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**Deficient Motherhood and its Impacts on the Male Child  
Development: An Approach to “Basil” in Gloria Naylor’s *The Men  
of Brewster Place***

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**Abstract:** Unlike animals and the vegetation whose behavior and maturity are believed to be innate, human beings take time to mature as they must be educated and trained. Any gap in the training process may be fatal to the progeny. Basil (a protagonist of one of the episodes of Gloria Naylor’s *The Men of Brewster Place* (1998), faces life-dismantling challenges in his young adulthood due to his mother’s deficient upbringing. This paper examines how lenient and negligent maternal parenting can affect the psychic, emotional, mental, and social development of a male child. Using the psychoanalytic approach, this study has found out that the mother’s responsibility in education is vital to male child’s successful maturing.

**Keywords:** Archetype, Collective Unconscious, Maturing, Guilt, Deficient Motherhood.

**Résumé :** Contrairement aux animaux et à la végétation dont le comportement et la maturité sont censés être innés, les êtres humains mettent du temps à mûrir car ils doivent être éduqués et entraînés. Toute lacune dans le processus de formation peut être fatale à la progéniture. Basil (un protagoniste de l'un des épisodes de *The Men of Brewster Place* de Gloria Naylor (1998), fait face à des défis de démantèlement de la vie dans son jeune âge adulte en raison de l'éducation déficiente de sa mère. Cet article examine comment une parentalité maternelle clémente et négligente peut affecter le développement psychique, émotionnel, mental et social d'un enfant de sexe masculin. En utilisant l'approche psychanalytique, cette étude a découvert que la responsabilité de la mère dans l'éducation est vitale pour la réussite de la maturation de l'enfant de sexe masculin.

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**Mots-clés :** Archétype, inconscient collectif, maturation, culpabilité, maternité déficiente.

## Introduction

To a large extent, the place of the male figure in patriarchal societies is preponderant in many aspects of life. In the West, especially in the U.S., this concept seems to be rampant at social, economic, and political levels though women are gaining grounds in terms of gender balance at these various stages. Surprisingly enough, in the African American community, the female figure tends to be more valued. This is particularly true when it comes to child rearing. The crucial absence of the black male from black households is expressly more evident today than ever before. As a consequence, the situation cripples today many a black male child who has to mostly count on only its mother. Judith Cummings indicates that “virtually half of black families are headed by single women, and 55 percent of black babies are born to unmarried mothers” (1). Many complex and serious issues have stemmed from this one, which has made complex family life in the black community.

Observably, the complexity of African American lives prompted many black writers into the field of literature. In an interview, Gloria Naylor interestingly reveals that “I decided that, if I had one book in me, I wanted it to be all about me, and the me in this case was a multifaceted me. So that’s how *Brewster Place* began.” (Vinson 1). *The Women of Brewster Place* (1983) and *The Men of Brewster Place* (1998), a duology by Naylor, respectively tell the stories of seven female and seven male characters living in Brewster Place. *The Women of Brewster Place* highlights the hardships imposed on black women by their men, whereas in *The Men of Brewster Place*, “Naylor herself would have, indeed, thought of doing some justice to the men folk, and would have given a voice of these varied profiles that complement her women folk.” (Kannan 789). This study focuses on Basil, one of the male characters in *The Men of Brewster Place*.

Naylor observes that “With a poem you step into a moment. With a short story you’ll step into the day in the life of, or the year in the life of. But with a novel you’ve got whole universes swirling. And you’re attempting to make sense out of that” (Rowell & Naylor 181). This paper steps into Basil’s life. Basil is an overprotected male child by his mother, Mattie Michael. Her overindulgence has spoiled her only son to a point

that Basil has no sense of responsibility in his young adult years. His irresponsibility caused his mother to lose her house and to live in the ghetto.

This paper scrutinizes how lenient and negligent maternal parenting seriously jeopardizes the psychic, emotional, mental, and social development of the male child in the context of Basil's story. This study is conducted within the theoretical framework of psychoanalytic criticism. Specifically, the Freudian unconscious drive that guides an individual's behavior, and Jungian notion of consciousness, personal unconscious, collective unconscious, and the archetypes will be utilized.

Discussing the Freudian approach to psychoanalysis, Tyson observes that "... human beings are motivated, even driven, by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware..." (14-15). And she further explains that reading a story psychoanalytically is "...to see which concepts are operating in the text in such a way as to enrich our understanding of the work and, if we plan to write a paper about it, to yield a meaningful, coherent psychoanalytic interpretation" (Tyson 29). And the Jungian approach which relies on "the "collective unconscious" of the human race: "...racial memory, through which the spirit of the whole human species manifests itself" (Richter 504) will serve examine the collective unconscious of the Black American community and the Black mother in particular.

This essay is divided into three sections, the first of which deals with the exploration of the Freudian and Jungian views of psychoanalysis. The second section highlights the respective places of the father and the mother in the life of a male child, and section three examines the experience of Basil, as an overprotected child.

### **1. Freudian and Jungian Scanning of the Black Experience in the U.S.**

Celine Surprenant (200) observes that "Psychoanalytic literary criticism does not constitute a unified field. However, all variants endorse, at least to a certain degree, the idea that literature ... is fundamentally entwined with the psyche". It is precisely the structure of the psyche that caused Freud and Jung to break apart. While Freud excessively focused on the individual, Jung argued that the individual psyche belongs to a bigger

entity, the collective consciousness. To assess the story of Basil, a combination of both views to better conduct the analysis.

Mattie feels guilty of betraying her father when she disobeys him by sleeping with Butch Fuller. This guilt is what Freud refers to as an unconscious drive that directs one's life. Mattie's guilt will later lead her to be lenient mother to her male child Basil. Freud's unconscious drive matches with what Jung refers to as personal unconscious. But the personal unconscious belongs to the collective unconscious. This collective unconscious which is like a reservoir of human memories is made of archetypes.

Because the various races in the U.S. have not got the same histories, the archetypes function accordingly. Thus, the painful experience of Blacks in American from slavery to present times have impacted their collective unconscious. Mattie running away from home because her father is beating her to reveal the name of the man who impregnated her, and Basil running away from home to avoid going to jail highlight the archetype of a runaway slave. Mattie being alone to raise her son Basil brings the memories of strong Black women who do not need any man in their lives. By doing so, she unwillingly activates the archetype of the absent Black father from home. These attitudes have strongly impacted the psychic development Basil from childhood to adulthood.

## 2. The Dialog of Risk Taking and Life Preservation

In the Basil episode in *The Men of Brewster Place*, Basil's life story would have been positively different if Mattie Michael had taught him right. Because they have been living in a racist society, Black women should not only love their son but properly raise them too, so they grow up into men. If well-bred, these "... men have to explore the external world, establish their masculinity in all positive as well as constructive way by performing tasks not suitable for the so-called tender women folk" (Kannan 791).

As the irreversible wheels of time turn on, life quality in Black neighborhood deteriorates. Tomeiko R. Ashford bitterly complains that "The different tenets that we used to have, which were the family, and the community, and the church-those things are playing less and less a part in the raising of young black children" (76). In *Brewster Place*, due to the absence of these tenets, it takes only the Black woman to hold the ground.

The outcome is a vicious circle that fuels all kinds of social disasters. Vicious cycle of “... babies having babies; ... people living in the same poor area, living and dying within sometimes fifty miles of where they were born, never really seeing the outside world and never understanding the opportunities that are there and how to access them” (76). And this is a perfect depiction of life in Brewster Place.

The vicious circle whereby emotionally “crippled” parent will cripple their children, who in turn will do the same to their offspring is what Basil wants to break in the context of two black boys, Eddie and Jason. He grumbles about Black people: “... keep talking and talking about the situation with young black men. They’re an endangered species; they’re a lost generation; on and on... I can’t solve the problem of a whole generation; but there are two little kids right here who I can help. So, why not? Why couldn’t I stay in their lives forever? (Naylor 56-57). The remark is noble but how prepared is he to face such a huge challenge. Basil needs to understand that “... there are laws determining the behavior of natural things, then there must be social laws determining the behavior of people, and these laws, rather than individual choice, determine one’s destiny” (Debo 494). This will particularly be true in Basil’s case.

## 2.1. Mattie Michael: Basil’s Mother

Most people living in Brewster Place hold some types of job which do not allow them to leave this ghetto. Katherine McKittrick noted that black workers are stuck in “an economized and enforced placelessness,” (qtd by QI 104) due to their not owning land nor homes. If this is true for the other characters, Mattie Michael is an exception: “A slightly different case is Mattie, who is there because of her own failure in mothering, which lost her the home she worked so hard over her lifetime to buy” (Debo 498). Buying and owning a house for black working class is hard to achieve that it can be repeated. Mattie stayed in that poor neighborhood till her death.

Analyzing Mattie Michael in *The Women of Brewster Place* Annie Gottlieb states that “Pregnant and disowned, she made the instinctive matriarchal decision to live without a man and invest all her love back into her child. Left in the lurch by the grown, spoiled son, who results, she becomes the anchor for the other women of Brewster Place” (11). Mattie, in overprotecting her son, Basil, has spoiled him. Yu Yang vehemently

argues that “Because parents want for their children to enjoy a life better than the one, they have endured in the face of racism and economic oppression, they often overindulge their children or overprotect them” (145). And though people keep raising her awareness on the issue, Mattie disagrees with them. “We can draw a conclusion that over protection and overindulgence are extremely bad for children’s development” (145). Mattie is simply adding to the handicap of her son.

Eva who took Mattie as her daughter argued with her on how she is mothering Basil. “Sometimes, Eva would lead up to a suggestion for Mattie of how to take care of her son. For example, Mattie could not keep Basil running away from things that hurt him and should teach him how to go through the bad and good of whatever comes.” (147). Eva being much older than both Basil and her mother, tries in vain to teach them a life lesson. “However, every time Mattie would get snippy, just because Eva minded her business.” (147). At school, Basil is no better. “The counselors said Basil was an irresponsible young man, however, Mattie did not think so.” (146). And this does not worry her at all. Yet, when it comes to initiating children to maturity there should be no room for complacency.

The upshot is that “After Basil grew up, he ran school to school and job to job, and Mattie was his eternal refuge. When people around him reflected Basil being an indifferent person, Mattie was still proud of her son, because he always sought help to her in the face of difficulties.” (146). In fact, her misconduct “... gave rise to irresponsible Basil, unable to bear the consequences for his own mistakes and face the difficulties in his life. Mattie’s selfless dedication and overindulgence led to Basil as an immature and irresponsible adult man.” (146). A child should be raised as if the parent may die at any time for the child to grow quickly fully aware of the harsh reality of life.

Yu Yang opines that “Overprotection and overindulgence are extremely bad for children's development.” (148). Overprotection and overindulgence cripple the psychic, mental, emotional, and social development of the child, especially the male child. Yang recommends that “Instead of doing everything for them, parents should encourage their children to overcome difficulties and inspire them to develop by themselves. Only in this way can they grow up to be independent and become truly successful.” (148).

## 2.2. Butch Fuller: Basil's Father

Butch Fuller lured Mattie Michael, then a teenager, into rape. Although Sam Michael keeps warning her against Fuller, a fooler, Mattie got pregnant by him. Alfonso W. Hawkins declares that “The child was conceived as a result of Mattie's liaison with a man her father warned her against. Basil was born in her new home, away from Rock Vale, Tennessee.” (469). As Basil grows in the shadow of his mother, he lacks male figure role model. ““Your father wasn't a marrying type,” she said, “and so I never bothered to tell him about you.” And that was it. It's how she answered every question I had about him.” (Naylor, 46). Mattie makes a serious mistake by not properly responding to her son's legitimate claims. She thinks a woman alone can raise her son.

By concealing the information about Fuller, Mattie has unwillingly created loopholes in Basil's full manhood development. Basil said with a considerable pain, “And if I pressed, she'd get angry. “Ain't I been taking good care of you? If you gotta worry, worry about what you got, not about what you could never be.” (46). Knowing that his father lives somewhere and seeing his mates' father put serious limitations on the boy.

Such loopholes and limitations resulting from the absence of black fathers in the life of their sons foreshadows their doomed future of the progeny. Kannan keenly observes that “It is observed that the men maintain a fugitive tendency when life poses problems of reality. This would have been the case of them with regard to their existence and circumstances in *The Women of Brewster Place*.” (791). The fugitive father tendency underlies their sons' development. It is crucial to remind the reader that the fugitive slave archetype is activated in Fuller as well. When this happens, only the mother bears the burden of the childrearing.

## 2.3. Basil's Self-Schooling

### 2.3.1. The Vicious Circle

The absence and the fugitive tendency of black fathers due to the runaway slave archetype, and the unconscious guilt-drive leading to the overprotection of black mothers put black children, especially black boys in a vicious circle. Hawkins states that, “When proper nurturing does not occur, the parents, the black community, and America at large are

ultimately the victims.” (473). The African American community pays the biggest price in terms of damage.

“The characters of Basil, Mattie's son, and C. C. Baker and his crew represent the possible consequences of failing to properly nurture our young. Basil's social behavior, for example, was nourished, unknowingly, by a mother whose smothering love neglected discipline.” (472). An irresponsible young black man like Basil runs away in front judiciary issues linked to his unwillingly killing a man in a fight. And since his mother puts her house in bail, she lost her house. “The only thing she had was her home—free and clear—after thirty years. So, her hundred percent went into their ten percent.” (Naylor, 46). And she lost the house and trapped into Brewster Place, where she eventually died. Basil fails to stand his ground like the African hunter and face the consequences of his misconduct.

### 2.3.2. Transition to Role Model

After realizing that his mother lost her house for his sake, Basil grasped the reality of being an irresponsible child. And he decided to change. He takes two full time and one part time jobs to save money and buy his mother a new house. He wants to become a real man. That type of man Ben, the main narrator of the book, defends. Adishree Vats explained that “The notion, that Black men are lazy and unreliable, is vehemently opposed by Ben, the janitor of Brewster Place, who argues that these men do their utmost in most hostile situations for the survival of their families and communities.” (272). Basil seems to be in this category of black men.

In the same thought line, according to Jiamin Qi, Ben “... believes that black men need to be brave and face their own pains directly so that they can rise for a better future together. Even in a ghetto, one can still be a real man by building the community.” (104). Basil, from the depth of his irresponsibility, through the transition he experienced having realized his recklessness, wants to change his own life and that of his community. To achieve this newly goal, he needs money.

Basil's apparent maturity has stemmed from the 16-year gap between the publication of *The Women of Brewster Place* and *The Men of Brewster Place*. Basil, the irresponsible young man in the first book has been totally transformed in the second one. Kannan observes that “Take the



case of Basil, he doesn't escape, instead willingly takes up the responsibility of being the loving custodian of those two fatherless boys Jason and Eddie. It is an act of benevolence with a sense of commitment which even a woman may be hesitant to take up." (791). As he could not buy Mattie a new house before her death, Basil wants to do good to some other women, including Keisha. But again, the loopholes and the flaws in his maturing process catch up with him quickly as he is not prepared enough to face such challenges. It is also important to note that by accepting to take up the challenge of fathering the two boys, Basil is unconsciously trying to destroy the runaway slave archetype.

### 3. Basil's Misadventures

#### 3.1. Getting to Know the Truth about his Father

When Basil realized the death and burial of his mother, he went for his father for the first and the only time in life. And this is the first time he has a man to man, crude, harsh, straight forward talk. He went there to know his father and confront him with accusations of not trying to look for them. Fuller was sorry about Mattie's death but was quite indifferent toward the pains of his only son. "I went to see Mattie after I heard she was pregnant. I was so glad about you proving the doctors wrong that I was foolish enough to start thinking I could ask her in marriage. But her old man wouldn't let me see her. And he even lied about where she had gone. Your grandfather was a hard, hard man." (Naylor, 48).

As Basil wanted to charge his father with all kinds of accusations, Fuller told him, "If you came here thinking I was gonna help with the pain, you're wrong, stop it. I'm sorry Mattie's passed away, but I got no regret about the way I treated her. Then again, maybe you do." (48). This meeting with his father, another man, has revealed Basil's deficiencies and weakness in terms of manhood.

Basil also went to see the house where his mother grew when he saw a woman with children bothering her. On seeing this scene, Basil told himself "This is what happens without a man in the house (50). And he made another vow. "I swore, once again, that I would not be that kind of man. I was going to be there for my children, that is, if I could have one" (50). Here is exactly where Basil realizes the fugitive slave archetype which has been unconsciously directing the life of most Black men.

### 3.2. Dating Helene

As Basil has shown loopholes in his maturation in the presence of his father, he will demonstrate complete immaturity in front of women. If Basil was well initiated by Mattie into life preservation and professional secrecy, he would know a lot of things about women before venturing into their world. Basil confessed, “I learned quickly that women thought something was wrong with a man who talked about wanting a commitment before *they* brought up the subject. And even if they did bring it up, for you to agree quickly makes you a loser” (51).

But the first and the only time that Basil thinks about his mother, he finds relief. “I thought about what advice my mother might give me if she was still alive. “Hang in there, son. There’s light at the end of the tunnel.” And what I found at the end of the tunnel was Helen” (51). Helen is a young woman can make something positive out of Basil, and he knows that too. “After she took me to dinner wither parents, I knew it was time to tell her the whole story about my past” (52). Because Basil has seen in her a woman to marry that he is ready to reveal his life. The very day he plans to do this the day he and Helen met her cousin Keisha and her sons Eddie and Jason.

After church, Keisha’s threats on her sons seriously embarrassed Basil who asked Helen about her. ““Unfortunately, I do. It’s my cousin, Keisha, and she is bad news. I hate the way she treats her kids” (53). Beyond Keisha’s behavior, Basil is interested in the two boys. Alfonso W. Hawkins observes that “The clarion call in the African American community is a traditional one: “Must I be my brother's keeper?” Black youth are nurtured and raised by the internals of family, community, and the educational system, which extends the inherent community” (474). This is the sacred call that directly link Basil to these boys. Yet, without realizing it, Basil was too immature and ill-equipped to answer that call.

In the same line, Basil was also too stubborn to listen to Helen’s numerous warnings about Keisha’s trap. ““I see where you are heading, Basil, and there is nothing waiting for you but trouble. Maybe you aren’t interested in Keisha but the closer you get to those children, the more difficult it’s going to be to leave.” (56). Unfortunately, Basil was too idealistic to quit Helen, the woman he could marry for the sake of the two black boys, and Keisha. This is absolute stupidity. You cannot leave a woman and marry her cousin. That is insanity.

While Basil is trying to transcend the runaway slave archetype, it is essential to note that he is unconsciously guided by the strong guilt of betraying his mother. This unconscious guilt drive sheds light on his insane decision to marry the devilish Keisha so he could father the two boys in the life of whom the fugitive slave archetype has been rampant since they do not even know who is their father.

### 3.3. Basil's Downfall: Consecutive Life-Changing Mistakes

Analyzing the female characters in *The Men of Brewster Place*, C. Muralidara Kannan declares that “Negative forces have their say in a few women characters too. No reader of the novel will be forgetful of Evil Elvira and Keisha” (790). As Helen told Basil, Keisha is bad news. And to worsen his case, Mattie failed to deliver an appropriate initiation to Basil, and Gloria Naylor herself makes a sterile man out of Basil. And him knowing that he cannot impregnate a woman is trapped with the two fatherless black boys that he adopted via marrying their mother, Keisha. A pure holy insanity.

Beside Helen's warnings, Basil clearly sees that Keisha is not a sound woman, and less, a mother. She goes to church half naked and goes there only for her mother to keep her boys when goes out to enjoy life. ““If I didn't my mama would kill me. And who's gonna baby-sit when I need to go out?” (55). And when Basil volunteers to take the boys out, “Keisha was too happy to find that someone was going to take them off her hands for a day. It was alarming how easily she agreed. She and Helen weren't that close, what if I were a pervert that she'd just hand her kids off to? (55). Mattie's poor parenting and her overprotecting Basil put him at the mercy of evil Keisha.

It took Basil less than a month to talk Keisha into marriage. “The thing that concerned her was my age. At twenty, like she was, someone close to thirty-five seems ancient. But once she found out about my bank account, she had no more problem with my age than she did with the fact that a bench warrant was hanging over my head in another state” (59). Basil's stupidity is simply legendary. How can a man, a sound man, show his bank account information and reveal his court problem to an immoral and immature twenty years old girl whose cousin (Helen) he was supposed to marry?

Mattie has been absent in the life of Basil due to her own negligence which kills her. If Basil were well bred, he would keep social distance with Keisha, just like her cousin Helen did. Rescuing people should not be done at the expense of one's life nor one's happiness. This lesson Basil will learn through bitterness.

As Mattie's complacent parenting paved Basil's and her own way to destruction, Keisha's negligence toward her sons leads them to disaster. "A high school dropout, her dream for them ended with them finishing high school and going out on their own. My dream for them ended on the other side of the universe. They could be *anything* they wanted to, I kept telling them" (60).

Another insanity and stupidity of Basil was to believe that "It was very clear to both of us that I wasn't marrying Keisha, I was marrying the boys" (59). And "In six months, she had almost run through the forty-seven thousand dollars" (59). Basil confessed that "Maybe some of this was my fault. Maybe if I'd concentrated on being as good husband as I did a father, I could have saved the marriage" (60). How can a man, a full man, have for wife a woman he consciously knows is sleeping with other men? And when Keisha wants to beat Eddie for reporting to Basil that Keisha brought her boyfriend in the house, Basil discouraged her. "You aren't doing anything to him. You'll keep your damn hand off my kids" (61). And a whole fight follows. "'Your kids? They ain't your kids. Since when you are man enough to have any kids? You hardly ever touch me. They told me not to marry an old ass like you'" (61).

But this time was the last fight of their two years of marriage. "And then her eyes narrowed as she went for the jugular. "For all you know, Penny might be their real father. And even if he ain't, he's sure as hell better in bed than you are'" (61). When Basil asked what exactly she expects from him, she replied, "I want you to get the hell out of my life." Then the ill-trained Basil made the irreparable and the unforgivable mistake. "Ok, I'll take the kids and go" (62). Keisha was surprised by Basil's incongruity. "'Man, are you outta your mind? You ain't taking my kids nowhere'" (62). But the foolish man continued. "'Legally, they're mine as well as yours.'" (62).

"We'll see about that. We'll just see" (62). If Basil only learned from his mother like he should, and if Mattie had properly trained and taught her son as a mother should, he would surely understand and realize

that any mother, however bad she may be, would never let any person separate her from her children. Mattie and Keisha have this attitude is common. It is maternal instinct of protecting their progeny and that profound sense of belonging that prompts Mattie to put her house at bail to defend Basil; Keisha to report Basil to the police to prevent him from separating her from her sons. And this was Basil's fatal mistake. After Keisha went to report to the police about Basil's judicial situation, they came to arrest him. Now, Basil is ready to go to jail by accepting responsibility. If he did this earlier on, Mattie would keep her house and maybe still alive, and his life would be much better.

By the time Basil came out of jail after six years for good conduct on a seven-to-fifteen-year count for involuntary manslaughter, with total absence of communication with the two black boys for whom he married evil Keisha, "Jason had already done time himself in juvenile detention for car theft and aggravated assault. Eddie had built a shell around himself, hard and permanent: He said he didn't me. And that he didn't want to" (64). And the ball keeps rolling for these black boys. Basil took extremely unmeasured risk to rescue them, but their mother prevented him. Like Mattie, Keisha has demonstrated a complacent and negligent parenting for her sons. Basil has later and bitterly realized the wrong his mother did to him by loving, pampering, and overprotecting him, but he could never mention since his misbehavior triggered her death. Eventually Keisha is far much worse than Mattie and the life of her two sons speaks volume. Both Mattie and Keisha failed in their parenting roles.

The only question left for Basil is to know if he could have made any difference by deciding to rescue the two boys. "But the question that will haunt me for the rest of my life is whether or not I could have made any difference. Would these things have happened to them anyway just in the flow of life?" (64).

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined how lenient, negligent, and poor maternal parenting seriously jeopardizes the psychic, emotional, mental, and social development of the male child. The paper has shown that Basil is psychically deficient, emotionally unstable, mentally immature, and socially unequipped to life challenges due to a failed parenting. Mattie Michael, Basil's mother, and Keisha, Jason, and Eddie's mother, have

failed to properly deliver their parental mission. Mattie’s over protection of Basil makes her son an irresponsible child and an incredibly immature young fellow. As an irresponsible child he made his mother lose her house by running away from the court. As an immature man, he married an extremely irresponsible and negligent twenty-year old Keisha because he wanted to properly father Jason and Eddie.

Keisha is the worst mother the story has represented. Her harsh attitude toward her sons, her negligence, her always-looking-for money, comfort and sexual pleasure make her an unfit mother. This poor parenting has already shaped the critical part in the fate of her sons. And when providence brings her Basil, she literally destroys his life altogether with her sons.

Freudian and Jungian’s psychoanalytic approaches have been used as theoretical tools to examine Basil, Mattie, Keisha and her sons, and other characters. These characters are unconsciously led by their fear, desire or guilt drives which direct their lives. These unconscious drives are grounded in a collective unconscious which manifests through archetypes.

The consequences of poor and lenient parenting are numerous. The jeopardy of the psychic, the emotional, the mental and social development of the male child. This male child cannot meet the harsh demands of society. He constitutes a latent danger for himself and society. Just consider the rate of manslaughter, car theft, armed robbery, rapes just to mention but a few in the black community. All these problems have a genesis, the family. The quality of family life determines the quality of social life.

Though this article focuses on the relation between mother and son, Keisha’s misconduct is the result of poor maternal parenting. This introduces the issue of mother and daughter relationship in the black community and how important and vital the role of the mother is in the life of the female child as the offspring spends more time with their mother.

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MLA : Ahondo, Kodzo Kuma and Ebony Kpalambo Agboh. "Deficient Motherhood and its Impacts on the Male Child Development: An Approach to "Basil" in Gloria Naylor's *The Men of Brewster Place*." *Uirtus* 1.1 (août 2021): 1-15.