

## Article

# Attachment, Social Disorganization, and Trauma Beneath the Iceberg—An Analysis of Grenouille of *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*

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**Abstract:** It has been proven that secure parental attachment can help children regulate their emotional arousal effectively. Those who do not have a safe and healthy relationship with their caregivers to receive protection may suffer from attachment trauma in childhood, which may lead to negative effects on their personalities and interpersonal relationships. Moreover, while growing up in the context of social disorganization, with no peer or community support, children may lose their attachment to the community and hence display some deviant behaviors. To understand how the interconnections among attachment, trauma, and social disorganization may bring some negative impacts on children's development and devastate their interpersonal relationship with the outside world, this study aims to use Süskind's novel *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* as a case study and examine how the protagonist Grenouille, an unwanted and unloved orphan, gets involved in the murder of twenty-six young girls with an unsurpassed wondrous scent. The study uses Satir's iceberg theory as the overarching framework, underpinning the theories of attachment, social disorganization, and childhood trauma, to guide the analysis of both the observable behaviors and concealed emotions, desires, and inner selves of Grenouille. This involves examining multiple layers of the model, such as coping mechanisms, feelings, feelings about feelings, perception, expectations, yearnings, and self-understanding.

**Keywords:** Iceberg theory; Attachment; Social disorganization; Childhood trauma; Anxiety

## 1. Introduction

In early childhood, children develop feelings of dependence on and attachment to their caregivers (usually mothers), or more accurately, what is known as an "attachment relationship." The pattern of attachment will continue to influence the children for the rest of their lives, including personality and interpersonal relationships. The attachment relationship theory was developed by British psychiatrist Bowlby (1951), who averred that attachment refers to a strong and long-lasting emotional tension between children/infants and their primary caregivers; children/infants become attached to their caregivers because the latter provide them with a sense of protection and security. Once the infant's attachment and emotional connection to the caregiver is positively formed, the child sees the caregiver as a haven and, with the positive attachment, he/she can explore the world and develop other social relationships. If not, he/she may experience an attachment trauma. Hence, infant attachment behavior is key to building emotional and cognitive abilities, which shape one's beliefs about who one is as an individual (i.e. the self) and one's relationship with the social world (Bowlby, 1951).

As the majority of primary caregivers in early childhood are mothers, the attachment relationships formed between infants and mothers are likely to influence intimate relationships in adulthood. Once an emotional connection between infants and caregivers is established, it provides a secure foundation for emotional support and enhances autonomy (Mikulincer, Shaver, Bar-On & Ein-Dor, 2010; Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015). A secure parental attachment can help children regulate their emotional arousal effectively (Aspelmeier, Elliott, & Smith, 2007). However, those who do not have caregivers to provide them protection and a secure attachment relationship may experience attachment trauma in childhood, which may have a negative impact on their future interpersonal relationships, apart from affecting their attachment to others in adulthood (Cook, Spinazzola, Ford, et al., 2005).

Children with attachment trauma or insecure attachment with their caregivers may also grow up in a context of social disorganization. Those experiencing attachment trauma may hence develop attachment anxiety as a coping mechanism, fearing that

relationships are unstable and that they may be abandoned or rejected, which may hence contribute to difficulties in maintaining stable relationships, exacerbating social disorganization on an individual level (Erozkan, 2016; Myers & Wells, 2015; Simpson & Rholes, 2017). In addition, limited access to social support and resources in disorganized communities can also exacerbate the effects of trauma, as individuals may struggle to cope without sufficient support systems. Moreover, high levels of social disorganization, such as poverty and weaker social bonds, may result in the development of attachment anxiety and an increase in criminal activity in a community (Calhoun, et al., 2022; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shonkoff, 2011). When social institutions fail to provide effective control and support, individuals may resort to deviant behavior as a means of adaptation or expression of anger. As Bursik & Grasmick (1993) found, with no peer or community support, these children may also lose their attachment to the community. With no close interpersonal interactions and a sense of belonging to the community, they may diverge from social norms and display deviant behaviors (Calhoun, et al., 2022; Southwick, 2016). Such deviant behaviors displayed by children who have experienced attachment trauma are only the “tip of the iceberg,” and the factors and causes behind the behaviors are not always obvious. Underneath the surface are the feelings, thoughts, expectations, beliefs, etc. accumulated by children due to traumatic experiences (Satir, 1964, 1967, 1983, & 1991). To further this understanding, Satir’s Iceberg Model (1983 & 1991) may help explore how these attachment experiences are embedded in the subconscious and influence an individual’s lifelong emotional response. It may clarify the long-term effects of severe emotional trauma on the psychological and emotional fallout from traumatic events by elucidating how these subconscious patterns show up as emotions and affect a person’s coping strategies in different social contexts. In other words, Satir’s Iceberg Model (1983 & 1991) may help explore the factors and causes behind behavioral patterns, using an iceberg as a visual metaphor concerning the self or personal experience, where external behaviors are just the tip of the iceberg, the surface; below the surface are the true inner feelings, desires, and the self. The larger body of ice below the surface is the long-suppressed and neglected “inner self,” which, as an iceberg, is hidden deeper underneath.

To further explore how the interconnections among attachment, trauma, and social disorganization may have negative impacts on children development and harm their interpersonal relationship with the external world, this study takes Süskind’s novel *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2001) as a case study and examines how the protagonist Grenouille, an unwanted and unloved orphan, experiences attachment trauma and social disorganization, gradually deviating from social norms and murdering twenty-six young girls.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study uses Satir’s Iceberg Theory (Satir, 1983 & 1991) to explore the factors behind behavioral patterns: coping, feeling, feelings of feelings, perception, expectation, yearning, and self, using Süskind’s novel *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2001) as a case study. The iceberg theory is adopted as the overarching framework, underpinning the theories of attachment, social disorganization, and childhood trauma, to guide the analysis of both observable behaviors and concealed emotions, desires, and inner selves of Grenouille. Satir’s personal Iceberg Model outlines multiple layers of human experience, encompassing coping, feelings, feelings about feelings, perceptions, expectations, yearnings, and self (Satir, 1983 & 1991). It posits that problems are symptomatic representations of internal imbalances rather than intrinsic issues. Through conscientious self-exploration, individuals can further their process of self-exploration, elevate their sense of self-worth, and invigorate a more profound understanding of their inner selves. The study uses Satir’s iceberg metaphor to demonstrate the difficulties caused by the inconsistency between the internal and external experience of human behavior. External behavior is like the tip of an iceberg that can be seen on the surface of water, but beneath the surface lies a much greater portion of one’s emotions, viewpoints, expectations, desires, and complex psychological inner self. Therefore, in order to understand Grenouille in *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2001), one must go deeper into Grenouille’s inner thoughts rather than simply seeing his conduct.

Besides Satir’s personal Iceberg Model, the study applies the attachment theory to gain insights into the early personal experiences that might have influenced Grenouille’s development, using attachment styles and the quality of early relationships to uncover the formation of insecure attachments, detachment, or disrupted bonding, all of which lead to Grenouille’s deviant behaviors. The childhood trauma theory is also employed to explore the influence of traumatic experiences on Grenouille’s deviant behaviors, considering how past trauma affects his mental state and subsequent actions. Moreover, the analysis incorporates the social disorganization theory to examine how social factors may also have led to Grenouille’s aberrant behavior of killing 26 innocent young girls. This includes examining the impact of societal instability, breakdowns in community structures, and the availability of resources and support systems. By uncovering the secrets of the iceberg, readers can peep into the layers hidden below the surface, examining the desires, expectations, perspectives, feelings, etc. that Grenouille experiences and further spots Grenouille’s long-suppressed and neglected “inner self” underneath.

Based on the above literature review, this study proposes a research framework based on Satir’s personal iceberg theory underpinned by the theories of attachment, childhood trauma, and social disorganization, as shown below (Figure 1):

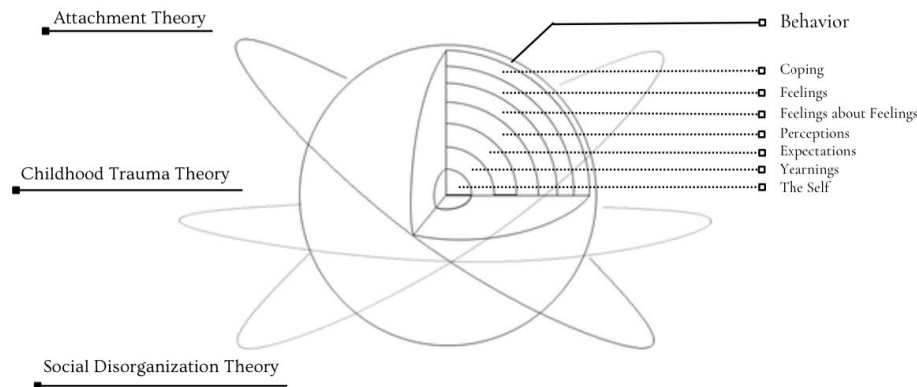


Fig.1 Satir's iceberg theory, grounded in attachment theory, childhood trauma theory, and social disorganization theory

### 3. Results & Discussion

#### 3.1. Grenouille's Attachment Anxiety and Trauma

According to Bowlby's "internal working models," (1951), children are born with an attachment to those taking care of them (usually their mothers) to protect them from external dangers, to develop strategies of interacting with others, and to investigate the external world more effectively. The attachment dynamic affects not only the interaction relationship between children and caregivers but also their development, personalities, and interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1951 & 1982). When individuals need help, they often turn to important people around them, such as family members, friends, and companions (Bowlby, 1951, 1958, & 1988). When individuals interact with those who are important to them and are always around them and support them, they would feel safe and confident that they are worth loving and that others are trustworthy.

An internal working system developed in this way is a positive internal working model of attachment to the self and others, a mutually satisfactory relationship that may enable us to manage stress and maintain emotional stability (Bowlby, 1951, 1958, & 1988). However, when individuals' sense of security is not fulfilled, they may consider themselves unworthy of being loved. At this point, they may develop a negative relationship schema, hence resorting anxiety attachment strategies or avoidance attachment strategies, which may potentially lead to deviant behaviors later on.

The message conveyed by *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2001) is that Grenouille is born in a stall full of fishy smells, though he himself has no human scent. However, Grenouille miraculously survives several near-fatal illnesses. After such survival, Grenouille, with an exceptionally sensitive sense of smell, uses his olfactory talent to accurately analyze the ingredients in the scent. He further discovers that putting on the cloak of perfume lets him have an affective connection with others. Hence, for Grenouille, each murder appears to be an affective connection, not with a person but with a scent:

he [Grenouille] did not love another human being, certainly not the girl who lived in the house beyond the wall. He loved her scent—that alone, nothing else, and only inasmuch as it would one day be his alone (Süskind, 2001, p. 190).

Grenouille's insatiable desire for a unique scent leads to an unprecedented emotional attachment, driving him to obsession and engaging in reprehensible acts to capture these scents, that lets him have an affective attachment he has never had before. Grounded on Bowlby's attachment theory (1982 & 1988), it is evident that his behavior reveals a twisted quest of "love and being loved" through an exclusive olfactory connection, even to the extent of murdering innocent young girls. Süskind's *Perfume* underscores the negative consequences when attachment needs are twisted, highlighting the possible adverse results from unmet emotional needs and the extreme measures people may take to satisfy their attachment need, even to the point of killing those innocent.

#### 3.2. Layers of Icebergs; Layers of Grenouille's Inner World

Satir's Iceberg Theory (Satir, 1983 & 1991) suggested that individuals must engage in deep dialogue or self-reflection with themselves to understand what lies beneath their personal icebergs. Satir's personal Iceberg Model covers various levels of human experience, including coping, feelings, feelings about feelings, perceptions, expectations, yearnings, and self (Satir, 1983 & 1991). According to Satir, Behavior is the outward expression of actions and performances that are visible to others, or the statements and

performances that are received directly with the five senses. Coping refers to the line moving in the horizontal plane, which is the survival posture developed by an individual to survive and cope with the environment. In other words, it is about adaptive behaviors or coping mechanisms to tackle emotional or psychological distress, involving the techniques, strategies, or mechanisms that individuals use when dealing with pressures, challenges, or difficulties in their lives. Feelings are often non-verbal experiences and can be emotional or physical responses to stimuli from the external world. The term “feelings of feelings” refers to individuals’ reactions regarding their emotional states. It involves reflecting upon and evaluating one’s emotions, including thoughts on their meanings, causes, and impacts. Perceptions refer to a system of beliefs and values formed by experience. They are the tracks and yardsticks by which people conduct themselves in the world. People may have different views, understandings, and interpretations of the same thing due to their differences in personal backgrounds, experiences, and subjective consciousness, thus resulting in different perceptions and leading to different emotional and behavioral responses. Expectations refer to the anticipation or hope in one’s heart that oneself or others should take certain actions to achieve certain goals. Appropriate expectations encourage growth, but unrealistic expectations can cause stress, distress, or even destruction. People all have deep-seated, universal desires that are intrinsic yearnings to be loved, affirmed, and accepted. These yearnings are the basis for the value of an individual’s existence and the driving force of personal growth. If these yearnings cannot be satisfied, the individual’s behavior may become disorderly; if they are satisfied, the individual can experience life force, thus better understanding and deeply connecting with himself/herself, that is, the self. The self is hidden at the bottom of the iceberg, referring to one’s feeling of “completeness” and a connection to oneself. Satir (1988) calls it the “life force,” while others call it the “soul,” “vitality,” or “spirituality.”

As mentioned, how a person behaves is merely the “tip of the iceberg,” and what remains invisible is the emotional, social, cultural, and other factors hidden beneath the surface that lead to such behavior. Apparent stress often arises from individuals’ inner feelings or deep-seated desires that are not in harmony with their personal values or beliefs. When individuals observe others, they can perceive only surface behavior, speech, expression, tone, and posture of those around them, like the tip of an iceberg in the ocean. Only through in-depth dialogue or self-reflection can they understand what lies underneath the personal icebergs: what they feel, what they expect, what they long for, and who they are. Hence, to comprehend the significance of Grenouille’s behavior, one must recognize what lies beneath the surface and examine the factors that lead to the behavior. Delving into the layers of Grenouille’s inner world, as an iceberg, would enable observers to grasp what is hidden beneath his surface behavior (the killing of 26 innocent young girls), which involves multiple levels of coping feelings, feelings about feelings, perception, expectations, yearnings, and the self. Besides, according to Bowlby’s attachment theory (1951 & 1958), the origins of the myriad of behaviors exhibited by abused children or juveniles may be a self-protective mechanism from stress or anxiety. These behaviors also represent automatic responses to perceived threats and dangers that stem from their own understanding of the environment. Abused children may perceive events as threatening, regardless of whether their caregivers or those around them perceive them as such. Grenouille’s birth takes place beneath a fish stall, where his four siblings “had been stillbirths or semi-stillbirths” and their bloody corpses “had been shoveled away and carted off to the graveyard or down to the river” (Süskind, 2001, p. 5). For survival, Grenouille cries, seeking maternal affection and protection, also a kind of self-protection. Ironically, his very first cry for maternal protection and affection leads to his mother’s execution, marking the outset of Grenouille’s life marred by a lack of maternal love.

Grenouille’s birth is the beginning of his tragedy. His mother, a fishmonger, does not even take a look at him, cuts his umbilical cord, and mercilessly discarding him into a pile of fish entrails. Prompted by an innate will to survive, Grenouille opens his eyes and cries vigorously, thus inadvertently leading to his mother’s execution and securing his placement in an orphanage. Subsequently, under the care of two nannies, the miserable complexities of Grenouille’s early life are revealed. Jeanne Bussie, who has a keen sense of smell, does not want to breastfeed Grenouille, despite monetary incentives. Instead, Mrs. Gaillard, whose ability to smell is disabled by her father, breastfeeds and raises Grenouille to make a living, but with no “human passion,” for “she had lost for good all sense of smell and every sense of human warmth and human coldness—indeed, every human passion” (Süskind, 2001, p. 19). To sustain himself, Grenouille demands “a minimum ration of food and clothing for his body” (Süskind, 2001, p. 20). As he grows older, Grenouille has adapted himself to cope with his tough situation, used to not provoking others or behaving aggressively, but avoiding human interactions. At the age of eight, Grenouille is sent by Madame Gaillard for a 15-francs brokerage fee to a tannery where he, as a cheap coolie, “would have no chance of survival” (Süskind, 2001, p. 28). During his stay at Grimal’s tannery, Grenouille has “an existence more animal than human” (Süskind, 2001, p. 32). In these tough environments, Grenouille, though falling ill and almost dying, does not escape from the tannery or runs away from being bullied by others. The adaptive *behaviors* displayed by Grenouille during childhood or adolescence could be viewed as self-protective coping mechanisms in response to life stress or difficulties in sustaining life (Satir, 1964).

As Grenouille finally discovers a secluded haven free from external disturbances, he revels in the magnificence of his own existence; but in an instant, his joy turns to terror when he realized that he has no smell. The thousand smells of sand, stone, and moss in his clothes are there, but the most important one, his own, is absent.

And the awful thing was that Grenouille, although he knew that this odor was his odor, could not smell it. Virtually drowning in himself, he could not for the life of him smell himself! As this became clear to him, he gave a scream as dreadful and loud as if he were being burned alive... (Süskind, 2001, p.133-134)

As the preeminent authority in the field of perfumery, Grenouille perceived the world primarily through his sense of smell, which acts not only as a navigation tool but also as a symbol of his dominance, authority, and desire—an integral part of his sense of being. Hence, Grenouille is shocked by this understanding and is overcome with panic as he feels for the first time a deep sensation of invisibility and non-existence. Even though Grenouille is an expert at identifying distinct smells associated with every object, every person, and every creature, he suffers from a crippling worry about his nonexistence. Driven to the verge of insanity by this fear, which makes him feel a desperate need to prove his existence, Grenouille decides to set out on a perilous journey to Grasse, where he will prove to the world that he is not only someone but someone exceptional. Moreover, once Grenouille realizing that he has no scent and therefore does not exist, running to an extreme, he turns to holding on to girls' scent as a maternal attachment to make himself feel safe and identified. For him, perfume is not mere scent but has extraordinary power too, for, through the imagination of smell brought by perfume, he creates his "self-existence." As Grenouille inadvertently causes the demise of a girl who emits a heavenly fragrance, strangely, his fluster and unease do not stem from the extinguished life before him, but rather from the gradual disappearance of the captivating aroma. The girl's exquisite body scent awakens him to the purpose of his existence and his olfactory talent:

Never before in his life had he known what happiness was. He knew at most some very rare states of numbed contentment. But now he was quivering with happiness and could not sleep for pure bliss. It was as if he had been born a second time; no, not a second time, the first time, for until now he had merely existed like an animal with a most nebulous self-awareness. But after today, he felt as if he finally knew who he really was: nothing less than a genius. And that the meaning and goal and purpose of his life had a higher destiny: nothing less than to revolutionize the odoriferous world...He had found the compass for his future life (Süskind, 2001, p.43).

Grenouille's *perception* of others is predominantly utilitarian, driven by a dehumanizing perspective that reduces people to mere sources of scents, elements instrumental for the completion of his magnum opus. Grenouille's self-perception is influenced by his extraordinary olfactory sensation. He considers himself unique and superior due to his olfactory talent. This perception of himself as a gifted individual drives his obsession with chasing the perfect scent. However, after realizing that there is no everlasting scent unless there is a way to preserve it, he considers it his destiny as an olfactory genius to preserve the scent. Smell is Grenouille's only means of perceiving and understanding both himself and the world around him, including his interpretation of his environments and interpersonal interactions with others, as well as his self-existence (Satir, 1964).

In Grenouille's case, his traumatic upbringing in an environment devoid of love and care leaves him emotionally detached and isolated. The absence of positive attachments and nurturing relationships results in his not having much of a sense of self-completion and not being able to validate his "self." Therefore, the night after killing the young red-haired girl halving yellow plumes, Grenouille cannot sleep because the girl's intoxicating scent makes him feel that he has returned to his life, as a rebirth from the womb. He hence realizes that his miserable life has a higher purpose: he is destined to seek out scent, learn how to preserve it, and take it for himself, so that he would never lose this affective attachment again. Consequently, Grenouille's olfactory perceptions or fantasies function as a coping mechanism, allowing him to escape from his attachment trauma. This escape enables him to create an imaginary world where he exercises absolute control and mastery over odors. Through these fantasies, he envisions himself as the ultimate perfumer, capable of creating the most exquisite and captivating fragrances in the world. Yearning for affective attachment, Grenouille uses fantasies as a mechanism for aspiration, driving him to seek and preserve the scent of young girls forever. From that day on, the only goal in his life is his yearning to learn how to permanently preserve the scent of a young girl's body forever; it is this yearning that leads to his killing 26 young girls—in his quest for the perfect scent because he believes that capturing the perfect scent would fulfill his expectations and validate his existence.

He now knew that he could do much more. He knew that he could improve on this scent. He would be able to create a scent that was not merely human, but superhuman, an angel's scent, so indescribably good and vital that whoever smelled it would be enchanted and with his whole heart would have to love him, Grenouille, the bearer of that scent (Süskind, 2001, p. 154-155).

For Grenouille, each murder is a *yearning* for affective attachment through capturing the scent of these girls. The procurement of the scent, not the girls, is just a way to let Grenouille have a secure affective attachment to someone, thus experiencing the feeling of "loving and being loved" and of self-existence that he has never had before:

Yes, that was what he wanted—they would love him as they stood under the spell of his scent, not just accept him as one of them, but love him to the point of insanity, of self-abandonment, they would quiver with delight, scream, weep for bliss, they would sink to their knees just as if under God’s cold incense, merely to be able to smell him, Grenouille! He would be the omnipotent god of scent, just as he had been in his fantasies, but this time in the real world and over real people (Süskind, 2001, p. 155).

When Grenouille finds himself devoid of smell and hence of “self-existence,” he yearns to have a unique and unparalleled smell for himself to have an attachment in connection with that smell, to achieve a certain self-existence or self-identification. Therefore, Grenouille relentlessly pursues scent to fulfill his yearnings for love and affection that he has lost in his childhood. Through his olfactory obsessions with smell, he not only seeks to possess the essence of fragrance but also attempts to recoup the loss of maternal smell in his childhood, through which he can bridge the gap of “not being loved” in childhood, and thus reaches “the self” stage. Thus, fragrances become a means for Grenouille to experience love, allowing him to express his deepest yearning for attachment and finally a feeling of self-completion, that is, the self.

For Grenouille, perfume is not just scent but has an extraordinary power to inspire his unrealistic olfactory imagination, thus bringing him an existence of “self.” Prior to his first act of murder, he takes a long stroll, sniffing his way through the alleyways, as if unconsciously retracing the birth canal of the fetus as a symbolic act of reconstruction. Metaphorically, the killing the girl marks Grenouille’s perceived rebirth.

As he came out onto the street, he was suddenly afraid, for he knew that for the first time in his life he was giving off a human odor...He slipped down toward the river through the darkest and narrowest alleyways, where tanners and dyers had their workshops and carried on their stinking business. When someone approached, or if he passed an entryway where children were playing or women were sitting, he forced himself to walk more slowly, bringing his odor with him in a large, compact cloud (Süskind, 2001, p. 151).

Grenouille’s self-awareness of “the self” strengthens his own existence and self-identification mechanism through the external factor: the smell. The metaphorical descent through “the darkest and narrowest alleyways” (Süskind, 2001, p. 151-152) becomes the birth canal of the fetus—symbolizing Grenouille’s rebirth.

### 3.3. Grenouille’s Trauma Beneath the Iceberg: Attachment Anxiety and Social Disorganization

Stable attachment is beneficial to future personality development, self-confidence, peer interaction, and the ability to build stable, intimate relationships as children grow older. As Bowlby’s attachment theory (1951, 1958, & 1988) indicates, the quality of the early attachments shapes one’s internal working models and influences one’s capacity to form and maintain healthy relationships. Hence, the attachment theory illuminates the profound impact of early attachment experiences on Grenouille’s psychological development. Grenouille’s childhood experiences of abandonment by his mother at birth, followed by neglect and mistreatment in the orphanage, has profound effects on his development of deviant behavior (Bowlby, 1951; van der Kolk, 2014). Besides, his upbringing in 18<sup>th</sup>-century France provides a backdrop of social disorganization. He is born in a Paris slum, an impoverished environment rife with overcrowding and rampant crime. The decaying urban environment, a Parisian society characterized by filth, decay, and a disregard for societal norms, also reflects the disintegration of social control mechanisms and the erosion of community cohesion (Shaw & McKay, 1969).

Moreover, the subsequent sale of Grenouille to the tannery, where he endures physical and emotional abuse as a laborer, subjects him to ongoing attachment trauma. Grenouille’s immersion in this disorganized and chaotic environment and the chronic exposure to adverse experiences has endangered his ability to form healthy relationships, regulate emotions effectively, and develop empathy toward others (van der Kolk, 2014). Due to a lack of a sense of belonging or emotional support, coupled with the early traumatic experiences that disconnect him from social values, Grenouille’s lack of social cohesion and support in life exacerbates his sense of marginalization and alienation, increasing the possibility of his deviant behavior (Messner & Rosenfeld, 1994), gradually turning him into a murderer of 26 young girls.

Though seemingly cursed right from his birth, Grenouille manages to survive in circumstances difficult for even ordinary people to endure. However, this deprivation of secure attachment bonds leaves him with intense feelings of emptiness, insecurity, and an impaired understanding of intimate connections. Grenouille is deprived of upbringing and lacks love and care, which later leads to his distorted understanding of intimacy and the self.

In his quest for the self, he turns to the possession of the ultimate perfume as his self-existence, and the perception of “self” and “existence” prompts Grenouille’s quest for the possession of the perfume, through which he can realize his desire to be loved. The process of making the perfume and the subsequent murders reflect his quest for love, his desperate attempt to fill the emotional void in his heart. Grenouille craves emotional attachment, and his obsession with extracting odors can be seen as a search for love

and recouping the deficit of love he has never received. Further, Grenouille's fantasies serve to satisfy his psychological needs for recognition and validation of self-existence. As Egger (2002) suggested, his pursuit of olfactory perfection and the creation of fragrances that elicits intense desire in others are his attempts to establish a connection and gain admiration. These fantasies, including the possession of the scent—the essence of beautiful young girls—drive him to commit heinous acts in his quest for the perfect scent, as he believes that capturing their scent would allow him to validate his existence (Ressler & Shachtman, 1993). Consequently, bound by a false sense of self-existence, Grenouille's life becomes trapped in an attachment predicament and leads to his deviant behavior, viz., the murders of 26 young girls.

Children experiencing attachment trauma or insecure caregiver attachments often grow up amidst social disorganization. This trauma may lead to attachment anxiety, fostering a fear of unstable relationships and abandonment, hindering stable connections and exacerbating individual-level social disorganization (Erozkan, 2016; Myers & Wells, 2015; Simpson & Rholes, 2017). Moreover, limited social support may intensify trauma effects, leading individuals to engage in deviant behavior as a coping mechanism. This coping mechanism causes detachment from the community, resulting in deviation from social norms (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993). The film begins with the smell of fish and ends with Grenouille's looking back on his infancy in the market; the fishy smell of the market, the smell of fish on his mother's body, and the various smells of the market stalls, which are all deeply rooted in Grenouille's memories, guiding him back to the stalls, to the past that is difficult for him to look back on. Grenouille begins to understand that "the self" has something to do not only with the issue of the "present self" but also with the wounded "past self," the suppressed one. Therefore, it is necessary to face and integrate the "past self," the wounded and suppressed one, to reach "the self." Ultimately, Grenouille comes to the realization that with no inner self-identification and relying solely on external identification, specifically the smell, it is impossible for him to reach "the self," which ultimately leads to his tragic death. After returning to the filthiest and most repugnant place of his birth at the Cimetière des Innocents, a foul-smelling and squalid fish market of Paris, craving for love, Grenouille pours almost a full bottle of his perfect perfume over his head, knowing that this act would trigger the most primal and instinctive desires in others, who would hungrily devour him.

When they finally did dare it, at first with stolen glances and then candid ones, they had to smile. They were uncommonly proud. For the first time they had done something out of love (Süskind, 2001, p. 255).

The crowd tear Grenouille apart and completely devour him under the spell of the perfume. With no inner self-identification but instead an obsession with scent, after all, he fails to find his self-existence: "the self," remaining nonexistent, unloved, and perished forever.

#### 4. Conclusion

Every action conceals a silent plea, deep as motivation and desire. By taking Grenouille from *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (Süskind, 2001) as a case study, this study applies Satir's iceberg theory (Satir, 1964) to unravel the complex inner world behind the horrifying acts of Grenouille, a murderer of 26 young girls. It delves into the concealed emotions and yearnings that motivate Grenouille's behavior, highlighting the complexities of his character. Attachment theory and child trauma theory reveal how traumatic childhood experiences and disrupted attachment relationships increase the likelihood of Grenouille's deviant behavior in adulthood. Social disorganization theory sheds light on how growing up in adverse environments increases the risk of deviant and even criminal behavior.

By peeling off the layers of Grenouille's psyche through the lens of the iceberg theory, one can find that Grenouille is an individual who yearns for love, strives to understand love, and relentlessly pursues "self." The fascination with capturing alluring scents, the relentless quest for personal meaning, and the ultimate realization of its emptiness—all these reflect Grenouille's longing for love, identification, and a sense of self. The fragrance he seeks represents an expression of self-worth, existence, and possession. However, he ultimately discovers that his efforts are in vain, leaving him unfulfilled and devoured by his own obsession.

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