

RESEARCH TITLE

**Hierarchy of Needs in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*:
Abraham Maslow**

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HNSJ, 2025, 6(6); <https://doi.org/10.53796/hnsj66/4>

Received at 07/05/2025

Accepted at 15/05/2025

Published at 01/06/2025

Abstract

This research discusses hierarchy of needs in the novel "*Disgrace*" by J.M. Coetzee, 1999 as the data source and using a psychological approach. In this research, researcher focused on what are the hierarchical needs in the novel (Coetzee 2000). This research used descriptive qualitative (Creswell 2013) to analyze and with (Taormina and Gao 2013) Maslow theory's of hierarchy of needs. The phenomenon of hierarchy of needs reflected in this novel. This research shows the influence of hierarchy of needs experienced by the characters in the novel (Coetzee 2000) such as; Physiological, Safety, Love/ belonging, Esteem, Self-actualization.

Key Words: hierarchy, physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, self-actualization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Because of rules that everyone must follow to stop the spread of the corona virus, known as social separation, many people are staying home during this pandemic and doing things around the house (Pearce, 2020). During the social distance time, this could make some people feel bored, worried, and thoughtful about how things are going in their social lives. This happens because it's in our nature to meet our needs, one of which is the need for safety, which is also on Abraham Maslow's (1987) hierarchy of needs. If you like being at home, now might be a good time to take some time to think about yourself. If you like to read books, now might be a good time to finish what you're on (fiction or non-fiction).

When people talk about reading social events and how they deal with them, as well as reading books, they do so in a variety of ways. These ways come from regular people, academics, and so on. Some clear sign of this criticism can also be seen in the academic world, in the literary world. This is an example of how writers try to explain, come to critical opinions about, and offer answers to problems in society. This can be seen in how people write and act, in things like short stories, poems, books, plays, movies, and more.

Therefore, the researcher finds literature to be a captivating subject for investigation. This study aims to elucidate the process of conducting psychological critique in a literary work. The writer will discuss J. M. Coetzee's book "*Disgrace*," which was written by the Nobel Prize-winning South African-Australian writer J.M. Coetzee and released in 1999. The novel received the Booker Prize in literature for that year. The book explores the interplay of gender, sexuality, age, racism, and power relations in post-Apartheid South Africa. *Disgrace*, narrated in the third person, chronicles the experiences and inner reflections of David Lurie, a Caucasian, middle-aged academic who finds himself in a condition of dishonor after coercing his young student into a sexual relationship at their institution in Cape Town.

An examination of how *Disgrace* portrays sexual assault reveals the interconnectedness of gender, class, and race, since these identities are shown as deriving significance from their relationship with one other rather than being determined afterwards. The book specifically illustrates that rape is not merely a crime based on gender, which is then further complicated by factors such as color or class. Instead, it portrays rape as a complex phenomena that is highly influenced by discourses related to race and class, and these discourses play a significant role in shaping its tangible effects. This research demonstrates that the difference in reactions to the two rapes in the book is only accepted as normal when not enough focus is given to the mechanisms of storytelling, the narrative itself, and racial dynamics. Coetzee's novel reveals both the unpredictability of justice and the inherent racial bias in this unpredictability, whether the reaction to rape takes place in black South Africa or in the white progressive environment of the university. (Taormina and Gao 2013)

An examination of the novel's portrayal of sexual assault reveals the interconnectedness of gender, class, and race, and how they acquire significance in connection to one other, rather than via a subsequent or cumulative process. *Disgrace* illustrates that rape is not merely a crime based on gender, which is then further complicated by factors such as race or class. Instead, it is a complex phenomena that is shaped by deeply ingrained racial discourses, which in turn determine its material effects. (Taormina and Gao 2013:2)

This study used a psychological method, namely using Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (1987), for analysis. In this study, the researcher examined the physiological aspects depicted in the novel, which are closely connected to the central topic of the story. As

to the American Psychological Association, psychology is the scientific discipline that studies mental processes and behavior. The vast and varied subject of psychology encompasses numerous subfields, including studies of human behavior, cognition, sports, health, clinical practice, and social behavior.(Canguilhem 2016). From the most basic physiological requirements to more complex ones like safety, love/belonging, esteem (a need to be valued), and self-actualization, Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of needs" hypothesis lays out a framework for understanding what drives people(Navy 2020)

a. Physiological

Physiological needs are mostly impacted by our innate appetites. When an individual is experiencing thirst, they seek out a water dispenser. Likewise, if a person is experiencing hunger, they will seek out food. In the event of oxygen deprivation, the body will inevitably respond. In the event of a vitamin deficit, the body employs subtle mechanisms to meet that requirement(Bob 2009:3)

b. Safety Needs

After meeting physiological demands, safety comes next. A person would naturally want security, stability, reliance, relief from dread and anxiety, and protection. Threatening mental situations such not being mocked, humiliated, or stressed. Security cannot be totally met, unlike physiological needs. People can never be entirely shielded against meteorites, fires, floods, or others' hazardous behavior. Insecure people demand order and stability and would do anything to prevent surprises (Maslow, 1987)

c. Love and belonging

Once an individual's safety and physiological needs have been satisfied, they will endeavor to satisfy this particular desire. One's fundamental need include receiving love, attention, and affection, whether it be from family, friends, or romantic partners. If this requirement is not met or satisfied, it might impact an individual's conduct, encompassing both positive and bad manifestations (such as misbehaving children or engaging in dishonesty) (Maslow, 1987)

d. Esteem needs

The following need is self-esteem, which refers to an individual's desire for self-respect and the recognition and positive evaluation of oneself by others. One's reputation significantly influences how others see and appreciate them. The higher one's standing, the greater the amount of esteem they are likely to receive (Maslow, 1987)

e. Self- Actualization

Self-actualization needs, situated at the highest point of Maslow's hierarchy, pertain to the actualization of an individual's potential, the attainment of self-fulfillment, the pursuit of growth in oneself, and the occurrence of peak experiences. This level of need pertains to an individual's maximum capability and the actualization of that capability. it cannot begin before accomplishing the first four levels;

- Accomplishment
- Self development
- Ideology
- Maturity

The utilization of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1987) in this research holds significant importance. This idea serves as a foundation for examining how a person's psychological state is affected by anything. This hypothesis can be used to evaluate an individual's psychological

condition during or after experiencing an event and its impact on them. Consequently, the researcher ultimately chooses to employ this theory for the purpose of studying the data, specifically the novel "Disgrace" authored by J. M. Coetzee.

"Disgrace" stars David Lurie as an Afrikaner who doesn't feel sorry for his actions, which is a reflection of the harsh apartheid society. However, he learns to be humble and compassionate, which is a sign of personal growth. Lucy is a good example of the multiracial society that came after apartheid because she is strong and ready to make deals for the good of the new South Africa. Coetzee's works, especially the way he writes fiction and autobiography without being clear about the lines between the two, explore ethics and morals. This gives the story more depth (Oriaku, 2016)

The study created operational definitions for each of Maslow's five wants and devised novel metrics to evaluate the extent to which these needs are fulfilled, in accordance with Maslow's motivational hierarchy. Defining self-actualization is difficult since it is an abstract concept that exists at the highest level of the hierarchy. A new scale has been developed to address the challenges faced by previous measures. This new scale specifically focuses on self-oriented characteristics, drawing from Maslow's theories. The study found that overall health was a predictor of physiological need satisfaction, suggesting a connection between health and the fulfillment of basic physiological requirements (Taormina and Gao 2013)

Other previous research is David Lurie is a character in "Disgrace" by J.M. Coetzee who is affected by Romantic poets like Lord Byron. He is a mix of the independent hero archetype and the Byronic hero archetype. Lurie, who used to be a romantic scholar, thinks of himself as an outcast who doesn't follow academic rules. He uses literature to seduce women, which shows his delusions and fights with independence. The book looks at guilt, redemption, and change through Lurie's character, showing how Romantic ideas have affected who he is and what he does. Lurie's rejection of traditional literary models and his own struggle between reason and desire make him similar to the archetypal Byronic figure. This makes his loneliness and inner battles stand out even more (Yadav 2022)

Other previous research is the "death of God" is a key idea in Nietzsche's writing, especially in "The Gay Science," where the Madman announces the event and blames people for it. Coetzee's book "Disgrace" is about a character named David Lurie who has to deal with the effects of God's death. It shows how hard it is to live in a world without standard religious beliefs (Conway 2022)

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The fundamental concept is that all works of literature contains elements that demonstrate the protagonist's or antagonist's attempts to meet basic requirements. In light of this, the researcher will use Maslow's (1987) theory to explain the "hierarchy of needs" in J. M. Coetzee's "Disgrace."

3.1 Physiological

Securing employment and generating income is arguably the most effective means of fulfilling essential human needs, which are essential for survival. Without meeting these needs, the human body cannot properly function, including the requirements for food, hydration, oxygenation, and reproduction. This requirement is referred to as physiological needs according to Maslow (1987). This research seeks to clarify the physiological needs depicted in the novel "Disgrace" by J.M. Coetzee.

The novel "Disgrace" portrays Lucy, David Lurie's daughter, as a character who represents the challenge of fulfilling basic physiological needs while living on her rural farm. These are

the basic things you need to live, like food, drink, and a place to sleep. These wants are taken away from David in the book when he has to quit his job as a professor and move to the country to live with his daughter. His new way of life is hard for him to get used to, and he feels like he's been moved.

"I am used to a house, to rooms, to space. Here everything is cramped and mean, as if we are all being punished for something" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 60).

2. Safety Needs: Stability and safety, both physically and emotionally, are important for safety needs. Someone in David's class accuses him of sexual abuse, which puts his safety at risk. He sheds his honor, his job, and his belief in himself. He has to face the results of his actions and the fact that his place in society is not stable.

"I am a man of the city, a man of intellect, accustomed to a certain way of life. Here I am nothing" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 62).

3. Love and Belonging Needs: All of these need to do with relationships and interacting with other people. David has a hard time connecting with his daughter Lucy and doesn't feel like he belongs in the neighborhood where she lives. He wants to connect with other people and feel like he belongs.

"I am a stranger here. I have no roots. Like an uprooted tree, I may die" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 60).

4. Esteem Needs: Esteem needs encompass the desire for self-respect and a positive self-image. David's self-esteem is jeopardized when his status as a sexual predator is revealed. He is compelled to face the actuality of his acts and his personal perception of morality.

"I am not a bad man, I am not a monster. I am a man who has made mistakes" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 80).

5. Needs for Self-Actualization: Those need to do with developing oneself and happiness. David's journey through the book is one of learning about himself and growing as a person. He starts to understand how complicated the world is around him by facing his own flaws and limits. "I have learned something about myself, about the world. It is not a lesson I would have chosen, but I have learned it nonetheless" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 220).

It is very important that Maslow's (1987) theory of the hierarchy of needs be used in this study. This is because this idea can be used to figure out how something affects a person's mental state. This idea can be used to figure out how something affects a person's mind before, during, and after experiencing it. Because of this, the researcher finally chose to use this theory to look at the data, which was the book *"Disgrace"* by J. M. Coetzee.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used the qualitative method to gather, analyze, and summarize the data for this study. Creswell (2013) says that the qualitative method is a way to look into and find answers to questions. Some examples of this are phenomenology research, case studies, and ethnography. By comparing things that happen in everyday life, this is similar to what was studied in this study.

It will be possible to describe the research findings with words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. The qualitative method itself gives a clear, factual, and correct account of what happened with the study object. Researchers talk about Maslow's (1987) theory of the hierarchy of needs in the book *"Disgrace"* by J. M. Coetzee as part of this study.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Essentially, every piece of writing will have parts that show how each character tries to meet their own needs or set of needs. Since this is the case, the researcher will talk about what Maslow's (1987) "hierarchy of needs" can be found in J. M. Coetzee's book "Disgrace."

3.1 Physiological

Getting a job and making money might be the best way to meet our basic wants, like food, water, oxygen, sex, and other things that are necessary for our survival. Maslow called this need a bodily need in 1987. This study will talk about what bodily needs are shown in "Disgrace" by J. M. Coetzee.

"He takes her to lunch at a restaurant a discreet distance from the campus and listens while, over shrimp salad, she complains about her sons' school." (Coetzee 2000:8)

In the context of this quotation:

Food as a Basic Need: Taking lunch, especially shrimp salad, is directly linked to the need for food in the body. Eating is an essential part of being human and keeps us alive and healthy. Setting the story in a restaurant and having a meal together also help to make the characters' lives seem normal and routine. Eating usually is an important part of staying healthy and happy, which shows how important it is to meet your body's needs on a regular basis.

3.2 Safety needs

Residing in an urban area or a highly developed nation does not ensure perpetual comfort for all individuals. Naturally, there will be occurrences that cause people to feel concerned and strive for a sense of ease. This pertains to the essential requirement for safety, encompassing security, stability, reliance, freedom from fear, anxiety, and protection. Threatening mental conditions include experiences such as being subjected to scorn, humiliation, and stress. The reference (Maslow, 1987)

In this novel, researcher found data where when the attack on Lucy's farm is a pivotal moment in the novel that highlights the vulnerability of the characters and their desperate need for safety. After the attack, the sense of security that Lucy had in her home is shattered.

"No animal will accept the justice of being punished for following its instincts." (Coetzee 2000:90)

This quote exemplifies David Lurie's reflection on the assault and its consequences, highlighting the inherent uncertainty and absence of safety in their surroundings. The key topic in Lucy's struggle is the loss of safety and security, as she grapples with the trauma and the erosion of her sense of safety within her own household.

"As a woman alone on a farm she has no future, that is clear. Even the days of Ettinger, with his guns and barbed wire and alarm systems, are numbered. If Lucy has any sense she will quit before a fate befalls her worse than a fate worse than death."

This quote effectively illustrates the vulnerability of Lucy's circumstances on the farm, namely as a solitary woman residing in a hazardous setting. Now, let's analyze how this is connected to safety requirements. The assertion that "she has no future" is directly correlated with the notion that Lucy's prospects are grim in the absence of sufficient safety and security. The peril she encounters is of such magnitude that her very prospects are at stake. The phrase "as a woman alone on a farm" indicates Lucy's susceptibility. Within Maslow's hierarchy, safety needs encompass the requirement for a stable and protected environment, devoid of

any potential dangers or risks. Lucy's state of being isolated increases her vulnerability to harm, intensifying her requirement for safety. The mention of a "fate worse than death" highlights the possibility of significant suffering or psychological distress, emphasizing the severity of the peril that Lucy is confronted with. The use of such strong language underscores the crucial need of safety requirements in her particular circumstances. Coetzee effectively communicates the idea of safety needs in this quote by depicting Lucy's condition as one of extreme vulnerability and peril. The user's demand for protection is of utmost importance, however, the environment in which she resides is depicted as progressively hostile and unsafe. This text emphasizes the significance of safety needs in the overall story of **Disgrace**, demonstrating how the absence of safety can jeopardize not just one's physical health but also their future prospects and psychological well-being.

3.3 Love and belonging

The fundamental requirements for emotional well-being include receiving love, attention, and affection from one's family, friends, or romantic partners. If this requirement is not met or satisfied, it can have an impact on an individual's conduct, encompassing both positive and bad aspects (such as misbehaving children or engaging in dishonesty). In this research, the researcher will analyze the love and belonging needs depicted in this literature.

David Lurie's complex relations with women within the narrative mirror his internal conflict with love and a sense of belonging. The individual's involvement with his student, Melanie, is an endeavor to satisfy his longing for closeness, although it finally falls short of establishing genuine emotional bond and reciprocal admiration.

"He has never been afraid to follow a fantasy to its conclusion, and he is not afraid now." (Coetzee 2000:76)

This demonstrates David's endeavor to establish connections that he perceives as capable of satisfying his emotional requirements. However, these connections frequently lack depth and are primarily motivated by self-interest, revealing his inability to truly fulfill his desire for love and a sense of belonging.

The novel **Disgrace** explores the prominent themes of love and belonging, which are depicted via the characters' relationships and their challenges in seeking connection and acceptance. David Lurie's unsuccessful romantic connections and his intricate relationship with his daughter Lucy exemplify the challenges of satisfying these desires. Contrarily, Lucy endeavors to preserve a feeling of inclusion within her group, despite the presence of violence and peril. Coetzee examines the innate human desire for affection, companionship, and a feeling of fitting in, illustrating how these desires can serve as both a reservoir of resilience and a susceptibility.

4. CONCLUSION

The novel **Disgrace** by J.M. Coetzee clearly depicts the complex levels of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs through the experiences and challenges faced by the characters, specifically David Lurie and his daughter Lucy. The story explores the essential biological requirements for survival, such as nourishment and housing, while also highlighting the crucial significance of security, which becomes more uncertain in a hostile and unpredictable setting.

Finally, **Disgrace** provides a profound examination of the human condition by using Maslow's hierarchy of requirements as a framework. It demonstrates how the characters' life, choices, and sense of self are influenced by their pursuit and satisfaction of these wants. Coetzee's depiction of the vulnerability of human desires, situated in the context of post-

apartheid South Africa, acts as a powerful reminder of the intricacies and difficulties involved in the pursuit of survival, safety, affection, and a sense of belonging. The novel emphasizes that when these essential needs are not fulfilled or disturbed, it can result in significant individual and societal repercussions, highlighting the uncertainty of life in a world filled with moral and physical hazards.

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