

Case study lily owens essay sample



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In order to accurately assess the main character Lily Owens in "The Secret Life of Bees," the first step is to gather information about her biological, psychological, and social factors that make up her psyche. Knowing that today's confederate America's bio-psycho-social habitat is completely different than in 1964, one can gather that it would only make sense to take a look at the major issues of the times from a relational aspect with relation character growth. In a time where a country family value seems to be the norm of society, the racial tension forges an overall racially charged theme of seeking love. In order to fill the missing void created by injustice and abuse in the character's lives, one must seek the love, care, and preparation needed for a prosperous future.

The protagonist of the story is much like a bee; Early on, Lily lives a very secret but complicated life in which she feels completely abandoned, even living with her father. She is a widowed 14 year old Caucasian female who lives on a farm with her father in the heavily segregated state of South Carolina. Her conscience is affected tremendously by the thought that she killed her mother at four years old. The film shows her pursuit in search for the actual truth about the details regarding the involuntary manslaughter of her mother, and whether or not she was truly loved by anyone. The movie shows snapshots of the domestic violence that T. Ray, Lily's father abused his wife and her mother, Deborah; the scene features shouting and shows the gun falling and Lily's small hand reaching for then gun, followed by the fatal gunshot. Shortly after Deborah's death, it is discovered that the Father-Daughter duo hired a "Negro" (Movie) nanny; this sets the environment of racial tension for the movie.

Lily's nanny is named Rosaleen and has seemed to be the only one caring for Lily as her father only treats her with abuse. The only source of love was coming from her nanny who ironically was going through her own civil rights battles on a daily basis. Even though America was making steps to unify the nation as a whole, most Blacks in situations like Rosaleen never felt protected from the racists who only considered laws to be " just a piece of paper" (The Secret Life of Bees). This impacts Lily tremendously as she is recognizing that world can be a cruel place, and is only a glimpse into the love that she has for Rosaleen. Lily was excited and happy to hear that Rosaleen was going register to vote for President Lyndon Baines Johnson, who was most often referred to by the public as LBJ to distinguish him from Andrew Johnson, the Nation's 17th president.

Lily and Rosaleen's relationship is pivotal in determining what type of person Lily is, because it shows that she has feelings. She and Lily share a moment of love as she has prepared a birthday cake for Lily. Rosaleen sees Lily as a growing woman and take her in town to buy her a proper bra. A true test of the character of Lily is her reactions to problems when they present themselves. On their way into town, they were approached and harassed by three white men. Lily was held down by 2 men and had to watch as Rosaleen was beaten senseless because she chose to pour tobacco chew on his shoes for his verbal, soon to be physical harassment. Lily was held down by the other 2 men and had to watch as Rosaleen was beaten senseless and sent off to jail. Even though Lily's was not physically hurt, her psyche was heavily damaged at this point because she finds out from her father that Rosaleen

could possibly killed by the men she that she offended, negating the fact that the men targeted her. When they arrived home at their peach farm, they got into an argument, and out of built up anger over his past perpetuated the lie that her mother was only coming back to gather her belongings and to ultimately abandon Lily.

All throughout Lily's young life, the innuendo of her mother not being there bares a negative impact on her biological, psychological, and social areas of her life. Physically, she was a very beautiful young girl, but through abuse she has developed scars on her body, she seems acutely mentally instable, and developed a habit of lying and deceit in order to help herself out of the situation. In another comparison of life as a bee that she once caught in a jar, she was trapped until she made the final decision to run away and seek the questions she needed to be answered about her mother. Upon the departure of her father, Lily escapes with only a bag of items belonging to Deborah, Lily's mother. With her hopes high, she manages to get into the Colored ward of the hospital with intentions to free Rosaleen; she knew if she did not help her, that nobody would be able to deliver her the help needed to leave the hospital under police supervision. Upon sneaking out, they hitchhiked quite a ways because of a clue in her mother's items.

Deborah had written the name of a town on the back of picture of a black Virgin Mary and she hopes it will lead her to finding more information about her mother. They headed for the town of Tiburon, despite the dangers the two of them faced traveling together. Upon reaching the town, Lily seeks food for the duo and spots honey for sail with an identical image of a black Virgin Mary at the general store. After ordering her food to go, she inquires

about the label to the cashier who offers to help her. This moment, her psyche was developing a sense of hope. The cashier gives her all the information needed to get more information about her mother, restoring her faith. Lily shows signs of emotional abuse as she created up a lie in order to help herself to the next level. She arrived at Boatrite's house with Rosaleen and fabrication a lie about why she was there. This shows that she did not trust anyone but Rosaleen.

The Boatrites are welcoming for the most part to Lily, even though her story did not quite make sense. The Boatrite sisters provide food, clothing, housing, and employment for them, preparing them for a positive long-term future. Lily seems to be August Boatrite's apprentice as she was learning the trade of the family business in harvesting honey. While in the Boatrite house, Lily and Rosaleen were exposed to the spirituality they needed to help fill the emotional void left by T. Ray. The Daughters seem to be Catholic, as they prayed to a statue of the Black Virgin Mary. Lily and Rosaleen join them in prayer, and Lily faints, claiming it was the heat, when August knows she needed to be physically released from the emotional chains that held her down from soaring. The need for counseling early on is evident as she was not able to control her emotions.

In the midst of her apprenticeship she was confronted with many different feelings; Being a young adolescent she was physically developing into adulthood by getting taller and growing breast. This change causes her to blossom into a young lady and plays a factor in her develops a crush on her Negro co-worker Zach. Lily acted on her instinct to kiss Zach and they engage in a relationship and he promises her his heart, despite their race. By

this time in the movie, Lily is probably the strongest she has even been, and asks to speak with August privately about her mother while giving her the true reason for her being at the Boatrite house. She however still lacks the necessary self-control and ends of destroying the several bottles of honey in the farm house she and Rosaleen was staying at. August informs her that she believes that her mother loved her but needed to stay at the Boatrite house for refuge from T. Ray with whom she really did not love. Also they married as a result of Deborah getting pregnant with T. Ray's child. August also gives Lily some of Deborah's items that was a pin in which T. Ray gave her and a photo of Deborah holding Lily as an infant.

In a twist of fate, T. Ray showed up at the Boatright after an extensive search effort, and confronts Lily with physical abuse again by slapping her. Lily showed the most strength by restraining her feelings of hurt, and verbalizing her emotions to her father. Upon hearing the noise, the Boatrite sisters and Rosaleen introduce themselves to T. Ray and after a bit of southern hospitality he seemed to calm down. He displaced his emotion towards his wife, and projected it on to Lily all her life. Now, a much stronger person all around was able to convince her father to let her stay. She needed to know before he left that if she truly killed her mother, and if her mother truly only came back for her belongings; T. Ray's response was that Yes, she killed her mother by accident and her mother was coming back for Lily. This moment gave Lily the satisfaction she needed to fill the void of not being loved and cared for as needed by her family. You can choose your friends, but you cannot choose your family.

As family, it is assumed to be an establishment that is expected to provide for you, while giving the love necessary to create great social skills. The family structure is one that molds an individual from when they are a child and later on affects them as adults, leaving her witnessing her mother's abusive relationship most likely cause psychological trauma Lily life. Lily played rebellious behaviors she was often anxious and nervous, however determined to find love. In the article, Family Influences Related to Adult Substance Use and Mental Health Problems, predictors for mental health issues arise from a family structure conflict and family management in a child early ages 10-12, 13-14 and 15-18 is the cause of those children mental health and substance use when they are adults (Herrenkohl, Lee, Kosterman, & Hawkins, 2012).

The author suggest that child abuse such as physical, sexual, and psychological increases the risk of depression, anxiety, and substance use (Herrenkohl, Lee, Kosterman, & Hawkins, 2012, p. 129). In Lily's case she was beaten by her father and would often be punished by having to kneel on grits for at times as long as an hour leaving her psychological and physically abused. In order for her to help herself, Lily had to show rebellion. By not obeying the law of the South and harboring a fugitive, she used lying and manipulation to get her needs met and leaves a bad situation, just like her mother. With bruises on her knees, Lily's innocence had been taken from her in whom she despised her abuse so much that when offer grits by the Boatrites, she immediately refuses them and changes the subject. This exchange shows in fact shows that she recognizes a trigger object of her emotions and deflected the pain by constructively changing the topic, thus

showing the building of her shattered ego brought on by her unsatisfactory family structure.

The family structure of such relays back to whom and how the household runs, the code of conduct, which does what jobs, and whether or not the family positively interacts together effects adolescents down the road. Lily's System was made up of a cruel father, an African American Nanny, and herself at first. The System Theory developed in 1920's helps us describe the functioning of the family by stating all systems are composed of varies subsystems; however Systems Theory deals with the system as a whole and not in parts. It helps Social workers with the understanding interrelationships between different people, groups, organizations and their environments. Systems Theory assists with developing holistic, contextual, and rational view of individuals and the environment in which they live (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2011).

The social construct of the Systems Theory can be complex and is made up by different terms. The ecological perspective works a hand and hand with systems theory. The ecological perspective puts emphasis on the individual and family system. It is the context for understanding why individuals behave the way they do (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2011). Looking at System's theory and ecological perspective you can relate many of the concepts of the Theory to family conflict and its effects on Lily. Lily lacked the ability to be a child as she cooked and often took care of herself due to her father's anger and control issues. When you look at a person's mental health, you look at this person's geographical origin; how the act with others,

where they work, their economic status, and altogether that describes the type of social environment did this person come from.

In Lily's case she came from an environment of abuse and neglect. Lily's father did not engage in any activities with her, often destroying her ego by saying her mother left her and did not love her. T. Ray understood that when he brought it up that it would tear Lily apart. Lily father physically hit her grabbing her face and slapping her. Lily family had a dysfunctional family system that if she did not escape, she could have possibly been in major danger herself because abuse only escalates until you get help. Neither Lily nor her father could live functional lives once Lily's mother passed, so that interconnection that a good family system had Lily lacked. The family systems theory suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family, as the family is an emotional unit. Families are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system (GenoPro, 1998-2013).

Strengths of Family System approach is that the model is strength based focusing on the interactional view, structural view, and constructivist view (Wrench, 2009). Looking at the family system approach shows that Lily came from a dysfunction family and would have a lot more damage when she grow up if she did not begin to fill the void that was missing. It was role reversal such as Lily fixing dinner, and doing household chores as if she is the wife when she is the child. Lily father also gave her adult responsibilities at the family business while Lily should have still been enjoying childhood. In families there are roles such as mother, father, daughter and son. Each role

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also plays a major part of the family you may have the responsible one, rebellious one, or the emotional one. It is the job of the family to balance each other out and help make the family unique (Allen, 2007).

Lilly's father could not be the man of the house and play the nurturing role usually played by a mother because of the pain and anger that he held in towards his wife and daughter because she looked like Deborah. Lilly became used to her father yelling and being mean and she began to adapt to the situation. The family system also makes up of family rules as a unit. Family rules often are not spoken but it is how the family operates together. It is the way in which the family speaks to each other, how affectionate the family is, who make the decision, and how private the family is. Circular causality refers to the fact that in family systems, each family member's behavior is caused by and causes the other family members' behaviors. They are each impacting the other, in a circular manner (Allen, 2007). Lilly was left with emptiness lacking love but most importantly the love of her mother. The things that typical daughters do with their mother Lilly could not; she could not play with her mother hair or take turns doing each other's nails while exchanging conversations.

In the scene that T. Ray was told by the nanny that Lilly needed to get measured for a bra it seemed to be a very awkward sense of reality. This is usually a special time in a girl's life, but it became an event that was embarrassing. Lilly's mother being absent from her life and dad not knowing how to cope or parent resulted in an unstable life for Lilly who seemed helpless. Lilly's father was depressed and angry which led to her own depression and anger. Lilly grew up stressing each day about how else her father would

abuse her and yearning for the love and a fond memory of her mother. Lily worried daily about the fact that she was the one who killed her mother. When the movie opens Lily stated “ What I know about myself is that I killed my mother when I was four years old!” The stress she felt left her feeling abandoned by her father and mother resulting in her running away searching for love.

Freud believed that all individuals naturally find ways for their biological needs to be suited, such as finding food and creating shelter. He believes that these needs are satisfied and determined by libido or sexual pleasure (McLeod, 2008). The ego in Lily’s place has reasoning and maps out a plan to control the situation by using various techniques to get results. (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2012) Lily believed that her father did not care and love her enough to change. She developed a plan when she was frightened Roseline would be killed to find out some answers about her mother. Lily wanted nothing but to feel the void of knowing that her mother loved her and was coming to get her. Lily learned at a young age to listen to her father and not disobey him. Lily also learned that her father was not a good man and he did not practice good use of morals and ethics. Lily also used good judgment as far as when to tell the Boatrites who she was and why she was in trouble, when she did.

The superego is in control over the impulses with the id which makes the person strive for greatness to motivate overall ego (McLeod, 2008). The fundamental role of the superego is to always maintain the impulses of the id, to further keep the yearning to perform bad activities to a minimum. The superego is responsible for taming such actions society deems unlawful,

whether it is violence or a sex crime. It also is the reason that the ego is influenced through setting realistic and moral goals (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2012). System Theory was developed in 1920's to describe the functioning biological organisms. All systems are composed of various subsystems; however Systems Theory deals with the system as a whole and not in parts. It helps Social workers with the understanding interrelationships between different people, groups, organizations and their environments. Systems Theory assists with developing holistic, contextual, and rational view of individuals and the environment in which they live (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2011).

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In families there are roles such as mother, father, daughter and son. Each role also plays a major part of the family you may have the responsible one, rebellious one, or the emotional one. It is the job of the family to balance

each other out and help make the family unique. The family system also make up of family rules. Family rules often are not spoken but it is how the family operates as a unit. It is the way in which the family speaks to each other, how affectionate the family is, who make the decision, and how private the family is. Circular causality refers to the fact that in family systems, each family member's behavior is caused by and causes the other family members' behaviors. They are each impacting the other, in a circular manner (Allen, 2007). This negative energy creates an environment in which the child becomes stress. Stress is described a negative emotional reaction to the sense that one may fear or have a loss of control to meet the demands of what they may need (Glaser, 2000, p. 103).

A negative family structure creates stress in a way in which a child who is abandoned and neglected by their parents. Stressing is believed to result in health and psychological problems. The author of Child Abuse and Neglect and the Brain, (Glaser, 2000, p. 105) argues that, severe withdrawal and neglect in early childhood and exposure to parent's violence causes stress; which causes a negative reaction towards the brain at an early age. Lily lacked the ability to be a child as she cooked and often took care of herself due to her father angry and control issues. It was role reversal such as Lily fixing dinner, and doing household chores as if she is the wife when she is the child. Lily's father also gave her adult responsibilities at the family business while Lily should have still been enjoying childhood. In families there are roles such as mother, father, daughter and son. Each role also plays a major part of the family you may have the responsible one, rebellious

one, or the emotional one. It is the job of the family to balance each other out and help make the family unique (Allen, 2007).

The Family system theory approach also demonstrates that Lily family system was dysfunction resulting in the recent problem of her running away. The limitations of family system theory does not have specific hypothesis that can be tested. According to Fizatrick and Noller it is best viewed as a metaphor for thinking (Wrench, 2009). Other theorist such as Freud psychoanalytic theory offers an in-depth perspective that accentuates exploring the origins of psychopathology and considers developmental considerations (Barry, 2012). Freud's psychoanalytic theory was created of two different models to conceptualize how an individual personality is composed. One called the Topographic model which contains the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. The second would be the Structural model consists of the Id, Ego, and Superego. He believes the unconscious holds the ideas, thoughts, and memories that you are not currently aware of. The preconscious is memories that a person may not be thinking about and can be remembered in an individual's current thought (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2012).

In the movie Lily would have various dreams that would trigger negative thoughts about the day she accidentally killed her mother. Lily is uncertain what exactly happen and because she is left with that emptiness inside she had this drive that she needed to fill. It was one in Lily often has dreams that are nightmares about the death of her mother. She knows that there are some good things and have memorable from her mother where she tells stories of what she believes her mother is like. While Lily was at the

Boatrite's she was offered grits, however she said she wasn't hungry due to remembering her father making her sit on the grits. Freud's states that the unconscious mind stills exist and it suppresses itself in your mind, and waits to trigger repressed memories and manifest itself (Freud, 1987).

Developmentally, the id is the driving force behind the unconscious psyche of a person and reacts with no impulse control. It pretty much meets the instinctual needs of the individual at a moment's notice (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2012).

Freud believed that all individuals naturally find ways for their biological needs to be suited, such as finding food and creating shelter. He believes that these needs are satisfied and determined by libido or sexual pleasure (McLeod, 2008). The ego in Lily's place has reasoning and maps out a plan to control the situation by using various techniques to get results.(Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2012) Lily relieved that her father did not care and love her enough to change. She developed a plan when she was frighten Roseline would be killed to find out some answers about her mother. Lily wanted nothing but to feel the void of knowing that her mother loved her and was coming to get her. Lily learned at a young age to listen to her father and not disobey him. Lily also learned that her father was not a good man and he did not have the morals and ethics that he followed. Lily was not scared to stand up to the police officers and do what she know was right. Lily also used good judgment as far as when to tell the Boatrites who she was and why she was in trouble.

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fundamental role of the superego is to always maintain the impulses of the id, to further keep the yearning to perform bad activities to a minimum. The superego is responsible for taming such actions society deems unlawful, whether it is violence or a sex crime. It also is the reason that the ego is influenced through setting realistic and moral goals (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2012). Children are innocent when they are young unless corrupted. Lily felt like she did not have a voice for years and she held in a lot of anger. Her sense of family structure was that not built on morals and truth; the actual family structure itself is who runs house hold, are their rules and chores. Lily did not choose her family. Lily family was chosen for her. Your family is your safe haven. They are supposed to provide, nurture, love and protect you. As we know there are many family issues in America today.

The family structure is what molds an individual from when their child and effects them as adults. Lily witnessed abuse from a young age. Her mother stayed with an abusive father which psychologically caused trauma to Lily. Lily displayed rebellious behaviors, she was often anxious and nervous, however determined to find love. In the article Family Influences Related to Adult Substance Use and Mental Health Problems: A developmental Analysis of Child and Adolescent Predictors is that family conflict and family management in a child early ages 10-12, 13-14 and 15-18 is the cause of those children mental health and substance use when they are adults (Herrenkohl, Lee, Kosterman, & Hawkins, 2012). The author suggest that child abuse such as physical, sexual, and psychological increases the risk of depression, anxiety, and substance use (Herrenkohl, Lee, Kosterman, & Hawkins, 2012, p. 129). In Lily's case she was beaten by her father and

would often be punished by having to kneel on grits for long periods of time. The fact that despite the Lily was basically getting her vita physical needs met by Rosaleen. Lily had food available, cloths to wear, and a steady shelter to live in which in essence sounds like life in a prison.

Often neglecting biological, cultural, and social needs of a person can change a person's character. The character of a person is built through positive observation and interaction with others in the family structure. (Barry, 2012) This concept of mimicking refers back to the ideas brought up in the social learning theory. Its primary focus is to highlight the need for a model for positive behavior and constructive emotional reactions to happenings in the habitat. It is a type of behaviorism that includes the idea that the environment places a big portion on behavior as well. Lily's inability to find help early own was a product of her being cared after by someone who could not really care for himself.

The social learning theory focuses on the ideas that involve housing, neighborhoods, poverty levers (Abbott, 2007); with morals down in habitat, it was very hard for Lily to find the positive observational learning she needed to grow according to Freud's theory. Lily rebelled against her society and father showing that she no longer shared the innocent that young children have. Lily's prolonged forced silence made gave her the time to think to escape her bad situation. She found more family structure in 3 sisters than she had ever found in her father. The Boatrite home was built on love, morals and truth; these were everything she lacked as a child. Lily did not choose her birth family, but she chose a better family for her that made sure she was provided for, nurtured, most of all loved.

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