

Culture and Identity

INTRODUCTION

The notion of “identity” refers to how people “identify” themselves at different levels, which is to a great extent determined by the cultural environment they live in. In turn, culture is manifested in different aspects of people’s lives including the way they conduct their everyday activities. The relationship between culture and identity is discussed in a series of works, such as *Everyday Use* (Walker and Christian 1994), *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (O’Connor 1993) and *The Things they Carried* (O’Brien 1990). The many-sided study presented in these books reveals the interesting aspects of the link between a culture an individual belongs to and his/her identity (Black 74-80).

DISCUSSION

As it has been clearly demonstrated in the abovementioned sources, culture plays a key role in determining people’s identities; in other words, the life style people adopt based on the peculiarities of their cultural environment influences the identities they possess. For instance, as the book *Everyday Use* (Walker and Christian 23-38) depicts, Maggie’s life in the rural area where traditions dominated over people’s individuality led to becoming very humble and honest, which was a result of the life experience she obtained at that place. In fact, she is presented as a character whose identity harmoniously absorbed the best qualities the culture and traditions encouraged. As a result, she remains a modest and very respectful girl by the end of the narration (O’Donovan 34-65).

On the other hand, as shown in the marked books, various lifestyles to a great extent affect people's perception of various phenomena they face in their everyday life. These perceptions are based on the society's values and attitudes that it has towards different things. In this way, as it is shown with the help of personalities of various characters of these three books, lifestyles and preferences help people shape their identities (Black 74-80). For example, as the story *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (O'Connor 1993) shows, the grandmother is of the opinion that imperfection should progress towards becoming perfect. These words denote that the grandmother's Christian way helped her become more social and attentive in her treatment of other people. Her choice to join the Christian way also helped her overcome many evils she could have committed. More precisely, a change from one culture to another can lead to a change of identity, which follows a consequent change of lifestyle, as it is shown in various characters in the books under consideration (O'Donovan 34-65).

The things that people use in their everyday activities also shape their identity. Besides, in the long run, engagement of people in the use of various objects that in some way help in forming their identities leads to the establishment of some values in them (Black 74-80). For instance, in the book *The Things they Carried*, things that individuals associated themselves with helped them determine their identities. As the book depicts, various characters' identities are determined by the things that have some specific meaning to them and are appreciated higher than the other objects. For example, the poncho of the character, Ted, was a thing that was strongly associated with him: it was impossible to imagine Ted not wearing it; it was even used later by his fellow soldiers to carry his dead body (O'Brien 6).

CONCLUSION

Culture – both material and non-material – affects people's lives through shaping and changing their identities. In this regard, it can be argued that culture and identity are inseparable.

Works Cited

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