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The impact on identity from one’s environment

Have you ever felt persuaded to change your own identity based on your environment? In *Lullabies for little criminals* by Heather O’Neill, we meet a young twelve-year-old girl named Baby. She struggles to find an identity outside the shifty environment in which her deadbeat drug addict dad raised her in. Baby struggles with the pressure of drugs and prostitution in her life. She is a naïve young girl who is not ready to make decisions on her own. In Garth Davis *Lion* we encounter a five-year-old boy by the name of Saroo, who gets lost on a train that takes him thousands of miles away from his home and family. Saroo is forced to survive alone in Kolkata, before being adopted and taken to Australia. Many years later Saroo is determined to find his lost family, while only having his memories to guide him along the way. This article titled *Separation anxiety; Immigration* from the Economist talks about how families are being separated because of immigration, and how people are being affected by being rejected from the states and being forced to live in their countries of origin. In *Teacher’s Reward* by Robert Phillips, a young boy by the name of Raybe Simpson seeks revenge on a teacher who made his school experience bad because she constantly blamed him for things that other students did, which made him a victim for her abuse. Raybe had blamed her for many things in his life, after all the time he had spent in prison he had a long time to think about where his life went wrong and it all came back to her. All these sources can be connected to the thesis in many ways. Lullabies demonstrates to us that we can have a force identity that can be born into us by our surroundings. Differently in Lion we see how being placed in an unknown environment can impact your identity and make you change. Similarly, in the article from the Economist we see firsthand how immigration and loss of family can affect one’s identity. In a Teachers Reward we see how being in a forced environment can impact your mindset. Our environment impacts our mental and physical identity because we get pressured, we become followers, and change can persuade us.

Very often we are pressured into falling into the negative impact of our environment. We can see an example of this in the book *Lullabies for little criminals* by Heather O’Neill, when Baby a young 12-year-old girl is being affected by the drugs and street life that surrounds her. Baby began to have an identity that was being born into her because she didn’t have a choice to grow up in a community with all these negative influences including the biggest one being her father. Her father Jules introduced the idea of drugs into her life very early. “*Jules had been calling heroin chocolate milk for years*” (p.10, O’Neill), we can tell from this that even though Jules had tried to hide the influence of drugs into Baby’s life she was still aware of what was going on. Baby’s mentality about drugs and prostitution had completely been pressured because in her community it was normal, and it was looked at in a good way and not a bad one. The physical pressure of her environment was starting to get to her, drugs began to swim through her veins and started to control her body and her thoughts. The Baby we once knew was no more because she had finally let the pressure of others start to control her life. We can tell that her environment had not only affected her, but it had also affected the other kids growing up there. Baby didn’t think prostitution was a bad thing, she gazed over the amount of money that kids were making from this, demonstrated when her friend Marika mentioned “*I had sex with a man for fifty bucks*” (pg.16, O’Neill), and this left Baby considering doing it to get a bit of extra cash. A man named Alphonse that Baby had met was the one who made her start to do prostitution and after Baby started doing this, we can see that she physically didn’t feel the same because now her body was more of an object to her instead of something special. “*It had to be done and money was money*” (p.220, O’Neill), baby didn’t care what she had to do with who, as long as she got paid for it. Our environments pressure us to fall into the trap of following others bad decisions but it’s our choice weather to follow them or not.

We are thrown into situations that we aren’t necessarily used to, and we learn to adapt to these new experiences. In the movie *Lion* by Garth Davis we encounter a five-year-old boy by the name of Saroo who is lost far from home. Saroo learns to adapt and survive in a place named Kolkata that he’s never been to. Among his long journey Saroo begins to lose his identity and starts to forget about who he is. Before being adopted and taken to Australia, Saroo began to lose hope of ever being with his family ever again. While in this new environment that he was adopted into he learns many new things like electronics and objects that he never knew before, the mother had to teach him that “*a television is pictures on a screen*”(Davis,47:40) because he had never seen one before. Saroo’s identity had now gained another side to it because while being introduced to many new things “he knew everything” (Davis,1h 10) within his new environment but he never truly forgot where he came from, he constantly thinks about “his mother and brother who are non-stop looking for him” (Davis, 1h 15:50). We see that many years later the idea of finding his family had been pushed away and that he started to give up on ever seeing them again because he had been so involved and used to his new surroundings that he had been starting to forget his true home and life back in his small village. We see that the identity and environment that Saroo was so set on returning to was now being forgotten and overpowered by his new life in Australia. While Saroo is on the mission to find the missing piece of him we cannot deny that physically he has been influenced by being away from India. His environment has persuaded him into changing his looks, like his clothing style, physical stature and even accent. A big impact on Saroo’s identity is his language because when he lived in India he only “*spoke Hindi*” (Davis, 24:32) and didn’t speak a word of English and once he returns to his village after many years we can see that it’s the complete opposite and now Saroo’s lost that side of him and can no longer communicate with his family. This shows that when you’re placed away from your normal surroundings you adapt to new things and sometimes that makes you forget your past. We can see that new environments impact our thoughts and identity because we intake new information and learn new perspectives.

When being forced to adapt to new changes we can experience trauma that can alter our identities. Demonstrated in this article titled *Separation anxiety; Immigration* from the Economist, we see that families are going through difficulty because they are being separated and their communities are being torn apart. Being taken away from their homes as well as being rejected from living a new life in a safer environment with greater opportunities. Taking away people’s chances at having a better life can mentally impact them and make them believe that change within their situations will never occur and that they will be stuck with their day to day lives. This article talks a lot about how global leaders are using people as pons because they are “*separating of children”* (Economist) from their family and homes. Knowing that, parents would never leave their child behind and that they will go back to their country to stay together, as proven when the article talks about “*the White House's approach, which resulted in 2,342 children being separated from their families last month*” (Economist). Our identities can be impacted by where we are living and where our opportunities lie. This article demonstrates that when we are influenced by things like immigration, we gain new worries which can cause anxiety and mental disorders. People who were once immigrants can experience trauma later in their lives that can show itself in many different forms. For example, people might be afraid to start families because they don’t ever want to relive the feeling of losing someone very close and important. Trauma can also be caused because people will never be at ease knowing that they aren’t necessarily welcome because their new environment is “*cruel and racist*” (Economist). When we’re forced to leave the things that mean the most to us behind, we get trauma that will never be forgotten.

In life main events can shape our outlooks on life and alter our realities. In *A teacher’s reward* by Robert Phillips a boy named Raybe Simpson becomes a victim of violence from his third-grade teacher Miss Scofield, she “*used to rap his knuckles with a ruler*” (Phillips, pg.1). Raybe believes that his teacher is responsible for all the things that have gone wrong in his life because she would always blame him for everything and made him think he “*deserve it”* (Phillips, pg.6)”. After graduating high school Raybe had "*gone to prison*" (Phillips, pg.6) which gave him a lot of time to think about his life, while being contained to only his thoughts, Raybe’s mindset about his bad high school experience and his poor decisions in life had now a source of blame that he could refer to. Being in a contained environment made Raybe’s sense of decision making unclear. He was forcing himself to find an outlet to blame his life on and for him that outlet was his third-grade teacher. Being in a prison environment affected Raybe because it made him think more violently and more physical than he would have if he never went. Prison changed the mindset of Raybe and his thoughts on Miss Scofield, as we can tell when he mentions that "*she should try staying behind those walls for ten years and see if you think it's a joke*"(Phillips, Pg.6), we can tell that he became very serious about how prison affected him mentally. After all the time he had spent in prison he had a long time to think about where his life went wrong and it all came back to her. We often get pressured on placing our blame on other people but it’s our choice weather we let other actions affect us.

After reading and listening to all these sources it is safe to say that our environments have a huge impact on our identities because without knowing it, we change based on the pressures that surround us. We see that being placed into a negative space can make bad habits control our lives, and that when your placed in unknown surroundings you must adapt to survive even if that means leaving family in the past. We encounter rare situations in life that can cause us to have trauma and make us want to blame others, but it’s placed into our control weather we take action or leave it. Weather or not we realize it we are gravely affected by our environment and the communities we place ourselves in, because everyone holds different opportunities and lives different lives, but we easily get persuaded by the pressure our others and our surroundings.

**CITATIONS-**

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