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Beyond Survival: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Human Needs in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

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***Abstract*—Based on the theory of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, this study aims to analyze the needs of the main character, Bride, in Morrison's *God Help the Child* (2015). This study aims to explore and address the problem of how Bride achieves her human needs, focusing on her efforts in achieving self-actualization. Additionally, it explores the clash between Bride's external accomplishments and her inner hunger for the body, arguing that the denial of belonging in her childhood creates a psychological barrier that she must overcome to achieve true independence. The study contributes to Morrison scholarship by reframing Maslow's theory as a narrative lens and critically examining human motivation theory. Despite extensive psychoanalytic readings of Morrison's fiction, limited attention has been paid to interrogating Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a dynamic narrative structure rather than a static psychological model, thereby highlighting the significance of humanistic principles even under harsh circumstances and confirming that recovery requires a return to the basis of the self. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative psychoanalytic-textual approach, employing Maslow's hierarchy of needs as an interpretive framework rather than a deterministic psychological template. Consequently, this study demonstrates that Bride fulfills her human needs through her relationships with others.**

***Index Terms*—Abraham Maslow, *God Help the Child*, human needs, Toni Morrison**

I. Introduction

For human beings, needs are the basics for continuing their lives. They have human needs to be fulfilled in life (Nggilu et al., 2025). To achieve a need, a person has a motivating force. Larsen (2017) defines motives as "internal states that arouse and direct behavior toward specific objects or goals" (p. 352). Motives are linked to needs arising from a deficiency. These needs can be met by thinking about something valuable or by performing specific actions. The psychological approach, based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, aims to understand the text, the writer, and the reader. The core concept of this approach is that humans possess unconscious feelings, motives, and desires of which they are unaware, yet these influence their emotions and behaviors. The psychological approach explores personality motives and aims to analyze and describe the reader's response to the text. Therefore, humans have needs in their lives—essential needs for survival that cannot be avoided—and these needs may be material, objective, or moral.

This study seeks to answer the following questions: How is Maslow's hierarchy of needs reconfigured in *God Help the Child* as a dynamic narrative structure rather than a fixed, linear psychological model? To what extent do trauma and racial discrimination disrupt the traditional sequencing of Maslow's hierarchy and reorder the priorities of human needs in Bride's character? What role do love and belonging play in the reconstruction of identity and the process of trauma

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recovery in comparison with lower-level needs in the hierarchy? How does literary narrative contribute to questioning the assumed universality of Western psychological models when applied to different cultural and experiential contexts?

In addition, this study is conducted in accordance with its theoretical and practical functions. The study, theoretically, focuses on enriching the theoretical foundation related to the psychoanalysis of Bride's character in the novel by applying Maslow's theory. Practically, this study seeks to explain how motives can control an individual's behavior as he/she strives to achieve those goals. It also offers readers insight into the fundamental motivations behind human emotions from a psychological perspective.

Maslow (1908-1970) developed the theory of human needs, and the hierarchy of human needs consists of five levels and is considered "A Theory of Human Motivation" (p. 370). The four lowest levels of this pyramid are classified as deficit needs (D-needs), which correspond to the needs of physiological, safety, love and belonging, and self-esteem. The highest level is known as growth needs, which relate to self-actualization. D-needs must be satisfied, while growth needs shape behaviors. Yunita (2017) states: "The basic concept is that the higher needs in this hierarchy only come into focus once all the needs that are lower down in the pyramid are mainly or entirely satisfied" (p. 20).

Physiological needs are at the most basic level, such as the need for thirst and food. When both physiological and safety needs are adequately met, the needs for love and belonging will emerge. Esteem needs, the fourth level of the pyramid of human needs, lead to a sense of worth, strength, self-confidence, and the ability to be useful in the world. Finally, self-actualization is the pinnacle of the hierarchy of human motivations.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is presented as a five-level pyramid. Mustofa (2022) states that the main aim of Maslow's theory is to explain and arrange all types of human needs in relation to the level of human priority in fulfilling them (p. 33). The lowest level consists of basic needs, while the highest level comprises more complex needs. Once the basic needs are met, a person moves to the next level of needs. As a person progresses through the pyramid, these needs become psychological and social. According to Maslow (1987), "[m]otivation theory is not synonymous with behavior theory […]. [B]ehavior is almost always motivated, it is also almost always biologically, culturally and situationally determined as well" (p. 5). Motivation focuses on directing, initiating, and sustaining behaviors. It should not be confused with emotion or personality because it is a temporal state. Maslow views human needs as being understood through a hierarchy of needs.

Humans are social beings by nature, unable to meet their needs without the help of others. For example, humans satisfy their needs for love and belonging through others, such as family and friends. As a result, humans need others to fulfill their needs.

Hence, D-needs are needs that a person is motivated to fulfill. For Maslow (1987), physiological needs, the first level of Maslow's human needs, are "the needs that [are] usually taken as the starting point for motivation theory are the so-called physiological drives" (p. 7). They are an efficient indication of needs or lack in the body. Physiological needs are related to the need to drink, breathe, eat, regulate homeostasis, and eliminate waste. Every person needs all of these, as they are the necessities of human life. Maslow argues that most people in society meet physiological needs. Therefore, once these needs are satisfied, the next need(s) in the hierarchy emerge(s) as the hegemonic power in guiding and controlling behavior. The primary goal of physiological needs is to maintain the body's normal, healthy functioning. Physiological needs are fundamental to all humans and vital to survival. Maslow (1987) states that physiological needs "serve as channels for all sorts of other needs […]. These physiological needs are the most prepotent of all needs" (p. 36).

The second level of the hierarchy of human needs is safety needs. Boeree (2006) states: "When the physiological needs are largely taken care of, this second layer of needs comes into play. You will become increasingly interested in finding safe circumstances, stability, protection" (p. 183). Safety needs represent security in the environment, and they are triggered in emergencies. Therefore, higher needs are unimportant when a person's life is endangered. A person's behaviour reflects his/her attempts to remain secure. For example, a child needs safety and security. Inconsistency, injustice, or unfairness from family makes a child feel insecure and anxious. Maslow (1943) points out: "Parental outbursts of rage or threats of punishment directed to the child, calling him names, speaking to him harshly […] or physical punishment […] elicit such total panic and terror in the child" (p. 19). He (1943) adds: "It can also occur in completely rejected children, who seem to cling to the hating parents more for sheer safety and protection than because of hope of love" (p. 20). Every child prefers an organized, safe world; they need a parent to protect them from harm.

The third level of the hierarchy of human needs is the need for love and belongingness. For Maslow (1943), when both physiological and safety needs are met fairly well, the needs for love, affection, and belonging will emerge (p. 26). Humans yearn for friendly relationships with others, or for a place in their group, and strive to achieve their goals. Maslow (1987) asserts that a person who does not have friends, a beloved, children, or a wife, he/she "feels sharply the pangs of loneliness, of ostracism, of rejection, of friendlessness, of rootlessness" (p. 43). A person can exhibit his/her love and belongingness needs in his/her desire to marry, have a family, and be a part of society. Maslow (1987) asserts: "Love needs to involve both giving and receiving love" (p. 45). To avoid anxiety, loneliness, and depression, it is essential for people to feel loved and accepted by others.

At the fourth level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for respect and esteem comes into play. Esteem needs to play a significant role in motivating behavior. At this level, it is important to gain the respect of others. Esteem needs include personal worth and self-esteem. A person needs to feel that others appreciate them and their contributions to the world. Petri and Govern (2012) state that esteem needs "can be broken down into subcategories—a need for self-esteem

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and a need for esteem from others" (p. 336). On the one hand, a person who can satisfy their esteem needs by achieving positive self-esteem feels confident in their abilities. On the other hand, the person who suffers from negative self-esteem feels inadequate. Self-esteem motivates a person to quest for achievements, confidence, independence, freedom, and strength. Therefore, when this need is met, a person feels self-worth and self-confident, and sees themselves as having a purpose in life. Conversely, a person with low self-esteem feels a lack of self-worth.

The deficiency needs are seen as 'basic', while the self-actualization needs are seen as 'growth needs'. At the top of the hierarchy of human needs is the need for self-actualization. At this level, the self-actualized individual is self-aware, less concerned with the opinions of others, concerned with personal growth, and focused on realizing their potential. Maslow (1943) states: "What a man can be, he must be" (p. 29). These needs vary from person to person.

At the level of self-actualization, a person's behavior is driven more by various conditions than by other needs at lower levels. These needs are values such as beauty, goodness, truth, and honesty, which give meaning to the life of a self-actualized person. According to Maslow (1943), there are several traits of a self-actualized person: they embrace the realities of the world (including themselves), they are spontaneous in their actions and thoughts, they are concerned with solving their own problems and those of others, they feel close to others and value life, and they view all issues objectively (p. 55). According to Petri and Govern (2012), "[a] self-actualized person is a very positive one […]. [He/she is] motivated to grow all that [he/she is] capable of becoming" (p. 337). Hence, self-actualization is a process of developing and growing.

Consequently, literary writing is a psychological activity in which the writer utilizes their deepest feelings, creative abilities, and inspiration (Adel, 2023). *God Help the Child* depicts the struggle to satisfy the hierarchy of needs. According to Dar (2022), "Psychology plays a very important role in the literature whether we talk about the one who writes the story or the one who reads it", establishing a connection between the writer and the reader, as the author is not only influenced by society, but also influences it (p. 284). As mentioned, psychology helps the authors display the characters successfully, expressing their thoughts, emotions, and moods, and how various events affect their mental lives.

This study adopts a psychological approach. The data is collected through an in-depth reading of the novel, classifying and highlighting dialogues related to human needs, and analyzing them according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This novel forms a crucial basis for study, providing rich narrative material that highlights human needs. Additionally, this study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and give an in-depth description related to the experiences, perspectives, and behavior of Bride's character to reveal and describe her hierarchy of needs. Data analysis methods are based on Maslow's framework of human psychology to understand and interpret the needs and development of the main character within the narrative, ensuring a comprehensive, accurate analysis.

Applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs to Morrison's *God Help the Child* is a useful method for understanding and analyzing the protagonist's character development. It helps writers and readers determine whether the protagonist is stuck in a survivalist stage or striving for self-actualization. This approach also helps map the protagonist's journey and understand why her purposes change throughout the story by assessing her initial level of human needs, observing her progression up the hierarchy, and providing a deeper understanding of her desires and motivations.

Regarding literature review, some studies have examined the novel from different perspectives, depending on racial, post-colonial, and feminist theories to display the suffering and the stigmatization of Afro-American women by white American standards. Hidayati (2019) believes that the oppression of black women is shaped by overlapping systems of racism and patriarchy, which would not allow characters to attain emotional security and self-esteem. Likewise, Wang (2020), using a trauma theory approach, discusses how Bride's past of childhood abuse and emotional neglect affects her divided self, as well as her lack of successful interpersonal relationships. Ajay (2021) and Roy and Saif (2023) delve into intra-racial discrimination and colorism, revealing the effect of white beauty ideals in creating an internal psychological divide within the black community. Moreover, Bern (2023) examines Morrison's inversion of the white gaze and how colour becomes a tool for negotiating identity, visibility, and self-perception. Furthermore, Princey and Puri (2019) emphasize the lingering effects of memory and emotional trauma in the novel, indicating that Morrison's depiction of trauma is not transient but rather a lasting event that shapes the characters' emotional growth. Martín-Salván (2025) especially stresses the role of the mother/daughter bond, stating that the emotional disconnect between Sweetness and Bride is an example of the devastating impact of the withholding of maternal affection and recognition. As seen, the previous studies focus on the Afro-American experience, exploring the realities of identity, historical trauma, slavery, and racism, and centering on the struggles and interior lives of black women to define belonging and cultural identity in American society.

Other literary papers by Alhourani et al. (2026) and Khalifa et al. (2025) indicate postcolonial narratives, showing how dramatic texts negotiate identity formation under systems of cultural and social oppression. Similarly, Elhalafaway et al. (2025) and Alenzi et al. (2026a) employ performance-oriented and dialogic theories to highlight how form and theatrical strategies articulate fragmented selves. In addition, Abou Adel et al. (2025) and Alenzi et al. (2026b) adopt a posthumanist lens to emphasize ethical reconfigurations of the human condition. Together, these studies resonate with Toni Morrison's novel (*God Help the Child*), supporting a psychoanalytic reading informed by Abraham Maslow's theory of human needs (Alhourani et al., 2025). *God Help the Child* is Toni Morrison's rendering of the struggle for survival as the struggle for love, identity, acceptance and emotional wholeness—an almost psychological fight (Abou Adel et al., 2026).

As seen, the previous studies assert that black women are victims of American society because of their blackness, addressing trauma/race/identity, but do not examine Maslow's hierarchy as a dynamic narrative structure in the novel—

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serving as the bridge to methodology and analysis. In doing so, the current study depends on Maslow's human needs to unlock a deeper understanding of the black's emotions, past experiences, and motivation. By combining Morrison's narrative of the black child with Maslow's needs for emotional security, this study lays the groundwork for viewing *God Help the Child* as an example of a failed psychological basis. Moreover, the study employs the hierarchy of needs to illustrate how the protagonist prioritizes her goals, defines her vision of success, and helps her understand herself better. It also develops readers' social-emotional awareness, providing insight into the fundamental motivations and emotions of human beings from a psychological perspective.

II. Discussion

God Help the Child (2015) tells the story of Lula Ann, an African-American girl with white parents. At her birth, her mother, Sweetness, is shocked by her daughter's black skin. Lula Ann's skin causes problems for her parents, leading to the breakdown of their marriage. Lula Ann's father blames his wife for their daughter's black skin, refusing to interfere in his daughter's life and never touching her. Therefore, he decides to leave his family. Sweetness is left alone, bearing full responsibility for her daughter. The novel explores the psyche of Lula Ann, as a child and an adult, in detail. Her character embodies the complexities of human existence from childhood to adulthood, and faces numerous challenges in satisfying her hierarchy of human needs.

A. Human Needs

(a). Physiological Needs

As mentioned earlier, physiological needs come first in the human quest for contentment. In *God Help the Child*, Lula Ann is a poor girl rejected by her parents. Her mother cannot find a suitable job and has no chance to improve her economic situation; so, she and her daughter remain poor. Although Sweetness's skin is brighter, her newfound status does not protect her from mistreatment by others, who still perceive her as poor.

After leaving his family, Lula Ann's father sends just fifty dollars a month. Sweetness says: "My night job at the hospital got me and Lula Ann off welfare, which was a good thing. I wish they [American society] would stop calling it welfare" (p. 14). In American society, the term "welfare" often refers to the poor. Sweetness works as a nurse and has no opportunity to increase her wealth or status. As a result, her meager salary provided by her husband is insufficient to cover her basic needs. At the same time, Sweetness should pay her rent on time and support her child financially.

Lula Ann's parents, who are ashamed of her dark skin, mistreat her. Her mother, for example, cannot look at her child and stops breastfeeding her. Sweetness states, "It's not my fault. So you can't blame me" (p. 12), justifying her fear of her daughter's skin. This behaviour leaves Lula Ann with no secure attachment or emotional closeness. Moreover, Martín-Salván (2018) states that Sweetness's reference to her daughter's skin reveals understanding of racial prejudice and color discrimination (p. 2).

Childcare includes meeting basic needs such as shelter, food, and sleep. Sweetness provides shelter and food for her helpless child, unable to cover her daughter's emotional needs. Lula Ann says: "She [her mother] had to bathe me. Rinse me" (p. 29). Moreover, Volker et al. (1999) indicate that if babies receive predictable reactions to their behavior early in life, they may feel more capable of having some control over situations and their own reactions, which could boost self-confidence. Consequently, they may be very independent but lacking in emotional bonding. Volker et al. (1999) add that individuals are capable of problem-solving and adapting with fear without social support. On the other hand, emotional attachment enables them to connect with others and "obtain social support" (p. 934). The excerpt reveals the importance of emotional needs that help a person have relationships with others. In this case, Lula Ann is deprived emotionally and physically, not economically. Therefore, she does not struggle to fulfill her physiological needs, including her needs for water, food, and shelter from her mother.

(b). Safety Needs

After physiological needs are met, safety needs rise, such as protection, dependency, stability, security, and freedom from anxiety and fear. The most significant phase in a person's life is childhood. The parents should provide their child with love and establish feelings of safety. During childhood, Lula Ann received unfair treatment from her parents. Instead of being a caring, loving parent, Sweetness distances herself from her child. For her, "[n]ursing her was like having a pickaninny sucking my teat" (p. 13). The word "pickaninny" reflects the depth of Sweetness's disgust with her child. Furthermore, Sweetness insists on hiding her daughter, refuses to go out with her, and fears that others will accuse her of adultery because of her daughter's skin color. Sweetness states that she "didn't take her outside much anyway because […], friends, or strangers would lean down and peek in to say something nice and then give a start or jump back before frowning. That hurt" (pp. 13-14). The insecure relationship between Lula Ann and her parents is the primary cause of child abuse. Lula Ann needs to be loved and accepted; therefore, she makes her goal to be accepted in life.

Lula Ann suffers from physical and psychological violence. Physical violence is any act intended to harm the victim's body. Psychological violence includes cruel actions or verbal abuse intended to humiliate or degrade the victim (Khater, 2022). For example, Lula Ann was physically abused by her mother, stating: "I didn't make a sound, didn't even raise a hand to protect myself when she slapped my face then punched me in the ribs before smashing my jaw with her fist then

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butting my head with hers" (p. 30). The above excerpt confirms the physical violence inflicted upon Lula Ann, describing Sweetness's behaviour toward her child. According to Luckhurst (2008), Morrison creates an "emphatic unstellment [sic] in the reader" (p. 91). This empathy makes the reader(s) feel Lula Ann's sorrow. Moreover, Lula Ann recalls how her mother punished her, stating: "I made little mistakes deliberately, but she had ways to punish me without touching the skin she hated—bed without supper, lock me in my room—but her screaming at me was the worst" (p. 29). Lula Ann's inner emotions toward her abusive mother confirm what Herman (1992) says: "In the abusive family environment, the exercise of parental power is arbitrary, capricious, and absolute" (p. 71). Lula Ann is a victim of violence, having been neglected by her parents, which makes her feel submissive. According to Herman (1992), "Trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality" (p. 70), adding that an abused person has to find a way to maintain a sense of trust in untrusted people, security in an insecure situation, control in a terrifyingly unpredictable situation, and strength in a helplessness situation (p. 70). In this case, Lula Ann suffers from fear, distrust, lack of self-confidence, and isolation.

As a result, Lula Ann cannot fulfill her safety needs during childhood. In other words, she cannot find peace or love in her childhood because of her family's rejection. Sweetness does not establish a comforting, secure childhood for her daughter. This means that the way the mother deals with her child will affect his/her emotional life as he/she matures.

During adulthood, Lula Ann decides to live in California and move away to eliminate the unfair treatment she receives from her abusive family. For Tull (2019), "in the setting of childhood abuse or neglect, dissociation is thought to be a self-protective survival technique in which a child (or adult) slips into a dissociative state in order to escape fully experiencing trauma that is unbearable" (p. 1). Lula Ann isolates herself to escape her horrific environment. Unable to forgive her mother as she grows up, the memories haunt her throughout her life. Moreover, she changed her name to Bride. The old name, Lula Ann, reminds her of her miserable childhood, while the new name, Bride, is a new start for a new life. According to Thompson (2020), Bride aims to be someone else and establish a safe environment for herself, hiding her darkness behind whiteness (p. 2). She also works as a cosmetics distributor and becomes successful and independent, although her past haunts her.

It can be seen that Bride's safety needs are met. These needs include independence, safety, and freedom from anxiety and fear. Moving to a safer place to begin a new life away from her past is another ordeal for recovery.

(c). Love and Belongingness Needs

If the physiological and safety needs are well met, the needs for affection, love, and belonging will emerge. As mentioned earlier, when Sweetness gives birth to Lula Ann, her life changes drastically. Sweetness cannot love her, stating: "Lula Ann, embarrassed me. Her birth skin was pale like all babies', even African ones, but it changed fast" (p. 13). Sweetness does not allow Bride to get close to her, neither emotionally nor physically. Throughout childhood, her mother set boundaries on their relationship. For example, Sweetness asks her daughter to call her 'Sweetness' instead of 'Mama'. As a result, Sweetness and Lula Ann have become emotionally and physically estranged. Sweetness's parenting does not involve closeness, emotional security, or love.

When Bride grows up, she treats her mother the same way in return. According to Maslow (1987), "love needs involve both giving and receiving love" (p. 45). Bride does not care for her oppressed mother. Sweetness realizes this when Bride moves away: "What you do to children matters. And they might never forget" (p. 36). As seen, Bride was born into a world devoid of love and affection. A chasm exists between Bride and her parents. This chasm widens, leaving Bride in a state of loss and longing. According to Mydland (2018), "Lula Ann is left with one parent physically absent from her life and the other physically present yet emotionally absent" (p. 47). Her mother never touches her. Lula Ann states, "I used to pray she would slap my face or spank me just to feel her touch" (p. 29). Therefore, Lula Ann is unable to communicate with others due to the lack of support and love during her childhood.

One incident that demonstrates Bride's longing for her mother's attention and love occurred when she was asked to testify in court against Sofia Huxley, a teacher accused of sexual harassment. She testified against an innocent teacher to please her mother. She briefly received her mother's attention and felt loved. Sweetness is pleased with Lula Ann for the first time because the latter does what her mother asks of her. Bride states: "I glanced at Sweetness, she was smiling like I've never seen her smile before […]. [S]he held my hand, [...]. She never did that before" (p. 29). Lula Ann loses her self-acceptance because she is not taught how to build pride and confidence. For Herman (1992), "the child victim often becomes a superb performer. She attempts to do whatever is required of her", hoping to find favor in the eyes of her parents (p. 76). Lula Ann is a child to realize that what she does will ruin Sofia's life; all she needs is her mother's love and attention.

Moreover, instead of providing the security, protection, and love Bride needs, Sweetness teaches her to avoid trouble and act as if she were invisible. Sweetness justifies her own shortcomings by stating: "[H]er black skin would scare white people or make them laugh and trick her" (p. 35). Therefore, a family should provide their child with nourishment and love for healthy, normal growth. Bride is ill-prepared to face future challenges.

Lula Ann was also rejected by her society, especially during childhood. She experiences stereotypes and bullying in her life. For example, at school, her friend stereotypes her. Since school is the first environment where a child interacts and communicates, Lula Ann learns about the social stigma associated with her Black skin from her friend. Bride's friends call her 'Cunt' or 'Negro', using these terms to humiliate her. She also experiences bullying at school because her white friends treat her like a stranger, put a bunch of bananas on her desk, and make monkey noises (p. 37). She experiences psychological violence because her friends insult her at school.

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Furthermore, as an adult, the stereotypical image of Bride persists in her workplace. Although Bride and her white friend, Brooklyn, love each other, and their friendship is based on mutual support and understanding, Brooklyn compares them in terms of appearance. Brooklyn states: "I shouldn`t be thinking this. But her position at Sylvia, Inc., might be up for grabs. How can she persuade women to improve their looks with products that can`t improve her own?" (p. 26). This statement confirms how Brooklyn excludes Bride from the definition of female beauty. For Brooklyn, Bride's blackness does not reflect the ideal, true image of a woman. Brooklyn believes Bride is not suited to be the manager of a cosmetics company due to her physical appearance.

Therefore, Bride suffers from the image created by the dominant. Another incident illustrates how Bride is rejected by a white-dominated society. Her former white lover and his family reject her. He asks his parents, "Isn't she [Bride] beautiful? […]. Look at her, Mother? Dad?" (p. 33). The phrase is sarcasm. They humiliate and degrade her. The behavior of her ex-boyfriend and his oppressive family is a form of psychological abuse. She is viewed as an object of ridicule.

Lula Ann did not find love in her childhood. As a grownup, Bride begins to look for safety, love, and care. She satisfies her safety needs by moving away from her oppressed mother. Actually, Bride looks for other people to help her overcome her sufferings. At the age of twenty-three, she meets Booker, a white man, and falls in love with him. After meeting Booker, her life gets a new meaning. For Booker, Bride is different; she is not like other girls. Bride never asks him about his previous life. For Bride, Booker represents a turning point in her life.

As mentioned earlier, Bride is emotionally deprived; so, she hungers for love. When she meets Booker, finally, she has one person to guide and support her. Bride shares and recalls her miserable childhood with him, telling him how he was humiliated and rejected. He acknowledges her suffering and pain. Finally, a safe environment was provided for Bride. Booker made her feel secure, confident, and a sense of belonging. Bride states: "When I told Booker about it [her childhood] I laughed at first, pretending the whole thing was just silly" (p. 44). Booker's empathic response to her old experience overwhelmed her. Booker says: "It's just a color […]. [S]o racism without race is a choice" (p. 101). Bride finds someone who can help her overcome her old life. For Herman, "when the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery" (p. 1). Bride learns to hide her real emotions because her mother educates her to avoid trouble. According to Mydland (2018), the lack of contact between Bride and Sweetness led to the former becoming a self-doubting character due to the latter's unpredictable reactions (p. 53). Therefore, Bride develops and establishes a meaningful relationship with Booker. Bride's ordeal ends by telling her story to Booker and expressing her feelings freely. In other words, Booker gains her trust and makes her open up.

When Bride finds love, she can heal from her childhood trauma. With Booker, she finds inner peace. For Herman (1992), "[s]haring the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world. In this process, the survivor seeks assistance not only from those closest to her but also from the wider community" (p. 51). Bride-Booker relationship is seen as a means of recovery. She is given a chance for self-realization and healing. According to Donia and Haikal (2022), "voicing the trauma Bride suffers from is the only way that helps her to achieve full recovery" (p. 29).

Moreover, Lula Ann tells Booker about Huxley, and he encourages her to overcome her fear stemming from her miserable childhood: "You're not responsible for other folks' evil", and he advises her to "correct what [she] can; learn from [her] can't" (p. 44). Hence, Bride is freed from her miserable childhood and the false testimony that burdened her throughout her past life. Morrison (2015) suggests that after Lula Ann confessed her sins, she felt as if she had been reborn. She no longer had to endure, but rather overcome, her mother's contempt and her father's abandonment (p. 114). From the preceding explanation, Bride achieves love and belongingness after meeting Booker. In his relationship with her, Booker provides her with the stability and security she seeks. He helps her heal her painful past.

(d). The Esteem Needs

A person has a desire or need for stable, consistent, and high self-esteem, for self-respect and self-esteem, or for the esteem of others. These needs fall into two categories: first, the desire for mastery, achievement, strength, competence, proficiency, efficiency, confidence in the world, freedom, and independence; second, the desire for prestige, reputation, fame, glory, status, attention, appreciation, dominance, dignity, importance, or recognition.

Satisfying self-esteem needs leads to feelings of strength, worth, self-confidence, and the ability to contribute meaningfully to life. A person who satisfies their self-esteem needs is not dependent on others but is always ready to grow and achieve their highest aspirations.

Like all humans, Bride has a desire and a need for a solid foundation: high self-esteem, self-respect, and respect for others. Therefore, the first need for self-esteem is self-respect or self-worth. In this case, Bride desires freedom and independence. This is evident when she decides to live alone, away from her oppressive mother, to enjoy the freedom to be whoever she wants and do as she pleases. Furthermore, Bride becomes independent when she applies for a job at Sylvia's company and then becomes a manager at this cosmetics company. She then launches her own cosmetics line called "You Girl: Cosmetics for Your Personal Millennium." Thus, Bride's self-confidence is realized. Consequently, her need for self-esteem increases, and she gains a strong incentive to change and build her life. It can be concluded that her self-esteem has been fulfilled.

The second esteem need is the esteem of others. The esteem of other people is important for Bride. Even though she has achieved self-esteem and self-respect, she still desires care and appreciation from others. Thus, Booker appreciates

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her. She also gets the attention of others because she becomes a successful cosmetics distributor. Bride, finally, is accepted by herself, Booker, and society.

It can be concluded that Bride fulfills self-esteem and respect for others. In her pursuit of self-esteem, Bride experiences freedom, independence, and confidence. With respect from others, Bride gets great support and appreciation from Booker, who makes her feel loved and respected.

(e). Self-Actualization

Even if all these needs are met, it is expected (though not always) that new needs will arise. This need might be called self-actualization, that is, the human drive to realize one's full potential. The emergence of these needs is usually contingent upon the prior satisfaction of D-needs.

Bride actualizes herself by passing all the processes gradually and reaching her hopes. She leaves her miserable childhood behind to live a normal, healthy life in the present. For Mydland (2018), "[Bride] has mourned her past and enters a new stage in life" (p. 70). She changed her name to Bride to start a new life and to be visible. She has started wearing white because her friend advises her to "wear white [...]. Only white and all white all the time" (p. 30). White clothes make her black skin more noticeable. Bride becomes successful in turning negative situations into positive ones. Therefore, instead of covering up and hiding her dark skin, she uses it to assert her identity. Moreover, her dark skin, which is a source of shame for her mother, becomes a source of pride for Bride. According to Vinayakaselvi and Arunmozhi (2020), Bride's transformation makes her feel empowered (p. 1155).

One of the issues that proves Bride is a self-actualizing person is that she accepts the realities of the world. She is proud of her skin, refusing to wear any makeup. She feels her inner beauty beyond her dark skin and takes control of her life. For Herman (1992), those who are in control of their lives are known as "fortunate survivors" (p. 70), because they control their recovery and thus became the subjects of their own search for truth rather than the subjects of investigation (p. 70). Bride's friend tells her to be herself: "A panther in snow […]. Just you girl" (p. 31). Herman (1992) writes about how an abused child "must build a new life within a radically different culture from the one they left behind" (p. 196), adding that he/she can discover his/her ambitions (p. 197).

In addition, Bride can solve problems and take responsibility for her previous actions. When Bride learns of Huxley's release, she tries to make Huxley's life better by offering her money. She does this as a well-meaning act because she destroys Huxley's life.

Finally, Bride's ambition is to create a new life that she has never had. She becomes pregnant, telling Booker: "I'm pregnant and it's yours" (p. 122). Bride and Booker create a good life, or they want to re-live the childhood they never had, through the unborn child. Both help each other to recover. She challenges the past through success and achievements. People view Bride as a successful, beautiful figure. She has succeeded in gaining acceptance among white people. According to Ramírez (2016), Morrison's novel "is not only about childhood abuse and trauma, but it is also about transformation and healing" (p. 145). Bride wants a happy future with Booker. They hope to be good parents and to love and protect their unborn child. Finally, her self-actualization needs are fulfilled when her healing process is fulfilled.

III. Conclusion

Morrison asserts that human needs are not merely milestones to be reached, but rather foundations to be continually strengthened. As seen, Bride's transition to self-acceptance represents her first, true step toward self-actualization, which only comes after facing D-needs she experienced during childhood. As a result, this psychological reading highlights the central message of the novel: the necessity of healing the inner child before attaining true fulfillment in adulthood. The study concludes that Bride meets her physiological needs with her mother's help. She fulfills her safety needs —freedom from anxiety and hatred—when she leaves her abusive mother. Additionally, Bride satisfies her love and belongingness needs when she loves Booker. Furthermore, her self-esteem is positive; she gains confidence when others accept her. She also fulfills her need for self-actualization by aspiring to be a good mother. Hence, Bride's human needs are fulfilled by others. *God Help the Child* has a theme of the issues of post-colonial such as discrimination and racism, but what the main character, Bride, experiences about it also impacts her human needs and how to achieve them.

After analyzing *God Help the Child*, it is concluded that Maslow's human needs are effective, especially in the life of Bride in the novel. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is fulfilled through others. Additionally, this study stands out for its unique focus on the complexities of meeting basic needs in the context of colorism and confronting societal challenges that prevent a person with color from achieving the needs for a self-actualized life. Bride's efforts to meet her needs reflect a psychological journey of self-discovery shaped by harsh circumstances.

The significance of this study lies in enhancing readers' social-emotional awareness, fostering empathy, and deepening their understanding of others' behaviors and motivations. Furthermore, the study of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, particularly in relation to Black women who experience discrimination and stigma due to their skin color, contributes to developing a framework for exploring their deeper desires and motivations. This study expands our understanding of human self-sufficiency and resilience, offering a different perspective on how individuals achieve personal growth and find meaning in their lives by facing extraordinary adversity. It is worth noting that using Maslow's theory to analyze the personality of Black women helps others understand the motivations behind their actions and reactions.

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