

**The Role Model Influence on Behavior Transformation in Alexandra Andrews'
*Who is Maud Dixon?*****Anggun Patma Ayu¹✉, Rini Susanti Wulandari²**¹English Department/Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia²English Department/Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History:</i> Received 30 June 2025 Approved 05 July 2025 Published 31 July 2025 Keywords: behavior, ideal-self, obsession, obsessive-compulsive disorder, role model	This research presents a Freudian psychoanalytic interpretation of Alexandra Andrews' <i>Who is Maud Dixon?</i> It focuses on the psychological imbalance projected by the main character, Florence Darrow, as she becomes increasingly obsessed with her role model. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the study uses the concept of the id, ego and superego to explore the transformation of the ideal-self/desire into obsessive-compulsive disorder and how the obsession for the role model changes the behavior. Initially motivated by the desire of literary achievement, wealth, and fame, her desires escalate into harmful and unethical actions, such as plagiarism and identity theft. The psychological imbalance is characterized by the dominance of the id, the moral disengagement of the ego, and the repression of the superego. It demonstrates a dangerous combination of ambition and obsession. This analysis emphasizes the terrible effects of projecting the ideal-self in the role model, uncovering how the disastrous obsession results in self-disintegration and moral degradation.

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INTRODUCTION

Public figures can have a significant impact on others. The rapid development of mass media enhances the attractiveness of public figures to a higher level. Nouri (2018) stated that the growth of mass media generates the level of admiration for public figures. By using this advantage, most public figures showcase their accomplishments to the people and gain their attention, inspiring them to set similar goals and even affecting the development of fashion, beauty, and lifestyle

habits of the general populace. Generally, public figures from various professions use media to expose their activities to the public in the form of video, picture, writing, painting, etc. Although the reactions received by public figures are not always favorable, people still express their admiration.

From the above explanation, many public figures cultivate a flawless and motivational persona that triggers people in stimulating the ideal-self. Based on Boyatzis & Akrivou (2006) definition, ideal-self is a "motivational core within

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the self, focusing a person's desires and hopes, aspirations and dreams, purpose and calling". It is formed by the perception of what kind of people they could, should, or want to be (Schlenker in Radu & Lou  , 2008). Moreover, the ideal-self that exists in someone's mind can be stimulated by "parents, teachers, or those with whom you wish to be admired, respected, or loved" (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). For instance, a person dreams of becoming a famous author of fantasy novels, and there is also a public figure like J.K. Rowling who serves as an example of a renowned author.

Role models mean to encourage people to adopt new behaviors and establish ambitious goals. In addition, as individuals who exemplify behaviors, values, and achievements that other may wish to emulate (Morgenroth et al., 2015). However, admiration for role models can transform ambition into obsession. Such obsessions can be beneficial by increasing productivity and skill development or advance the problem-solving abilities (Vallerand, 2003). Nevertheless, it can also lead to harmful compulsive behaviors affecting oneself and others (Rachman, 1997). For example, they are carrying out black campaigns and false information (Rauf & Masri, 2019), mimicking behavior, and figure worshiper behavior Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Legiana & Hetami, 2020).

The enthusiasm for famous people can be considered an intermediate condition, ranging from a healthy appreciation to an obsessive attachment to a public figure which could interfere with one's life aspects. Individuals who exhibit an obsessive fascination with famous people are more likely to experience obsessive-compulsive disorder (Zsila et al., 2018). Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterized by obsessions described as recurring intrusive thoughts, impulses, or images. The disorder subsequently results in compulsions or various behaviors (Obsessive-Compulsive Behavior) performed to relieve these distressing thoughts (Weiss et al., 2024).

This study analyses the novel of Alexandra Andrew's, *Who is Maud Dixon?* using the psychoanalytical approach of Sigmund Freud. The analysis applies the theory of id, ego, and superego. Although there are similarities in topic and approaches with the previous studies, the

researcher found that there are no previous studies investigating the novel. Therefore, this inaugural study is considered to have its novelty. Additionally, this study investigates the transformation of the ideal-self into obsession and how it changes her attitude and behavior.

METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative methodology. As mentioned by Creswell (2017), this method involves interpreting a dataset to explore the significance of social phenomenon. The investigation focuses on two categories of object: material and formal. The material object is the novel *Who is Maud Dixon?* by Alexandra Andrews, while the formal object concerns the obsession exhibited by the female protagonist in the story. The primary data are in the form of words, phrases, sentences and dialogues relevant to the problems which then were inventoried in a table. Meanwhile, the secondary data were gathered from books, journal articles, and previous research that addresses the topic, obsession. For data analysis, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory was employed to examine the imbalance of the id, ego, and superego within the female character and to scrutinize her extreme actions resulting from an overwhelming obsession with her role model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Transformation of the Ideal-Self into Obsession

Alexandra Andrew's *Who is Maud Dixon?* explores how the ideal-self is also shaped by the impact of role model. Through Florence and Helen (Maud Dixon), they reveal how the connection between readers/fans and writers plays a role in constructing one's ideal-self. This relationship not only inspires personal growth, but it can also erode individual identity due to the inability to fulfill the desires.

1.1 The Depicted Ideal-Self

The ideal-self, as described by Boyatzis and Akrivou (2006), represents an individual's vision of

their desired future life. Since the ideal-self functions as a self-regulation tool, it is encouraging a person's commitment to personal growth. Thus, changes driven by the ideal-self should have led to more positive outcomes.

In the novel, the concept of the ideal-self is portrayed as a deeply held aspiration that hardly to achieve. Each person in a social context has his/her own version of dreams. Regardless of whether he/she is conscious of it, the ideal-self exists and influences individuals to strive toward realizing the goals.

Who is Maud Dixon? demonstrates how the ideal-self is constructed by the combination of internal and external influences. As described in the following illustration:

"She had originally wanted to be a writer so that everyone would know that Florence Darrow was a genius...When she looked into the future, she saw herself at a beautiful desk next to a window, typing her next great book." (Andrews, p.31)

The presented ideal-self is solely based on Florence's own wish. It was not her external factors that trigger her to be a writer. Drawing by this argument, it's clear that the aspiration/ideal-self can still emerge within someone's personal mindset/internal factors.

Another Florence's internal motivation was the idea of yearning wealth and fame, as portrayed in the quotation below;

"Florence's mother liked to imagine a life of diamonds and gilt for her daughter. But this, this (Helen's life), was the life Florence wanted. A blue-and-white teacup stuffed with clementine peels. A tangle of white ranunculus in a ceramic pitcher on the windowsill." [p.73] "She loved it. She'd never had her own space before—her own building—and this one felt right in a way no place she'd lived before ever had." (Andrews, p.74)

The quotation reveals the life Florence had long imagined for herself, a life of abundance, surrounded by material wealth and rare items,

rather than "living in a small, ugly, Florence-size hovel" (Andrews, p.162).

This indicates that one's underprivileged life has shaped a realistic ideal-self, envisioning how life would be simpler with financial support. The wealth obtained from releasing a bestselling novel are undeniably alluring for a lot of people. It's not just the financial gain that matters, but also the popularity of the author himself/herself. It is illustrated in the following quotation:

"When she looked into the future, she saw herself at a beautiful desk next to a window, typing her next great book...Everyone would know the name Florence Darrow." (Andrews, p.31)

However, while the ideal-self is indeed formed as the motivational core within the individual, role models also contribute as external influences during the identification process (Radu & Lou  , 2008), serving as a concrete example of the self that envisions by the person (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The argument is in line with Morgenroth et al. (2015) who stated that role models are viewed as a source of motivation for individuals to encourage them to set high aspirations. The quotation from the novel showing this is presented below;

"When that(Maud Dixon's) book first came out,... Florence had been blown away by the confidence and vitality of the writing." [p.104] "Helen (Maud Dixon) was everything she(Florence) wanted to be, and she'd been handed the opportunity to study her at close range. She would not, she swore to herself gravely, waste it." (Andrews, p.81).

It reveals that other's skill, especially role models', evoke admiration which subsequently drives one to improve his/her abilities to align with those of his/her role models. This is further supported by shared interest within the same field—in this case, literature—cultivates an emotional connection and indirect competition.

1.2 Ideal-Self Transformation into Obsession

Flaws in a person's actual abilities can be recognized as the main factor behind the dissatisfaction when failing to achieve their aspirations, causing a shift in the positive ideal-self to negative ambition. This transition also underlies the emergence of obsessive behavior accompanied by actions that disregard morals and ethics.

Higgins (1987) asserts that the ideal-self contrast with the real-self despite both are still part of the self concept. While the ideal-self represents an individual's desires/motivations to develop in the future, the real-self refers to his/her actual qualities, such as his/her "aptitudes, inclinations, and characteristics" (Irtelli et al., 2021).

From those assertions, it shows the gap between one's abilities and aspirations. Boldero and Francis (1999) reveals the discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal-self result in the absence of positive outcomes and effect on the individual's emotions and behavior. From what should guide someone to be more positive, but instead causes them to feel lost and act immorally.

The transformation from a positive ideal-self to an obsession as it's illustrated through the character of Florence Darrow:

"When she couldn't decipher a word that Helen had written, she made decisions more swiftly and surely...Every time she chose a word to type into the manuscript, she got a small rush. She felt like Helen's collaborator rather than just her assistant... From there, she grew bolder. She started adding words that she knew were not what Helen had written." (Andrews, p.104-105).

Florence projects her efforts to achieve her dreams through a steady approach. The next move she makes is to work with a renowned author. This is a wise choice, as it could enhance the abilities and experience within the literary field. This indicates the ideal-self is progressing positively.

However, the assertion of "when she couldn't decipher a word that Helen had written," (Andrews, p.104) reveals that Florence struggled to align her writing with the works of the authors she admired (Helen/Maud Dixon). Consequently, this

highlights a gap between someone's aspirations (the ideal-self) and their true abilities (the real-self).

The transition from a positive to a negative behavior can be seen when someone neglects their true self/true qualities, opting for easier paths instead of enhancing their potential. The quotation, "She felt like Helen's collaborator rather than just her assistant" (Andrews, p.104), highlights the beginning of the repetitive thought experienced by Florence. This suggests that someone may become obsessed with becoming someone else, as a form of dissatisfaction with their actual capabilities.

Rachman (1997) suggests that obsession is a phenomenon in which an individual experiences "intrusive, repetitive thoughts, images or impulses" that are difficult to avoid, as seen in people with Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). He further notes that an exaggerated misinterpretation of these thoughts can lead to traits of abnormal obsession. Florence Darrow depicts this condition in a subsequent quotation :

"She would shrug off Florence Darrow in one swift motion and clothe herself in Helen Wilcox. An extraordinary life. The life of an artist; a writer... And she was sure that under Maud Dixon's name, people would finally see her talent...Putting on the guise of Helen, she really had felt more commanding, more interesting, more worthy in every possible way. Oddly, she felt more like herself—more like the woman she had always suspected was somewhere inside her." (Andrews, p.163 & 180).

The misinterpretation portrayed in the novel gradually becomes catastrophic. Repetitive thoughts about becoming someone else, along with the belief that adopting that identity guarantees success, suggest an intention to obtain that identity. As a result, an individual will gradually start to cross certain moral boundaries to acclaim what they desire.

2. The impact of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder on the Changing Behaviors

As the ideal-self shifts into an obsession, this change definitely influences the individual's behavior. In Alexandra Andrews' *Who is Maud Dixon?* the result of this transformation is reflected in increasingly uncontrollable behavior and repetitive thought. To explore this further, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory is applied to dissect the imbalance in the human psyche structure (the id, ego, and superego) that leads to the collapse of moral values within the individual.

As stated by Freud in Bressler (1999), the id represents the unconscious aspect of the human mind that encompasses instinctual, irrational, and unknown elements. It is driven by the pursuit of pleasure and holds our most profound desires, hidden wishes, and strongest enhancements. The id operates without any controlling will and seeks immediate gratifications for all of desires.

Generally, the id shaped by human psyche has its own distinct objectives. For example, the dream to become a proficient writer may lead someone to learn how to make a great story and was enjoyed by people. The goal of such desire is clearly to satisfy both his/herself and others.

However, this contrast when someone's desire is tainted by the repetitive thought—obsessive - compulsive disorder, making the goal seem more selfish. This is exemplified by Florence who constantly thinks about taking over Helen's life in the following quotation:

"She'd genuinely hoped that Greta would agree to her proposal and let her finish Helen's manuscript." [p.275] "Then she'd finally see her work in print. And it wouldn't just be a handful of words here and there, like she'd been toying with in Cairo; it would be the whole thing. Hers. She didn't even care that it wouldn't be under her real name. "Florence Darrow" already felt like a relic from the past. She had no attachment to it." (Andrews, p.163).

Florence continues to exhibit the obsessive-compulsive disorder that still intent to claim someone else's work as her own. This suggest that the id within an individual has begun to dominate and has lost control over moral consideration.

He/she immediately forgets the fact that plagiarism is strongly condemned by society; what is matter to him/her is the publishing a novel under the of other writer, as in the quotation below:

"She'd finally gotten what she wanted—Helen Wilcox's life and Maud Dixon's audience—and she wasn't going to squander them." (Andrews, p.278).

Furthermore, *Who is Maud Dixon?* also depicts a person's intention to assume another person's identity in order to satisfy their egocentric desires. If such an act is truly carried out, then the domination of the id marks the early sign of a psychological imbalance.

Freud referred the ego as the reality principle, which makes an effort to assists the id in achieving the goal by determining what is real and what is unreal. The purpose of the ego's development is to act as a mediator between the unrealistic id and the outside world; or as the guide in decision-making (Bressler, 1999).

Who is Maud Dixon? offers a depiction of the internal conflict within a person. The ego, which is supposed to mediate and control the id in accordance with ethical standards, but instead becomes weakened due to uncontrollable desires.

Florence Darrow exemplifies that psychological imbalance emerges from the weakened role of the ego as a mediator, as illustrated in the following quotation:

"Helen's identity was just waiting there, unused, like a big, empty house. Meanwhile, she was living in a small, ugly, Florence-size hovel. Why shouldn't she move into the abandoned mansion? Why should she let it fall into disrepair instead? She could go in and do some upkeep. Clean the gutters, wash the floors, make sure it stayed in good shape." (Andrews, p.162).

This quotation depicts the repetitive thought (OCD) to steal someone's identity that ultimately leads to the justification of actions beyond moral limits. Florence's justification is expressed in the thought, "it's acceptable to steal an identity as long

as it can be utilized.” Any form of theft, whether it’s material or identity, is considered a criminal act.

Such justification indicates the fragility of a person’s ego in controlling their behavior within moral boundaries. Moreover, as the ego weakens in mediating the future decision, the possibility of repeating such actions increases. This is demonstrated in Florence’s behavior as shown in the following quote:

“She’d (Florence) started writing the second half of *The Morocco Exchange* the night Helen had died.” (Andrews, p.278).

The above quote refers to Florence continuing Helen’s manuscript immediately after her death. This action was taken without the original author’s consent, which categorized as privacy and copyright violation. Furthermore, an individual with a weakened ego and a dominating these actions as “acceptable” as long as their desires are fulfilled.

The superego serves as an internal filter that forces individuals to evaluate morality in the context of societal influences. As a filter, the superego works by repressing and pushing back all the instincts and desires that contradict with societal value into the unconscious (Bressler, 1999).

Because of its alignment with societal moral values, the superego uses to restrain the id when it becomes excessive. However, in a unbalanced psyche, the superego might either become more dominant or be more suppressed by the person’s desires.

In this case, *Who is Maud Dixon?* showcases the suppression of an individual’s superego, as he/she obsessed to fulfill his/her desires instead of adhering to society’s ethical standards. The following quote serves as a representation of a suppressed superego:

“Under the cover of the Maud Dixon pseudonym, she’d (Florence) found the freedom and confidence to just write... Someday, she might be able to tell the world that Maud Dixon was none other than Florence Darrow.” (Andrews, p.278).

From the above quotation, Florence represents the suppressed superego, marked by a complete absence of anxiety and guilt. Generally, when people engage in wrongdoing—even something as simple as lying—they naturally experience feelings of anxiety. This indicates that even is behavior deviates from ethical norms, their psychological state is stable. However, in the case of someone like Florence, whose in unbalanced psychological state, the response to his/her actions is no other than a sense of pride.

CONCLUSION

Florence Darrow’s psychological imbalance in Alexandra Andrews’ *Who is Maud Dixon?*, highlights the portrayal of harmful impact of an uncontrolled obsession to fulfill the ideal-self. As examined through Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis theory of the id, ego, and superego, the depicted ideal-self (e.g., to be a genius writer, to live a wealthy life, and attain public acclaim) began as motivational goals but eventually transformed into a pathological obsession. This arise as someone imposed these ambitions onto his/her role model. Every aspects the ideal-self become progressively consumed by obsessive thoughts, demonstrating a psychological imbalance where the id dominates with compulsive desires, the ego rationalizes unethical behaviors, and the superego significantly weakens. The compulsive actions driven by the obsession led person to steal another person’s project and even finally take over his/her identity. The actions presented by Florence indicate a deep ethical decline and disintegration of the identity. This behavior embodies signs of obsessive-compulsive traits, where intrusive ambitions manifest in compulsive actions without guilt or self-control. Therefore, this novel serves as a powerful depiction of how obsessive admiration, fueled by societal standards of fame and success, can destroy psychological integrity and ethical limits. Further, it turns ambition into a terrible influence of self disintegration and moral degradation.

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