

## **Levi's Basic Anxiety, Conflict and the Search for Glory in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Literary scholars of Zadie Smith's novel 'On Beauty' (2005) have examined Levi, the youngest male character of the novel, based on his environment, a multicultural society, and have viewed him as a representation of a multicultural family. However, this paper analyses Smith's portrayal of Levi as an ordinary child who grew up in unfavourable conditions. For this purpose, Levi's character is analysed as a representation of neuroticism and his basic anxiety, need for detachment, self-idealisation and search for glory are explored using a conceptual framework based on Karen Horney's psychoanalytic social theory. Through textual analysis, this study attempts to explore the root of psychological anxiety in Levi to discover the role of basic conflict in his behavioural and emotional responses, and to examine how Levi copes with his anxiety through self-idealisation. The outcomes indicate that, as the root of his basic anxiety, Levi's relationship with his father, transforms him into a detached person attempting to prove himself. This paper clarifies that Levi's conflict is rooted in the manner of his nurturing, with some impact from other factors such as society, culture and racial issues. In order to justify that the difficulties faced by multicultural families are not only related to their cultural and racial identity, future research could apply Horney's theory for literary works categorised under multiculturalism and immigration.

*Keywords:* Basic anxiety, Karen Horney's psychoanalytic social theory, need for detachment, 'On Beauty', self-idealization, the search for glory, Zadie Smith

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper studies the psychological characteristics of the youngest male character, Levi, in 'On Beauty' (2005) by Zadie Smith (b. 1975). In this novel, Smith attempts to portray characters living in contemporary multicultural societies who

suffer from a lack of good communication with their fathers as they cannot understand their children and do not respond accordingly to their problems. Therefore, they face anxiety in their childhood, which then causes them difficulties and conflicts in their relationships with society and even in their psyche later on. Smith portrays her characters in a way that shows their problems manifesting in the environment, their relationships and also in their own psyche. As the story progresses, the characters have to overcome the complexities and uncertainties they face in society and in their own families.

In this study, the selected character, Levi, is analysed using Karen Horney's psychoanalytic social theory. He is analysed as an individual who has psychological problems that manifest in his relationship with his family and with society. The focus of this study is on the character's inner conflict and anxiety that are not related to multiculturalism and hybridity.

Smith in 'On Beauty' concentrates on two middle-class families: the families of Howard Belsey and his academic colleague, Monty Kipps. Belsey's mixed-race family includes a white Englishman and an African-American woman, who move to Boston. Howard and his wife, Kiki, have three children: Jerome, Zora and Levi. On the other hand, Trinidadian Monty and his Caribbean wife, Carlen, have two children: Michael and Victoria. Although the fathers of these two families have ideological differences and are academic rivals, the mothers become friends despite all the

tensions between them. Not interested in the familial relationships, Levi becomes friends with an African-American man, Carl, and later becomes involved with black Haitian street boys in order to have a life similar to theirs.

Based on previous studies, although it is known that the novel avoids penetrating into the characters' minds (Moo, 2005), it is suggested that Smith has depicted her characters with certain psychological conflicts. As multicultural fiction, Smith attempts to bring the discussion of the obsession with racism and the tendency to define identity (Lanone, 2007, p. 192), which is seen particularly in the characterisation of Levi, who has a collective identity and pretends excessively to be a person of African heritage, referred to as black street culture in the novel. However, through analysing Levi's behaviour and actions, it is hypothesised that, because of his basic anxiety, he moves away from his family and creates an idealised self within the street culture of the Haitian boys. Moreover, Lopez (2010), through analysing 'On Beauty' based on the theme of racism, has noted Levi's sense of being guilty as he enjoys his self-idealised life as a young black man who is wealthier than his peers (p. 352).

According to the review of this story in a British national daily newspaper, *The Guardian* (2006), the campus fiction deals with "the clashes between intellectual[s]" and ordinary people (Mullan, 2006). In Smith's narrative, academia deprives people of having a real sense of beauty or even

prevents them from discussing this subject freely (Lopez, 2010, p. 362). Thus, in this regard, Howard, Levi's father, is found to be a typical academician rather than a real person, and he does not seem able to enjoy the beauty of his life and his family. Here, the notion of beauty brings with it a sense of justice for Levi (p. 358).

In a comparative study, Meeuwisse (2011) finds that Levi is rebellious against his father, Howard. Children need "emotional outlets" and someone to talk to in order to be able to know themselves, something which Levi is deprived of. Thus, in order to cope with problems, Levi has a more extroverted manner in contrast to his parents' strategy. He argues that environment — where children live and grow — has the most influence on the sense of belonging. As a result, it does not matter where the children are born or how they grow up as much as how they think and interpret their being (p. 45). Thus, the characteristic differences are the consequences of "difference in character and opinions, not ethnicity" (p. 53).

In contrast, according to Krickl (2009), ethnicity, as part of social construction, cannot be omitted as an influence when it comes to differences between characters (p. 54) since, as human beings and as members of society, we are interrelated and cannot live alone (p. 1). Krickl states that the identity of the characters in this novel is shaped by the alternative world they live in (p. 8), which is characterised by binary opposition (p. 9). According to Jackson (2012), the novel consists of binary racial categories, which is understood through the

"family's spoken and unspoken conflicts" (p. 865). Characteristics of racism in terms of human skin colour, white or black, which shape the characters' identities, as the main contradiction in 'On Beauty', are exclusively realised through the characterisation of Levi. In order to be an authentic black and part of street culture, Levi adopts its special language and characteristics (Krickl, 2009, p. 12), and, because of the feeling of being uprooted, he looks for a "connection with the part of his identity" (p. 85) which is denied.

In her essay, 'Fail Better' (2007), Smith states that it is the responsibility of the author to understand the outside elements of the individual as well as the inside elements with the aim of transferring this understanding to the reader. She provides the possibility of portraying the characters' personalities, and "their inner feeling" (p. 22) regarding their personal relationship (Kakutani, 2005) in turn, leads us to concentrate on Levi's behaviour and reactions towards his family, enabling us to analyse his character according to Karen Horney's psychoanalytic social theory. Therefore, in this paper, the aim is to explore the root of Levi's basic anxiety to discover the impact of his basic conflict on his process of socialisation and to examine his psychological coping mechanism.

Findings from previous studies show that perhaps there is no common reason for Levi's tendency towards street culture as some scholars have identified ethnicity as his motive, while others have identified his environment as his reason. Indeed, providing

a good explanation of his communication with his family, especially his father, as well as his feelings and thoughts through the narrator indicates that there may be something psychological pertaining to his inner conflict.

### **KAREN HORNEY'S PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIAL THEORY**

In this section, it will be explained the major elements of Horney's theory which are relevant to this study and the chosen character, Levi, such as, basic anxiety, need for detachment, self-idealization, and the search for glory, in the following part.

Karen Horney's psychoanalytic social theory describes how people develop 'interpersonal' and 'intrapsychic' methods of defence in order to cope with the dissatisfaction of their psychological needs (Paris, 1997, p. 18). Horney believes that basic anxiety in people who do not have "favourable conditions for growth," causes them to develop "profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness" (1950, p. 18) and results in feelings of isolation and helplessness in a hostile world. Consequently, such individuals would not be able to make a connection with others based on their real feelings and would attempt to find a new way to deal with them.

Being neurotic is accompanied by having certain needs, such as the need for affection and approval, the need for power, the need for prestige, the need for admiration, the need for personal achievement or the need for self-sufficiency and independence.

As a result of basic anxiety, and attempts to relieve it, these needs in neurotics lead them to move away from others in order to rescue themselves from that basic anxiety; however, a basic conflict is formed in the individual as a result of this.

The dynamic centre of the theory of neurosis as it relates to socialisation lies in the conflicts among the attitudes of "moving toward, against, or away from" people. Although an individual may be successful in creating an artificial balance, he would face newly developed conflicts which would require further attempts to eliminate. In this process, whatever the neurotic person does makes him encounter more difficulties and renders him more hostile, helpless, fearful and alienated from himself and others. As a result of this hostility and helplessness, he may come to make a sadistic decision which would increase his hopelessness and create new conflicts. In the process of socialisation, these conflicts are not specific for neurotics. In fact, conflicts are a result of the individual's wishes, interests and convictions, which are bound to those of others. Conflict could also occur as a clash between wishes and obligations.

The neurotic person attempts to find a way to cope with his difficulties and as he does not find anything in common with others, he decides to move away from people since he has a need for detachment. These individuals have a tendency to keep a distance between themselves and others, especially in the case of emotional feelings. Their need for "self-sufficiency" is generally seen as being "resourceful to live." As a result of their needs and preferences, they become independent individuals. According

to Horney, moving away from people “give[s] the individual a feeling of security as long as they function and that, conversely, anxiety is aroused when they fail to function. As long as the detached person can keep at a distance he feels comparatively safe” (1945, p. 91).

The need to lift himself above others is developed in the neurotic person living in a competitive society who feels isolated and inferior to others. The more he invents artificial strategies to cope with others in contrast to his real self, the more he becomes alienated from his real self. Gradually, he loses the understanding of who he is or where he stands. He seeks to find something to bring back his feeling of identity, something which could give him a sense of power and importance. The imagination could be the only way through which a neurotic person may cover his deficiency. Through imagination, he is able to create an idealised image in his mind and become a hero, lover, genius or saint. Self-idealisation gives the individual a sense of superiority. Eventually, the idealised image takes the place of the idealised self. Now, the individual identifies himself with his idealised image and not only does he want to express himself through this image, he also needs to prove it through actions in order to actualise his idealised self.

As one of the major ways to solve this basic conflict, Horney states that a neurotic creates a special image of himself as he is or he feels that he ought to be. While most of the time the created image is far from the reality, consciously or unconsciously the

sense of this creation is very real for him. Certain characteristics of the created image depend on the personality of their creator. It could be beauty, power, intelligence or whatever he feels he must be or have.

As the need for superiority and being above others can be found in all neurotic people, they then make it their goal to search for glory in their lives. One of the most destructive and hidden elements in this type of search for glory is the drive towards a “vindictive triumph”. This drive causes the neurotic to put others to shame and defeat them in order to feel more successful or powerful or simply better than them. Horney terms it “vindictive” because this drive is fuelled by revenge for whatever the individual has unconsciously suffered in his childhood, and, thus, the neurotic is unaware of this need.

Being imaginative is a general characteristic the neurotic exploits in his search for glory. The imagination plays a crucial role in the search for glory that is a part of the process of self-idealisation. Through the imagination, the individual reaches the truth of his self (productive), or moves away from it (unproductive) when it is in the service of neurotic needs.

According to Horney, in the search for glory, the neurotic cannot help wandering in his fantastic world. Therefore, he attempts to actualise his self-idealisation based on the “outside world”. He forgets his real self and becomes what he makes of his self, relying on how he ‘should’ be, how he should understand everything, how he should like others and should be liked by them.

Regarding the aforementioned, a neurotic person tries to be perfect although he cannot always obtain the self-confidence and self-respect that he desires. As he lives in his imaginative world and does not grow up in the favourable conditions of enjoying protection and feeling welcomed, he gradually becomes alienated from his self, and his real self gradually disappears.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As outlined in Horney's theory, the major cause of becoming neurotic, along with the associated characteristics, results from how children grow up and are treated by their parents. The development of neurosis in Levi can be seen in his movements from his troubled childhood to the serious troubles of his teenage years. Since, according to Horney, the role of parents is very important in the personality development of a child, the characterisation Levi's father, Howard, will also be discussed in order to discover the roots of Levi's basic anxiety. This paper is divided based on the concepts of basic anxiety, socialisation, which discusses the motives of Levi's need for detachment and the search for glory.

According to Horney, the major causes of neuroses and their accompanying characteristics result from how a child grows up and is treated by his parents. In the Introduction to her book, 'Neurosis and Human Growth' (1950), Horney states that the significance of self-knowledge in the process of growing up has an important role in childhood, providing a better understanding of self and moving to

healthy self-realisation. This self-knowledge originates from the family, which is known as the segment of society from which children's behaviour is formed (Davis, 1940, p. 523). In fact, a child needs "an atmosphere of warmth to give him both a feeling of inner security and the inner freedom enabling him to have his own feelings and thoughts and to express himself" (Horney, 1950, p. 18).

Horney believes that the minds of children who grow up under favourable conditions within the family setting develop and work well. Their potential energy is utilised towards having a better understanding of themselves and their motivations. Therefore, they will grow up as normal people who live well according to their real selves. If children have a good connection with family members such as their fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers, they will have the opportunity to talk about their desires and dreams. Otherwise, they prefer to live alone with their wishes.

The behaviour of parents also affects children's processes of personal development and helps them to have a better understanding of themselves. Parents might also be preoccupied with their own neurotic desires that prevent them from loving their children and giving them sufficient self-confidence as their attitudes toward them "are determined by [their] own neurotic needs and responses" (Horney, 1950, p. 18). Therefore, Howard's neurotic desires, such as the needs to be perfect and to have power or for personal achievement, among others, limit his son's life within narrow borders.

### *Basic Anxiety*

The youngest male character of Smith's novel 'On Beauty', Levi, is portrayed as having been deprived of a good relationship with his father, Howard, who is unable to love him as he himself is preoccupied with his own needs and desires. Howard lives under the pressure of his desires and is an irresponsible father who nurtures his need for personal admiration and achievement in the university where he works without a care for fulfilling his children's needs. In fact, not only does he prefer to escape from his wife, he chooses to set himself outside of his family (Meeuwisse, 2011, p. 14).

As a result of creating an idealised self of his own, Howard also loses his real self and lives particularly as an academician who does not have real passion for life and forgets about true love: "It was an old joke that Howard was only human in a theoretical sense. [...] Something about his academic life had changed love for him, changed its nature" (2005, p. 255). In this regard, Lopez (2010) points out that Howard is separated from his family and his friends due to his academic career which prevents him from being a human being who can feel beauty. Howard is so drowned in his dreams and idealised images that Kiki, his wife, attempts to remind him that whatever happens and whatever he is doing are the real facts and not imaginary ones:

*You're not Rembrandt, Howard  
[...] I was thinking: What is wrong  
with this man? Howard [...] this is  
real. This life. We're really here –*

*this is really happening. Suffering  
is real. When you hurt people, it's  
real. When you fuck one of our best  
friends, that's a real thing. (2005,  
pp. 208, 394)*

Henceforth, it is seen that Howard fails to be a good husband as well as a good father (Lopez, 2010, p. 363). As depicted in Smith's novel, 'On Beauty', there is no real father-son relationship and good understanding in this story as "he disliked and feared conversations with his children" (2005, p. 85), particularly with Levi. Furthermore, Meeuwisse (2011) also believes that Levi is deprived of a good relationship with his father because his father does not understand him and his feelings.

Through the narrative of the novel and the conversations between Levi and his family, we are told of the unfriendly atmosphere in this family. Levi lives under unusual circumstances where his parents do not love each other as well as do not talk pleasantly to or spend any time with each other. They argue most of the time in such a way that Levi complains and asks them to "stop arguing" (2005, p. 14). Howard is involved in affairs with his colleagues and students without considering his family's emotional reactions (2005, p. 13).

Throughout the story, we are informed that Howard keeps himself busy by competing with his colleague, Kipps, and trying to defeat him in everything as he sees himself in a competition with this colleague. Howard sees Kipps as his rival:

*For fifteen years these two men had been moving in similar circles; passing through the same universities, contributing to the same journals, sometimes sharing a stage – but never an opinion – during panel discussions. (2005, p. 29)*

To fulfil his “strong need to exploit others, to outsmart them” (Horney, 1945, p. 65), Howard writes some articles with the intent of outsmarting his colleague, Kipps in order to defeat him in order to show that he is better and more intelligent than him. Another example of his competitive streak is clear when, because Kipps writes books on Rembrandt, Howard decides he will do the same (2005, p. 21). Howard cannot tolerate being inferior to this person whom he perceives as being a professional rival and opponent. He needs to be superior, to be a winner. He also moves against others and tries to use them for his own advancement although he fails most of the time (2005, p. 29).

Therefore, the textual evidence on Howard’s behaviour indicates that Howard is in conflict with his desires and neurotic needs, which, in turn, affects his relationship with his son as well as the conditions in which Levi is growing up. Levi is 16 years old, and needs his family’s affection. Horney states that “the human individual needs favourable condition for growth, he needs healthy friction with the wishes and will of others” (1950, p. 18). However, Levi’s parents’ attention is drawn more to what

Levi wears, not to what he says or even who his friends are. For example, when Levi is speaking to his father, Howard’s attention is focused on his style of dressing and not on what Levi is talking about:

*Howard was surprised by Levi. Once again, this head-stocking business. [...] ‘What’s the deal with this?’ asked Howard, flipping the interrogation round and touching Levi’s head. [...] ‘Nothin’, Dad. It’s just what it is’ Levi said and shrugged. ‘just a thing that I wear.’ (2005, pp. 21-22)*

Although his chosen accent also is very different from his family’s, their attention is on minor issues, such as his “head-stocking” which is really not that important (2005, p. 11).

These attitudes and behaviours illustrate that Levi’s father does not consider the basic needs of the personality development of his child. Therefore, on account of these indifferent attitudes toward him, Levi finds he has grown to be a different person who does not have anything in common with his family, and eventually becomes a stranger.

Since Levi’s parents cannot understand his behaviour and do not comprehend his way of living, he finds himself a helpless and lonely boy. The fact is that, according to Horney, the child feels helpless and isolated when he finds his family indifferent towards him, feels the lack of respect for his individual needs and feels the lack of real guidance (1945, p. 41). Therefore, in



Levi's case, he has to be responsible for his problems and must handle his conflicts and issues on his own, as he says, "I can handle it myself, don't worry about that" (2005, p. 24). Horney believes that the individual needs to find the proper conditions in which to talk about himself, his desires and his wishes. Moreover, "he needs the good will of others, not only to help him in his many needs, but to guide and encourage him" (1950, p. 18). However, because of the lack of such an atmosphere, Levi is not able to talk about his difficulties and friendships with his family.

Levi suffers from the lack of true love from his parents, which in turn results in his loneliness and isolation. Horney believes that "basic anxiety" or the "insecurity in a child" could be the result of many issues in his surroundings, which then affect his mental development, such as direct or indirect domination, indifference, ignoring his needs, absence of reliable direction, absence of real warmth, lack of admiration, isolation, and an unfriendly atmosphere (1945, p. 41). As a result of such surroundings, Levi also feels lonely and helpless within his family. Nobody cares for him. His father does not speak to him seriously and is so indifferent that, when Levi is talking about his feelings and attitudes, he has to ask his father "why you always got to make everything be a joke?" (2005, p. 63). Levi's parents do not know where he works, and his father guesses that he works in a "record shop," asking him:

*Are you going to work today? They  
let you wear it at the wotsit, the*

*record shop?"* , Levi replies that *'It's not a record shop—I keep telling you—it's a mega-store. There is like seven floors' [...]* Levi pulled back from his father (2005, p. 22).

#### *Socialisation and the Need for Detachment*

The socialisation of children involves "pass[ing] through a series of stages of emotional development when basic attitudes are formed. Early childhood encompasses three of these: the stage of trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, and initiative versus guilt" (Norton, 1991, p. 18). These stages are clear in the development of a normal child who is raised in favourable conditions within a genuinely warm family without any hostile conditions. However, as discussed in the previous section, Levi has been deprived of nurturing under such positive conditions.

The factors that cause Levi to suffer from basic anxiety also threaten his feelings of security and his inner freedom. Therefore, because of this kind of basic anxiety, he does not grow up as a normal child and he encounters problems when it comes to socialisation. Based on Horney's description, Levi "cannot simply like or dislike, trust or distrust, express his wishes or protest against others, but has automatically to devise ways to cope with people and manipulate them with minimum damage to himself" (Horney, 1945, p. 219). The betrayal characteristic of Levi's father makes it difficult for him to trust his father as a supporter and guide since it is not reasonable to trust someone who has

shown his unfaithfulness before. So, he tries to be more autonomous and self-dependent, deciding to work on weekends in order to earn a little money to be independent as the first step of being away from his family.

As he fails in the process of socialisation due to his situation, he needs to find a way to solve his problem in order to be socialised and cope with others as well as with his situation. In order to cope with basic anxiety, Levi chooses to move away from his family; this is in line with Horney's view that the detached person "wants neither to belong nor to fight, but keeps apart" (Horney, 1945, p. 43). Therefore, Levi attempts to find a better life for himself far from his family and their ideals, since his mother also points out that "[t]o be honest, he's trying to lose us" (2005, p. 66). Levi's decision to be away from his family and his eagerness for street culture in order to live based on his idealised self are as a result of having an indifferent family, which Horney calls the "adverse factors" (1945, p. 41) of lack of real respect for a child, absence of admiration, lack of reliable warmth in the house and discrimination in the family. Levi begins to fantasise about belonging to the black district and not to an academic village like Wellington and calls himself a "brother" who can "jump the fence" (2005, p. 63). Since the most obvious peculiarity of the detached person, according to Horney, is "a general estrangement from people" (1945, p. 73), Levi becomes a stranger in his family through his actions.

As a child usually does not have experience living in a real and bigger

society, he needs someone as a model of life or as a guide (Norton, 1991). However, Levi does not have such a real person in his life as a result of being deprived of having a good and reliable relationship with his family.

As I have discussed so far, he is not similar to his family, whose desires, wishes and lifestyles are different. In fact, as a detached person, Levi prefers to maintain the emotional distance between himself and his family. As a major need, a detached person prevents himself from "get[ting] emotionally involved" (Horney, 1945 p. 75). Hence, Levi does not interfere with his family's problems, which can be understood when Jerome, Levi's brother, talks about the conflict between their parents and tells Levi, "You have to be there all the time. It's like you're in the belly of the beast" (2005, p. 236). However, Levi, because he is not very involved with his parents' relationships, indifferently and without any consideration replies, "It's all right man. I'm out a lot. You know" (2005 p. 236).

Levi, in his detachment, based on Horney's theory, has "a need for self-sufficiency" (1945, p. 75). Due to his lack of having a genuine and warm relationship with his family, he chooses to be friends with black men, his colleagues and the boys who live in that area, while his father does not appreciate this and fears of talking about them, since he relates it to the race issue: "He disliked and feared conversations with his children that concerned race, as he suspected this one would" (2005, p. 85). As a detached person, Levi needs to acquire his knowledge of race and street culture on his

own rather than believing what his father says. With regard to Horney's theory, the detached person has a strong desire to obtain his knowledge about any subject through his observation and interpretation, not based on what others have said or written (1945, p. 76). Thus, despite his father's fear, Levi invites his black street poet friend, Carl, to his family's anniversary party; however, his father does not allow him to come in (2005, p. 105). This action, according to Horney's theory, suppresses Levi.

Regarding the social development of a child, Norton believes that children "observe what other members of the family fear and how members of their groups react to people who belong to different racial or cultural groups" (1991, p. 25). As a result, they would be affected by this treatment and try to show reactions. Levi is a kind of child who is opposed to the despising of street boys and blacks as he finds himself similar to them and pretends to be one of them. He wants to be with street boys instead of with a family friend in Wellington:

*He left the city reluctantly, as always. He got back on the subway and then the bus. He looked out with dread at Wellington [...]. The pristine white spires of the college seemed to him like the watchtowers of a prison to which he was returning. He sloped towards home, [...], listening to his music. The fate of the young man in his earphones, who faced a jail cell that very night, did not seem such a world away from his own*

*predicament: an anniversary party full of academics.* (2005, pp. 79-80).

This action then fits into Horney's theory of how "he dislikes general gregariousness" (1945, p. 76). In order to be familiar with them and their culture, he wants to dress up like them; for example, he wears a "doo-rag" (2005, p. 87), speaks with their accent, a "faux Brooklyn accent" (2005, p. 11), or does his weekend job where they live and work, in Boston, not in "the toy-town that was Wellington" (2005, p. 79). In fact, he is trying to behave, talk and think similarly to street boys as though he really belongs to that street culture since "children's thoughts, feelings, and actions become similar to those of people they believe are like them" (Norton, 1991, p. 25).

#### *Idealised-self and The Search for Glory*

According to Horney, the "search for glory" is a child's response towards misrepresenting features of the family environment. It "springs from the need to actualize the idealised self" (Horney, 1950, p. 38). In Horney's opinion, children who are raised in a neurotic environment and are governed by neurotic needs and responses will become irritable, threatening and unreliable. The child tries to cope with his anxiety through rebellion, clinging to or shutting others out and withdrawing in an extreme way (1950, pp. 18-19).

Withdrawing from his family, Levi becomes interested in associating himself with the black Haitian street boys in Boston.

It begins unconsciously when he idealises his self to be a black American street boy. Thus, he first finds a job in a mega-store to sell hip-hop, R&B and urban music, which, according to Rabaka, originated from African Americans (2013, pp. 39-40). As a detached person, he believes that his knowledge and interest in these genres would be useful in order to help customers; however, nobody is interested in his knowledge, and it is also not appreciated by his family. Nevertheless, his job is not what he expects since his workplace is similar to the information desk where they answer questions, such as where the toilet is, or where "World Music" is. As a result, he becomes disappointed since his job does not satisfy his need to be useful and he does not enjoy it anymore. Finally, he leaves his job, as he believes that there is no respect for him in the mega-store.

According to Horney, through shattering the feelings of superiority in the detached person, a neurotic needs to find protection; otherwise, he would not be able to stand the solitude (1945, p. 79). Therefore, losing his job, which is the only way for him to actualise his idealised self of being black and independent, brings out in Levi feelings of hopelessness and insecurity: "Two fat tears welled up. On the practical side it was very bad—it was a nightmare" (2005, p. 192). As a detached person, Levi is not interested in his family and their concerns. Furthermore, as part of his idealised self, he could be normal as well as sane and black as long as he could be free from his family and make money on his own.

In order to have individuality, Levi needs to imagine himself as a black Haitian boy. He is afraid of ignoring his imagination because, according to Horney, "imagination itself may become of supreme value, regardless of the use to which it is put, since it allows its bearer to look down with contempt on the drab and pedestrian people who are concerned with truth" (Horney, 1950, p. 91). Moreover, for Levi, having money of his own "will give him a hold, a feeling of identity which could make him meaningful to himself and, despite all the weakness in his structure, give him a feeling of power and significance" (Horney, 1950, p. 21).

What Levi dreams of is having a black Haitian life. In fact, it is just a fantasy of Haitian boys since their lives are something more real and difficult than Levi's imagination:

*Even if the other guys didn't fully understand Levi's enthusiasm for what they did, they always smiled and played along, and they had learned a few of the artificial words that Levi likes to apply to their real-life situation. Hustler, Playa, Gangsta, Pimp. The reflection of themselves in Levi's eyes was, after all, a more than welcome replacement for their own realities. Who wouldn't rather be a gangsta than a street-hawker? Who wouldn't rather hustle than sell? Who would choose their own lonely, dank rooms over this Technicolor video,*

*this outdoor community that Levi insisted they were all a part of?* (2005, p. 245)

Therefore, Levi comes, based on Horney's theory, "to identify [himself] with (his) idealised, integrated image which becomes an idealised self" (Horney, 1950, p. 23).

Similar to the neurotic who has a need to express himself through his idealised self, Levi uses his energy with the aim of "actualising the idealised self" and "to prove it in action." Hence, there would be a "need for perfection," which means moulding the whole personality into the idealised self" (Horney, 1950, pp. 24-25). After losing his job in the mega-store and becoming a friend of a Haitian Anglo-Francophone group, Levi begins to read a book about Haitians in order to remould himself into the specific features of his idealised image (2005, p. 355). Moreover, he even attempts to look like the Haitians and is usually seen in hoods and jeans, and his language is particularly transformed by using words such as "yo," "man," and "brothers" in an unnatural accent. Throughout this attempt, and using his energy to be someone "black, a Haitian," he gradually loses his real self. He does not have extra energy in order to find himself and to improve his good qualities. Consequently, his real self is replaced by his idealised image. Krickl (2009, p. 63) also highlights that, for Levi, being black is everything as he attempts to represent himself as a black teenager. Therefore, he changes his cultural code in order to share

the same ideas as an authentic black young man. As a result, not only does his style of living as well as his manner change, he also denies his family.

The search for glory and need for perfection for Levi are revealed when, after spending time with the Haitian boys and reading books about them, Levi becomes aware of their miserable situation. As his idealised self is to be an authentic black boy and he has desires of living with black Haitian boys, he believes them and trusts whatever they say about their situation and actions. He discovers that to be a black means to be an inferior resident in America, the same as his situation in his family. Thus, as an independent and detached person, based on Horney's theory, he finds an obligation in himself; "he should be able to solve every problem of his own, of others, in no time" (Horney, 1950, p. 65). Understanding that his father's colleague, Kipps, "rob[s] the peasants of their [Haitian's] art and it makes [him] a rich man" (2005 p. 362) causes him to steal it from his office without considering the outcomes of his action. In fact, living in a dream of being different from others and finding himself alone and helpless in his family's condition, where he lives as an inferior and even a stranger, causes him to fight his situation and to seek revenge against his family and neighbours. In other words, as long as he lives in a self-sufficient dream, he cannot be true to himself and, consequently, cannot see the wrong side of his decision. This, then, fits into Horney's view that Levi, the neurotic, "blinds himself to the consequence of his actions" (Horney, 1950, p. 170).

Before Levi perform his final action, he unconsciously encounters intrapsychic conflicts between his idealised self and the despised self (2005, p. 408). In his real self, he is not a thief; however, he loses his real self as a consequence of his circumstances. However, after spending time during the day with the Haitian boys, at night he goes to the office and steals the painting in order to seek revenge against the superior residents and sell it and give the money to the Haitian boys.

## CONCLUSION

An analysis of Levi's situation in his family reveals that the root of his basic anxiety is due to his upbringing in unfavourable conditions, where his father displays neurotic behaviour, he lives as an inferior and he is different from other members of the family. Through being socialised as a neurotic, he needs to cope with his basic anxiety, which leads him to develop his basic conflict and move away from his family and look for his desires outside the family. Therefore, he finds himself more similar to the black street boys than to his family members. However, insisting on being detached, Levi unconsciously creates an idealised self-image for himself. Through living in his dreams, Levi establishes his idealised self as a black street boy who works with Haitians and adopts their lifestyle. Therefore, he loses his real self and externalises his self-idealisation. As a result, in his search for glory as an authentic black teenager, Levi decides to steal a valuable painting in order

to fight against his own inferiority as well as that of the black Haitian boys.

Furthermore, Smith portrays her character as a human being in a contemporary multicultural society who is searching for glory in a competitive world. In fact, everyone in the real world is trying to be superior and victorious in order to gain whatever they want, especially pride and glory. In her novel, Smith tries to portray what would happen if a person does not grow up in suitable and conducive conditions and what he or she would do in a competitive society in which everyone fights for glory and victory in order to be the most successful and appreciated person in the world.

Studying the characters of novels with the theme of multiculturalism through the lens of psychological theory provides an opportunity for readers to understand that the roots of the problems and conflict faced by the characters are not related to where they stand or live. Rather, it shows that those conflicts are firstly related to their minds and their personal development with some impact from society or the new country in which they live as immigrants.

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