5-3-2021

Bigger and Abnormal Psychology: How Antisocial Personality Disorder and a Lack of Identity Helped Shape Bigger's Behavior

Trayton N. Armstrong

Tray Armstrong

Professor Jennifer Pittman

Senior Lit Seminar

3 May 2021

Bigger and Abnormal Psychology: How Antisocial Personality Disorder and a Lack of Identity Helped Shape Bigger's Behavior

What makes a man commit murder? Some people argue that it is simply the nature of the person himself that drives one to kill, while others assert that there are genetic factors that play an intense part in shaping how one approaches the world, and still some say that it is primarily a societal factor that plays the largest role. While it is difficult to assess some of these points in the real world, as we are unable to really hear their thoughts and see their motivations firsthand, in fiction we can take the journey that the main character takes both physically and mentally. One of the most discussed murders in modern American literature is Bigger Thomas, the protagonist of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940). The novel centers on the last days of Bigger's life, as he commits two homicides, extortion, and rape. These crimes led to a death sentence of the electric chair after a flimsy trial. While it might appear at first that Bigger's situation is simply a result of the racism of the late 1930s, with the segregated South Side noticing and hating the disparity they see compared to the more affluent white residents in neighboring burgs, I would argue that the situation is more nuanced and complex than just simply that of a racial socioeconomic disparity. Due to the way that his peers and other African Americans react to Bigger's behavior, I posit that Bigger actually suffers from an antisocial personality disorder which has created a negative feedback loop with his surroundings. He is trapped in a cycle that is terribly difficult to escape from because of the way his environment, genetics, and reactions have conditioned him to

behave and believe. In understanding why Bigger behaves the way he does, I aim to bring understanding to both extreme cases like his and to those whose psychological disorders are not as severe.

First, it is imperative we define what antisocial personality disorder is and how that might apply to Bigger's psychological makeup and demonstrate evidence of an antisocial personality disorder in the character. Antisocial personality disorder, as defined by Barlow, Durand, and Hofmann in *Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach*, is a cluster B personality disorder[1] in which patients presenting will often fail to comply with social norms to further their own gains.[2] The authors break down the one-sentence definition further, stating, "[Those presenting with antisocial personality disorder] perform actions most of us would find unacceptable, such as stealing from friends and family. They also tend to be irresponsible, impulsive, and deceitful" (Barlow, Durand, and Hofman 461). This personality disorder tends to manifest itself in a variety of ways, but the most important aspects are included in the Revised Psychopathy Checklist [PCL-R]. The personality characteristics of those with antisocial personality disorder include high scores in "glibness/superficial charm, grandiose sense of self-worth, pathological lying, manipulation, lack of remorse/guilt, callousness/lack of empathy" (Barlow, Durand, and Hofman 462). Often when diagnosing patients with antisocial personality disorder, clinicians will need to

[1] This grouping also includes other "dramatic, emotional, or erratic" disorders like borderline personality disorder, histrionic personality disorder, and narcissistic personality disorder. These type of disorders tend to affect and heighten aggressive and outgoing aspects of personality while muting more inhibitory aspects. Compare to Cluster A disorders, like paranoid personality disorder, which produce odd, eccentric, or distorted behaviors, and Cluster C disorders, like obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, which affect and emphasize fearful aspects of personality (Barlow, Durand, and Hofman 451).

[2] Antisocial personality disorder is very similar to psychopathic disorder and there is academic debate as to whether or not these disorders should be combined into a single diagnosis or left separate to emphasize degrees of severity. Patients presenting with psychopathic disorder tend to have a blanket lack of affect when it comes to emotions, tending to put on a show of fake emotion to fool anyone interacting with them, whereas antisocial personality disorder patients have emotions that skew towards aggression and nonconformity (Barlow, Durand, and Hofman 462).

go beyond the patient interview itself and investigate exterior documents to confirm a case of antisocial personality disorder while ruling out any other causes for socially abnormal behavior.

Barlow and colleagues also discuss antisocial personality disorder in relation to criminal behavior. Many who suffer from antisocial personality disorder are at an elevated risk for criminal and antisocial behaviors such as drug use, robbery, and extortion (Barlow, Durand, and Hofman 462). This propensity is because they have a reduced or even complete lack of regard for the rights of others. For those presenting with this disorder, lying to manipulate someone into a favorable position does not come with inherent morality or weight. While they may understand that there is a social norm or inherent risk in their actions, these patients do not assign any weight to it and instead prioritize their own desires.

This rejection of exterior risk can lead to incredibly risky decision making that brings harm to both the person with the disorder and those around him, something that Bigger constantly engages in. This engagement of risky behavior is perhaps most obvious in more flamboyant crimes, such as Barlow and colleagues' example of a man robbing a bank without a facial covering. For purposes of explanation, I expand upon their initial example. The man wishes to obtain money, and so walks in armed with a pistol. The man walks to the clerk's desk and wildly pulls the pistol, announcing to everyone in the building that he has a gun and he wants money. This announcement endangers both the bystanders, as they are now aware of the danger and might attempt something foolish in an adrenaline filled attempt to save their lives, and the robber himself, as he may be shot by any security, police, or bystanders. He does not have a face covering, and security footage will most certainly lead the police to him if he even leaves the bank. This scenario is not wildly disproportionate when it comes to antisocial

personality disorder, and while the disorder does not make one a criminal inherently, the disorder does have an unfortunately high correlation to criminal behavior.[3]

Given all of the diagnostic and anecdotal information on antisocial personality disorder, can Bigger be diagnosed as presenting with the disorder, and how does any diagnosis or lack thereof affect the message of the novel? In my mind, I believe it is a relatively quick diagnosis based on the evidence presented throughout the narrative. The novel is broken into three sections, each of which describes a different phase of Bigger's story, and each emphasizes a different mental state Bigger finds himself in. Each can be effectively examined to find pieces of evidence for a myriad of disorders, but when synthesized and taken together, I believe antisocial personality disorder is the most likely diagnosis for Bigger Thomas.

The novel opens with the title "Fear," broadly a reference to Bigger's existential fear of white people that he masks with an aggressive but false bravado. This is most evident in the altercation with Gus. When Bigger and the men are planning to rob old Blum's store, Gus is reluctant to go through with the plan, primarily because Blum is a white man and Bigger's friends had never robbed a white man before. They all feared that doing so would incur more severe consequences than if they stuck to the blacks in South Side. Bigger says to them, "'If old Blum was a black man, you-all would be itching to go. 'Cause he's white, everybody's scared'" (Wright 24). Bigger himself is actually afraid of the robbery, of the white men who might pursue them after the act, and of Gus for his indecision in the matter. "He had argued all of his pals but

[3] There are plenty of people with antisocial personality disorder who function perfectly well in society. People with antisocial personality disorder tend to fit well in the business world or that of venture capital, where a lack of emotional affect, competitive, thrill-seeking nature, and pragmatic mindset are often more advantageous than interpersonal skills. While there is a positive correlation between the presence of antisocial personality disorder and criminal activity, inside the population with antisocial personality disorder there is a negative correlation between IQ and criminal activity. This means that the people with both an antisocial personality disorder and a high IQ may still be at a higher risk for criminal activity than someone without antisocial personality disorder. They are at the lowest risks for those suffering from the disorder and may be able to fit into society in a productive way (Barlow, Durand, and Hofman 462-3).

one into consenting to the robbery, and toward the lone man who held out he felt a hot hate and fear; he had transferred his fear of the whites to Gus" (Wright 25). Bigger has an immense amount of fear and anger inside him and the tension from those two forces seems to put him in a state of constant stress. This fear of whites is a major driving force within Bigger and is what gives him his motivation throughout the novel. As Masaya Takeuchi notes about Bigger's lack of a father, "His father was probably murdered by whites, and Bigger must realize that his father's death led to his family's predicament" (57). While I do have questions concerning Takeuchi's rationale about Bigger's understanding of his family's predicament, as Bigger rarely even thinks about his father, I do tend to agree with his next statement, as Takeuchi continues, "The death of Bigger's father probably implanted in Bigger his fear and hatred of white people" (57). As Dr. Travis Langley put it, losing a parent is "the single most stressful common life event a child can experience" (37). Because Bigger lost his father at an early age, he experiences an intense amount of stress all throughout his childhood, compounded by the fear of the external threat to his existence from the white oppressors. Mathew Elder, professor at University of Georgia, believes that Bigger's stress is related to a case of distorted or split personality, and that this split is most eloquently demonstrated in book one of the novel. He states of book one, "Representing this cultural sickness in the individual Bigger Thomas, Wright adroitly and powerfully identifies the form of the psychological dissociation and vacuity of identity among the urban African-American population" (Elder 33). In simpler terms, the African Americans from South Side suffer from a type of identity dissonance because of the systemic racism present throughout society. Concerning the scene in which Bigger and Gus imitate an army general, Elder notes:

> For Bigger and Gus, being black, and even more so because they are admitted thieves, the uniform, and the militant authority it represents would have been a

> constantly lurking and fearsome presence. Contrast this with the white understanding of that presence, which was as a protective barrier preventing any encroachment into white society by black skin, which, to white society, was a lurking and fearsome prospect, made all the more terrifying, especially to white women, by the promulgation of the "black rapist" myth. (Elder 34)

Because the society was constructed in a way that disenfranchised black Americans in the 1930s, people like Gus and Bigger felt like they had the world itself against them. This disparaging treatment led to the “vacuity of identity” that Elder references.

This lack of identity is further emphasized by other characters’ reactions to Bigger: not as his own individual person but as a symbol of what African Americans are. As Charles De Arman notes, many characters, often including Bigger himself, do not see Bigger as a “discrete entity who creates a self through moral choices and the assumption of responsibility for his acts” but instead as a stereotype exemplifying the worst portions of the Black situation at the time, culminating with the Black racist stereotype in book three (61). Bigger is often confronted with presumptions about himself that may or may not be accurate, but he does not choose to defy them. One smaller example of this is when Bigger is in the diner eating with Jan and Mary, when Jan asks Bigger if he likes to eat fried chicken. Because of the way Jan asked the question, already presuming the stereotypical answer rather than asking an open-ended question, Bigger is trapped into the stereotypical identity that Jan and Mary see for him instead of that which he can make for himself. More importantly, however, he does not fight the assumption of his identity. Instead, he passively accepts the role Jan assigns him and carries it out faithfully, all the while hating that he has to do so.

Though I agree with Elder that Bigger suffers from a lack of identity, I disagree with his conclusion that Bigger suffers from "psychological dissociation" and has several split personalities he takes on in order to survive in his world. The bravado in front of the boys and the quiet demeanor taken in front of the Daltons and reporters are not different core personalities presenting themselves. Instead, they are characters that Bigger takes on to fool anyone watching, not unlike his playing general or J.P. Morgan with Gus on the street corner. Very few of these social, external characters show Bigger's own inner monologue, only small fragments of what he truly thinks. One example is the scene in which Bigger attempts to intimidate Gus. In this scene, Gus has just arrived to execute the robbery on Blum's store when Bigger turns on him seemingly without provocation. From there, Bigger continually assaults Gus, pulling a knife on him and making him lick it in a twisted display of Bigger's own manhood. Elder uses this scene to make the argument that Bigger's outbursts, both here and with Bessie later in Part 2, are to relieve himself from the stress and tension of the multiple characters he is forced to play (39). While I do not completely disagree with this assessment, as Bigger does seem to use violence as a method of stress relief throughout the novel, beginning in the first few pages with the rat and his sister, I assert that this is Bigger's internal anger and hatred manifesting in front of the men as a way to control his fear of robbing the store. While Bigger's persona changes from scene to scene as necessary, through the narration of the book, we see his bend towards violence as the primary answer to his problems. One such thought occurs for Bigger right before the scene with Gus, as Bigger is playing pool with Jack and G.H. "Jack chalked the cue stick and the metallic noise made Bigger grit his teeth until they ached. He didn't like that noise; it made him feel like cutting something with his knife" (Wright 36). Bigger seems to have a predisposition to violence,

and while that does not always manifest physically in every situation, the desire is shown as ever-present.

While I believe the lack of centralized identity is a complex cause of Bigger's personality disorder, it seems that new methods of psychological evaluation are beginning to reflect this personality dissonance as a potential cause for personality disorders. In a study by Bogaerts and colleagues, researchers examined the validity of an alternative model of diagnosis for personality pathology. The Alternative Model of Personality Disorder (AMPD) focuses on two factors when making a diagnosis: impairment of self- and/or interpersonal functioning and pathological personality traits (Bogaerts, et al. 4).[4] While we could lose the forest for the trees in examining every incident within the novel relevant to diagnosing Bigger, we can simply note that forcing a friend to lick a knife and coercing a girlfriend into sex are not healthy interpersonal relationships. While pathological personality traits are often assessed through behavioral study, we can discuss Bigger's through the lens of intrusive, recurring thoughts and impulses. One example is the desire to stab something over a noise mentioned earlier. The researchers note the critical circumstance of clinical lack of identity, stating, "At the most pathological end of the continuum, the lack of identity subscale captures feelings of non-existence, inner emptiness, and feelings of fragmentation or being broken" (Bogaerts, et al. 6). This lack of identity flows well into Elder's argument, changing its final outcome with a diagnosis of a personality disorder (specifically in my view Antisocial Personality Disorder) without completely derailing his logic.

[4] The classic approach to diagnosis, a categorical diagnostic approach, tends to focus on general characteristics and behaviors (Bogaerts, et al. 3). While this is helpful for clinical diagnosis, it might not be the most useful in this argument because we are getting Bigger's perspective in the novel. Behavioristic diagnoses tend to focus on exterior behaviors because we cannot see into a client's mind to see their impairment or personality traits, but within the pages of the novel, where we can see Bigger's uninterrupted thoughts and how he functions within society, the AMPD is more effective.

While Bigger's tendency to become outraged and violent could be a symptom of his circumstance, it appears to me that he is acting outside the bounds of normal operation in South Side, making his behavior fall into disruptive tendencies and allowing it to classify as a personality disorder rather than a cultural norm. When he has the violent outbursts, those around Bigger seem to treat it as abnormal. They are used to Bigger acting out, and many even seem to understand his feelings, but they do not see it as normal for the people of South Side. Bigger's own mother is perplexed by his actions and temperament, and when Bigger makes his sister faint by terrorizing her with a rat, his mother questions, "Boy, sometimes I wonder what makes you act like you do" (Wright 7). She is obviously taken aback by how much he enjoys terrorizing his sister. Bigger's mother wishes that he would grow up and work at a steady job, but Bigger is repulsed by the idea. Unfortunately, he finds he has no other option. If he is caught stealing again, he would be sent to an actual prison system instead of the reform school where he had been sentenced previously. Summarily, "Yes, he could take the job at Dalton's and be miserable, or he could refuse it and starve. It maddened him to think that he did not have a wider choice of action" (Wright 12).

Even the creation of Bigger Thomas himself lends evidence for a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder. Given the narrative foundation for a probable diagnosis with antisocial personality disorder, an examination into the background of the character of Bigger Thomas and where Wright drew inspiration for the character is key to understanding some of the underlying narrative choices Bigger takes. Wright, in his essay "How Bigger was Born," details some of the individuals he encountered throughout his life and why they helped inspire Bigger Thomas. He lists five primary inspirations for the severity of Bigger's condition, choosing to omit names and label them as "Bigger No. 1" through "No. 5" (Wright 436). These various "Biggers" each

contributed certain aspects to the character of Bigger Thomas, but the two I wish to focus on are the first and last that Wright mentions, No. 1 and No. 5.

No. 1 was a Bigger that Wright encountered when he was a child in Jackson, Mississippi. He was the most unnecessarily aggressive and antagonistic of the Biggers, as Wright notes, "Never was he happier than when he had someone cornered and at his mercy; it seemed that the deepest meaning of his squalid life was in him at such times" (Wright 435). No. 1, while still a child or adolescent, shows some signs of the precursor to antisocial personality disorder: conduct disorder. Though antisocial personality disorder can only be diagnosed in adults, there are some markers and behaviors that serve as potential warning signs for plausible later development of antisocial personality disorder. These behaviors are classified as conduct disorders for purposes of treatment (Barlow, Durand, and Hofman 463).[5] Symptomatically, however, these two disorders are exceedingly similar, and Wright's early experience with No. 1's likely conduct disorder informing the basis for Bigger's own antisocial personality disorder.

No. 5, on the other hand, is a critical source for Bigger's disregard for Jim Crow laws and tilt towards violence as a method of breaking them, another symptom of his antisocial personality disorder. Wight recounts the way No. 5 managed to sit in the "whites only" section of a streetcar, with No. 5 pulling a knife and indirectly threatening the streetcar driver. This behavior is reminiscent of how Bigger uses violence to get his way in the novel, evidenced in the scene in which Bigger coerces Bessie into collecting the ransom money. When she is reticent to continue with his scheme, he strikes her, forcing her farther in against her will. While he never

[5] There are two different classifications of conduct disorders, childhood-onset and adolescent-onset (Barlow, Durand, and Hofman 463). The specific distinction is not relevant to the argument about No. 1 or Bigger Thomas himself, as with No. 1 we are not sure if he is a child or teenager when Wright remembers him, and with Bigger Thomas, while we get some hints that he has been troublesome for quite some time, we do not see firsthand his younger years.

directly threatens her as he does with Gus earlier in the novel, he is still using force and the threat of more violence to get his way, incredibly similarly to how No. 5 reacted to the streetcar driver telling him to vacate the seat.

Additionally, the context for the case of Loeb and Leopold, the legal case that Wright followed as inspiration for this novel, also lends evidence to a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder. Both Loeb and Leopold, who carefully orchestrated and killed the young Bobby Franks and attempted to extort ransom money from his wealthy family, described the reasoning not for any monetary gain, but rather for the adrenaline rush:

> Loeb and Leopold, who greatly admired (and conveniently misunderstood) the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and saw themselves as *ubermenschen* above the law, explained their murder of Bobby Franks as a carefully planned exercise, a "thrill killing" that gave them a sense of excitement and power. (Butler 560)

While this description may not initially strike a resemblance to Bigger Thomas, as Bigger killed more from reaction than a coolly planned and executed murder, the sense of power he feels after is the element of the night that sticks in his mind long after the other details fade from memory. Upon reflection, Bigger experiences senses of joy and thrill in the fact that he had killed Mary and Bessie. He revels in the sense of superiority these acts give him. Wright managed to translate a semblance of the inner monologue of Loeb and Leopold into the character of Bigger Thomas, making him a terrifying protagonist because we can see exactly how self-assured he becomes after the act.

Psychologists have also weighed in on the Loeb/Leopold case, with interesting implications for Bigger's character. Dr. William Healy, an expert witness in the case, seemed to diagnose Loeb with what today would be termed multiple personality disorder or dissociative

identity disorder (DID), noting that Loeb was “a strange combination of brutal killer and mama's boy who at one point explained that he blamed his partner for the murder because ‘mompsie’ would be disappointed if he were revealed as the killer” (Butler 560). Loeb, from the outside, seemed to have two distinct personalities, termed today “alters,” residing in his psychological makeup. One alter was the cold, pathological killer who would revel in the death of Bobby Franks. The other was the innocent-seeming alter who just wanted to make his mother happy. While one could make a coherent argument that Bigger suffers from DID in this way, I would argue that his identity, though severely injured, is not completely fractured and distinct. I would much rather place him closer in personality to Leopold, who, while also seeming to suffer from DID upon brief overview, actually seems to be hiding true intentions behind a series of personas. A persona is the outward facing personality one presents to the world, a personality that is constantly shifting as the situation requires and the company changes. For examples of Bigger’s different personas, one only has to examine the distinction between his behavior at the bar with the other men and Doc versus his behavior with Mary and Jan at the diner. Both locations were very similar, but the people surrounding Bigger determined whether he would act tough and in-charge or meekly submissive. This persona is distinct from the actual self, which is what the person actually believes their identity and role to be and is made known to the reader through Bigger’s inner monologue. While Bigger has several personas he is constantly aware of, he unfortunately is not cognizant of his actual self, as he is unable to voice his truest inner thoughts until near the end of the novel.

Ultimately, with all of the textual, developmental, and expert evidence weighed, I have come to the conclusion that Bigger does suffer from some form of personality disorder, and specifically antisocial personality disorder. With my tentative diagnosis, however, the question

becomes what are the causes of Bigger's personality disorder and do these causes translate to other people who might suffer similar circumstances to Bigger? Wright himself uses *Native Son* as an opportunity to discuss those who might feel like Bigger, if less severe. He writes about his perspective on the causes of Bigger's rebellion,

> There were always two factors psychologically dominant in his personality. First, through some quirk of circumstance, he had become estranged from the religion and folk culture of his race. Second, he was trying to react to and answer the call of a dominant civilization whose glitter came to him through the newspapers, magazines, radios, movies, and the mere imposing sight and sound of daily American life. In many respects his emergence as a distinct type was inevitable. (Wright 439)

Wright asserts that Bigger Thomas had two main subconscious motivations for his actions: his lack of religion and culture and a desperate need to feel included in the vision of American life he saw. Both of these are interesting points, and each contributes to the background of Bigger's antisocial personality disorder.

Wright's first point, that of Bigger's lack of culture and religion, connects to Elder's argument on Bigger's vacuity of identity. Bigger does not have any structure in his life, nor does he have anything he can lose himself in beyond his own fear and hatred. He is not connected to any organization through which to spend his time and energy. Being a member of a church or member of a local recreation team might have provided a younger Bigger the structure and history his life needed in order to feel something beyond his hatred. While not directly addressing his antisocial personality disorder if structure had been provided at the beginning of the novel, as present-day Bigger would still be prone to violence and a sense of discontentment

and injustice, if a young Bigger had been able to find himself integrated into a church or a recreational league or some other team or organization, the feeling of a lack of identity would begin to lessen. Additionally, creating ways for Bigger to understand and connect with his history would let him feel pride in his race rather than anger and hatred for another. Bigger would not just be another African American passing by on the streets of South Side, but instead Bigger Thomas, a man who means something because of his history and involvement in community. Other youths, perhaps those without a conduct or antisocial personality disorder solidifying, might also lack some form of identity to mold oneself by, and Bigger's story can be seen as a warning of the dangers of a lack of identity. While Bigger was molded by his crimes and he let the sense of power over people define him, his fate is an example of can happen when identity is not filled by positive influences, such as cultural or social support systems.

Wrights second point, that Bigger was desperately desiring the experience of the outside world, is much more difficult to address, as in Bigger's situation, the change needs to take place within the exterior circumstances. Because the novel takes place within the 1930s, disenfranchisement, racism, and structural policies meant to beat down the black people were in full swing. Bigger constantly wishes he could do the things white people can do during this time. He states to Gus as they stand on the street corner, "I *could* fly a plane if I had a chance," to which Gus responds, "If you wasn't [sic.] black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to that aviation school, you *could* fly a plane" (Wight 17). Bigger and Gus here are fantasizing more on the idea that one day they might get to experience the world from the way the white people are allowed to experience it, but unfortunately, the laws of the world are stacked against them. The blacks are primarily relegated to South Side for places to live and work, without much outward mobility. Their housing is controlled by white business tycoons who

manage to turn a profit off the run-down apartment buildings that the poorer residents can barely afford. There are welfare jobs available, one of which catapults Bigger into the events of the story, but the pay is slim and it is difficult to advance as a black worker. If the legal system had not been subject to Jim Crow law and a younger Bigger had been given an opportunity to advance himself, he might not have harbored the resentment and rage within himself.

Though Bigger does have his reasons and motivations for his actions, he also suffers from an antisocial personality disorder that puts him at a disadvantage compared to other people of the time in South Side. In addition to being a black male who has the prejudice of the world against him, often being labeled a rapist at the drop of a hat, Bigger was also predisposed to more violent, harmful, and unhealthy tendencies that influenced his eventual outcome. His almost instinctual urge to cover Mary's face with the pillow in order to keep her quiet, an act that leads to her suffocation, is his only way to differentiate himself from those around him. After Mary's death, his antisocial personality order becomes solidified as his identity throughout the rest of the novel until nearly the end, as he is being taken to be executed. The antisocial personality identification is perhaps most on display in the scene in which Bigger and Bessie are attempting to make an escape from the city. During this scene, Bessie is reticent to continue, knowing that she cannot go back but dreading the thought of going forward as a fugitive. Bigger, more intent on taking what he wants from her than her actual safety, coerces her into laying with him as he rapes her. After she falls asleep, however, he sees an opportunity to free himself from his burden and attempts to kill her, bashing her with a brick and tossing her down an air duct. While the murder of Mary Dalton had been nothing more than an accident in the heat of the moment, the killing of Bessie had been intentional, an acceptance of his identity as murderer. Though that was the eventual fate that befell Bigger Thomas, his story serves as a warning sign. There must be

some ways to help at risk individuals find an identity that is not rooted in psychological disorder, instead focusing on healthy and communal activities. Being in a positive social circle and having ways for others to find that is key to preventing what happened to Bigger from happening again in cities everywhere.

Works Cited

Barlow, David, Mark Durand, and Stephan Hofmann. *Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach*, 8th ed. Cengage Learning, 2018.

Bogaerts, Annabel, Koen Luyckx, Tim Bastiaens, Erin A. Kaufman, and Laurence Claes. "Identity Impairment as a Central Dimension in Personality Pathology." *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2021, pp. 33-42.

Butler, Robert. “The Loeb and Leopold Case: A Neglected Source for Richard Wright's ‘Native Son.’” *African American Review*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2005, pp. 555–567.

De Arman, Charles. “Bigger Thomas: The Symbolic Negro and the Discrete Human Entity.” *Black American Literature Forum*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1978, pp. 61–64.

Elder, Matthew. “Social Demarcation and the Forms of Psychological Fracture in Book One of Richard Wright's *Native Son*.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2010, pp. 31–47.

Langley, Travis. *Batman and Psychology*. John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Takeuchi, Masaya. “Bigger's Divided Self: Violence and Homosociality in ‘Native Son.’” *Studies in American Naturalism*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2009, pp. 56–74.

Wright, Richard. “How Bigger was Born.” *Native Son*. 1940.

---. *Native Son*. Perennial Classics, 1940. Restored ed. 1998.