

# Sample research paper on father figure and the oedipus complex

[Family](#), [Father](#)



My Oedipus Complex is a story written by Frank O'Connor. The story is set in a small town of Ireland shortly before the Second World War. In the book, O'Connor tentatively intertwines the lives of Larry, Sonny, and Mother and Father. The story exhibits high levels of humor and of unexpected occurrences between mother and son. The story begins at the end of the First World War and the character Larry is enjoying his life a great deal. With just him and the mother, Larry gets all the attention he gets from his loving mother. Larry even goes ahead to suggest to his mother that they could buy a baby. As a baby, Larry would like a brother and sister because he sees some of the neighbors having brothers and sisters. In some cases, Larry's father comes back from the army and Larry is forced to live with little attention from his mother. During these times, Larry gets mad because he fails to understand why his mother loves his dad more than she loves him. O'Connor presents the life of a five year old full of innocence and purity of consciousness. However, Larry's happy bliss comes to an end when the war is over and Larry has to live with dad everyday of his life. Another misery is that Larry has to share his mother's love with his dad. For example, Larry has no right now to share his bed with his mother in the morning like he had done before. The humor part is that while in war, Larry had prayed that his dad would come back alive, but now he lost faith in the belief of God. While getting ready for sleep, Larry asks his mother: "do you think if I prayed hard God would send Daddy back to the war?" Larry becomes frustrated because he is no longer the center of the attention of his family.

While many readers have argued that Larry's father in Oedipus complex is the central person in the family, it is Larry's mother that calls the shots in the

family. The story is about Larry and his loss of a special bond with his mother after the war. Larry worries about his mother's lack of time for him. Seymour Keitlem wrote that " the Oedipus complex is a theory that postulates in early childhood, between the ages of two and six, children develop two emotional ties to the parents, one is a purely affectionate tie to the parent of the opposite sex and a hostile tie to the parent of the same sex as a rival" ( p. iv). The phenomenon of Oedipus complex is perhaps what happens to the relationship between Larry and his father. Even though many can argue that O'Connor's Oedipus complex is about male dominance, the story is much more about relationships and child innocence as opposed to male dominance. According to Kate Murphy (1990), O'Connor's stories are divided between " the natural or normal worlds through which every person successively progresses in the process of growing up, and a number of "unnatural" worlds with which the individual elects or arbitrarily find himself (p. 313). Such analysis would be very practical in the understanding of Larry's quagmire.

Larry is in a quagmire, and the mother's focus while lovingly caring for him, she has to balance between his father and him. However, deep within Larry's mother's heart is also a desire to break free off Larry's continuous desire for attention. Sometime Larry's mother would rather tell Larry to give up some of his time so she could take care of some other things. For example, in one instance, " Just a moment, Larry" " Do be Quiet, Larry" (O'Connor, 2). By asserting these sentiments to Larry, her mother makes it clear that there are boundaries that Larry must not surpass. When Larry's father is asleep, his mother tells him " don't wake Daddy". Here, Larry's mother exert authority

to him make very unwanted and uncared for.

Because of the feud between Larry and his father for the mother's attention, Larry's mother becomes the most desirable and powerful. Larry would do everything to get the mother's attention. Because of this reason, Larry's mother would get whatever he desires. Larry would go to an extent of saying things to his mother like " I am going to marry you" and " we're going to have lots of babies" (7). Instead of telling Larry what he can and can't do, she decides to go along with it. While such statements were out of child's innocence, they made the father feel left out. When Larry's mother gets another child called Sonny, Larry falls in love with her even the more. In addition to fighting for love between the each other, Larry's father and Larry are forced to fight for the attention of the baby and of the mother. At one point, Larry's mother kicks her husband out of the bed for the baby. The two find themselves together in bed and become friends once more.

Because of loneliness, Larry does a lot of things to keep himself busy. One of the things he does is naming his feet Mrs. Left and Mrs. Right. One purpose of the feet is to act dramatic situations. In page 5, Larry says " I put my feet out from under the clothes- I called them Mrs. Left and Mrs. Right and invented dramatic situations for them in which they discussed the problems of the day." Larry does this because his feet are perhaps his only source of entertainment. In the absence of his father, the only person Larry has spent most time with is his mother. Larry's feet give him more time pass, so the act of naming his feet is because of a desire for company. The squabble with his dad over his mother is thus legitimized because Larry's fear of being left alone.

When Larry's father comes back home, he begins to act in unruly ways.

During one instance, Larry gets mad because he can't sleep in his mother's bed. Larry knows that his father is asleep and he should be silent, however he decides to wail just so he can misbehave. Larry says " As she lifted me, I gave a screech, enough to wake the dead, not mine father" (O'Connor, 10).

Larry's father is upset at Larry for waking him up. In another instance, Larry talks back to his father. His father says " he wants his bottom smacked".

Larry out of anger says back to his father, " Smack your own" (O'Connor, 10). Larry finds himself in a rather unusual place and his body language and actions are a response to his mother's attention to his father instead of him. Larry would love to have his mother for himself.

A reading of Frank O' Connor life history would relate with the story of Larry and his father. Frank O'Connor's father was a drunken, debt ridden, and poor. This means that Frank's father did not play much role in life. Compare this to Larry's life and absent father at war. In page 5, O'Connor says that " Father was in the army all through the war". This means that Larry did not have the chance to hang out with father when he was a toddler. When the father came back, he was a rival for the mother's love. We could also get the psychoanalysis from the book in the sense that O'Connor always confronted his father over his violent behavior towards his mother. While the case was not for attention, it clearly played a key role in shaping his understanding between father and mother relationship. In the end, when Larry realizes that his mother and brother are a team, he becomes aware that his father is his only friend in the house.

Lastly, Frank O'Connor's story Oedipus complex is much more than Oedipus

complex, the story also tackles the issues of fatherlessness. Fatherlessness is a social problem brought about by the breakdown of traditional family setup. The victims of these social phenomena are young and innocent children with little or no power to change the situation that they face. Fatherlessness is harmful to the children for three reasons. First, fatherlessness causes poverty. This leads to stress on the available resources forcing priority for the most basic of needs. Important services such as education and character development are traded off for the sake of survival. Second, fatherlessness strains single mothers by bestowing them the responsibility of being both the dad and the mom. While single mothers do a good job in bringing up children, fatherless children are most likely to lack the masculine values that fathers impart on kids. Third, fatherlessness breaks family structures thereby making male children to feel the urge of playing the role of the absent father while still too young to do it. Upon reading the book again, I realized Larry and his father's squabbles are to a large extent, a function of the societal definition of how dad and son interact after long absence.

## **Work cited**

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