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Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English Language and Literature

# MASTER THESIS

Letters and Foreign Languages

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**The Traumatic Reflection on Identity Construction in *Darkly Dreaming***  
***Dexter***

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## Declaration

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### DECLARATION OF INTEGRITY

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I, "*Remadna*", solemnly declare that the dissertation titled "*The Traumatic Reflection on Identity Construction in Dostoyevsky's Novels*" submitted to the Department of the English language and Literature at Biskra University is entirely my own work, free from plagiarism, and has not been submitted to any other educational institution. I have appropriately acknowledged and cited all sources used, and I have conducted myself with academic integrity throughout the process. I understand the severe consequences of academic misconduct and affirm the authenticity of my dissertation.

Signature



### **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. Thank you so much for everything  
Words can hardly describe my thanks and appreciation to you. You have been my source of  
inspiration, support, and guidance.

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### **Abstract**

It is the intent of this paper to examine the relationship between Dexter Morgan and Brian Moser's childhood traumatic event, in *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* novel, and their fascination with death, and its later influence on their adult personality development. The focus of this study will shift to the long-term reflection of the trauma suffered by these serial killers along with the impact of their socioenvironmental living conditions. Thus, we will be exploring the psychological defense mechanisms, which are Repression, Displacement, Sublimation, Introjection, Identification with the Aggressor, and Projection. These coping modes will help us explain how rising from a traumatic childhood event shaped the brothers adulthood. In addition, we will include Social Learning Theory to show how they adopted their mother murderers' behaviours. Lastly, we will apply the Lifestyle and Routine Activities theories to show the connections between the serial killers trauma and their victims. Therefore, these theories will contribute to elaborate different reflections of Dexter and Brian's trauma in their identities construction and the impact of their socioenvironmental conditions.

**Keywords:** *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, Serial Killers, Childhood Trauma, Defence Mechanisms, Social Learning theory, Victimology sub-theories.

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## General Introduction

A child body's biology is developing from conception to young adulthood; therefore, his/ her environment can markedly influence the development of human biological systems. Positive and negative experiences are able to imprint themselves in children's psyche. Although young children are not able to describe their feelings as well as older children, a two-year-old may process the experience of his mother being beaten to death or being executed differently than an eleven-year-old would. This traumatic experience can have deep effects on the child's brain because of its vulnerability.

One of many novels that depicted psychological trauma is *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*. It is a crime horror novel by Jeff Lindsay that was released in July 2004. The first in Jeff's crime horror series, it formed the basis of the Showtime television series *Dexter* and won the 2005 Dilys Award and the 2007 Book to TV award. The novel discusses the story of two brothers who have been traumatized at a very early age by the death of their mother. The trauma has had a great impact on the kids' lives, as previous researchers state that Dexter suffers from post-traumatic syndrome that causes the disruption of his psychosexual development.

They portray how their adulthood is an extension of their early life experiences. In other words, Dexter and Brian's trauma have influenced their lives and personality development as it is clearly reflected in their criminal profiles. In this dissertation, we discuss the work of Jeff Lindsay, *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, by analyzing the characters' trauma in terms of how it is reflected in their criminal identities and how their environmental factors contribute to develop their personality. We pinpoint the defense mechanisms used by the characters to cope with their trauma and how it is manifested in their victimization process according to social learning theory. In addition, we aim to specify the major characteristic that describes the killers' victims that connects to the brothers' trauma by using Lifestyle



theory and Routine Activities theory. In conclusion, the three following chapters' objective is to identify the socioenvironmental factors that turned the brothers to serial killers and to explore the connections between their childhood trauma and the violence that they have inflicted upon their victims.

The first chapter consists of a theoretical framework that elaborates the concept of trauma and its role in shaping serial killers' lives. The genesis of the aggression motive begins with a traumatic upbringing because arising from a dysfunctional family with the direct view of violence can develop sadistic tendencies in a child's personality. In addition, we intend to tackle the victimology discipline to understand the victimization process and its causes by focusing on the victim interference in crime and why particular individuals are more likely to be victimized. Ultimately, this chapter is basically a theoretical description of trauma studies in serial killers' lives.

The second chapter of our research focuses on elaborating Dexter and Brian's socioenvironmental living conditions that has strongly shaped their killing desires in distinctive ways; each serial killer has a distinctive environment that shape his trauma response in a different way. In this chapter, we analyse the brother's lives separately by tackling their childhood trauma, socioenvironmental factors, Dexter's dark passenger, their modus operandi, and victims' selection. We aim to carefully follow the path of our theoretical framework in order to pinpoint the genuine origins of their issue.

The last chapter is divided into three parts. The first part analyses the psychological complexities of the characters that have been manifested in their behaviours using defence mechanisms. Through these mechanisms, we would be able to see how the trauma shaped and directed their lives' choices. The second part of the chapter consists of applying the Social Learning Theory on Dexter and Brian that demonstrates how the trauma is fixed and internalized in their unconscious part of the mind. The last part of the chapter is going to be

devoted to the analysis of the brothers' victims using the two sub-theories of victimization to analyse the killers' victims. In conclusion, these theories are going to contribute to demonstrate how their criminal identities are created.

## Chapter One

### Theoretical Contextualization of the Story

#### Introduction

Early life experiences form a foundation stone on which the rest of our lives are built, and when the foundation is not solid, it will affect the structure of our brains. Therefore, Individuals who experienced complex trauma in their childhoods are significantly more vulnerable to developing mental health illness, it can also directly cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Ultimately, traumatic childhood is a sign for extreme aggressiveness in adulthood. In *Darkly Dreaming Dexter's* novel, Dexter and Brian's environmental factors have helped to turn them from innocent individuals to criminals.

*Darkly Dreaming Dexter's* moral dilemma has become a cult-hit in the landscape of popular North American television due to the protagonist multi-dimensional character. Dexter Morgan, the main character, who is a police in Miami-Dade Police Department as a forensic blood spatter analyst. He is secretly a serial killer, arising from a traumatic incident connected to the death of his mother when he was three years old. His foster father, Detective Harry Morgan, has recognized Dexter's instincts, and has helped him to channel them in this constructive way. He has taught him to target only serial killers, rapists, child molesters and other undesirables who have escaped from the judicial punishment by following the "Code of Harry." Only his foster father knows about his reality. Neither his adoptive sister Debra Morgan nor those in the department know about his secret killings.

As Dexter manages his double life, he has known about the case of three prostitutes who have been murdered by the "Tamiami Slasher." In order to gain recognition as a homicide detective, Deborah, Dexter's adoptive sister asks him to assist her with the investigation. Dexter has helped Deborah out of his sense of morality. In spite of this, he has felt a powerful attraction to the killer, due to similar desires. While driving around Miami,

Dexter spots a refrigerated truck. As he pursues the truck, the killer has thrown a severed head into his car. Later, the Tamiami Slasher begins sending him messages. Dexter has been torn between helping Deborah and allowing the killer to continue his spree.

The Tamiami Slasher kidnaps Deborah and brings Dexter to the scene, revealing that his sister is being held in the same shipping container that Dexter's biological mother, Laura, has been held in. The killer is Dexter's biological brother, Brian, who has been separated from Dexter after their mother's murder at the hands of a drug dealer. As Deborah's spiteful colleague, MigdiaLaGuerta, arrives on the scene, Brian is disappointed that Dexter refuses to kill Deborah. Dexter allows Brian to kill LaGuerta and helps him escape, out of a sense of familial loyalty. In the epilogue, Dexter stands at LaGuerta's funeral and feels sad, but cannot bring himself to cry.

## **1.1 Description of Childhood Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Children of 6 years old and younger may develop a Posttraumatic Stress Disorder following a traumatic event. PTSD is defined as the exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence either by directly experiencing the traumatic event(s), or by witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others, especially primary caregivers (American Psychiatric Association 272). There is a common misinterpretation that children under the age of six years old are incapable of understanding traumatic experiences; however, the malleability of children's neural circuits during early brain development makes them much more sensitive to the exposure of negative experiences (Eaton 23). Brain areas implicated in the stress response include the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex. Traumatic stress can be associated with lasting changes in these brain areas. (Bremner 1)

The body's biology is developing from conception to young adulthood; therefore, their environment can considerably influence the development of human biological systems. Positive and negative situations have the power to engrave themselves in children's conscious and subconscious in an equal manner. Facing strong stimuli can completely destroy the child's sense of security, such as loud noises and violence; it is because of the sensitivity of a child's brain. Although young children are not able to describe and verbalize their emotions as well as older children, early childhood toxic and positive experiences can have profound effects on the child's life.

Trauma can refer to a direct violent or non-violent attack by another kid, a parent, another adult, or an animal, as well as witnessing a traumatic event that threatens the life or physical security of a close one. This is specifically vital for kids as their sense of safety depends on the perceived security of their close caregivers. For example, when a child witnesses his/her parent being verbally or physically abused within the family or watches a sibling or friend being assaulted or attacked by another adult, this can also result in childhood

trauma ("Childhood Trauma & Mental Health" par. 2). Therefore, trauma can also be the indirect exposure to danger as it is elaborated in the following paragraph:

Both direct and indirect exposure to trauma can increase the risk of PTSD. The latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) determines direct traumas as threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence. Indirect traumas include witnessing the trauma, or learning that a relative or close friend was exposed to a trauma. Differences in trauma characteristics, along with differences in personal characteristics, may affect the risk of developing PTSD. (Neura)

Ultimately, the indirect involvement in a traumatic experience is another vital type of trauma that can strongly affect the mental and emotional health conditions of a child; it can have a negative health impact throughout a person's lifespan. As mentioned before, if the traumatic event is related to one of the caregivers or parents, the child's sense of security and trust can be completely destroyed that they will need to be helped by a professional psychiatrist throughout their lives.

## **1.2 Factors Affecting the Duration and Severity of the Trauma**

People's response to a traumatic experience differs from one another; each person has a distinctive physical, mental, social, and living conditions. These conditions can affect the way in which the person process and respond to the trauma. Furthermore, the individual's trauma severity, physical health conditions or vulnerable personality, lack of social support system, and prior trauma play a significant role when facing strong stimuli because people who have these factors are more prone to be strongly influenced by the trauma and face challenges later in their relationships.

The severity of a traumatic event leaves deep effect on the traumatized people. Despite the fact that there are many individuals went through a trauma, they lived normal lives

without getting affected by the trauma's severity. However, other individuals are deeply affected by their trauma. If the individual has many resilient qualities, it may not affect his or her mental health. Behavioral health and chronic physical health conditions are proved to be the major factors for the trauma's severity; therefore, substance use, mental health conditions, and other risky behaviors have been linked with traumatic experiences because these behavioral health concerns can present challenges in relationships, careers, and other aspects of life (SAMHSA).

Human vulnerability is another factor that has a crucial impact in contributing to the development of a PTSD following a traumatic event; it can affect key cognitive processes and PTSD symptoms. Prevailing psychological models of PTSD emphasize the role of cognitive processes such as appraisal, information processing, and memory formation as mechanisms in the progression and continuity of PTSD after a traumatic event. Indeed, researchers have demonstrated the connections among negative appraisal, dysfunctional peritraumatic cognitive processing, disturbances in autobiographical memory, and symptoms of PTSD. In addition, cognitive models like intelligence and anxiety are considered the main factors that may affect the key cognitive processes and PTSD symptoms (Judith and Lynn). Ultimately, pre-existing vulnerable personality can influence trauma sequel as well as the symptoms' severity.

Severe trauma must be followed with a professional social support system because it can strongly affect the ability to overcome and cope with the psychological consequences. Loss of support after experiencing a trauma may print enduring signs on subsequent adjustment and functioning. On the contrary, if one's family restores a sense of trust and safety, he or she will not be psychologically harmed after a trauma. The effects of social support disruption have been more influential in kids who are physically or sexually abused by their close relatives on whom they rely for their care. The unavailability of children's

safety often leads to a life-long inability to trust and a chronic rage that may be turned against others or against themselves (Andrea et al. 59).

For both children and adults, having a vulnerable personality and lack of social support system following severe traumatic experiences increase the sense of lost security and can reduce the ability to recover from trauma. The social supportive environment is very important for any traumatized individual; it should understand the psychological effects of the trauma and encourage them to seek healing. Especially people with vulnerable personalities, their response to a traumatic event depends on their personal social support system. In addition, the social system can consist of close relatives or professional help.

The last factor that contributes to the trauma's duration and severity is prior traumas. Many researches have elaborated the relationship between prior traumatic events including childhood trauma, the development of later life psychopathology, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. They have analyzed the development of PTSD after people have been exposed to trauma, including previous traumatic experiences, and predicted the severity of the trauma's reaction. The research findings suggest that having prior traumatic events produce a greater immediate reaction to trauma and contribute to creating PTSD (Murray 40). Prior extensive trauma can make the individuals' psychological system more sensitive when they encounter a new traumatic event. Thus, whenever the person re-experience a new trauma, its impact becomes powerful than before, and the severity of the event along with extensive traumatic experience can strongly affect his or her mental and psychological health.

### **1.3 Serial Killers' Trauma**

Trauma is considered the most prevalent and recurrent theme in serial killers' biographies. Many early psychiatrists state that experiencing a psychological trauma in childhood can lead to psychopathology in adulthood; thus, Serial killers are victims of their own past that led to their destructive hostility and sadism. They have focused on how the



early stages of an individual's life contribute to the quality of emotions in the individual's relationships. The psychosocial factors of serial killing roots are found mainly in childhood experiences, particularly family dysfunction, child neglect, and physical or sexual abuse.

Developing healthy relationships starts with having a good present parent or a caregiver from early childhood. Thus, when a child is affected by certain negative experience, he/she may be unable to feel protected. This causes different types of symptoms in children's behaviours. For instance, children under the age of two years old who have encountered a trauma may show poor verbal skills, memory issues, excessive screaming, crying and low appetite. Children between the age of three and six, their trauma response may result as academic issues, learning disabilities, poor skill development, low self-regulation skills, imitation of the traumatic event, verbal abuse, social difficulties, and low self-esteem. They will proceed in showing negative responses in their lives, but each person will show different symptoms. In fact, they may create violent tendencies in one's behaviours, such as becoming a serial killer (Chiriboga 18).

At different stages of life, people may encounter different experiences that can have deep effects on their behaviours and relationships. The researchers show that the majority of serial killers themselves are victims of their own past; this means that violence gives birth to violence, and deep traumatic childhood shapes an individual's adulthood. Although not all serial killers have encountered child trauma or been subjected to violence at an early age, it is not a coincidence that most serial killers have been subjected to violence at an early age which have become a foundation stone for extreme aggressiveness in adulthood (Vardan 1).

Another psychosocial factor of serial killing roots is child neglect, it is defined as the caregivers or responsible adults' failure to meet the physical needs of their child such as food, clothing and shelter. However, it is not only limited by physical neglect but also by a lack of emotional nurturing and supervision. Lack of supervision can be manifested in

providing unsafe environment and frequently unavailable guardian for the child. Over the past several decades, several researches have examined child neglect and abuse that identified child maltreatment and neglect with a number of mental health problems and as a significant predictor of higher aggression scores (Tamara 22-24).

The last most significant factor is child abuse, it is a serious issue that is related to physical, emotional, or sexual maltreatment that results in actual damage to the child's health, survival, development, trust, or power (World Health Organization). Parental abuse has been connected to developing a killing tendency in the future. People who were physically, emotionally, and sexually abused as children are more prone to have violent attitudes compared to adults who did not face any type of abuse. Several cases identified early Family dysfunction, abuse, and neglect as factors of childhood that may explain future sadism and serial killing (Alyssa 5-11).

#### **1.4 Serial Killers' Victimology**

Victimology is a discipline that investigates why some people are more prone than others in becoming victims of crime. The type of person who is targeted for a violent crime can uncover the perpetrator's motive which will then lead to the offender. Serial killers select their victims based on certain physical and/or personal characteristics. Although some victims are selected because of their vulnerability and their low capacity to resist, there are particular personal characteristics that arouse aggressive reactions in offenders. It can be more demonstrated in the following quotation:

Victimology is particularly useful when attempting to capture a serial killer because, like most serial killers, the victim is a stranger to the perpetrator. Gary Ridgeway targeted prostitutes; John Wayne Gacy lured adolescent boys to his home by promising them payment; Ted Bundy attracted kind-hearted, college-aged females with long hair to his car by faking injury; and Jeffrey Dahmer baited young men into

coming to his home with the promise of money if he could photograph them. Analysis of the similar characteristics between the victims of a serial killer provides important clues that aid in profiling and capturing these criminals by helping to identify who and where the killer would be likely to strike next. (LaBrode)

The word victim came from the Latin word “victima”; the latter refers to an animal or living sacrifice. The word was offered to a temple or deity, and it was first mentioned in the bible as a concept of suffering of the weak at the hands of an aggressor. Thus, the first recorded use of the word referring to a person was circa in 1690 and indicated someone who was tortured, hurt or killed by another (Javed 2). Furthermore, World Society of Victimology defines the term victim as a person who, individually or collectively, has endured physical or mental harm, emotional injury, economic loss, or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws, including those proscribing abuses of power (qtd. in Fohring 2). Subsequently, victim's age, sex, occupation, hunting grounds, victim's risk, and level of guilt are factors that can affect the solvability of homicide investigations.

Serial homicide researches have revealed that some demographic types are more prone to be victimized and chosen by the offenders due to their age, sex, and occupation. Female victims have been increasingly remarked in serial homicide cases, and when cases increase, the victims are more likely to be prostitutes. This population occurrence of victims is high because they are never reported missing. Prostitutes are easy targets who are transient and geographically mobile individuals. They are considered suitable targets for certain serial killers because of their lifestyles. They are often found in risky locations, as they also usually lack proper shelter. Prostitutes are one of the most high-risk victims; however, they are only one type of high-risk occupations (Harding 26).

In addition to the victim's personal characteristics, Rodney Stark believed that the criminal characteristics of certain locations would lead to an increased chance of someone being victimized. According to Stark's theory of deviance; density, poverty, mixed use, transience, and dilapidation are factors that affect crime. Therefore, these five place factors will provide four individual traits including moral cynicism, increased opportunities for crime and deviance, increased motivation, and diminished control. The result of Stark's five place traits mixed with his four individual traits results to a place attracting deviant and crime prone people, driving out the least deviant people, and disruption in social control (qtd. in Helle 9-10).

The risk of being victimized can be classified as low, medium or high. Low risk victims are often close to home and work, lock their doors at night, hold steady jobs, and have numerous friends. The second medium risk victims have steady jobs and remain close to work and home. The last high risk victims often their homes are located in risky places; they go to work during the night hours when the streets are empty. Other high risk behaviours include drug use, and sexually active lifestyles (Oakes-Odger MBE). Age, occupation, gender, lifestyle choices, physical stature, resistance ability, and victims' location are factors that can increase or reduce the ability to become a victim of a crime. Therefore, some demographics are more prone to be targeted because of these factors.

Investigation solvability also requires focus on the victim's injuries characteristics in order to detect the specific features and behaviours of the offender. Some of these details are the extent of physical violence, the injuries inflicted on the victim, and the type of weapon used by the offender. It has been demonstrated that not all claim types are equal and therefore helpful in crime solvability; however, excessive physical violence, and injuries sustained by a victim, increase the chances detecting the offender's victimization style at a crime scene. It is often found with contact weapons such as, knives, hands, or blunt force objects.

Different weapons, therefore, have the ability to leave different impressions and kinds of evidence at the crime scene (Harding 25-26).

Dr. Matiyani has introduced three typologies of the victims' level of guilt that also contribute to the crime solvability. Firstly, victims with minor guilt are those who may have predicted danger. For example, Person walking on a dark street alone at off-hours, the chance of getting robbed, raped, or assaulted is higher under such circumstances. Secondly, victims who are as guilty as the offender, they are responsible as the offender for the victimization process. An example of this typology is challenging or enticing the perpetrator. Finally, the last typology is related to the victims who are guiltier than the offender. They have actively participated in the interaction where there is a likelihood of them getting hurt. For instance, a wife kills her abusive husband. To sum up, there are three levels of guilt for the victims; they can be minor, equal, or guiltier victims (8-9).

### **1.5 Incorporating Victim into Criminal Etiology**

Victimology consists of sub-theories that are also called as victimization theories. These theories examine the victimization process and its causes by focusing on the victim involvement in crime and why particular individuals are more likely to be victimized. Criminologists have identified four main theories of victimization which are Lifestyle Theory, Victim Precipitation Theory, Routine Activities Theory, and Deviant Place Theory. Studying these different theories of victimization can be helpful in explaining why certain people have a higher likelihood of becoming victims of crime.

Lifestyle theory represents one of the first attempts to explain criminal victimization according to the victims' daily activities and life choices. These activities heighten the risk of victimization process because they place the individuals in confronting situations to criminal activity. For instance, people who work away from home, spend more time out at night, and involve in risky behaviors are more prone to victimization. Lifestyle differences

can be explained by individuals' adaptations to their social situation based on social status characteristics. Demographic characteristics such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, and marital status are linked to certain behavioral expectations and structural constraints that lead to differential risk for criminal victimization (Wilson 158).

Precipitation theory is associated with the extent of the victims' responsibility for their victimization. From this perspective, it should be noted that Precipitation theory must not be used to blame the victim while ignoring the offender's role (SAGE 1). Precipitation has two different types; it can be active or passive. The former appears when the victim clearly provokes the offender by way of provocative clothing, vulgar language, or provocative body language. The second type appears when the victim exhibits behavioral, character, ethnic, or personality traits that motivate or threaten the attacker. The victim is not intent to provoke the offender (Mblevins par. 5).

Routine activity theory was first formulated by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson. They emphasized that crime occurs when there is a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. It combines the routine activities of both the offender and the victim. An offender may purposely in a routine basis walk through specific neighbourhoods looking for homes that appear as suitable targets. For example, a family where all adults work, their homes are often unoccupied during the day, which can become suitable targets for burglary. Finally, the absence of a capable guardian refers to the people who can protect or serve as witnesses, or police or security personnel. Therefore, when a motivated offender finds a suitable target with the absence of a capable guardian, a crime is expected (Purpura).

The last theory of deviant place states that victims are at risk for bigger contact for harm or violence because they reside to socially disorganized, dangerous, and high crimes areas. Bad environments that are characterized by engulfed criminal activity are considered

high-risk areas that lead to victimization. Individuals should keep from dangerous places where crime rates are high. Usually, people with low wages have to live in areas of town that are considered to be deviant or unsecured. The deviant place theory feels that there is no need for victims to practice safety measures to elude injury because it would be useless (Angelaolson).

### **1.6 The Nature of Victimhood and Victimization**

Victimhood and victimization are another two components of the core structure of victimology theory. These two notions are a double terminology of the term “harm”. The first notion of victimhood is used to describe the victim’s situation and the harm caused based on personal circumstances regardless the role of victimizer. Thus, victimhood means the state of being a victim. This conceptualization has various aspects; it involves a potential victim who is characterized by different variables such as gender and race that make him/her an actual one. It includes an actual victim that indicates how one of the variations plays a main role in a criminal occurrence. The second term of victimization is derived from the transitive verb "to victimize" which explains the effect of crime according to the interaction between offender and victim through which an individual or a collectively and/or a group of individuals suffered harm (Rayejian 63-64-65).

## **Conclusion**

From what has been said before, we conclude that witnessing a severe trauma in early life stages have the power to engrave itself in a child's mind. Thus, it can have a profound effect on the brain and personality formation. The first chapter is divided into two parts; the first part consists of a contextualization of the story and a theoretical framework that elaborated the concept of trauma and its role in shaping serial killers' lives, and the second part consists of a short description of victimology discipline.

We cannot deny that serial killers are dangerous criminals; however, we can explain how they are victims of their past circumstances and interior life. The genesis of the aggression motive begins with a traumatic upbringing because arising from a dysfunctional family with the direct view of violence can develop aggressive tendencies in a child's personality. Ultimately, their trauma will influence their lives, as it will be reflected in their daily life activities.

Trauma can be also seen in the serial killers' relationships especially with their victims. Victimology is a scientific study of victims of crimes that seeks to study the relationship between victims and their offenders. It attempts to understand why some people are more prone than others to be targeted by serial killers. By answering this question, we will be able to denote the characteristics that are unconsciously or consciously related to their traumatic experiences.



## **Chapter Two**

### **The Analysis of the Characters**

#### **Introduction**

Dexter along with his brother has a remarkable childhood trauma that turned them into becoming cold-blooded serial killers. However, each serial killer has specific characteristics that describe his victimhood and victimization process. These characteristics are different because Dexter and Brian lived in different circumstances. Therefore, different socioenvironmental conditions have influenced their lives. The second chapter of our research focuses on elaborating Dexter and Brian's socioenvironmental living conditions that have strongly shaped their killing desires in distinctive ways. Each serial killer follows a specific modus operandi that is constructed by their surroundings; however, it reflects the same trauma that they have endured in their early lives.

The chapter is divided into two sections; the first section is an analytical study of Dexter's life. We primarily focus on his childhood trauma which is the core behind his aggressiveness. In addition, the influence of his father on his modus operandi, his impact is viewed in animals' abuse and the code of Harry. The second section consists of analysing the character of Brian Moser; we aim to focus on his childhood trauma and his modus operandi. Our goal is not only to study and depict the characters' story but also to demonstrate and analyse the reflection of their trauma and environmental factors on their identities.

## 2.1 Dexter Morgan

The protagonist of *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, Dexter, is a cop in Miami-Dade Police Department working as a forensic blood spatter analyst. He is secretly a serial killer who targets other serial murderers who have escaped from the judicial system. Dexter, the serial killer, aroses from a traumatic event. When he was three years old, his foster father, Detective Harry Morgan, has found him in a crime scene where his mother has been killed. Harry and his wife, Doris Morgan, have adopted Dexter. He has grown up with his adoptive sister Deborah Morgan. It can be seen in the following quotation:

I don't have a family. I mean, as far as I know. Somewhere out there must be people who carry similar genetic material, I'm sure. I pity them. But I've never met them. I haven't tried, and they haven't tried to find me. I was adopted, raised by Harry and Doris Morgan, Deborah's parents. And considering what I am, they did a wonderful job of raising me, don't you think? (Lindsay 15).

His foster mother died when he was 16 years old, and his foster father died when he was 20 years old. After their death, Deborah becomes Dexter's only family and the most influential person in his life next to Harry. Deborah also works in Miami Metro Police Department; she has been distracted at her father's death because she has been inspired by his legendary police career. She decides to join the police force. As Dexter describes her when he said, "Both dead now. And so Deb is the only person in the world who gives a rusty possum fart whether I live or die. For some reason that I can't fathom, she actually prefers me to be alive. I think that's nice, and if I could have feelings at all I would have them for Deb." (Lindsay 15).

Dexter is described in the novel as a good person to people close to him; he is successful in his career as a blood spatter analyst. At the same time, he has secret hostile and sadistic killing desires against serial criminals. Dexter kills many criminals without

confessing to the police. Therefore, he has a secret evil identity and a social good one. He hides his dark nature from others in the mask of a forensic blood spatter analyst. His dark side cannot be found easily because he deceives people with his unique look, outfits, skills, and intelligence, as he says, “In the mirror I looked the way I was supposed to look. Carefully composed features. Calm and mocking blue eyes, a perfect imitation of human life. Except that my hair stuck up like Stan Laurel’s, there was no sign of whatever it was that had just zipped through my half-sleeping brain and rattled me out of my slumber.” (Lindsay 63).

### **2.1.1 Childhood Trauma**

As noted, Dexter along with his brother has a remarkable childhood trauma. They have witnessed their mother’s death at a very early age, and they have been covered in blood and sitting for two days in front of their mother’s lifeless body. However, Dexter does not remember his traumatic event because he was very young, but his older brother has been aware of the happenings so he was sent off to live in a mental institution. Dexter’s trauma has been blocked in his memory for years; he also forgot his brother’s existence until Brian has brought the memories back by recreating them, as he said, “This happened, little brother. The chain saw, the flying body parts, the . . .blood — With that same fearful emphasis again. Two and a half days of sitting in the stuff. A wonder we survived at all, isn’t it?” (Lindsay 195).

Although Dexter forgot about his past, yet it has strongly influenced his entire life. It can be seen in his words when he said, “Whatever made me the way I am left me hollow, empty inside, unable to feel. It doesn’t seem like a big deal. I’m quite sure most people fake an awful lot of everyday human contact. I just fake all of it. I fake it very well, and the feelings are never there” (Lindsay 14). We can understand that Dexter grew up feeling different from other people; he postulates that he does not feel normal human emotions.

### 2.1.2 His Father's Influence

Dexter is very close to his adoptive father, he considers him as the only person who understood his reality. When Harry found out that Dexter is killing the neighbours' pets, he has realized that he did not survive his trauma. He took him in a boat trip, so that he can talk about the neighbours' pets' corpses, he asked him, “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.’ ” (Lindsay 32).

From the above quotation, after knowing and revealing Dexter's desires about killing, Harry has influenced and directed Dexter's life. He has helped him to control his impulses in a constructive way, as he gave him a code. Therefore, He considers his father as the idol person that inspired him after accepting his reality. Harry aims to help Dexter channel his desires. He said, “There are plenty of people who deserve it, Dex . . . .And with those few little words he gave a shape to my whole life, my everything, my who and what I am. The wonderful, all-seeing, all-knowing man. Harry. My dad. If only I was capable of love, how I would have loved Harry.” (Lindsay 33).

Harry gives Dexter few principles in order to hide his evil personality. These principles consist of how to interact with others without revealing his real identity by keeping a normal social appearance. He tells him to fake emotions regardless of their availability, to be always prepared, to leave no evidence or traces of his crimes, and to never get emotionally involved when choosing a victim. It can be demonstrated when Dexter remembers his father's words by saying, “It was part of building my Harry Profile. Blend in. Act normal, even boring. Don't do anything or own anything that might cause comment.”(Lindsay 93).

Primarily, the most important rule in Dexter's Code of Harry is to do not get caught. If Dexter is to be caught, he would face a very strong judicial punishment that can be an

execution. Harry has taught the boy to be a careful killer, to leave no clues, and to be absolutely sure that his victims are guilty before killing them. Harry's warnings can be seen in the following quotation when Dexter was about to kill the priest, he has recalled his foster father's instructions:

Always be sure, be careful, be exact, he had said, and for a week now I had been sure that everything was just as Harry-right as it could be. And when I left work this night, I knew this was it. This night was the Night. This night felt different. This night it would happen, had to happen. Just as it had happened before. Just as it would happen again, and again. (Lindsay 5)

After never being caught comes the most important rule in Dexter's Code of Harry; it is to never kill an innocent person. If Dexter is searching for a victim, he must make sure that the person he kills is a murderer. In conjunction with the first important rule, the Code of Harry states that Dexter's victims must be killers who are not punished by the justice system. As when Dexter makes an intensive research before choosing the priest in the beginning of the novel, it is described in Dexter's words when he said:

But it was careful time, too, time spent making sure. Not making sure of the priest, no, I was long sure of him. Time spent to be certain that it could be done right, made neat, all the corners folded, all squared away. I could not be caught, not now. I had worked too hard, too long, to make this work for me, to protect my happy little life. (Lindsay 5)

Harry Morgan eventually has taught him set of rules to use his irresistible urge to kill for good. Dexter uses his moral code to justify his murders. The code's aim is to help Dexter by using his Dark Passenger to get rid of the world's serial killers or murderers who are not punished by the judicial system. However, these rules that Harry has created weighed on his

conscience, with the police officer eventually taking his own life after seeing Dexter in action.

### **2.1.3 Animal's Abuse**

The mistreatment and abuse of animals contributes to the continuation of violent and non-violent criminal behaviour towards humans including physical, emotional abuse, rape, and murder. Harry takes Dexter on hunting trips to help him reveal and free his urges of killing, as he has advised him to channel his desires in a controlled way. However, he has encouraged and increased his desires by teaching him hunting animals. Dexter's foster father has most of the responsibility for shaping and developing Dexter's instincts.

The Billups say Buddy has disappeared, he says. Noisy little creep. He was barking all night. Mom couldn't sleep. Mom needed her sleep, of course. Dying of cancer requires plenty of rest, and she wasn't getting it with that awful little dog across the street yapping at every leaf that blew down the sidewalk. I found the grave, Harry says. There were a lot of bones in there, Dexter. Not just Buddy's. (Lindsay 31)

The above quotation shows when Harry firstly discovered that Dexter has been killing the neighbours' pets. Dexter has started killing various animals when he was twelve or thirteen until he turned fourteen. Buddy is the neighbours' dog which barked during the nights and disturbed the sleep of Dexter's mother, so Dexter has killed the dog. The next day, Buddy has been reported missing by its owners. Later, Harry finds Buddy's grave. While he is alone with young Dexter on the family boat, Harry has talked to Dexter about the grave. As a homicide detective, Harry could realize that Dexter is showing signs of a future serial killer. The following quotation shows the different kinds of animals that he had hunted:

A very large thrill ran through me. Stop her? Was it possible? Could he mean — stopher? Until now Harry had helped me control my Dark Passenger, feeding him stray pets, hunting deer; one glorious time I had gone with him to catch a feral

monkey that had been terrorizing a South Miami neighborhood. It had been so close, so almost human—but still not right, of course. And we had gone through all the theoretical steps of stalking, disposing of evidence, and so on. Harry knew that someday It would happen and he wanted me to be ready to do It right. He had always held me back from actually Doing It. But now—stop her? Could he mean it? (Lindsay 118)

Often times, children who abuse animals will be looked upon as violent future criminals. Harry taught Dexter how to hunt animals as a way of freeing his repressed desires, he has thought that it would be a better way to express and feed his urges; however, it was the worst idea. With time, Dexter's desires grow bigger than before. Dexter has killed unaccounted number of stray pets under Harry's supervision. Ava Academy on Violence and Abuse has stated that “there is growing recognition that when animals are abused, people are at risk, and that when people are abused, animals are at risk” (9). To sum up, animal cruelty is one of the earliest markers for future acts of both violent and nonviolent criminal behaviours, as Dexter shows violent tendencies at a very young age, and these tendencies have developed and motivated by his foster father.

#### **2.1.4 The Dark Passenger**

Dexter's repressed memories are shaped in the form of his Dark Passenger that represents his burden. The Dark Passenger has been born during his mother's hostile murder. From an early age, Dexter has been trained by Harry Morgan to focus and control his dark urges on other killers, instead of innocents. Dexter names his irresistible need to kill as the Dark Passenger. It keeps telling Dexter to kill until he does so. It gets satisfied for a while, but it always returns. It can be demonstrated when Dexter says, “And always somewhat draining. So I was tired, but the tension of the last week was gone, the cold voice of the Dark Passenger was quiet, and I could be me again. Quirky, funny, happy-go-lucky, dead-inside

Dexter. No longer Dexter with the knife, Dexter the Avenger. Not until next time.” (Lindsay 14).

Dexter does not know what makes him a murderer and the reasons behind his personality; he completely forgot his past. All he knows is that a voice in his mind, the Dark Passenger, tells him to murder people. In spite of the fact that he did not want to commit murder, he did not know how to live his life in any other way. The rules that govern Dexter's Dark Passenger and keep it within a moral framework which are the Code of Harry. The latter forms Dexter's modus operandi of serial killing.

Modus Operandi is a Latin phrase meaning “mode of operating.” In criminal law, it refers to each criminal's method of criminal behaviour that is distinctive and separated from others' methods. Some killers have specific and unique patterns that make their crimes distinguishable from others (Cornell School). Dexter follows a specific process before he kills a victim. His modus operandi follows his adoptive father's code; he follows a careful, neat, and organized process. His killing pattern is a well-planned and thought out process that follows these basic steps respectively: **select, vet, prepare, capture, blood trophy, and execute.**

Dexter targets serial killers who killed innocent people without remorse and who were not punished as he said, “Remove one more heap of mess from the world” (Lindsay 11). Dexter victims are often found due to his job's nature by paying attention to unsolved cases, blood reports from fellow spatter analysts, and even rumours. In addition, he attends court hearings or appearing in court as a forensic witness and use his friendship with Camilla Figg to obtain files on killers released by technicality or judicial mistakes. In addition, because Dexter spends much of his time working with Homicide, he has extensive access to police databases that provide him with information, names, pictures, and addresses.



Dexter had completely adopted his father's code, The Code of Harry. Its main rule is to confirm the victim's guilt. Dexter spends a long time obtaining a compelling evidence against the targeted victim. As when he took three weeks to confirm the priest's guilt, he fought his inner urge to kill him all this period just to prove his guilt. The priest is Dexter's first victim that is mentioned in the novel. Therefore, according to The Code of Harry, Dexter follows his victims to examine and investigate their lives, and to confirm their serial killings; thus, he will prepare their murder to satisfy his dark passenger. It can be demonstrated in the following quotation:

I had been waiting and watching the priest for five weeks now. The Need had been prickling and teasing and prodding at me to find one, find the next, find this priest. For three weeks I had known he was it, he was next, we belonged to the Dark Passenger, he and I together. And that three weeks I had spent fighting the pressure, the growing Need, rising in me like a great wave that roars up and over the beach and does not recede, only swells more with every tick of the bright night's clock. (Lindsay 5)

Dexter's usual method is to select and prepare a place for his murders, he sets up his place by filling it with evidence or pictures of his target's victims, and candles. One time, he fills the room with the priest victims' corpses. In addition, his killing tools consist of boxes of white garbage bags, bottles of chemicals, and small row of saws and knives. The center of the kill room contains some form of table for the victim to lie on. Dexter has rolls of shrink-wrap to hold the victim to the table. It can be also seen in the following paragraph when he captures Jaworski:

I found Jaworski on the third floor. A pile of electrical wire pooled at his feet. I stood in the shadows of the stairwell and watched as he pulled out wire. I ducked back into the stairwell and opened my tote bag. Using my duct tape, I hung up the pictures I

had brought along. Sweet little photos of the runaway girls, in a variety of endearing and very explicit poses. I taped them to the concrete walls where Jaworski would see them as he stepped through the door onto the stairs. Ie to prevent escape. (Lindsay 103)

Dexter usually captures his victims with a knife and a duct tape in his pocket. As when he got his victim Jaworski, he says, “He stared, slack-jawed, unable to move, and then I was behind him with my knife at his throat” (Lindsay 104). These tools help Dexter in not leaving any forensic evidence. After capturing the victim, Dexter uses either his own car or the victim's car to transport them to the kill room. Another example, when he has captured the priest, he says, “I sat up in his backseat and slipped the noose around his neck. One quick, slippery, pretty twist and the coil of fifty-pound-test fishing line settled tight. He made a small ratchet of panic and that was it” (6). He has been hiding in the back seat Jaworski’s car, and then has wrapped a noose of fishing line around his victim's throat when he sits down.

Before Dexter murders his victims, he saves a small portion of their blood. The blood trophy consists of slicing the victim’ cheek underneath the victim’s right eye. The saved blood makes Dexter able to relive the experience. The following quotation shows his first blood slide from his first victim Last Nurse when he says, “I still had that first dry drop of blood on its slide. It was my first, and I could call up that memory any time by taking out my little slide and looking at it. I did, every so often. It had been a very special day for Dexter. Last Nurse had been First Playmate” (Lindsay 122). Dexter neatly organizes the blood slides inside a wooden filing box, which he hides in a rosewood box in his bookcase.

In many times, Dexter kills his victims by stabbing the victim in the neck or the chest. In some cases, Dexter's favoured method to kill is a fatal stab wound to the heart or neck. For some victims, he cuts through the neck with a knife or a saw. He often likes to ironically

and poetically stage the deaths of killers using elements of their own style. Dexter prefers a fillet knife which involves an extended exploration. Sometimes the victim's body is chopped up, as Dexter says, "I thought about the nice clothes that I always wore. Well of course I did. I took pride in being the best-dressed monster in Dade County. Yes, certainly, he chopped up that nice Mr. Duarte, but he was so well dressed!" (Lindsay 72).

### **2.1.5 Victims' Type**

Last Nurse is a character in *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*; she has been a nurse when Harry Morgan was diagnosed for heart problems. She has been Dexter's first human victim. When Harry Morgan is treated in a hospital for heart disease, he realizes that his nurse is slowly killing him with overdoses of morphine and an unidentified substance. When Harry said, "She's deliberately—overdosing patients . . . killing them . . . killing them . . . on purpose . . . She's a killer, Dexter . . . A killer . . ." (Lindsay 119). He gives Dexter the permission to kill the nurse in order to stop her from killing him and the other patients.

Mr. Duarte is another victim of Dexter, he mentioned him in his mind briefly in *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, as one of his previous victims. It appears when he said, "I thought about the nice clothes that I always wore. Well of course I did. I took pride in being the best-dressed monster in Dade County. Yes, certainly, he chopped up that nice Mr. Duarte, but he was so well dressed!" (Lindsay 72). Dexter brings back the memory of his victim, Mr. Duarte, by stating that he has chopped him up.

Father Donovan is also referred to as the priest. Although he is a prominent citizen, he is also a serial child rapist and murderer of children. In the night of targeting Father Donovan, Dexter has been thinking of his own killing desire. He watches Donovan when he is joking and laughing with a young black girl, before a nun takes her to play with other children. After talking a bit with a janitor, Donovan walks to his vehicle and enters in. It can be observed in the following sentences:

I watched him this night as I had watched for so many nights now. Watched as he paused in the orphanage doorway to talk to a young black girl who had followed him out. She was small, no more than eight years old and small for that. He sat on the steps and talked to her for five minutes. She sat, too, and bounced up and down. They laughed. (Lindsay 6)

Dexter is waiting inside the car to make his move; he quickly pulls a noose over Donovan's neck, ordering him to follow his instructions. Dexter takes Donovan inside the house and forces him to look at the remains of the boys that Donovan has killed. For Dexter, it is essential for Donovan to see why he is there. He then renders him unconscious and sets him up on a table. Before he is killed, Donovan whispers something twice to Dexter. After the second whisper, Donovan closes his eyes, and Dexter responds, "You're welcome" (Lindsay 12). Dexter buries Father Donovan in the same garden where the boys are buried.

Jaworski is a school janitor and serial killer who films himself raping and murdering young girls between the age of 12 and 13 and posts their videos on the internet. Dexter follows Jaworski through Miami until he finds him in an isolated construction site. Dexter hangs up many pictures of his victims while he is not looking. Jaworski turns around and he is shocked, distracting him long enough for Dexter to attack him and tie him to a table he sets up. As Jaworski professes his lack of guilt, "He finally opened his eyes and looked at me. Five, he said at last. Five little beauties. I'm not sorry" (Lindsay 106). A security guard approaches, and Dexter quickly slits his throat before escaping.

## **2.2 Brian Moser**

The antagonist of *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* is Brian Moser; he is the biological brother of Dexter Morgan. Additionally, he is a serial killer who targets prostitutes and leaves their bodies severed and bloodless, he is known as the Tamiami Butcher or Tamiami Slasher, due

to the locations of his first crimes. The killer begins by leaving Dexter subtle messages along the way placing the body parts of his victims in locations that hold significance for Dexter's childhood. He leaves a Barbie doll head tapped to the refrigerator in Dexter's apartment and puts inside of it the rest of the doll body parts. It can be seen when Dexter said, "Attached to the refrigerator, hair pinned to the door with one of my small tropical-fruit magnets, was a Barbie doll's head. I did not remember leaving it there. I did not remember ever owning one. It seemed like the kind of thing I would remember" (Lindsay 93).

In the beginning of the novel, the "Tamiami Slasher" has killed at least three prostitutes. Dexter's sister, Deborah, is transformed from vice and into homicide. She is a part of the Tamiami Slasher case investigation; she knows that her brother could easily detect killers, she asks for his assistance in following the case. When the killer begins sending messages to Dexter who finds the terrifying crimes impressive, Dexter is confused between helping Deborah catch the killer or to sit back and admire the neat work of this monster. However, at the end, he helps Deborah due to "the Code of Harry". The following quotation shows Dexter's different stands:

Right now she believed I could help her solve these murders, jump-start her career and catapult her out of her Hollywood sex suit and into a tailored business suit. And she was right, of course. I could help her. But I didn't really want to, because I enjoyed watching this other killer work and felt some kind of aesthetic connection, or— (Lindsay 34)

As the case progressed, the killer kidnaps Deborah and brings Dexter to the murder place. It is the same shipping container where their mother, Laura, has been killed. It is the first meeting of the brothers when Dexter knows that he has a biological brother. Later, Deborah's colleague, Migdia LaGuerta arrives and is killed by Brian, as Brian hoped that

they would kill Deborah together in a twisted kind of family reunion. However, Brian's actions break one of Dexter's cardinal rules, which is to never kill innocents.

No, I said, with both my families, living and dead, crowded around me clamoring for me to do and not do. And with one last whisper from the Harryblue eyes of my memory, my head began to shake all by itself and I said it again, No, and this time I meant it, No. I can't. Not Deborah. My brother looked at me. Too bad, he said. I'm so disappointed. And the knife came down. (Lindsay 201)

The above quotation shows Dexter's rejection to kill his sister; Brian has tied up Deborah so that Dexter can kill her. In the beginning, Dexter hesitates and wants to kill her; however, he has fought his urge and finally decides not to murder her. He refuses because of Harry's instructions. This shows the impact of Dexter's father on his life; Dexter does not mind killing his sister, but the idea of breaking his father's guidelines stops him.

### **2.2.1 Childhood Trauma**

Dexter was only three when his mother has been murdered in a storage container, hacked to death with a chainsaw; however, Brian was four years old that he could understand and remember the full scene of the murder. The following quotation shows when Brian revives the traumatic event to Dexter, and he makes him aware of the reason behind his actual hostile life. Brian's emphasis on the word blood shows the strong effect on the traumatic bloody scene on their lives and how blood has become the driving force for their desires.

Brian waved a hand around at the interior of the little box. This happened, little brother. The chain saw, the flying body parts, the . . . blood — With that same fearful emphasis again. Two and a half days of sitting in the stuff. A wonder we survived at all, isn't it? Almost enough to make you believe in God. His eyes glittered and, for some reason or other, Deborah squirmed and made a muffled noise. He ignored her.

They thought you were young enough to recover. I was just a bit over the age limit. But we both suffered a classic Traumatic Event. All the literature agrees. It made me what I am—and I had a thought that it might do the same for you. (Lindsay 195)

### **2.2.2 Modus Operandi**

Brian is a serial killer that leaves no blood in the severed body parts. Dexter is very intrigued that there is another serial killer, and he seems to be using Dexter's same modus operandi to finish his victims. However, Brian most victims are female prostitutes, unlike Dexter, he does not mind killing innocent people. He also kills his victims and chops them up as it is seen in the following quotation:

First, this victim is male. All the others were female. This victim was found off Old Cutler. All of McHale's victims were off Tamiami Trail. This victim was found relatively intact, and in the spot where he was killed. McHale's victims were completely chopped up, and they were moved to a different location for disposal. (Lindsay 132, 133)

Brian's victims are mostly female prostitutes; however, his selection does not have limits. He feels total freedom in choosing and controlling the victims due to his socioenvironmental and developmental factors that shaped his personality. As it is stated before, most of Brian's victims are chopped up into pieces, and he disposes them by putting the body parts in different locations. These actions are constructed by his traumatic event; correspondently, it is strengthened by the nature of his upbringing.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter shows how Harry influenced and directed Dexter's life. Harry took Dexter on hunting trips to help him reveal and free his urges for killing, as he told him to channel his desires in a controlled way. However, he has encouraged and increased his urge by teaching him hunting animals. Dexter's foster father has most of the responsibility for shaping and developing Dexter's instincts. Harry Morgan eventually taught him set of rules that uses his overbearing urge to kill for good.

Dexter follows a specific process before he kills a victim. His modus operandi serves not only to maximize the gratification that he derives from his kills, but also to eliminate forensic clues and evidence, and to ensure that he does not target innocents. His method is according to his adoptive father's code, he follows a careful, neat, and organized process. In the other hand, Brian also follows specific modus operandi, as his killing is a well-planned and thought out process. However, he is not restricted to a code, unlike Dexter, he feels free to choose any victim. This distinction was constructed by their different upbringings.



## **Chapter Three**

### **The Analysis of Darkly Dreaming Dexter Novel**

#### **Introduction**

Darkly Dreaming Dexter discusses a horrifying childhood trauma that was endured by Dexter and Brian. Previous chapters have discussed trauma studies and analysed the characters' lives; accordingly, in this chapter, the writer analyses the characters of Dexter and Brian to understand how their traumatic event has been reflected in their criminal identities. The chapter follows the work of the previous chapters by applying the psychological Defence Mechanisms, Social Learning Theory, and Victimology Sub-theories, which are Lifestyle Theory and Routine Activities Theory.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part analyses the psychological complexities of the characters that is manifested in their behaviours using defence mechanisms to see how the trauma shaped and directed their lives' choices. The second part of this chapter consists of applying the Social Learning Theory on Dexter and Brian that is going to demonstrate how it is fixed and internalized in their unconscious part of the mind. The last part of the chapter is the analysis of the brothers' victims using the two sub-theories of victimization. Using these theories, we would be able to analyse the connection between the characters' trauma and their adulthood.

### 3.1 The Characters' Psychoanalytical Defence Mechanisms

The term "defence mechanism" is derived from the psychoanalytic theory that is developed by Sigmund Freud. He believes that the human psyche has three constituents: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id consists of our primitive and on instinctual drives and desires, and the superego is the portion of the mind in which morality and higher principles reside. Lastly, the ego is the realistic part of the mind. When the urges of the id conflict with the demands and morals of the superego, the ego typically works to meet the id's needs in a socially appropriate way, such as using a sublimation defence mechanism, to resolve the conflict (Schacter 482).

Defence mechanisms are applied on Dexter and Brian's criminal behaviours. The brothers' egos have made usage of defence mechanisms in order to cope with their trauma. Thus, the goal of this section is to investigate the characters' use of Repression, Displacement, Sublimation, Introjection, Identification with the Aggressor, and Projection. It can be traced and found in the characters' feelings and behaviours which are manifested through their strong killing desires. These defence mechanisms appear when the brother's inner conflict and trauma turns to be too much for their psyches to handle.

Repression is the first use of a defence mechanism in Dexter's character. According to psychoanalytic theory, repression plays a major role in analysing the individuals' mental and psychological processes. Simon Boag defined repression as the unconscious blocking of unpleasant emotions, thoughts, memories or impulses from conscious awareness. Because of his young age and the trauma's severity, Dexter initially forgets about his past and his real family. It is impossible for him to recall the painful memories he has had as a child. It is seen when Brian says, "They thought you were young enough to recover. I was just a bit over the age limit. But we both suffered a classic Traumatic Event. All the literature agrees. It made me what I am—and I had a thought that it might do the same for you." (Lindsay 195).

To protect himself, he unconsciously has repressed these memories from his consciousness. Instead, he displays hostile behaviours toward his victims that he associates with these original painful memories. His repressed memories appear in the shape of his Dark Passenger. Painful memories do not completely disappear with repression; they are just pushed to the unconscious portion of the mind to the point that often the individual is unaware of their existence. It can be seen in Dexter's words when he said, "That still hurts, but I really don't know why. I was only three. Nothing." (Lindsay 33). Repression is a defence mechanism that Dexter's ego has used in order to cope with his trauma that led to the use of other mechanisms.

The second defence mechanism that is associated with both of Dexter and Brian's feelings and behaviours is displacement which involves transferring feelings from one target to another that is deemed less threatening or neutral (Baumeister et al. 1093). The brothers effectively use this defence mechanism to unconsciously displace their anger, aggression, and revenge that they have felt towards their mother's killer upon other victims that has been considered less threatening. Their ego deals with the tension or anxiety associated with the trauma, such as fear and anger, by releasing them on killing other individuals.

Due to Dexter and Brian's young age and lack of strength, they could not defend their mother or take any action to confront the murderer. As a result, they took the anger and rage out on other people when they have grown up. Harry has trained and taught Dexter how to be a vigilant serial killer, so Dexter displaces his feelings for his mother's murderers towards other serial killers. In addition, Brian displaces his feelings towards killing mostly prostitutes which are considered easy targets and less likely to be reported missed. Brian and Dexter have unconsciously made use of the defence mechanism displacement.

Dexter has transferred and displaced his negative impulses of his trauma towards his victims in an aggressive and unacceptable way; nevertheless, he also directs his feelings in

a socially acceptable way that he has become a police in Miami-Dade Police Department as a forensic blood spatter analyst. Thus, Dexter's ego makes usage of another defence mechanism that is called sublimation. The latter is a defence mechanism in which unacceptable sexual or aggressive desires are unconsciously transferred into socially acceptable modes of expression and shaped into new, learned behaviours, which indirectly provide gratification for the original drive (American Psychological Association).

You may say that dear diligent Dexter gets carried away in his job, but I like to be thorough, and I like to know where all the blood is hiding. The professional reasons for this are obvious, but not quite as important to me as the personal ones. Perhaps someday a psychiatrist retained by the state penal system will help me discover exactly why. (Lindsay 40)

The above quotation shows how Dexter enjoys his job and being a hard worker because he considers his job as a personal satisfaction. The nature of Dexter's job makes him in constant confrontation with blood; the latter is a strong reflection of his trauma. After his mother's murder, he has been left sitting in blood for two days and a half; therefore, his mother's blood was reflected in his life choices. Thus, Dexter's sadistic and hostile energy is sublimated into civilized and socially acceptable actions that benefit others. Due to his job as blood spatter analyst, he always sees and analyses blood and crime scenes.

Another strong defence pattern that Dexter's ego has applied to overcome his trauma is introjection. It is defined as, "a psychoanalytic concept referring to the psychic process whereby objects from the external world – prototypically parental objects – are taken into the ego, internalized." (Truscott 2). Dexter has completely adopted and internalized his father's instructions that formed his entire way of living. He considers his foster father as his personality and profile builder and his inspiring influencer. Ultimately, Dexter internalizes his father's beliefs on him and applies his instructions that have become his lifestyle.

The two kids' trauma have had a great impact in creating their criminal profile, as it is clearly reflected in their criminal identities. When their mother was being killed, Dexter and his brother were young, horrified, angry, subjected to pain, and helpless to do defend their mother. Therefore, they replace the fear and defencelessness by becoming the powerful murderers who are in control, and who inflict pain. By transferring their personalities to become serial killers. Their psyches made a defence mechanism called identification with the aggressor as a defensive mode against continuing feelings of vulnerability to further victimization. Anna Freud describes identification with the aggressor in her book, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*. She writes:

A child introjects some characteristic of an anxiety object and so assimilates an anxiety experience which he has just undergone. Here, the mechanism of identification or introjection is combined with a second important mechanism. By impersonating the aggressor, assuming his attributes or imitating his aggression, the child transforms himself from the person threatened into the person who makes the threat. (113)

Dexter has internalized the behaviours of his mother's killer; as he kills his victims the same way his mother was killed. He straps his victims down, cuts them into little pieces. While he is cutting them up, he describes his fascination for exploring his victims' bodies, as if he is looking for his mother among the body parts. It can be seen in the following sentences when Dexter said, "I opened up a vein and a horrible puddle of blood formed on the plastic wrap alongside the janitor. I stopped for a moment, looking for an answer, finding nothing. I looked away, out the shell of the window. I stared, forgetting to breathe." (Lindsay 105). From this perspective, we can note that Dexter has taken the role of his mother's aggressor, as he unconsciously has adopted the same way of killing.

Psychological projection is another defence mechanism by which internal emotions and motivations are displaced to another person or object. The effect of this process is to avoid experiencing unbearable psychological states. When these states are projected onto another, they can be treated as an external rather than internal threat or anxiety (Jenny). It is also attributed with previous traumatic experiences that are buried below conscious awareness; they always still exist but cannot be fully recalled. Someone else's words, actions, expressions, traits, or mannerisms can motivate a reaction based on buried memories, thus causing old, unpleasant emotions to surface. These emotions create undesirable and uncomfortable feelings. Thus, the individual projects his feeling onto another person, instead of facing his/ her feelings (Peterson).

Dexter makes use of projection defence mechanism; he shifts and transfers his feelings for his mother's killers to others. Thus, Dexter has projected his feelings of revenge and anger onto other serial killers. He justifies his actions of being a serial killer by admitting that he kills only serial killers to avoid acknowledging that evil part of himself, thus protecting his self-esteem. However, he is projecting his innermost feelings and desires of killing his mother's killers onto other murderers. Projection is a reflection of how someone feels about his own desires, so Dexter has projected his killing desires onto other serial killers.

### **3.2 Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theory has a remarkable impact on the field of criminology. It evolved from Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association in the 1940s, which demonstrated that crime is learned through interactions with close associates where individuals acquire principles and rules of law that support or refute their violation. This theory was revised in Burgess and Akers 1966 to become a Differential Association-Reinforcement model recognizing the impact of peer attitudes and reactions to delinquency. In addition, it was

revised in the 1970s and 1980s to become a social learning model developed by Ronald Akers. Akers also built on the work of psychologist Dr. Albert Bandura as his SLT evolved. Finally, Akers adapted the model in 1998 to become a macro-level model of delinquency and crime by arguing that social learning mediates the influence of structural factors on offending (Holt).

In SLT, individuals can acquire new behaviours, values, and attitudes by the direct experiencing and observing others' behaviours. Previous learning theories elaborated how people behave in response to environmental stimuli, such as physical rewards or punishment. Conversely, social learning theorists stress the importance that the mutual relationship between social characteristics of the environment in terms of how they are perceived by individuals and how instinctively motivated to reproduce behaviours that they witnessed (Health communication). Therefore, people can be highly shaped by their environment. Albert Bandura has created the Bobo Doll experiment to elaborate his theory; it is explained in the following paragraphs:

To try and prove his theory, Bandura had 36 young boys and 36 young girls (all between the ages of 36 to 69 months) watch as two model adults (male and female) played with several toys, including an inflatable Bobo doll (the ones that get back up when you push them down). Then, the kids had an opportunity to play with the toys themselves.

In one condition, the adult model played with other toys while ignoring the bobo doll. And in the "aggressive" condition, after a minute of playing with the other toys, the adult male or female turned to the Bobo doll, pushing it, tossing it up in the air, and otherwise acting aggressively towards it.

When the children had an opportunity to play with the toys themselves, they tended to imitate the type of play they observed by the adults. The children who

watched non-aggressive play were more likely to color and play with the other toys, while those who watched the adults modeling aggressive behavior towards the Bobo doll were more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors towards it themselves. (Sandar B.Sc. and B.A.)

The Bobo doll experiment illustrates that children who were exposed to the aggressive model have a higher likelihood of showing and engaging in physical aggression than those who were not exposed to the aggressive model. It proves that children learn social behaviours like aggression through the process of observational learning that is through the direct observation of another person's behaviour. Recent studies emphasised similar findings on the internal learning process through role models and imitation. Bandura changed the name of "social learning theory" to "cognitive learning theory" in 1986.

### **3.2.1 Modelling Process**

Albert emphasised the importance of the environment and internal events which they have a major role on human learned behaviours. He introduced the concept of observational learning which stated that people learn from their environment by going through four stages namely attention, retention, production, and motivation. Albert Bandura suggest that the environment, behaviour and internal events in learning influence each other in the formation of a person's character behaviour. The existence or different social acceptance also affects the individual's self-conception. The relationship of these symbolic codes into three schemes like a triangle, namely, the environment, behaviour, and personal factors (Rahayu et al. 7).

According to the modelling process, people can learn behaviours through models. Therefore, children learn aggressive behaviours through observing aggressive attitudes or violent models. From this prospect, moral thinking and moral behaviour are also acquired by observation and modelling (Tadayon 8). In *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, Dexter and his brother have watched their mother's murder and were left sitting in blood with their mother's



severed body; therefore, they observed their mother's murder at a very young age, which has been fixed and internalized in their unconscious part of the mind. Thus, the traumatic event was acquired and reflected in their killings later in adulthood.

Observational learning is a main concept in SLT; it is defined as a method of learning new skills through observing and imitating others. Through paying attention to others when they perform a skill and they remember what they have observed and later replicate this knowledge through their own behaviours. Observational learning can appear in many distinctive forms, as it does not require reinforcement to be fulfilled. The models observed are often a parent, friend, teacher, sibling, or another person who has a perceived authority or status in a given area (Cherry). Bandura introduced three types of models: live, verbal, and symbolic. The first model, which is live model, involves an actual individual performing or acting out a behaviour. The second one is the verbal instructional model which involves descriptions and explanations of a behaviour. The last model is the symbolic model which involves real or fictional characters displaying behaviours in books, films, television programs, or online media (Dumper).

The serial killers are identified with similar and different models because they are both traumatized with the same event; however, they lived different lives. Firstly, they are both concerned with the live model. A live model involves demonstrating a behaviour in a person, as when the killer murdered Lora, her kids could see how he did it. They have observed and watched the murder act. Secondly, unlike Brian, Dexter is identified with the verbal model. When Harry Morgan discovered Dexter's desires for killing, he thought that to save his son from the prison, he should teach him how to satisfy his instincts in a constructive ironic way. Dexter's foster father explained and gave him instructions about how to be a neat serial killer without being caught. Ultimately, Dexter is identified with the live and verbal model while Brian is identified with the live model only.

According to Bandura, modelling process does not only require external environmental behaviours but also it needs intrinsic reinforcement. It is described as a form of internal reward, such as pride, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment (Van Wagner). When an individual has a strong internal gratification, his/ her internal rewards will be enhanced with the new behaviour. In addition, when the acquired behaviour increases personal accomplishment, the ability to develop the new behaviour is quicker. Personal accomplishment is also accompanied with pride and satisfaction. Eventually, intrinsic reinforcement or the mental state of an individual plays a critical role in the learning process of an individual (Study Corgi).

Dexter and Brian have strong internal desires; they perform the act of killing because it is internally rewarding for them. They find it fun, enjoyable, and satisfying. Their urge to kill come from within and the outcomes satisfy their basic psychological needs. Dexter names his irresistible need to kill as the Dark Passenger. It keeps pushing Dexter to kill until he commits the crime. His Dark passenger gets satisfied for a while, but it always returns. In the end of the novel, Brian insisting words about killing Deborah shows how much he desires and enjoys killing people.

Bandura also states that among the characteristics of effective modelling are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. An individual's attention is influenced by a variety of factors, which are complexity, prevalence, or the functional value. Once attention is paid, the individual retains the behaviour by remembering it. Then, reproduction is when the individual exactly reproduce the activities he/she has observed. Last factor is motivation where an individual is reasonably motivated to copy the behaviour. Modelling can happen as a positive or negative process; violence is a negative modelling and any activity that is of rewarding manner such as social service is a positive modelling (Communication Theory).

Dexter and Brian applied the modelling process factors of the social learning theory. The first applied step was attention; they witnessed their mother's brutal murder. Secondly, the event is unconsciously repressed in Dexter's mind while his brother was older that he could remember and consciously observe the event. In addition, they have retained and made use of the second step, which is called retention. Thirdly, Dexter and Brian reproduce the behaviour that they have observed and saved in their memory; they turned to be sadistic serial killers. The last step in modelling process is motivation. Dexter has been encouraged and motivated by his father when he told him to kill the nurse. Whereas, Brian has been neither punished nor motivated by another person, but he has had an intrinsic motivation and a strong desire. To sum up, according to SLT, Dexter and Brian have observed, retained, reproduced, and they have been motivated to become serial killers.

The kids' inability to fight for their mother made them consider the criminals as an authority. Authority figures who treated them badly became models. As noted, children become more aggressive when they observe aggressive or violent models. Each of the men have escalated his aggression to homicide in a further attempt to reconcile his internalized humiliation and restore his sense of self-worth and power. They become serial killers is their inability to resolve their frustration. Based on social learning theory, when Dexter was adopted by Harry, he has idolized him and followed his words because he was the closest person to him. Therefore, his foster father could reinforce Dexter's instincts of the observed event.

### **3.3 Victimology Sub-Theories**

Victimology is the criminology branch that studies the victims rather than the offenders. In this research, we focus on two victimization sub-theories, which are Lifestyle Theory and Routine Activities Theory. Through these theories, we intend to examine why Dexter and Brian's victims are chosen to be their victims of a crime by analysing the victims'

characteristics, role in the criminal justice system, and factors that increased their chance of being targeted. Routine Activities Theory determines the environmental factors that are often outside of the victim's control, whereas Lifestyle Theory studies the victims' lifestyle choices that made them victims of crime.

As it was defined in the first chapter, routine activities theory emphasize that crime occurs when there is a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. Dexter is a motivated offender who chooses his victims following specific modus operandi. He targets only serial killers according to Harry's code, so he pays attention to unsolved cases. Because Dexter spends much of his time working with Homicide, he has extensive access to police databases that provide him with information, names, pictures, and addresses. When Dexter is motivated and a suitable target is available, he carefully prepares for capturing his target.

Brian's way of capturing his victims is not fully described in the novel; however, Brian's victims are mostly female prostitutes. Serial homicide researches have revealed that some demographic types are more prone to be victimized according to their age, sex, and occupation. Prostitutes are considered easy targets and less likely to be reported missed. They are suitable targets for Brian. Due to their job, they are often in dangerous places where there is no capable guardian. Ultimately, When Brian is motivated and a suitable target is available, he carefully prepares for capturing his target.

Lifestyle theory is another criminological theory that explains criminal victimization; it proposes that daily activities and choices can contribute to the likelihood of individuals' victimization. Dexter victims' selection is based on the personal and professional lifestyle activities of the victims. He follows Harry's code that emphasises the principle of targeting serial murderers who have evaded the justice system; Therefore, Dexter's victims are chosen because of their lifestyles. In addition, Brian victims' lifestyle is often female prostitutes.

Although, his selection does not have limits, he has murdered many prostitutes. These demographics are always at risk of victimization because of their life's nature. In conclusion, Dexter victims' lifestyle is serial criminals while Brian's victims are often female prostitutes.

## **Conclusion**

In this last chapter, the writer analysed the characters of Dexter and Brian's criminal profiles in order to understand how their traumatic event was reflected in their identities by applying the psychological Defence Mechanisms, Social Learning Theory, and Victimology Sub-theories. Dexter and Brian's defence mechanisms has highlighted how the trauma shaped and directed their lives' choices. In addition, according to Social Learning theory, they observed their mother's murder at a very young age, which has been fixed and internalized in their minds. The last part of the chapter deals with the two sub-theories of victimization. The Lifestyle theory specifies their victims' main characteristic, and the Routine Activities theory determines that when the two serial killers are motivated and a suitable target is available, they carefully prepare for capturing their target. To sum up, the third chapter was an analysis of Dexter and Brian characters using the four mentioned theories.

## General Conclusion

Several key results are to be reached at the end of our examination in relation to Defence Mechanisms, Social Learning Theory, and Victimology sub-theories. We have concluded that facing complex trauma in early life stages, particularly situations related to our parents, may have profound effect on our brain and personality development. In addition, the individuals' trauma response differs from one to another depending on the social environment, mental health conditions, and the trauma's severity. These factors can reduce and heighten the trauma severity according to the victim particularity. The dissertation was coherently divided into three chapters.

The first chapter consisted of a theoretical framework that elaborated the concept of trauma and its role in shaping serial killers' lives and an overview of victimology discipline. The chapter shows how trauma and dysfunctional upbringings could be seen in their relationships especially with their victims' selection, and the extent of violence that is inflicted upon them. The second chapter have analysed and explored Dexter and Brian's lives so that we can see how the trauma shaped their personalities by tackling Dexter's father influence, his animal abuse, the Dark Passenger as well as their childhood trauma, modus operandi, and their victims' types. This analysis shows also how their different upbringings constructed the distinction in their trauma response.

The brothers' trauma has a major role in their personality; nevertheless, their different environments made a distinctive impact in their criminal profiles. For example, each serial killer has specific modus operandi that are similar in some points and different in others. Both serial killers have the same way of killing. After killing their victims, they cut them into little pieces in a much more powerful imitation of their mother's murderers. In addition, they choose their victims according to certain specific characteristics. Dexter targets only

serial killers following Harry's code while Brian's victims are mostly prostitutes. Finally, the second chapter highlights the brothers' trauma along with their environmental living conditions that have had greatly formed their adulthood.

The last chapter of our dissertation examines the previous discussed points by applying the Defence mechanisms and the three criminological theories. The first part identifies Dexter and Brian's Defence mechanisms which have revealed how the kids' trauma is reflected in their lives. The first mechanism used by Dexter was Repression; he unconsciously has repressed his memories from his consciousness. Instead, he displays hostile behaviours toward his victims that appear in the shape of his Dark Passenger. The second mechanism that is used by both Dexter and Brian is Displacement, the brothers effectively use this defence mechanism to unconsciously displace their anger, aggression, and revenge that they felt towards their mother's killer upon other victims that are considered less threatening. These defensive methods are reflections of their trauma as they led to other mechanisms.

Another defence mechanism used by Dexter is Sublimation. Dexter's trauma is also reflected in his job; he has directed his feelings in a socially acceptable way that he became a police in Miami-Dade Police Department as a forensic blood spatter analyst. Moreover, Introjection is one of the strongest mechanisms that is seen in Dexter's internalization of his father's instructions. In addition, Dexter makes use of Projection defence mechanism; he shifts and projects his feelings of revenge and anger for his mother's killers to other killers. Finally, Dexter and Brian identify themselves with their mother's aggressors and become the powerful murderers who are in control, and who inflict pain. These mechanisms have strongly participated in reflecting their trauma.



The second part of this chapter consists of applying the Social Learning Theory on Dexter and Brian. According to this theory, Dexter and his brother has watched and observed their mother's murder at a very young age which is fixed and internalized in their unconscious part of the mind. Thus, the traumatic event has been observed, retained, reproduced, and motivated. According to SLT, Dexter and Brian have strong internal desires; they perform the act of killing because it is internally rewarding for them. The last part of the chapter has dealt with the two sub-theories of victimization. Firstly, according to Lifestyle theory, Dexter's victims are specifically chosen because of their criminal profiles while Brian's victims are mostly female prostitutes. Secondly, according to Routine Activities Theory, when the two serial killers are motivated and a suitable target is available, they carefully prepare for capturing their target.

In conclusion, this research have proved using Defence Mechanisms, Social Learning Theory, and Victimology sub-theories that Dexter Morgan and Brian Moser's trauma is reflected in many areas in their identities construction. The theories have contributed together to answer the raised questions and to achieve the main aims of the research. We have concluded that witnessing complex trauma in early life stages, particularly situations related to our parents, can have profound impact on our brain and personality development, as the socioenvironmental conditions have a major role in heightening the trauma's severity.

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## الملخص

تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى فحص العلاقة بين صدمة طفولة دكستر مورغان وبريان موسر، في رواية الغامض الحالم دكستر، وتأثيرها لاحقاً على تحول شخصياتهم إلى قتلة متسلسلين. كما يتمحور تركيز دراسة هذه الرواية إلى الانعكاس طويل المدى للصدمة التي عانى منها هؤلاء القتلة المتسلسلون إلى جانب تأثير ظروفهم المعيشية الاجتماعية والبيئية. وبالتالي، سنركز على سيكولوجية الشخصيات وتحليل النفس. ببساطة، سيتم دعم الأساس النظري بنتائج التحليل النفسي من أجل تتبع الصراعات النفسية للشخصيات من خلال تطبيق الآليات الدفاعية النفسية وهي الكبت، الازاحة، التسامي، الاستدماج، المماثلة مع المعتدي، والإسقاط. ستساعدنا هذه الآليات على شرح كيف شكل النهوض من حدث الطفولة الصادم مرحلة بلوغ الإخوة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، سنقوم بتطبيق نظرية التعلم الاجتماعي لإظهار كيف تبنوا سلوكيات قتلة امهم. أخيراً، سوف نطبق نظريات الفرعية لعلم الضحايا وهم نظرية نمط الحياة ومدخل الأنشطة الروتينية لإظهار الروابط بين صدمة الإخوة وضحاياهم. ستساهم هذه النظريات في إظهار الانعكاسات المختلفة لصدمة دكستر وبريان في بناء هوياتهم وتأثير ظروفهم الاجتماعية والبيئية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** رواية الغامض الحالم دكستر، القتلة المتسلسلين، صدمات الطفولة، آليات الدفاع، نظرية التعلم الاجتماعي، ونظريات الضحايا الفرعية.