

Psychosocial Development of the Protagonist Dexter in *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* and Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*

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Abstract: *Jeff Lindsay is an American novelist and Lewis Carroll was an English writer both belong to different time periods and different literature and their works Darkly Dreaming Dexter and Alice in the wonderland belong to different genres but the protagonist in these novels have some similar psychic ability. Both the protagonists suffer from the identity crisis because they do not get proper guidance and proper development in their life stages. Human mind is the place where the thoughts, feelings and behaviours are born and the heart responds to it. The personality trait depends on the development and growth of the mind. Development is the nonstop process which continues in each stage till the end of every human's life. The growth and development makes the changes in one's behaviour and personality. Every human being has unique individual characteristics which makes the difference between every single human being. This paper attempts to discover how the protagonist's brain developed and identified their true self with society.*

Keywords: Unconscious, Self Identity, Identity Crisis, Psychic Ability

I. INTRODUCTION

In Jeff Lindsay's work *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, the character Dexter Morgan plays an important role not with heroic abilities but rather as a villain, an antihero. He is the protagonist of this story because the plot revolves around him being the centre character through his thoughts and actions.

Erick Erickson who postulated the theory of psychosocial development. Erikson's theory is based on one's individual development in their life and their interaction with the society. This theory analyses the behaviour and the characteristics of a person throughout their lifespan. According to him, social experiences only build one's personality traits. Ego's identity is one of the main elements in this development theory. New experience and interaction with people will develop and change this ego's identity. In each developmental phase of one's life, a crisis happens and it's nothing new and if one phase develops in the right way, then they succeed in their current phase and then they are able to develop in their next phase or level of life. According to him, one should master each stage of life and if he/she fails in one phase then it leads to failure in the next phase of life.

II. ERICK ERICKSON'S THEORY

Erick Erickson discovered eight developmental stages in human life. He coined the term identity crisis and he developed the concept of loss of identity. According to him the eight developments made human life better. In each developmental stage/phase the child faces a different crisis according to its level. If a person who faces each stage of life by learning and adapting through his/her learning will be able to attain success in the other stages. This developmental stage depends on a person's interaction with the social environment. This development starts from one's birth till the end of their life. The crises which they face are to be resolved by them and need to develop one's personality. The person who can handle the crisis in each stage well, It is obvious they will succeed and develop one's behaviour in the good way but failure in any one of the stages leads to the bad behaviour. For good development in each stage, it depends on how they interact with peers and provide the needs they need in each stage. If all the stages are managed properly by one person then that person will emerge with an accomplishment of mastering the inadequacy, which is referred as ego strength or ego quality.



According to Erick Erickson, social development is important for the person to develop their skills and knowledge. Social development leads an individual to interact with society in a good manner. Otherwise an individual will lack confidence and will not be able to survive in society. So a failure in any one of the stages leads the person to doubt oneself, feel guilty and lack their identity in the society. The one who develops well in these eight stages will lead a beautiful life and they will be ready to accept their end in the fulfillment and be satisfied. Trust vs Mistrust, Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt, Initiative vs Guilt, Industry vs Inferiority, Identity vs Confusion, Intimacy vs Isolation, Generativity vs Stagnation and Integrity vs Despair. These are the eight stages, which make human life in a particular way. At the age of three Dexter and his brother Brain lost their mother.

III. DEVELOPMENT STAGE OF DEXTER

According to Erickson this is the stage where the child learns to interact with society. This is the age between the second and third stages of Erickson's psychosocial development. The second stage is Autonomy vs shame and doubt. This is the stage where the child starts to control his bodily function but in this stage Dexter's mother was dead and the one who should have trained him was dead and that's why he was not able to control his urges. In this stage he became loner and no one is able to guide him. According to Erikson if one wants to succeed in one stage then that person must get proper guidance in each stage and he needs to master each stage. When Dexter lost his mother at the age of three and no one was there for him. It made him lose in the upcoming stages. His fall in the next upcoming stages happened due to the failure in his second stage which made him a serial killer. The third stage is initiative vs guilt, in this stage a child starts to interact with the environment both physically and mentally. When Dexter starts to interact with the social environment he sees his mother's death in front of his eyes. This traumatic experience motivated him to kill others. She was murdered by a drug dealer in front of him in the cruel manner. During this stage he had a shocking experience and in response, his mind sensed fear which increased his adrenaline which either tells a person to run or fight as an instinct to escape a situation but when it comes to Dexter, it made him as a person who is numb to fear from a very little age. It made him show his anger and gave urge to harm and kill. This made him a serial killer. Most commonly, a failure in this stage leads a person to feel guilty and they will lack initiative. In Dexter's case it is different. His urge to kill was developed unintentionally due to his mother's death which shook his subconscious mind to motivate him to kill. It was hidden in his mind until a certain period and then it came to consciousness when he was twelve and that is when he started to kill the animals. He never hesitated to kill others. Here, a child's first initiative step is turned into a negative approach by killing others.

In the sixth stage, identity vs role confusion when Dexter was 20 he identifies his in-depth desire to be a serial killer, when Harry was in the hospital for his treatment, he made Dexter kill the nurse. Harry was the one who motivated Dexter's urges of killing to kill the bad people who are bad for the society and who harm innocent people for their self pleasure. Dexter is a man of disguise. He is extremely intelligent, very handsome and charismatic who excels in his profession as a blood spatter analyst. He manages both his personalities in a professional way. At the same time he has control of his ethical code to keep him on track and control his ego.

3.1 Self Identity

The Ego's identity is important in one's life to identify themselves. If this ego's identity is not developed well then it leads to identity crisis or loss of identity. If the ego of the person does not develop well, it is obvious I would have taken control of a person's mind. The ego only deals with reality but if Id takes its place then the human mind will be corrupted and the beast within him with the killer instincts will take control of him in the real world. Which happened to Dexter, who is a well respected person at day and a serial killer by night. Through analysing his character, we can see how he tries to balance the ego and I'd like a professional. The ego is the one which makes one's identity in a particular way based on their experience and character development.

Self schema is one through which we come to know about one's ability and identity which stays as an everlasting memory in a person's mind. Their own identity, whichever they acquire in the fifth stage will never be destroyed from a person's memories. The acquired identity is composed and stays stable in their mind. It is stored in the long term memory and it might vary from one person to another, based on their culture and social experiences. Self schema not only talks about identity but also about one's belief and experience. According to the theory of self perception by the



psychologist Daryl Bem, the self perception makes the behaviour and attitude toward others. By the individual perception their character is sketched up and they begin to behave in that particular attitude. When analysing Dexter's character, his attitude towards life is made by him and by his step father Harry. When Dexter was twelve he started to kill the animals, at the age of fourteen he killed his neighbour's dog named Billups which was buried during the night time and he disturb Doris Morgan sleep. This was seen by Harry and he guides him in the proper way.

At the age of twelve, according to Erikson's psychosocial theory it is when the children learn new things and develop their characters. Harry saw Dexter killing their neighbour's dog and he trained him to act in the society in a particular way without getting caught. He taught him to be meticulous, to socialize with others in good manners and imitate life whatever life teaches him. He taught him to kill the bad people who escaped the law and who deserved to die for their crimes, without leaving any clues in a meticulous way. These are called Harry's code. Which turned Dexter into a skillful serial killer. Harry does not stop Dexter's dark nature but he tries to change his perception and direction of his killer instincts to kill those who are bad and never been punished. In this stage, Dexter did not succeed according to the theory of Erikson. The failure of this stage should have given an outcome of inferiority complex but the person who learns their phase of life in the wrong way makes the wrong decision and moves in the negative way.

You're different, Dexter. Yes, Harry, I certainly am. But you can learn to control that difference and use it constructively. All right, Harry. If you think I should. How? And he told me. [...] Have you ever wanted to kill something else? Something bigger than a dog? I try to answer but there is something in my throat. I clear it. 'Yes,' I say. 'A person?' 'Nobody in particular, Dad. Just-' I shrug again.(36)

Harry came to know Dexter's true identity as a twelve year old child who has the killer instincts to kill others. Then Harry taught him in a particular way to act normal in society. Only through Harry's code, he was made into a serial killer who can kill the bad people who deserve it. Otherwise Dexter would have become like Brain who kills the others without any reason but can kill anyone only for his self pleasure.

Self identity or self concept is the main concept for the self image, self esteem and ideal self. When analysing the characteristics of Dexter he made his self image by his hidden profession as serial killer and blood spatter analyst. His role as serial killer is to satisfy his id which he calls as a dark passenger and another role as bold spatter analyst is to hide his dark side and to trap his bad victims. Here he plays a dual role and makes it as his self image. When talking about the self esteem he esteems himself as a hero and as a monster in many interchangeable circumstances. His action looks cruel because he is killing others which is an unforgivable crime under law. The way the author made him as a monster, his character is still accepted as a hero on the other hand because he punishes bad people who have a very good life by sucking everything from the innocent people who did nothing wrong. His killing nature is justified as a person who cleans the society by filtering bad people. He made his strong opinion on his identity both as a serial killer and as a blood spatter analyst. This self concept is made up of a self schema.

I am unlovable. Following Harry's plan, I have tried to involve myself in other people, in relationships, and even- in my sillier moments – in love. But it doesn't work. Something in me is broken or missing, and sooner or later the person catches me acting, or one of those nights comes along. I can't even keep pets. Animals hate me. I bought a dog once; it barked and howled- at me – in a nonstop no mind fury for two days before I had to get rid of it. I tried a turtle. I touched it once and it wouldn't come out of its shell again, and after a few days of that it died. Rather than see me or have me touch it again, it died. Nothing else loves me, or ever will. Not even- especially- me. I know what I am and that is not a thing to love. I'm alone in the world, all alone, but for Deborah. Except, of course, for the thing inside, who does not come out to play too often. And does not actually play with me but must have somebody else. (47)

By this passage, we find Dexter lives a lonely life even though he has Deborah, his stepsister. He also got a wife Rita whom he married later but still he feels alone and no one is there for him to show or receive love from. According to Erikson's psychosocial development the sixth stage which happens between twenty to forty years old. It is when the people seek for a relationship and get committed in a relationship. In this stage a person makes and develops their identity with their relationship. In Dexter's case he wants to be isolated and be left alone. He himself thought that no one is there for him to love but actually he has Rita and Rita's Children. By the above quote, he wants to have a love life but his dark passenger in him creates the fear if he falls in love or in relationship with others. He does not even want to love himself because of this dark passenger. When he acts as a dark passenger he likes killing others but when he comes to a normal mood he hates his dark passenger which does not let him make a relationship. Dexter fails in this

stage too. He wants to be alone because of his dark passenger. He does not have any interest in Rita because he just made a relationship with her for the sake of society. He wears a blood spatter analyst and Rita's husband as a mask in the society.

3.2 Ego Balancing the Mind

Dexter is the one who is lacking as a person in his family; he lost his mother at the age of three and had a father who never cared for him. He was adopted by Harry Morgan, a police officer in the Miami police department. His biological brother Brain was not with him because the day his mother was brutally murdered, they both got separated. Brain thought Harry was the main reason. So Brain wanted to kill Harry's daughter Deborah for their separation but Dexter did not want to do that because she was Harry's daughter and his step sister and he followed Harry's code. When Brain made Dexter kill Deborah, Harry's voice spoke in his mind to obey Harry's code. He struggles a lot with the dark passenger and tries to control it from killing Deborah.

My knife was still fighting its way down towards- 'Dexter!' said mommy/Deborah on the table, but the dark passenger called louder and moved forward, grabbing my hands and guiding the knife down- 'Dex-!' 'You're a good kid, Dex,' whispered Harry from behind in his feather-hard ghost voice, just enough to twitch the knife so very little up again. 'I can't help it,' I whispered back, so very much growing into the handle of the quivering blade. 'Choose what ... or who ... you kill,' he said with the hard and endless blue eyes, watching now loud enough to push the knife a full half inch away. 'There are plenty of people who deserve it,' said Harry so softly above the rising angry yammer of the stampede inside. The tip of the knife winked and froze in place. The dark passenger could not send it down. Harry could not pull it away. And there we were. (271)

The passage above states for the first time that Dexter suffered to kill other people. This shows that ego is trying to balance the id in his mind but his dark passenger does not allow the ego to control its place. The dark passenger is the representation of Id and Harry's voice arises when he tries to kill Deborah which represents Harry's voice as his superego which tries to balance the Id the dark passenger to calm Dexter's killer instincts. For the first time he struggles between the dark passenger and Harry's code. But finally Harry's code wins and Dexter puts the knife down. So Harry's code acts as a superego which tries to reveal the reality by controlling the urges of the dark passenger to be obeyed by Dexter's ego.

In every stage of Erikson's psychosocial development theory Dexter did not attain exact failure. He learns and thinks about things well but in a negative way. His identification of Id is the main thing which makes him move in the negative direction. This happened due to the absence of his mother in his early childhood stage. So according to Erick Erikson's psychology in his theory of Psychosocial development if one needs to attain proper development in their life, then they need to master each stage of development. Dexter's life can be taken as the best example if one of the phases of life is not developed and learnt for good. Then childhood development affects Dexter's life and makes him a serial killer. But Harry's code acts as a superego which helps Dexter's ego to control his dark passenger and changes his killer instincts from killing the bad people who deserve it. Harry's code is the main element which activates Dexter's mind towards somewhat the right path by killing the other serial killers who killed innocent people. Even though Harry died due to cancer, his code which he said to Dexter remained in his mind which saved Deborah. Harry's code changed into an ethical code for Dexter and he followed it.

IV. DEVELOPMENT STAGE OF ALICE

Erickson in the third stage, talks about Initiative vs guilt. This is the stage when the children get to interact with their peers. In Alice's case she talks independently with all the creatures she meets. In *Alice in Wonderland* all the creatures in the wonderland fear the Red Queen because if anything or any creature happens to be against her in any way, she will order that person's head to be cut off. But Alice was not afraid about that; she just talks to her in a friendly manner and she even goes against the Queen when she gave a wrong judgement but at the same time when Alice was mistaken for a maid by the white Rabbit she did not speak against him. When the Gryphon and the mock turtle keep on interrupting and insulting her when she was talking about her adventures, she did not speak against them. This shows Alice had the ability to talk with all but she was not able to stand when someone was mocking her. But she stood up to give her voice for the wrongly testified victim at the trial.



According to Erikson's first stage of development Trust vs Mistrust, which happens between the periods from birth to the age three. Alice trusted others blindly without any question. She blindly ate things which were given by the caterpillar, who was rude to her. When she met the Cheshire cat it guided her to the mad Hatter and March Hare house she simply followed that way which was said to be guided by him. To the caterpillar who did not even talk to her in a nice manner when Alice met him he just asked her who she was at the beginning. She was questioned in a rude way. She was also frustrated with the change of her size. The Cheshire cat behaved in a different manner and it disappeared by leaving his grin to disappear last. But she also followed her words.

4.1 Physical Changes

Erickson's fifth stage is an important stage for one to develop and make their own identity to survive in society. This stage is about Identity vs confusion which plays the vital role in every person's life to identify themselves. This stage happens during the stage of adolescence. In this the child turns into an adult and faces a lot of challenges in mind and changes in their body where the physical transformation takes place. Those who succeeded in the previous stage are the ones who can succeed this stage properly. The identity crisis happens often due to the changes in body and mind. A person, who did not succeed in their previous stage, will have lots of confusion about their role in the society. The frustration and anxiety of every teenager due to their new experience into adulthood is shown here which is shown through the character Alice. During this stage a person finds their identity but the failure in this stage leads an individual to lose their identity. Alice as a girl her dream is the representation of the child to adult stage. All the people face this stage and lots of people have confusion in this stage but if the person does not get proper guidance or proper development in the previous stages, it will lead to identity crisis or lead to confusion of their role in life.

Physical change is the main process the child faces because of hormones. But In her first stage, we could see how she was confused to accept it.

The Rabbit noticed Alice, as she went hunting about, and called out to her in an angry tone, 'Why, Mary Ann, What are you doing out here? Run home this moment, and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan! Quick, now!' And Alice was so much frightened that she ran off at once in the direction it pointed to, without trying to explain the mistake it had made. (37)

Alice was mistaken by the White Rabbit for his maid Mary Ann, she ran to fetch the gloves and fan without asking any words. She was afraid by his words and was confused about her identity at that random place of wonders. She could not tolerate her change of size as she was already puzzled by the wonderland and the creatures.

'Who are you?' said the caterpillar. This was not encouraging opening for a conversation Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I hardly know, sir, just at present- at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.' 'What do you mean by that?' said the caterpillar sternly. 'Explain yourself!' 'I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.' 'I don't see,' said the caterpillar. 'I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly,' Alice replied very politely, 'for I can't understand it myself to begin with: and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.' 'It isn't,' said the caterpillar. (47)

Here we see Alice was scared about her growth because she was not able to recognise her own well. Because of her sudden transformation and change of size, the caterpillar who comes under sage archetype taught her to control her size by eating the mushroom. He also tells her that one side makes her grow taller and the other side makes her shorter.

'Serpent!' screamed the pigeon. 'I'm not a serpent!' said Alice indignantly. 'Let me alone!' 'Serpent I say again!' repeated the pigeon, but in a more subdued tone [...] 'But I'm not a serpent, I tell you!' said Alice. 'I'm a - I'm a -' 'well! What are you?' said the pigeon. 'I can see you're trying to invent something!' 'I - I'm a little girl,' said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through that day. (54)

She moves like a serpent into the tree and her head grows larger. She herself is confused about her identity when the Pigeon asks her a question about her identity. She gets confused; she only remembers that she is a little girl. We see she even hesitates to reply to the Pigeon's question. Lot of the creatures in the wonderland mistake her for someone else. Lot of them called her using different names. The White Rabbit identified her as his maid and called her by the name Mary Ann, then the Pigeon identified her as a Serpent and then the Cheshire cat said she is mad.

Five and Seven said nothing, but looked at two. Two began in a low voice, ‘why the fact is, you see, Miss, this here ought to have been a red rose – tree, and we put a white one in by mistake; and if the queen was to find it out, we should all have our heads cut off, you know. So you see, Miss, we’re doing our best, afore she comes, to–(77)

When Alice enters into the garden, the playing cards call Alice as 'miss' because they misinterpreted Alice as a woman. The Garden is the place where Alice identifies herself and the garden itself is the representation of the world of adults. It is where she meets the creatures again like the White Rabbit, Duchess, Cheshire cat, Mad Hatter, March Hare, Dormouse, Duchess Cook, the birds and the animals who came to participate in the Queen’s Croquet game. These are the creatures Alice meets when she was suffering from her change of size.

4.2 Mental Development

“What’s your name, child?” ‘My name is Alice, so please your Majesty,’ said Alice very politely; but she added, to herself” (78). Only in the garden, Alice was able to identify her true nature because after she entered into the garden her size did not change and when the Queen asked about her she answered without getting confused. Others identified her in different names. Some even called her a miss but the Queen of Hearts only identified her as a child. Even though she was in the adult world she was not able to recognize herself as an adult. According to her she was just a child and she thought it was her nature. She was not able to accept her changes. This dream is her fear about her stages and her anxiety about growing up. She was scared about the adult world in real life and did not want to grow up in the real world. This shows that she was in her own comfort zone and she did not want to come out of it. According to the Erickson's stage of childhood from one to five years old the children who failed they could not come out from their comfort zone like Alice. That was the thing with Alice who failed. Not in all the stages but a failure in one stage is enough to lead a person to fail again in the next following stage.

V. CONCLUSION

Both the novels belong to different genres one is *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* which comes under the genre of Crime and Horror and the other one is *Alice in wonderland* which comes under the genre of children literature and fantasy. Even though both of these come under different genres both the Protagonists suffer from identity crisis. Due to the Dark passenger Dexter had an identity crisis. He was not able to be in a relationship in reality. It happened because his true identity made him fall on the negative side so he was not able to make a true relationship with Rita. In Wonderland, Alice was not able to face the adult world and follow their rules and regulations. So she did not want to be an adult. Due to these changes in her body she had an identity crisis and later in the end she was able to identify her nature as like a child, even though she was in the stage of adolescence she identified herself as a little girl.