



## Blackburn's Psychopath in Bradley Denton's *BLACKBURN*

**Dewa Maulana Akbar**

*UIN Sunan Ampel, Indonesia*

*Dewamaulana51@gmail.com*

**Ahmad Frank**

*UIN Sunan Ampel, Indonesia*

*ahmadfrank@yahoo.com*

**Nur Mufid**

*UIN Sunan Ampel, Indonesia*

*nurmufidali@gmail.com*

**Abu Fanani**

*Affiliation, Country*

*abufanani@yahoo.com*

### Abstract

This study aims to elaborate Blackburn's psychopath characteristics. Using the Psychopathy Checklist (PCL) theory proposed by Dr. Robert Hare as well as close reading method, literary research, and collecting the data in a specific way, the results showed Blackburn's characteristics of psychopathic behavior such as Glib, Grandiose, Lack of empathy, lack of remorse, manipulative and others according to Dr. Robert Hare's Psychopathy Checklist (PCL) and the childhood trauma as the cause of his psychopath behavior.

**Keywords:** *Psychopathic; Childhood*

### INTRODUCTION

A person with psychopathic disorders or now called antisocial personality disorder (APD), is dangerous. According to Dirgagunarsa (cited in Yadriha, Sri, and Mariana, 2019, p. 57), Psychopaths are people with aberrant psychology who have difficulty conforming to social standards in their environment. Because of the lack or scarcity of affection received from their environment, a person becomes a psychopath. Hence, psychopaths are predators who utilize attraction, manipulation, pressure, and violence to manipulate and control others to meet their own selfish needs. Psychopaths have no morality and have no sympathies for others. This suggests that psychopaths have a hard time in life. And psychopaths are not easy to characterize because everyone who has committed a crime is not necessarily a psychopath.

There are several characteristics to identify a person who has psychopathic disorders. These include egocentrism, deception, superficial effect,

manipulativeness, selfishness, and a lack of empathy, guilt, or remorse have traditionally played a prominent part in the definition and diagnosis of Psychopathy (Hare, 1996). The explanation above shows that the symptoms of psychopathic are numerous and too risky. It can be identified in the personal character in their life.

Psychological problems also happened in literature. Such as anxiety, depression, sadness, and so on. It follows the dense specificity of personal experience, which is always unique because each of us has a slightly or very different personal history, modifies every new experience we have, is described in the guise of fiction by works of literature. The creation of literary texts recapitulates this uniqueness (Aras, 2015, p. 251). It can be seen in prose, poetry, novel, and short story. There is a lot to discover in works of literature.

Blackburn is an American literary novel. He was written in 1993 by Bradley Denton, an American novelist. This book tells the story of little Blackburn to adulthood. Jimmy Blackburn is raised in America and believes everything grownups tell him. When he confronts his teachers, they lie to him. He interrogates his parents, and his father hits him across the face. He is troubled by his questions about the world. As a result, Jimmy Blackburn turns into a psychopath. And the victims are people who deserve to be killed. That's where Blackburn experiences the moral code. Victims include a husband who likes to do domestic violence to his wife, arrogant sheriff, cheating groom, adulterer, lewd writer, and others in the novel.

Much earlier research has studied Trauma and psychopathic characters. Such as Turdhiyana (2016) made research on Psychopath entitled "Daniel Boyle's psychopathy in Chris Mooney's the missing." Rodan (2018) researched childhood trauma entitled "the impacts of psychological childhood trauma into the main character, Libby day, in Gillian Flynn's dark places." Mutmainnah (2017) also researched psychopathy in the movie entitled "psychopathic by the main character in movie "maniac." and Rohman (2018) "psychopathic characteristic on Amy Elliot Dunne as the main character in gone girl by Gillian Flynn"

Notwithstanding earlier studies in the novel addressing Psychopath and Trauma. This research looks at how childhood trauma led to the main character developing psychopathic tendencies, causing him to murder his victims. Therefore, this study aims to fill a gap: theoretical gap, method gap, and object gap. The former refers to the use of the theory. In the mention previous studies, they use psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud, whilst, this research uses psychopath theory from general psychology. The latter refers to the use of the method. In the previous studies, they use descriptive qualitative method, whilst, this research uses close reading method. The last refers to the use of the analyzed object. This research uses Bradley Danton's Blackburn, whilst, the previous studies do not.

## **METHODS**

The method used in this study is close reading method referring to the literary analysis that focuses on the specific details of a passage or text to discern

deeper meaning. The meaning derived from the close reading is the reader's interpretation of the passage or text. A close reading should never be the first reading of a text. Before focusing on the details of a text or passage, it is essential to understand the text as a whole (Pickering, 2019).

Further, this research is a literary research whose main sources are taken from Denton's Blackburn from which the researcher quotes the words that have things to do with psychopath characteristics and cause of psychopath. Thus, not all items in the works are worth quoting here. The researcher, then, collects the data in two tables in a note; one table of the data is with the psychopath characteristics. The other table is with the cause of psychopath. Therefore, this kind of technique makes the researcher easy to analyze the problems.

The researcher elaborates the psychopath characteristics and second the researcher elaborates the cause of psychopath based on the understanding of the psychopath mentioned in the introduction in order that the researcher confirms that the quotations are worth quoting.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Psychopath Characteristic Dr. Robert Hare (PCL)**

#### **Glib and Superficial**

First characteristic in PCL (Psychopathy Checklist) from Dr. Robert Hare are Glib and Superficial. They are generally quite pleasant and charming, and they may be highly good at presenting themselves nicely. To some, they appear too slick and polished, too plainly false and superficial (Hare, 1993, p. 35). After the incident between Blackburn and the band's personnel, he met another woman who was attracted by Blackburn's heroic act of saving the woman who was being publicly mocked by the band personnel when she fled the bar. the woman applauds what he did to the musician and starts greeting him. Blackburn showed his charisma towards the woman. This is evidenced by the quote below.

The strobe stopped as Blackburn reached the door, and the yellow lights came on. The voice of the crowd started to change. Blackburn went out and ran for his car.

As he unlocked the car door, a voice behind him called "Hey!" He looked back and saw the long-haired girl he had been dancing with. She came up beside him.

"You got tired of the Gilmores too, huh?" she asked.

Blackburn nodded.

"Yeah," the girl said. "They kind of suck."

Blackburn smiled. "Yeah. They did."

The girl seemed to be studying his face. "You have a nice smile," she said.

"How about my eyes?" Blackburn asked.

The girl laughed. "Well, they aren't hypnotic."

He opened the car door, and she got inside. They drove out of town and spent the rest of the night in the country, where it was quiet. (p. 30-31)

She seemed interested in Blackburn. he complimented her, because she was sick of the band too. moreover, with the singer who is very demeaning to the dignity of women. after the woman complimented him, Blackburn replied "how about

my eyes?". like making fun of the musician who always compliments his eyes as if all women are captivated by his eyes. The woman called Blackburn's smile very charming. All psychopaths are lovely and good at engaging conversations.

Typically, some psychopaths are familiar with academic terms such as psychology, sociology, art, literature, law, and so on. This is a seamless lack of worry about being discovered is typically a hallmark of psychopath being discovered (Hare, 1993, p. 35). They are knowledgeable and intelligent like highly educated people. in fact, some psychopaths sometimes do not graduate from school or college. When Blackburn visits his father's house to kill him for the Trauma he experienced as a child, he chases after his temperamental father because he is irate to see his face. They disagree about the past when the dog they found was shot by his father for killing two chickens. while the dog protects the chicken coop from rats.

Blackburn tightened his grip. "You never did know much about 'worth.' You thought the chickens were 'worth' something, but all they did was shit and eat. That little dog, on the other hand, killed rats. One bite through the head, and then he went for the next one. And then the next. But one day he happened to kill a couple of chickens. Two stupid chickens. So you took your shotgun and blew a hole in his side. Blew a big hole. Very psychosexual, Daddy. Very Freudian." "Your mother overprotected you," Dad said. "You always were a sissy." "I made him lie down on the garage floor," Blackburn said. "And then all I could find to help him was a hammer. Afterward I wrapped him in shop rags and buried him behind the chicken coop. I hoped he would haunt you." The old man made a snorting noise. "Am I supposed to feel guilty? Is that why you came back?"

Blackburn smiled. "Not exactly. See, I've figured it out: It wasn't just that dog. It was everything. Every time I got to liking something, you'd blow a big hole in it. Kill it. But what you really wanted to kill was me."

Jasmine tried to step between them. "That's not so, Jimmy. You're his son." She had grown breasts and gone to college, but Jasmine was still as dumb as a dirt clod. "Sure I'm his son," Blackburn said. "That's why he did it." He fixed his eyes on the old man's. "And that's why I've come back." He released Dad's arm, and the old man ran into the kitchen. Blackburn started after him. He glanced back at Jasmine. "Very psychosexual," he said. "Very Freudian." He followed Dad into the kitchen and out the back door. (p. 205)

When Blackburn had a fight with his father, Blackburn used the words "very psychosexual, very Freudian". It shows that Blackburn understands Freud's psychoanalysis. Even though Blackburn not finished his school and college. But he understands Freud's term about psychosexual. Because of his father's act as in Freud's psychosexual theory.

### **Grandiose and Egocentric**

Another characteristic of psychopaths is grandiosity and egocentricity. Psychopaths are usually a group of people who have a narcissistic soul. he was the most excellent person among other creatures. they also have their own views on the law. he has his own laws to punish someone. like Blackburn who wanted to kill his father but was stopped by his younger sister.

Jasmine jumped from the porch and ran to him. She grabbed his wrist and tried to make him stop. He kept walking. Jasmine wasn't very strong.

"Jimmy, there's no point," she said. "He's got cancer, and he won't accept treatment. He told the doctors to go to hell. They said he only has three to five months."

"Then this is my last chance," Blackburn said.

"But he's paying himself back for the things he did. All you have to do is let him!"

Blackburn shook his head. "People can't punish themselves for their sins. Only the people they've sinned against can do that."

"The Bible says only God can do that."

"The Bible's full of chickenshit." He pulled free and sprinted for the windbreak. He heard Jasmine running after him. "Don't make me lock you up!" he shouted. (p. 206)

His little sister tried to stop the angry Blackburn. his sister kept reminding Blackburn that there was no point in killing his father. his sister tells Blackburn that his father has cancer in his body. Blackburn stated that the reason he wanted to kill his father was that only sinners could punish other sinners. because Blackburn was raised by someone who was very hard and brutal like his father. it's a natural thing, because Blackburn is also brutal too. even though his father didn't kill people. However, because of his father's strict upbringing, Blackburn became a cold-blooded killer with his Trauma. because of the severity of Blackburn's father, even though in the midst of Blackburn's anger he still cursed his sister who tried to break up the fight. It indicates that Blackburn has grandiose characteristics. because he thinks of him as an executioner for those who do evil. like his father who always acted rudely when he was little.

### **Lack of Empathy**

One of the most visible traits of psychopaths is their lack of empathy. he doesn't care about his actions. He can't feel anything. Empathy is the basic human ability to feel what other people feel. however, a psychopath doesn't have that. because of this lack of empathy, psychopaths always do brutal things to their victims. either killing him, mutilating him, or torturing him merciless. when Blackburn killed victim number two, he immediately shot him with the Colt

Python he had. without thinking, Blackburn shot him because number two had committed domestic violence against his wife. The proof of this is in the quotation below

Blackburn was surprised that it was so easy. He hadn't thought he would be able to shoot another man.

But here was Number Two trying to pull on his pants. The man was big, and his footfalls shook the telephone on the nightstand. A hole in his stomach pumped dark blood. The blood glistened on the man's skin, on the bedsheets, on the floor.

The woman on the bed was screaming. She scooted back against the headboard and stuffed part of the top sheet into her mouth. She screamed louder.

"Don't do that," Blackburn said. His ears were buzzing from the gunshot. Number Two pulled his pants up as far as his knees, then fell. The telephone jumped. The man grunted.

He lay on his side, and the blood ran down his belly to the floor. The woman continued to scream. Her screams were why Blackburn had come into the room. But there was no need for them now.

"It's all right," Blackburn said.

The woman screamed and screamed.

"What else could I do?" Blackburn asked. (p. 04)

After shooting him in the stomach, Blackburn calmly tried to calm the wife who was the victim of the domestic violence. After what Blackburn did to her husband, she still cares about the wife of victim number two. in fact, the wife of victim number two is very hysterical over what Blackburn did. the atmosphere of the room was very messy due to the bloodied Colt Python owned by Blackburn. Blackburn just said "what else could i do?". for a normal person would definitely be hysterical when this happened. however, Blackburn is different. he has no empathy and just feels normal. in fact, the number two was in pain from the shot in his stomach. After that, Blackburn threatened to put a gun to Number Two's head not to do anything stupid. Evidence of this can be seen in the quote below.

Blackburn pulled back the pistol's hammer to cock it. Then he pointed the muzzle at the side of Number Two's head.

The man was sweating. His twitching had become a steady tremble. His eyes rolled up to stare at Blackburn. He moaned.

Blackburn hesitated. It had been easy to shoot when he had seen the man beating the woman. It was not so easy now.

He turned to leave. This man wasn't Number Two after all. Wounding didn't count.

The woman's screams stopped as Blackburn started for the door. She was probably already reaching for the phone. He would have to get down the

road in a hurry. He hoped that the junk Ford pickup he had stolen would start.

He heard the woman say, "Oh my God should I call an ambulance?"

He heard the man say, "Get you for this, bitch."

The pistol was still cocked. Gripping it with both hands, Blackburn went back to the man and fired into his head. (p. 05)

Blackburn threatened to shoot him in the head. however, at that time he didn't press the trigger because Blackburn thought it would be too easy to kill someone. but he did it anyway. when the wife stopped screaming because she was hysterical to see her husband's condition covered in blood. she took the initiative to call an ambulance because her husband's condition was almost dying. but instead snapped her to silence by saying "Bitch" by her husband. suddenly, Blackburn immediately shot him without thinking. and victim number two died with a bullet in his head.

### **Lack of Remorse**

Lack of remorse is common among psychopaths. they usually don't regret what he did and never feel guilty. Usually, a psychopath doesn't care. after committing the act, a psychopath will usually leave the victim without any remorse. when psychopaths act, they consciously do it. only, he didn't feel anything. Murder cases committed by Blackburn such as when he was relaxing in an apartment. however, the apartment is not his. he took over the apartment from an old couple he kept in the garage. While relaxing, a salesperson came along who wanted to offer a book. the salesman introduced himself as Randall Wayne. The salesman was very cocky and he wanted to force his way in to offer his book. while talking, the salesman was very rude to Blackburn. he thought Blackburn was a gigolo. because Blackburn looks young. while, for his wife who is very old. After the discussion Blackburn was very uncomfortable with the salesman's rudeness. the salesman made a deal with Blackburn. The agreement that if he bought this book he would steal stuff in the houses he would visit. Evidence of this can be seen in the quote below.

"Let's you and me do some business," Wayne said. "If you can get your old lady to spring for the leatherbound, four thousand five hundred, I can bounce five hundred back to you. Free money, no taxes.

She gets an encyclopedia for her college boy, you get some untraceable working capital, I get my commission. Everybody's happy. How about it?" Blackburn hefted Lalo to Montpar. It was good and heavy. Solid.

"Not good enough?" Wayne said. "Okay, so how about this: I go into a lot of people's houses. These houses contain expensive items. Sometimes I leave a house and happen to find something small but valuable in my pocket. Other times I notice how bigger things might be taken away. Perhaps you could use such information."

Blackburn was appalled. "You steal from the people you sell to?" Blackburn himself sometimes stole when he had no other choice, but he never did so under false pretenses.

Wayne shrugged. "I'd call it putting knowledge to work. Hey, that's the whole concept behind the Encyclopedia Europus in the first place."

Blackburn nodded. "I understand," he said. He raised Lalo to Montpar and clubbed the salesman over the head. (p. 122-123)

Because the salesman talked a lot and said he would steal from the people he came to, Blackburn smiled and hit him with the book he offered. Blackburn also steals. But because he had no choice for that. It was the last thing Blackburn did when he had no money at all. But for the salesperson, stealing is a job to get money from the customers he visits. After hitting the salesman, the salesman got angry and ran to the kitchen and took a knife. The salesman tried to stab Blackburn so, Blackburn deflected it with the thick book he was selling. The knife stuck to the book and because of the force that pierced the book, the knife stuck to the book hit the salesman's thigh. The proof is in the quote below

Blackburn sighed. "All right. Close your eyes."

Wayne closed his eyes. Blackburn went into the living room to retrieve the Python from under the chair cushion, then changed his mind. Why waste a cartridge? They were hard to come by. He looked at the encyclopedia volume in his hands. The filleting knife had sliced the leather on the back cover, but the board underneath was intact. It really was a well-made book.

Blackburn returned to the kitchen. Wayne was still alive, but the puddle of blood on the linoleum was growing. Blackburn stepped around it and knelt beside Wayne's head. He placed the spine of the book on the salesman's throat and pushed down. Wayne's eyes opened wide. His tongue stuck out. Then Lalo to Montpar crushed his trachea, and he was dead. Blackburn took the car keys from the body, cleaned up the mess as well as he could, and waited for night. (p. 123-124)

When a salesman was hit by a knife because of his own actions, he slipped and fell on the refrigerator. When the refrigerator hit, the sales bag for mercy from Blackburn. Blackburn told the salesman to close his eyes. The reason Blackburn told him to close his eyes was because he wanted to kill him with the gun underneath. However, he loves his bullets. Blackburn returned to the kitchen and took the initiative to take the book and pull the knife stuck from the book. When the salesman lay hit by the refrigerator, he strangled him with the back of the book until his trachea shattered and died. Blackburn calmly cleans the salesman's body and steals the key. He waited one night to rest without guilt.

### **Deceitful and Manipulative**



Whenever a psychopath performs an action, they always use a pseudonym so as not to reveal their true identity. with that ability, they quickly outwit a lot of people. like Blackburn when he does the action. he usually uses a pseudonym whenever he meets new people. when he wanted to kill victim number five, the victim was an army recruiter. When asked for a name, Jimmy Blackburn lied about his name. This is evidenced by the quotation below.

"And what's your name, son?" the Recruiter asked. His grin was still there, but suspicion crinkled the corners of his eyes. His eyes matched his uniform.

"Ernest Tompkins," Blackburn said.

The Recruiter pulled a piece of paper from under the tank and began writing on it with a steel pen. "And how old are you, Ernest?"

"I'm nineteen."

"High school graduate?"

"Yes." It was only a partial lie. Blackburn hadn't even had a senior year, but Ernie had.

"Which high school, son?"

"Wantoda Unified. East of here, in Tuttle County." (p. 56-57)

Based on the quote above, it shows Jimmy Blackburn's trick to enter the army by falsifying his real name identity as Ernest Tompkins. After that, the recruiter asked his age and school origin. Therefore, everything that Blackburn said was a lie. Blackburn only quoted from the identity of his best friend named Ernie. above it is also explained that Blackburn has not taken high school. it's just his wits to answer questions from the recruiter. after that, Blackburn asking the recruiter about someone named Ernest Tompkins III while talking to him.

### **Shallow Emotion**

Another characteristic of psychopaths is superficial emotions. a psychopath cannot understand emotional feelings. shallow emotions are directly related to a lack of empathy and a lack of remorse. because empathy and remorse are related to superficial feelings. when Blackburn was arrested on charges of raping a woman when he didn't. however, his friend did it and he was in the crime scene. he reasoned that he had never raped a woman nor had he killed a woman Blackburn try to convince the trooper and talks casually that he neither kills women nor rapes her, if he kills men he says yes. "I've never raped anyone," Blackburn repeated, "and I've never killed a woman. Men, yes. But never a woman." Blackburn said." (Denton, 1993, p. 262). the trooper was getting curious about how many people he killed. and started asking who he killed and his first victim.

"How many men?" the first trooper asked.

"Just so we know how scared we should be," the second said.  
"Eighteen," Blackburn said. "So far."  
The troopers laughed.  
" 'So far,' " the third one said. "Whoo, this boy's a mean one."  
"You remember them all, do you?" the first trooper asked. "Every man you killed, every way you did it?"  
"Yes," Blackburn said.  
"Well, hell, enlighten us," the second trooper said. "We got time. Who was your first one? A cripple in a wheelchair?"  
The troopers were chuckling. They thought Blackburn was a psychopathic freak who needed to hurt women to feel strong. They didn't believe he had killed any men.  
Blackburn stared at his six reflections. "The first one," he said, "was a cop."  
(p. 258)

The Trooper asks Blackburn how many victims he killed. he said there were 18 victims he killed. they laughed at him. they thought Blackburn was a psychopath who wanted to kill to feel that he was strong. even though he killed people who deserved to be killed. but Blackburn describes the first victim he killed. he said he was a sheriff. he conveys his victims in a casual, guilt-free and unfeeling manner. he clearly explained his motive for killing the sheriff. his motive for killing the serif was simply because the sheriff killed a dog. and shot him with the policeman's gun.

### **Poor Behavioral Control**

Blackburn is a temperamental person. he often can't control his emotions. he is the type of person who gets emotional easily when he is pressured by someone. chances are, he will behave badly towards the person who makes him hot-headed. those are the basic characteristics of a psychopath. although a psychopath can appear calm. however, in his mind held a great grudge against his opponent. it was proven when there was a band member who trash talk to Blackburn when he ordered drinks for him and his girlfriend. the band's personnel raved about the woman he approached at the bar. The proof is in the quotation below.

"How's it goin'?" the musician shouted.  
"Okay," Blackburn shouted back. "You in line?"  
The musician nodded. "Bartender's slow."  
Blackburn nodded back again, then glanced around at the crowd. He could feel that the musician was watching him. He tried to ignore it. But the bartender was taking a long time, and the musician kept on looking at Blackburn. Blackburn gave up and returned the stare.  
"That chick you were dancing with," the musician said. His eyes didn't blink.

"What about her?" Blackburn asked.

"I fucked her."

Blackburn said nothing.

"I fucked her yesterday," the musician said. "You can have her tonight, though. Got my eye on the one in the pink." He jerked his head to the left.(p. 26)

Initially, the band's personnel only greeted Blackburn and immediately jumped into the queue to buy drinks. even Blackburn didn't know him. the band personnel are pretentious to him. all of a sudden, he asked Blackburn for his opinion on the woman he had a bar with. the band's personnel babbled incoherently to her. the band's personnel said that the woman was a slut because he often asked her for sex. Blackburn paid no heed and kept silent. she knew that replying to him would be even worse. maybe, Blackburn didn't seem to care about her, but he must be angry with his ramblings. he is still raving badly about the woman.

### **Cause of Psychopathic Childhood Trauma**

In this sub-chapter, the author tries to examine the Trauma experienced by Blackburn as a child in the novel. Abusive behavior is a central problem for Trauma. especially for children who are still in the growth stage. at a young age, children who often learn through the environment, the love of parents, friends, etc. Blackburn who lives in a less harmonious family. his father was a very rude person to him and his mother. in the beginning of the chapter, it is explained that his father beat his mother until her mouth bled. This is proven in quoted below.

The day before the blind man came to school, Jimmy Blackburn's father made his mother bleed. It wasn't much blood, but Jimmy's mother cried. His sister Jasmine screamed. Jimmy wanted to hit Jasmine in the mouth the way Dad had hit Mom. Jasmine's screaming was what had started the fight in the first place.

Dad went outside and drove off in his pickup truck. Jimmy would have gone outside too, but Mom said he couldn't leave the table until he had cleaned his plate. He didn't want to eat. His round steak and mashed potatoes were cold. But the longer he waited, the worse they would get. So he tried. Maybe if Mom saw that he was trying, she would excuse him anyway. Maybe she would even let him have some ice milk later on. (p. 04)

The incident indicates that, Blackburn's father was a very abusive person. he even hit his wife because Blackburn's little sister was screaming. because of the violence committed by his father, Blackburn also wanted to beat his sister as well as hitting his mother's lips which his father did. like father like son. Blackburn also wanted to run away from home just like his father after hitting

his mother. but his mother stopped him. It is an example of an abusive act by a father that can cause a child to be traumatized. Blackburn who was a child also wanted to do what his father did. because a father figure is a role model for his children. especially, boys. Violent behavior is carried out by the father, seen by his children. So, Blackburn who still didn't know anything thought of imitating him. but that's clearly a bad behavior to do.

## **CONCLUSION**

The researcher comes to the conclusion that Blackburn's psychopathic characters is shown that he is very easy to make women interested in processing his words which can be called glib, he has a narcissistic soul like he feels that he must punish his father, lacks empathy when killing victims, never feels guilty for his actions, always lying and manipulative, never revealing his identity, having shallow emotions when revealing his crimes and being caught by the police, getting angry easily when depressed, and always acting without thinking and also being abused as a child and left by his mother running away. Whilst, the only cause of his psychopathic experience is the traumatic experience during his childhood.

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