide. As an adult, Ruth also represses her anger towards small problems. She expresses it when she thinks they are too much for her. This effect shows that Luling's arbitrary power results in Ruth's restricted expression of her own thoughts and emotions which is symbolized by her diary. This combination of limitation and high power assertion makes Ruth rebel against her mother by expressing her repressed anger.

> *I want to die, she moaned to herself. Die, die, die. First she cried a lot in the bathroom, then sliced her wrist with a dinner knife. It left a row of plowed-up skin, no blood, and it hurt too much to cut any deeper. Later, in the backyard, she found a rusty tack in the dirt, poked her fingertip, and waited for blood poisoning*

to rise up her arm like liquid in a thermometer (Tan, 2001: 83).

Ruth once runs into a misunderstanding which involves her neighbors. She asphyxiates and feels nauseous whenever meeting them. She then decides to commit suicide as wanting to get out of her problem. She tries to die from blood poisoning and drowning. Berkowitz (2008) stated that the marital behaviors of parents will surely imprint themselves on the children's moral memories. Based on the previous explanations, it can be seen that Ruth's reaction which is a suicide attempt happens because of her mother's act of familiarizing the suicide and death every time both of them are in a quarrel. That act results in an impulsive act of Ruth attempting to suicide because she feels hopeless, unhappy and distressed.

Internalizing behaviors are child's problem behaviors in the forms of child's depressive symptoms. Ruth shows this through her characteristics of anxious, fearful and suicidal. In contrast, externalizing behaviors are negative problem behaviors in the form of uncontrolled behaviors. During and after the authoritarian that she receives, she becomes quiet when she is conversing with her mother and thoughtful when she is conversing with other people. Ruth is explosive for big problems and also suicidal.

Conclusion

The analysis on Luling in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* shows that she performs an authoritarian parenting in raising her daughter, Ruth. It can be seen through her action of being low in affection, high in behavioral control and high in psychological control which fit the three dimensions that the authoritarian parents have. She shows so little of physical act in expressing her love to her daughter. The high behavioral control is shown through the strict habit-forming of being organized and performing well academically. Lastly, the high psychological control by Luling can be seen in her act of harsh punitive action in the form of threatening Ruth to kill herself when they are bickering.

When Luling's low affection, high behavioral control and high psychological control are combined, there are two types of outcome as the results which can be seen in Ruth. The first is internalizing behaviors in the form of Ruth's being anxious, fearful and suicidal. The second is externalizing behaviors in the form of Ruth's being hesitant in talk, explosive for big problems and suicidal.

The study leads the researcher to conclude that parenting style does change children characteristics because it shapes a child to have particular qualities whether they are good or bad.

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