
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Psychological Perspective of the Inferiority Complex of Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*

Hulin Ren¹, Xuesong Li² and Na Xu³ ✉

¹²School of Foreign Studies, University of Science & Technology Beijing, China

³School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China

Corresponding Author: Na Xu, **E-mail:** hulinr@aliyun.com

ABSTRACT

Bigger Thomas is featured as one figure of rebellion with the nature of inferiority in Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1908-1960). There are relatively few studies investigating this nature from psychological perspective. This paper aims to explore the inner nature of Bigger Thomas from anthropological cognitive perspective of his inferiority complex. Beginning with the introduction of the relationship between the inferiority complex and masculinity, the paper articulates the inferiority complex of Bigger Thomas in the prevalent racial and anthropological discriminative background, along with his inner cognition within a white dominant society, and analytic behavior of the inner essence of the loss of masculinity of anthropological identity as well as its corresponding effect. Following this, the paper argues that, as a result of unequal racial oppression of the unfair society, Thomas developed a unique alienated and aggressive nature of complex inferiority from his inner identification of anthropological cognition, causing him to commit malicious acts to release himself in the unfair intolerable society. Meanwhile, the nature of this inferiority complex reflects human endurance together with the realities of an unfair anthropological psychological racial-hierarchy, featuring with inner disability and the loss of masculinity with brutal rebellion in social behavior.

KEYWORDS

Inferiority Complex; anthropological cognition; *Native Son*; Richard Wright; psychological perspective

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 19 July 2025

PUBLISHED: 07 August 2025

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2025.8.8.5

1. Introduction

Richard Wright (1908-1960) is recognized as one of the greatest writers of Afro-American literature, as his works provide a great amount of insight into the plight of blacks in America from the late 19th through mid-20th century. In a sense, his works helped to change the race relations in America during his time, especially his great imaginative novel *Native Son* which is set in Chicago during the 1930s. The novel strikes people with the unforgettable story of the main character, Bigger Thomas, who is a brutal murderer. He killed a white woman out of fear of being caught in the killing room. He then stuffs her body into a furnace. In this novel, Wright explores racial themes by describing the oppression and torture that tormented Bigger throughout his life. The reality of social racism and oppression for black people can help readers to understand that Bigger is neither a hero nor a villain, but a victim of the social circumstances.

Native Son is a great critical novel in a white dominant social setting, which is arguably considered as one of the most influential African-American works of the twentieth century. It is a milestone novel of a criticism of the oppression of black people in America. Bigger Thomas is given many layers of emotional responses and realistic actions to the tortures of his life. The novel describes a systematic inevitability of Bigger's tragedy instead of apologizing for his crimes, despite the fact that the acts he commits are without a doubt atrocious. All actions seem to be the only possible responses he can give to a society which allows him no further options. Wright created many psychological voices of Bigger to show his reactions and responses towards the white society. In doing so, Bigger can be transformed from a brutal and rebellious black man to a man that is both relatable and understandable for the time in which the novel is set.

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The novel describes Bigger as a restless and rebellious youth not only opposed to the racism in the American life, but also in opposition to the submissive black cognition of the world. The main characters' attitude serves as a symbol of the cognition that black people have towards the world. To be specific, the novel redefines the image of the blacks in the white dominant society, which is the contradictory issue of inferiority complex and masculinity to be described in section 2 of the paper. Section 3 is the detailed analysis of the behavior and inferiority complex of Bigger while the essence of his inferiority complex of is further developed in section 4. Section 5 holds the conclusions of the comprehensive picture of Bigger in *Native Son*.

2. Inferiority Complex and Masculinity

Alfred Adler first coined the term "Inferiority Complex". Initially, Adler was allied with Freud, but later they differed in opinions towards human psychology. Freud assumed that the important human force was infantile sexuality, which was popularly referred to as Libido Theory (1924, 1921). However, Adler argued that it was the sense of inferiority that was the major driving force of human beings, including the mastery and control power. Adler's psychological perspective contains logical principle, which involves the main content of the inferiority complex, including the desire for social interest, cooperation and compensation. Unfortunately, inferiority complex puts more emphasis on the feelings of inferiority. According to Adler, most people have a sense of inferiority which affects their behavior. As Adler says, "the inferiority complex, that is, the persistence of the consequences of the feeling of inferiority and retention of that feeling, finds its explanation in great lack of social interest" (Ansbacher: 370). By this logic, it is reasonable that inferiority complex can be taken as the feature of lacking confidence and/or inability in a society.

Inferiority complex is associated with gender. With the rising trend of gender prominence in studies of literature, the study of masculinity is also becoming popular, especially the masculinity study of black people. For example, David Gilmore and Harvey Mansfield are leading scholars who studied masculinity along with Fang Gang who is a leading Chinese scholar in the studies of masculinity.

The study of masculinity has gained much attention among scholars and the studies implicate quite a lot in this field. First of all, people have previously made few contributions to the study of masculinity, making the study beneficial to change the pattern of gender imbalance in modern literature. For example, it can contribute to building a harmonious relationship between males and females in society. By means of the study of this harmonious relationship, it is beneficial to reach a proper sense of social equality between males and females. Moreover, the masculinity of the black population can widen our perspective on the miserable lives led by African Americans and the effects on the identity of black people. In turn, the study of black masculinity has provided a new perspective of the study of masculinity as a whole, which helps to achieve a better understanding of the role of black masculinity attaching great importance on the crisis of black identity.

In order to have a clear understanding of the role of masculinity in literature, a brief introduction into masculinity is needed. As the Chinese Master, Mencius, once said, *Fugui buneng yin, weiwu bu neng yi, pinjian buneng qu, ci zhiwei da zhangfu ye* (Wealth cannot be obscene, mighty cannot move, and rank cannot bend, and this is a real man), which implicates that the masculinity of a man emphasizes the courage of a man. American writer Ernest Hemingway likes to write 'Code Hero' in his novels. For Hemingway, the Code Hero is the representative of masculinity. These heroes always have the necessary courage to conquer the difficulties in life, but are not willing to communicate with others about their feelings of weakness. This Code Hero is a typical representative of people advocating "grace under pressure". Currently, it seems that masculinity can be assumed as men who are independent and capable of providing a shelter for his family. Robert Staples published his article, "Black Masculinity: The Black Male's Role in American Society" in 1982, stating that males are responsible and should be psychologically and physically strong.

Progressive assumptions on masculinity take more focus onto the emotional expressions of men. In recent years, the studies on masculinity can be divided into three directions. The first one mainly discusses Freud's psychological theory, and puts more emphasis on sex and sexuality, claiming that sex plays an important role in constructing the image of masculinity. The second is mainly focused on the discrepancies between male and female from the perspective of anthropology, supporting the view that masculinity is the unique experience of a male. The third pays more attention to the cultural context on masculinity, maintaining that cultural context, such as social environment, language and community culture is the major deciding factors of what masculinity is.

Quite a number of scholars have made great contributions to the study of masculinity. The most famous one is Cornell (R. W. Cornell), whose study has laid a solid foundation for further studies into masculinity. Cornell believes that masculinity existed in the social class, race, gender and ethnics, leading a new way for others to explore masculinities. Moreover, masculinity can be divided into four types; hegemonic masculinity, subservience masculinity, conspiracy masculinity and marginality masculinity. Among them, the hegemonic masculinity is the leading one that is affected by social culture (Cornell 112). In Cornell's view, race plays a crucial role in shaping the masculinity of blacks within a white-supremacy society, "race relations may also become an

internal part in dynamic interaction between masculinities. In a white-supremacist context, black masculinities just played a symbolic for white gender construction." (Connell 110-112)

Later on, scholars developed their ideas to study into the affecting factors of masculinity, including the psychological analysis of masculinity. In the 1970s, the first study on the role of sex in masculinity appeared. For example, Talcott Parsons claimed that the role of sex should be directly applied into the study of masculinity and so the role of sex acquisition was explored in his study. Just as Janice Cools claimed in the *Journal of Men's Studies*, black images in the media have largely distorted the view of the black masculinity. It is vividly portrayed that the black masculinity is severely misunderstood by the society, in particular by the white dominant society, as stated in the following:

Although it is patriarchal, the American society offers black men fewer opportunities for achieving an acceptable and successful form of manhood in comparison to white men. In the society, one of the few ways in which black men's masculinities are acknowledged is when they are configured as sexualized and criminalized individuals; this stereotype and portrayal, however, is not the reality of all men. Neither does it reflect the multifaceted nature of their realities and experiences. (Cools, 38)

Black men are always in a subordinate position and are generally subject to a white leader in the white dominant society. They are suppressed by the society, but desire to succeed within it also. They are forced to rely on violence more frequently as a means to be successful. Therefore, black men do not reveal their range of emotions other than anger. Having experienced the suffocating hold of white power, black men take power as a way to control their lives and generally the only power they can exercise is by means of violence. Some scholars have studied the effect of historical and/or psychological experiences on masculinity, including Hare, Hooks and Billson, and found that there was a positive effect on masculinity. As argued by Clyde Franklin (2000) "masculinities are constructed. Black masculinities, in particular, are constructed under the cloud of oppression" (32).

Black masculinity is closely related to the inferiority complex. As the above-mentioned black masculinity, it is easy to know that black masculinity exists in a given social environment. That is, the society allows the construction of black masculinity. The black men who live under a white dominated society belong to the lower class of the society and are submissive. Therefore, their masculinities are constructed by the influence of the society. Their behaviors are close to those of women. They tend to easily lose their black masculinity. Compared with white men, they have the feelings of inferiority. Living under the oppression of the white dominated society, they prefer strength through black masculinity. Thus, the loss of black masculinity will cause strain on their psychological state, which is a double consciousness of being oppressed by the society.

The inferiority complex is the key of the construction of black masculinity. From the analysis described above, an inferiority complex arises when people lack confidence and/or the ability to survive in the society. The reality of a white oppressed society makes black men have feelings of inferiority. Correspondingly, the inferiority influences the behaviors of the black men. Their living experiences under oppression are feared and are forced to hold back the self they want to pursue. Their black masculine self often exists in the prison of their mind and that they cannot break out due to the influence of inferiority. It is quite acceptable in their mind that violence is the way to establish power and control of their life (Hooks, 2). The black male usually use violence to conquer females. In the novel of *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas realizes from the oppressed society that violence is the feasible way to release his anger so he uses violence to torment women. In a word, his inferiority complex affected the construction of his masculinity.

3. The behavior and inferiority complex of Bigger Thomas

Generally speaking, a person's behavior and/or action is the manifestations of his inner feelings. The internal inferiority complex is an inner complex feeling, while the external complex is the symptom complex that belongs to the neurotic disposition. In the novel, Bigger's inferiority complex is demonstrated by his external aggression.

Bigger's external aggression is reflected as a compelling, brutal and rebellious character in the novel of *Native Son*. Being aggressive is the only behavior that he has to fight against the hegemonic forces which oppress him. Initially, Bigger's aggressive nature was full of curiosity and gradually becomes a basis for his later rebellion. As evidenced in one scene of the novel, the violent behavior was vividly described. At first, "*Every slight movement in the street evoked a casual curiosity in him. His eyes followed each car as it whirled over the smooth asphalt*" (Wright 25-26). Then, "*That plane writing up there, Bigger said, pointing. It looks like a little bird, Bigger breathed with childlike wonder*" and "*I could fly one of them if I had such a chance*". Finally, "*If you wasn't black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to that aviation school, you could fly a plane*" (Wright 26). We can clearly see that Bigger has strong personal desires from these descriptions. Unfortunately, the society failed to satisfy his desires, which made him feel that individual desire or power was beyond his control and out of his grasp. It occurred to him that he was living in an oppressed society. We could also see that, though he shared his anger towards the society with his friend Gus, he just

joked about his environment when Gus told him that the society had stopped him from achieving his dreams, which meant that he had consciousness against the white, but he was just tortured by the society and had nothing to fight. Internally, he rebelled against the oppression, but externally, he submitted and allowed his dream to dissolve into a foolish joke. The intention of Bigger to fight by means of violence was clear through the conversation with Gus. Through the conversation, we get to know that Bigger's hatred towards the society was strongly expressed and that he wanted to rebel against the society through violence. The violence came to a slight climax through the scene when Bigger wanted to kill Gus because of his fear of whites and his lack of ambition. Violent words were used to express Bigger's inclination and actions of violence, such as *he could kick him*, and *he could stab him*. It seems to be the destiny that indifference and violence were the rhyme of Bigger's life.

As a black man, Bigger hated the white oppression and torture. He wanted to fight for freedom and rid himself of the oppression. However, being affected by the white dominant society, he had fears against the routines of the white dominant society. In turn, the fear of the white and the society caused him to behave violently. In the scene where Bigger killed Mary, we could see his fear against the society and the need he finds for violence to be his salvation. Mrs. Dalton, who is blind, is the symbol of the white society. Her blindness represents the white's blindness towards the oppression that the blacks experience. When Bigger heard Mrs. Dalton's voice, he was so afraid and scared, so much so that he wanted Mary to keep silent because he was afraid that he may be sentenced to death. Then his violent killing of Mary was the cause of his fear and the violence was the way he fought against the white dominant society. In this way, Bigger realized his identity from his inner heart.

To put it simply, Bigger Thomas was aggressive because he hated the society, and violence was the only way to release his inner world. In his inner world, he had the feelings of inferiority as the society deprived him of everything, including his schooling, and his dreams of a decent job, which was the inner driving force that caused the acts of violence.

Along with the cause of the miserable life on Bigger's violence, we can see that Bigger was alienated from the black people. The miserable and cruel society had caused a bad effect on his individuality, making him feel ashamed of his black culture. Therefore, Bigger was not only refused by the white culture but was alienated from his own black identity. Bigger was alienated from his own family and the black world, because it was the only way that he could get rid of the hatred, pain and sufferings that he felt. Alienation, according to Adler (1924), is a form of hostility that is frequently connected with the expression of a "lack of interest", denoting the innate aptitude through individual response to the society. In the novel, Bigger is alienated from the whole society, including his inferiority complex in his inner world.

Bigger Thomas was alienated from his family and his black community as well. He disliked his family members who behaved submissively and numbly. He hated his mother for singing the spiritual songs, and he thought that the singing was both annoying and upsetting. What he wanted was to get rid of the miserable life of his family members. Unfortunately, his intention is contrary to the reality, i. e., his family members lived a miserable life in the society. Thus, he treated his family members coldly in a rude way. He never talked with his family members even after he committed his worst crime. He hated and always quarrelled with his family during normal situations. Though he realized that his family was poor, he could not help the poor family as a man and had nothing to do that would help in making the family better. Therefore, what he could do was alienate the family. Moreover, he was alienated from his black community, because he had a bad relationship with the others within that community. Though he behaved rebelliously and aggressively, he was actually afraid in his inner world, which made him feel pain. In order to eliminate or release his pain, he chose to fight against his black community, showing a negative attitude towards them. For example, in the novel he was suspicious of the servant, Peggy, who treated him kindly and cooked for him. He was also cold to his girlfriend, Bessie, who loved him deeply, but Bigger had no faith in her despite having complete control over her life. Even when Bessie decided to run away with him, he thought that she was a troublemaker and even killed her violently. The examples clearly showed that Bigger had no trust of his own black people, and the violence was a way to get rid of the pain he felt in his inner world.

Bigger was not only alienated from the white world and the black communities, but also alienated from himself. His hatred tortured him completely. He was unable to see the reality and was trapped with his loss of identity. He was unaware of what the true self was that he was pursuing. The white oppression not only had an influence on his aggression, but also made him confused about himself. In Bigger's inner world, he was stimulated by two points; he wanted to be a hero, but was a murderer in reality. He wanted to be a man with dignity, but he feared the realistic society. Bigger hated his skin and was estranged from his black identity. Namely, he was losing his identity and alienated from himself.

Together with his alienation, a huge growth change of Bigger Thomas can be clearly seen from his behavior in the novel. Scholars have explored this change from a psychological perspective. Peng Bo claimed this change was a process of from being non-introspective to being introspective, from being irrational and being rational, from being unconscious to being conscious. Bigger has transferred and changed a great deal throughout the novel. At first, he was aggressive and rebellious against the

society. Indifference and aggression were his attitudes towards the society. However, in the end, Bigger felt guilty for his family. He had deep reflection on his mother. He said to his mother that he was okay. More importantly, through talking with Marx, he was aware of the fact that he was the victim and realized his sin and guilt, which was a great change of his psychological growth. He said goodbye to Marx and wanted to say hello to Jan, which meant that he accepted them as people. There was a narration about his rebirth before his death in the end. It vividly depicted his growth: "A new pride and a new humility would have to be born in him, a humility springing from a new identification with some part of the world in which he lived, and this information forming the basis of a new hope that would function in him as pride and dignity "(Wright 174).

Thus, through the psychological growth of Bigger, a new self-image of Bigger has been created. He tries to bear the inner tensions to be faced as a black man in the society and realizes the real black identity in his cognition, which is Wright's direct thinking of the society to be illustrated in the following section 4.

4. The Essence of the Inferiority Complex of Bigger in *Native Son*

With regards to the essence of the inferiority complex of Bigger, it might be assumed that Bigger Thomas is the reflection of Wright's personal experience and the way to explore the reality that black people were suppressed heavily by the white society. Kenneth Kinnamon stated in his *Review of Native Son* in 1997 that Richard Wright was writing his own experiences and he emphasized that Wright had turned the realistic murder case into the realistic art. First, for Richard Wright, his childhood was horrible and he lived a miserable life. Like Bigger Thomas in the book, Wright was born into a poor family. He was tortured by the family environment because his mother was heavily ill and his father abandoned the family. Meanwhile, the conflicts with his relatives and poor educational environment also had a great impact on the development of his individuality. For example, his mother and sister behaved submissively and numbly, which made him angry and even annoyed by the whole family. He wanted to get rid of the family and treated his sister coldly and badly. More importantly, he did not want to support the family because he wanted to alienate himself from them.

Though Bigger's family environment influenced him deeply, the event in Elaine had a really decisive influence on his attitudes toward the white and the racial-hierarchy society. Wright has moved to Elaine to live with his brother-in-law, Silas, where he enjoyed his happy life regarding the affluent food and the kindness of others. However, the death of Silas, who was incidentally killed by the white man, has ruined the happiness and developed his consciousness of hatred and hostility for the whites. Hence, he explored many issues towards the racial discrimination, pointing out that the blacks should fight for social equality, and thereby developed the character Bigger Thomas in the novel.

In fact, the symbol of the rebellious and brutal Bigger is a tool for Wright to explore the racial discrimination in reality. Through the description and the discussion of Bigger's segregation by the society, the miserable and horrible life of the blacks under the white-oppressed society can be seen clearly. In order to achieve the realistic reflection and a better understanding of the black life, Richard Wright used many writing techniques. First and foremost, he used a lot symbolism to explore the society, which started from description of the rat---the symbol of the blacks who lived in a horrible and miserable environment in America. In particular, the rat is the symbol of Bigger Thomas who was trapped in the hegemonic society and always suppressed and tortured by the white society. Moreover, blindness was popular in the novel, which was the symbol of the attitudes of Americans toward the racial discrimination. Secondly, figures of speech and different sentence patterns and impressive narrative structures were used in the novel, which were beneficial in producing the overt effect of racial discrimination.

Wright takes Bigger as an aggressive character from the beginning of his novel. Every scene in the novel shows a frightening desire for violence. As Bigger frightens his friend Gus with a knife, it showed his rebellion and aggression. His violence comes to a climax with the bloody scenes of killing Mary and Bessie. However, the scene involved a contrast with two men. Bigger is playing a game with the two men, in which he is the president of the nation. From this point, we can see that Bigger resents being a black in a white world. More importantly, his friends say that the white can definitely fly. Bigger realized his ambition cannot be achieved in the real society because he is a black man, making him resent being a black and views his black skin as a disability.

In addition, Bigger did not get a good education and could not find a decent job. His family was really poor. In the beginning of the novel, a scene is described where Bigger kills a rat in his house, and he lives in a tiny tenement apartment in the heart of the Black Belt in Chicago, which is full of poverty. Therefore, every day he reminds himself of his black skin color, causing him to have no chance of receiving a good education and find a decent job.

The above illustration shows that Bigger Thomas is the realistic creation of Richard Wright's physical experiences. Wright explores many dimensions on racism and he wanted racial discrimination to attract the attention of the world. Black feelings of inferiority can better depict the oppression and torture that the blacks experienced; the outcome of racism.

Racism is an increasingly important part to the study of the psychological growth of the black population. Due to the long history of racial discrimination, it has actually become a major factor affecting black people. In this regard, Yang Min, a Chinese scholar, had made the clarification and analysis of the bad effects that racism had on the black community. In *Native Son Racism Study*, her view was quite clear by analyzing the sins of racism. Namely, racism was the root of the evils in the society and the blacks should fight against the racial discrimination to achieve their rights for the purpose of human equality. Kuan Ying expressed his ideas in *Native Son of the Racism and Double Malignant Effect*, condemning the racism strongly and regarding the bad effect on the black community.

Racial discrimination is the major reason why Bigger has filled the sense of anger and fear. He has suffered the oppression of the whites in a Racial- Hierarchy Society so that he cannot forget about the memory of all his sufferings and therefore he is very afraid of the society and develops a sense of anger and fear towards it. First, he had lived in such an extremely poor society, which had a really bad influence on his education. He cannot pay for the education and the society also cannot provide a better educational environment for the black people. Secondly, he has immersed himself into the bombardment of a dominant culture. In this culture, the white are civilized while the black are savage. Affected by the dominant culture, Bigger is deprived of having a promising life and a decent job. Furthermore, he has lost his self-conception. Thirdly, he is ashamed of his family and being a black. He hates that feeling for being controlled by the white society and he finds a way against this, that is, he is violent and rebellious because he could not take the suffering any more.

Recalling the conversation between Bigger and Marx, we could see that Bigger's rebellion against the society was deeply caused by the social environment, as he said hopelessly, "*I wanted to be an aviator once. But they wouldn't let me go to school where I was supposed to learn it. They built a big school and then drew a line around it and said that nobody could go to it but those who lived within the line. That kept all the colored boys out*" (Wright 218-219). We could see that Bigger has suffered a good deal of oppression and could not achieve his dream because of the cruel society. Bigger said, "*I ain't trying to forgive nobody and ain't asking for nobody to forgive me. I ain't going to cry. They wouldn't let me live and I killed. Maybe it ain't fair to kill and I reckon I really didn't intend to kill. But when I think of why all the killing was, I begin to feel what I wanted, what am I ?*" (Wright 255). Though he did not intend to kill Mary, he had to admit that as the society had forced him to accept that. In the end, we could see Bigger was the victim of the racial-hierarchy society for the oppression and torture he had suffered.

Social settings play an indispensable role in racism, which impress the inner character or cognition of the black people. Li (2013) has studied the social environments of the novel *Native Son*. She discussed the main causes of Bigger Thomas's behavior and his three-dimensional character. She drew a natural conclusion in the end stating that Bigger was just a victim of the society regarding the social conditions and cultural background. Some scholars (e.g. Zhang, 2001) analyzed the misbehavior of Bigger based on the environment, concluding that it was the environment that caused Bigger to be brutal and rebellious.

Native Son was set in Chicago in the 1930s. It was vividly described in the novel and highlighted life in the slums in Chicago, in particular, the terrible conditions and the poverty faced for those in the slums. This can be seen from the living conditions of Bigger's family. For instance, their house was full of rats, four family members lived in a narrow room, Bigger had to turn around when his mother and his sister needed to change their clothes. Meanwhile, Bigger's family environment in a racial-hierarchy society has deeply influenced his psychological growth. Trudier Harris, in his *Native Son and Foreign Daughters*, has explored the social satire of Bigger's mother and his sister who were too submissive to the racial-hierarchy society. The reality was out of expectation that they did not have many fortunes, although they were willing to be oppressed by the white.

The cruel society and the oppression had led to his psychological repression. Bigger tried to hide himself and could not find a way to relieve his anguish toward reality. Therefore, Bigger took an indifferent and aggressive attitude towards the world. To conclude, the social environment, racial-hierarchy society and his family conditions made Bigger develop a severe lack of confidence and feeling that he would always be in oppression. He had feelings of inferiority, which greatly affected his behavior. For Bigger, the only way to release anger he feels in his inner world is through violence.

On examining the most frequently used words in Richard Wright's *Native Son* (of course, excluding character's names, articles and pronouns), the dominant words were related to the verb *look*, such as *look, glance, vision, stare, see* and the numerous tenses and forms that they took. The reason why Wright used so many words related to vision was that Bigger Thomas was affected deeply by the power of looks from others, especially the whites. In a sense, glancing and/or staring is an important tool and even

a weapon that can destroy Bigger's psychological growth. In *Native Son*, gazing and/or staring are closely related to personal powers. It is the powers that make Bigger alienated from the society and even himself. As such, in Bigger's mind, he uses the debilitating power to *look* and his power toward violence can be taken as a means of lashing out at the environment, frustrated by his inabilities to survive in the society.

His long frustration of the inabilities to suffer under a white world has dramatically changed the way he perceives himself and his race. He gradually realises his race as physically disabled and the black body as fragmented and disabled. As Lennard J. Davis claimed in his *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, that the way society defines and treats the blacks was the binary between disability and ability. Davis defined disability as a product of social forces that imposes on how people define what constitutes a disabled body. As Davis notes, the way we conceptualize disability is much like we do for race. In a hierarchy or racist society, people of minority groups or oppressed people will operate under some form of disability. For Bigger, who has lived under a white supremacy world, has been oppressed under the hegemonic forces, which has imposed him to view his race as a disability and makes him behave violently.

In *Native Son*, Wright tells that the character Bigger has reflected his black masculinity in many ways, which provides the significance of masculinity construction and huge resources for us to explore into the masculinity of black people. As the black community has always suffered and been suppressed a lot by the white dominant racism-hierarchy society. In reality, the blacks have lost their masculine identity and feel that they are in a state of anxiety and crisis. Faced with the violence and suppression, the blacks have always been bound by the limitations of the society and they were afraid to behave strongly and bravely. Meanwhile, they refused to take responsibilities and took a negative attitude towards education and the black culture. Therefore, the masculinity of black men has contributed a lot to the psychological development of the black people and provided the great significance of the studies into black masculinity.

Bigger is aggressive against the white society because violence is one way for him to prove his manhood and to strengthen his sense of masculinity. He had no job and received no education. He had no capability to support the family, making him have a diminished sense of masculinity. His family environment and the actual social conditions made him aggressive and rebellious. For him, killing and brutal violence were the ways that he fought for himself to prove his power of masculinity. He made his masculinity clear and visible through this unacceptable violence and even committing crimes. In doing so, he needs to find compensations for the feeling of inferiority in his inner world. Unfortunately, he has been oppressed and tortured by the society and therefore, he behaved violently even in his masculinity because his experience has greatly affected his strong sense of construction of masculinity. The bad environment and condition has made Bigger behave violently and keep isolated in the society. The outside condition of Chicago is really annoying; featuring noise and crowds, full of power and authority of the white society, which makes Bigger behave capriciously in particular.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the inferiority complex is Richard Wright's first realistic creation to gain world attention on the oppression and torture that the blacks have to face. Bigger's inferiority is the outcome of the racial-hierarchy society. Living under the white dominated society, Bigger cannot receive good formal education, realizing his dreams cannot come true as he had previously expected. Thus, he lacks confidence in his inner heart and feels inability in his cognition. As a result of labelling himself as black disability, Bigger hated black culture and took black skin to mean a disability or disgrace. The masculinity is another source of his inferiority complex. Under the oppressed society, he distorted black masculinity and found a violent way to treat women. By means of analysing Bigger's inferiority complex from a social cognitive perspective, it can be clearly understood that his aggression and alienation towards the white dominant society is doomed to happen, as the only way to release his inner anger is to express brutal behaviors. Meanwhile, Bigger is a victim of the whole society dominated by white people.

Funding: This research received no external funding

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers

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