

# THE HIERARCHY OF NEEDS REFLECTED IN MICHAEL OHER'S CHARACTER IN *THE BLIND SIDE* MOVIE

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## ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to find how Michael Oher fulfilled his needs and to convey Michael Oher's character when all his needs have been fulfilled and his dominant character in the movie of *The Blind Side*. The method that is used by the writer is descriptive qualitative. The data of this study were analyzed with the hierarchy of needs theory by Abraham Maslow. The writer analyzed the dialogue also narration that reflected the needs of the main character and also the changes of his character. The result of this study shows Oher could fulfill all of his needs from the lowest stage that begins with physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, self-esteem needs, and the last is self-actualization needs. Regarding to all of his needs that had been already fulfilled, his character also changed from a silent boy to a confident character who could express himself in sport and became one of the players that had a big influenced to the team. Last, for the dominant character that appeared in Oher was the protective character which was found in two different needs based on Maslow's.

**Keywords:** hierarchy of needs, character, characterization, *The Blind Side* movie

## ABSTRAK

*Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana Michael Oher memenuhi kebutuhan hidupnya dan menemukan bagaimana karakter Michael Oher ketika segala kebutuhan hidupnya sudah terpenuhi. Juga, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap karakternya yang dominan. Metode yang digunakan penulis adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Data penelitian ini dianalisa dengan teori Hierarchy of Needs dari Abraham Maslow. Penulis menganalisa dialog dan juga narasi yang mencerminkan kebutuhan hidup karakter utama dan perubahan karakternya. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Oher mampu memenuhi kebutuhan mulai dari kebutuhan fisiologis, keamanan, sosial, harga diri, dan kebutuhan pencapaian. Berkaitan dengan semua kebutuhan yang sudah terpenuhi, karakternya juga berubah dari lelaki yang pendiam menjadi karakter yang percaya diri dan bisa mengekspresikan dirinya dalam olahraga dan juga menjadi salah satu pemain yang memiliki pengaruh besar bagi timnya. Terakhir, untuk karakter dominan yang terlihat di Oher adalah karakter yang protektif dan di temukan didalam dua kebutuhan berbeda berdasarkan teori dari Maslow.*

**Kata kunci:** *hierarchy of needs, karakter, pemeranan, film The Blind Side*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Needs are something that people must fulfill every day. For instance, people need food to get their energy in case to do everything in daily life. Characters in movie also have their own needs to be fulfilled. It is because the creator of the movie represents their characters as the people who really exist in the real life. Character could be analyzed from many angles and using some theories.

One of the theories that can be used to analyze a character in movie is psychology. Abraham Maslow is the psychologist who created the hierarchy of needs theory for human. The theory stands in five stages. Maslow described his theory as the needs that people have to reach in every stage in order to have a proper live. The writer decided to use psychological theory by Abraham Maslow in order to convey Michael Oher's needs. Also to find out the causes that could change him into a better teenager through some stages in hierarchy of needs. The writer analyzed *The Blind Side* movie. The story was based on the true story and it based on 2006 book titled *The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game* by Michael Lewis and it was adapted into a movie in the year of 2009 by the John Lee Hancock.

The writer chose *The Blind Side* movie to be analyzed for this thesis because this was one of the most incredible true story that well-wrapped up into a movie. This was one of the timeless movies that had so many lesson and positive issues in life. The movie hits the box office of America for more than \$309.2 million income, won 18 awards and numbers of nominated. The writer decided to choose Michael Oher's character to be analyzed because the writer was having an intention to go deep inside his character. The writer wanted to understand his character and the factors that could change him from a completely silent teenager become someone who could express himself through joining a sport club.

This study is aimed to reveal Michael Oher's effort to fulfill all the needs that portrayed in Abraham Maslow's theory. Also, the changes that shown the characters of Oher after all of the needs fulfilled and also the dominant character that appeared in him based on the theory.

## B. RELATED LITERATURE

### 1. Character

Reaske pointed out the combination of speeches and action throughout a play, the small a side and jokes, the short angry speeches, the lengthy diatribes, all add up to produces in our mind, and understanding of the characters in drama as *people who might really exist* (40). Reaske divided character into some parts and he gave the explanation about those parts, as follows:

#### a. Characters in action

Reaske viewed that the character in action is about the characters in a play by closely observing their actions. We attempt to analyze the character in terms of their actions (40).

#### b. Motivation

Reaske mentioned that motivation as the larger action which characters complete in the course of a play have identifiable motive behind them (40).

**c. The rounded personality**

Rounded personality in character often shows as the story runs. Reaske elucidated that we should try to arrive at an understanding of characters as complicated human beings with patterns of motivation rather than single motive (43).

**2. Characterization**

Reaske discovered that every dramatist has at his fingertips a relatively large galaxy of differing devices of characterization (46). Some of these devices as follow:

**a. The appearance of the character**

Reaske concluded that we learn from these stage directions what the character looks like and probably how he dresses; it is obvious from his appearance whether he is a meticulous or sloppy person, attractive or unattractive, old or young, small or large (46).

**b. Asides and Soliloquies**

We learn about the characters as they speak. And, specifically, we are apt to understand the characters best when they speak in short asides or in longer soliloquies.

**c. Dialogue between characters**

Not only does the language of the character speaking alone characterize him, but his language when speaking to others also sheds a great deal of light on his personality.

**d. Hidden narration**

There is a great interplay between the playwright's characterization of certain people in the play through their own words and actions, and the characterization through the use of hidden narrations made by one character about another.

**e. Language**

Not only must we pay close attention to the kind of word which the character uses, but also we must be careful to remember how the character speaks.

**f. Character in action**

We continually ask ourselves why a certain character behaves in a particular way; as we slowly derive the answer to the why we are able to make conclusion regarding the character's motivation.

**3. Abraham Maslow's Theory**

The theory of hierarchy of needs indicated within a pyramid where all the needs that Maslow's explanation included. Petri added in hierarchy of needs, he organized the needs of human into five parts. Each of them covered different aspect of needs (289).



**Figure 2.3.1. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid**  
 (Source: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>)

**a. Physiological Needs**

Maslow pointed out that these needs are usually taken as the starting point for motivation theory are the so-called physiological drives. Undoubtedly these physiological needs are the most prepotent of all needs (35-37).

**b. Safety Needs**

It is about the law, order, safety, etc. Maslow stated that, we may categorize roughly as the safety needs (security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, from anxiety and chaos; need for structure, order, law, limits; strength in the protector; and so on) (39).

**c. Love and Belonging Needs**

These needs include a hunger for affectionate relationship with others, a need to feel part of a group or a feeling that he/she is someone's belong. Maslow elucidated that he (people) will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group or family, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal (43).

**d. Self-Esteem Needs**

Maslow discovered that these needs may therefore be classified into subsidiary sets. These are, first, the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. Second, we have what we may call the desire for reputation and prestige (Defining it as respect or esteem from other people) status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, important, dignity or appreciation (45).

**e. Self-Actualization Needs**

Maslow extrapolated that a musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be. He must be true to his own nature. This need we may call self-actualization. It means that the needs that the man already has (46-47).

## **C. RESEARCH METHOD**

### **1. Research Design**

In this study, the writer used descriptive qualitative method to collect the data. Mack asserted that this method (qualitative) will generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analyzing (11).

### **2. Data and Source of Data**

The primary data for this study was the script of *The Blind Side* movie (2009) directed by John Lee Hancock. The secondary data were all the written text such as previous researches studies which related to this study, journals, website, books and theory from the expert. The writer used the hierarchy of human needs by Abraham Maslow's theory to collect the data.

### **3. Research Instrument**

In this study, the research instrument was the writer herself. The writer collected the data that are gathered then analyzed it.

### **4. Data Collection**

The writer used the hierarchy of human needs by Abraham Maslow's theory to collect the data. First, the writer watched *The Blind Side* movie really carefully for several times and read the movie script as well. Then, the writer investigated the main character in this movie by classifying his utterances and the narration that referred to Michael Oher's needs and his character.

### **5. Data Analysis**

The writer watched *The Blind Side* movie and read the movie script as well. After that, the writer investigated the main character in this movie by classifying his utterances and the narration that referred to Michael Oher's needs and his character. After that, the writer narrowed the data. The last but not least, the writer would rechecking the data.

## **D. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **1. The Fulfillment of Hierarchy of Needs and its Influence to Michael Oher's Character**

In this part, the writer discussed about the fulfillment of the hierarchy of needs in Michael Oher's character using the theory of Abraham Maslow. Each needs also portrayed different characters of Oher. The analysis of Michael Oher needs elaborated below.

#### **a. Physiological Needs**

Maslow pointed out that this needs are usually taken as the starting point for motivation theory are the so-called physiological drives (35-37). For instance, the needs for food, water, home, proper bed and other basic needs.

Oher (Michael) had some trouble to fulfill this basic need for his own. But, since he lived in Touhy's, he fulfilled all of his physiological needs. First, the needs of **proper clothes**. When he stayed at Touhy's house at the time he was brought in by Leigh Anne, he could fulfill this needs with her help.

*Drop off area. Leigh Anne's car pulls up and SJ, Collins and Michael get out. They say a few good-byes, get out and walk toward the arch. Only then do we see what Michael is wearing: a GARGANTUAN.*

Then it continued to the needs of **home and proper bed**. It was also given by Leigh Anne too.

*Now turned into Michael's room, with an armoire, a chest of drawers, night stands, the whole nine yards. The bed is a massive futon in an ornate stand. Leigh Anne and Michael stand in the doorway.*

**Michael** : It's mine?

**Leigh Anne:** Yes, Sir.

The next part of physiological needs is **food**. In the movie, when he slept over in Touhy's house, he got variety of foods that he had never seen before.

*Michael stares – he's never seen so much food. Leigh Anne hands him a plate. He gingerly puts a slice of turkey on it. The entire family sits at the table. Rockwell would be proud. (00:27:23)*

After all of the needs in physiological were already fulfilled, then it also drew his character as the **close, character in action, and honest** one. He kept shut himself and not talking with another people. He just answered people's question with his action whether shaken or nodded his head. The author also tried to draw the characterization of Oher which was the **appearance of the character and short asides**.

## b. Safety Needs

Maslow stated that, we may categorize roughly as the safety needs (security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, from anxiety and chaos; need for structure, order, law, limits; strength in the protector; and so on) (39).

Oher in this case could protect himself when he went to Alton's apartment where it was located in the dangerous neighborhood.

*Michael shoves him hard. Alton unprepared for the force, flies back against the wall. On the ground he reaches in his belt for his gun, but just as he gets it out, Michael slaps it away. He picks up Alton and throws him across the room. The party comes unhinged as Michael grab Alton, holds him against the wall with one hand while pounding him with the other. Blood flies from Alton's face – eighteen years of subdued rage coming out in seconds. (01:53:08)*

Besides, the protection was also given by Leigh Anne when Alton was trying to threat Oher.

*Leigh Anne steps closer to Alton, stares him down.*

**Leigh Anne:** No, you hear me, bitch. You threaten my son you threaten me. You so much as cross downtown you'll be sorry. I'm in a prayer group with the D.A., I'm a member of the NRA and I am always packing. (01:54:30)  
*She taps her tiny purse. Alton laughs.*

Then, the safety needs of security and protection completed in Michael Oher's character. It made his character into **brave and characters in action**. It was proven when he fought Alton bravely and also he did not use any words before he fought them all.

### c. Love and Belonging Needs

Maslow elucidated that he (people) will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group or family, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal (43).

At one night when they just got home from grab a dinner in a restaurant, Leigh Anne, SJ and Oher sit together in Oher's bedroom. Leigh Anne read them a story from a children's book.

*A strange sight. Leigh Anne, SJ and Michael all sit on Michael's huge futon as Leigh Anne reads THE STORY OF FERDINAND. No one enjoys this more than Leigh Anne... (00:43:36)*

Oher looked very happy when Leigh Anne read him that story. It is because Oher's mother never read him a story when he was a kid. Now, he could feel the happiness that he never got before by hearing Leigh Anne read him a story before bed as his own mother.

Oher always gets support from Touhy's family when finally he could join the football's school. Oher never wanted to practice by his own, so SJ told him to practice with him. SJ always support him to be the best football player at school.

#### **WINGATE PRACTICE FIELD –**

*Michael moves to the line. SJ raises his whistle and blows SJ holds a blocking dummy and Michael fires out, hitting the dummy and sending SJ flying. Michael does ten yard "back and forths" as SJ times him. (00:54:40)*

Another support and love also showed by the football team. Coach Cotton as the coach of the team also defended Oher when he was kicked by another player.

*Cotton: This young man plays for my team and I will defend him like he's my own son! Against you or any other redneck sonofabitch! (01:18:41)*

Love and belonging needs were fulfilled in Michael Oher's character. It came from Leigh Anne, SJ and also Coach Cotton. This needs also made his character as an **opened and loving** also a **motivation** character.

### d. Self-Esteem Needs

Maslow separated this need into two parts. These are, first, the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. Second, we have what we may call the desire for reputation and prestige (Defining it as respect or esteem from other people) status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, important, dignity or appreciation (45).

Oher all his life never felt proud to himself. However, when Oher decided to join the football's school, he slowly changed his point of view to himself. He should improve his grade so he could be one of the members of the team.



Then, when Oher decided to join the football's school, he slowly changed his point of view of himself. He should improve his grade so he could be one of the members of the team.

*Michael chucks 66 into the air. 66 hits the fence hard and lands in a heap. Michael turns and walks back to the field.*

**Michael:** *Sorry, Coach. I stopped when I heard the whistle.*

**Cotton :** *Where were you taking him, Mike?*

**Michael:** *To the bus. It was time for him to go home. (01:20:55)*

It showed how confident Oher when he threw number 66 out of the field. Before, Oher was never seen so confident about something. But finally, he could find his self-confidence when he put down Milford team.

Oher also had an achievement when he finally could bring his team won the championship.

*Michael and Coach Cotton hold up a championship trophy (01:33:39)*

The effort of fulfilling this needs made Oher became a **never give up character** and **confident** too. He never give up on achieving things he could not get and it also built his character became confident at school and also to his social life.

#### e. Self-Actualization Needs

Maslow extrapolated that a musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be (46).

Oher (Michael) as someone who never thought that his life would change and could not achieve this particular need. Until he became one of the Touhy's family members, he realized that he could do more about his life. Apparently, he had a big body that he could use to become a football player.

He realized about his potential of playing football. When he played on the tournament at high school, he became famous because of his capability. Also, he was offered by some college in Memphis to get the scholarship as the football player at that time.

*Michael Oher was a freshman All-American in his first season (02:02:49)*

The writer found that Oher's effort on fulfilling self-actualization needs made him as an **optimist character** in his character. Oher keep optimistic that he needed to know more about how the game runs. He proved to everyone that he could play it and finally he was playing for one of the best team in Mississippi.

## 2. The Dominant Character that Appeared in Michael Oher's

Furthermore, in this section, the writer discussed about the dominant character that appeared in Michael Oher's character and it made him to do certain attitude. This dominant character was appeared in Oher's character where it was not found in others character.

The writer explained some particular needs based on Maslow's theory that influenced Michael Oher's dominant character that made himself felt that his life was appreciated by people around him.



### a. Self-Esteem Needs

Michael Oher tried to be a useful person to the people around him so he could feel that he was needed and still important as a human being.

*Leigh Anne: I've lived in Memphis my whole life and never been anywhere near here.*

*You're going to take care of me, right?*

*Michael : I got your back. (00:32:52)*

*Leigh Anne: That's good to know. Thank you.*

*As they start to walk, Leigh Anne reaches up and takes Michael's arm. He holds it out for her. (00:32:57)*

Finally by protecting Leigh Anne, he could feel himself as a useful person. The **protective character** made Oher felt that he was necessary by Leigh Anne and it was proved by the theory of Abraham Maslow where he concluded that the self-esteem need leads to the feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world (382).

### b. Love and Belonging Needs

Oher did not only protect Leigh Anne, he also protected SJ. SJ was the son of Leigh Anne and Oher considered him as his own little brother who loved him and always support him like his family. there was a time when Oher and SJ wanted to buy game and Oher drive the car, they had an incident which hurt Oher.

*Michael drives while SJ searches for music on the radio.*

*SJ: Look for Walker Street. That's where we take a left.*

*(SJ finds a hip-hop station and they both groove to the beat, dancing in the seats.)*

*That's what I'm talkin' 'bout!*

*(As the beat reaches a crescendo –*

*Michael instinctively throws a big arm in front of SJ as --) (01:06:28)*

*THE-truck CRASHES into the side of a VAN.*

From the scene and dialogue above, it is clear that he was willing to sacrifice his life to protect SJ. Oher did not care even though his arm was injured. Therefore, by protecting SJ from getting injure, Oher risked his life so he would not lose his family anymore.

The love and belonging needs made Oher's character became **protective character** too. He protected SJ like his family. He did not want to lose someone that already gave him so much love that he never had before.

In conclusion, self-esteem and love and belonging needs made Oher's character became the **protective one**. Those two needs made the protective character dominant in him.

## E. CONCLUSION

*The Blind Side* movie tells about a black homeless boy who did not have any family or friends. This movie also contained the relationship between white people and black people. This study had three research questions. They were the effort of Michael Oher to fulfill his needs, the characters of Michael Oher that already fulfilled and also the dominant character that appeared in him.

Thus, all of hierarchy of needs in Michael Oher's character had been fulfilled and the types of character in him based on Reaske were **character in action, motivation character and rounded character** which concluded his character after all of the needs had been fulfilled were **opened, loving, confident, never give up and optimist**. Also, the characterization of Oher that the author tried to arrive was only found in two types which was **the appearance of the character and aside and soliloquies**. The dominant character that appeared in Michael Oher's was the protective character. There were two needs that made his character dominant which was self-esteem and love and belonging needs. Those needs turned him to spill out his dominant character which was **protective**.

To sum up, Michael Oher succeeded to fulfill all of his needs that he never got before. Also, these all developed his character became someone better than before. Oher finally could be a successful person as he never imagined before.

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