Childhood Experience Is Presented Negatively

I agree with the above statement to a degree as although for the most part the theme of childhood is portrayed somewhat negatively there are moments within the above novels that could be shedding a positive light on childhood experiences. In the Bluest eye childhood experience is predominately presented negatively undoubtedly due to the race and gender of the novel's protagonist Pecola. The Bluest Eye was written during the height of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, and although the narrative takes place before the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum, many of the novel's themes explore the issues blacks were fighting for during the movement. During the Civil Rights movement, another movement emerged, called the Black is Beautiful Movement. The Black is Beautiful Movement, aimed to eliminate the idea that black people's natural features, such as skin colour, facial features, and hair are inherently ugly. The movement was an effort to counteract the then prominent idea that white people were more beautiful and desirable than black people. Therefore, it is almost impossible to argue that Pecola and the other black people within the novel did not suffer from a negative childhood experience.

Also set during the civil rights movement of the 1960's The Help deals with the theme of negative childhood experience but to nowhere near the extent of "The Bluest Eye" as whilst Mae Mobley suffers the emotional neglect and sometimes the physical abuse from her mother it is definitely nowhere near the extreme of the protagonist Pecola in "The Bluest Eye" as Mae Mobley is born into a upper-class white family which gives her leverage and an advantage in life as quite frankly everything will be handed to her on a silver spoon. However you cannot help but feel sympathy from Mae Mobley as her mother emotional neglect has completely wrecked her self-image and cause her to believe she is the one at fault," Baby Girl, she looking at the door her daddy slammed, she looking at her mama frowning down at her. My baby, she swallowing it back, like she trying real hard not to cry… 'Mae Mo been bad' she say." Stokett uses the sorrowful tone to reveal the negative impact her parents refusal to acknowledge her as no more but a nuisance is having on her therefore it could be seen as a negative childhood experience. However Mae Mobley has what Pecola does not someone who believes in her ""No, baby, you ain't been bad, " I say, smoothing her hair back. "You been good. Real good." (Pg 15) Stockett's use of the affectionate language and imagery reiterates the love and care Aibileen has for Mae Mobley therefore whilst there is undoubtedly some negative attributes in Mae Mobley's childhood experience it is not always presented negatively as Aibileen's fondness and bond with her as Mae Mobley desires the approval and affection of Aibileen more than her own mother.

Similarly, to Stockett's "The Help" Pecola's negative childhood experience is also cause by the emotional and physical neglect from her mother. Pecola is the victim of an intergenerational transfer of racial self-loathing. Her mother, Pauline Breedlove rejects her because of her own self-contempt, which she counteracts in her role as an 'ideal servant'. Her children do not deserve her attention or love. In fact, she only teaches them to be afraid, "fear of life" (pg 100). Pauline has always despised her daughter. When she sees Pecola just after her birth, she remarks: "Head full of pretty hair but Lord she was ugly" (pg 98). The black woman is all caring and sweet with the Fishers' infant, the family she works for. The white girl calls her Polly, while her own daughter addresses her as Mrs. Breedlove. Pauline feels ashamed of her child and

abuses her, as when she attacks Pecola furiously when the girl accidentally spills a blueberry pie at the Fishers'. Many psychologists state how important the mother's Look is for the child's subjectivity development, since the "failure of responsiveness on the mother's part to one or other aspect of the infant's being will have important consequences" (Laing 1990: 116). The mother's Look is at the core of the child's evolving self-concept and Pecola is exposed, from her birth, to a shaming and condemning gaze. Pauline fails utterly as a mother when she distrusts Pecola's account of the first time her father rapes her. Her disbelief prevents her from protecting her daughter, who will be sexually assaulted again. It cannot be argued in my eyes that childhood is undoubtedly negative for Pecola through the doing of her mother who should be her soul protector.

Similarly, Pecola's father, Cholly, who has endured devastating and negative experiences in his childhood which also furthers my argument that childhood experience is always presented negatively within the novel as his mother left him on a trash heap as an infant, and his caretaker died when he is an adolescent. These traumatic events leave him incapable of the stereotypical fatherly behaviour. He is neglectful and abusive with his children "quote about cholly being abusive". As a disempowered oppressed individual, he victimises his own daughter " His soul seemed to slip down into his guts and fly into her, and the gigantic thrust he made into her then provoked the only sound she made—a hollow suck of air in the back of her throat. Like the rapid loss of air from a circus balloon." Morrisons use of simile of the rapidly deflating balloon is used to imply that her whole self has been instantly crushed and hollowed by the rape. This is juxtaposed with the description of Cholly's soul 'fly[ing] into her,' suggesting that all the misery and trauma of Cholly's negative childhood experience and trauma that itself originated in an act of sexual violence has been transferred to his daughter Which leaves no room for it to be argued that Pecolas childhood is definitely a negative one. In a patriarchal society, the black woman is the ultimate victim, the black man displaces his frustration and self-disgust onto her. According to Cynthia Davis, "Pecola is so far 'outside' the centre of the system —excluded from 'reality' by race, gender, class, age, and personal history"