

*Navigating conflict shapes an individual's identity and their relationship with others.*

Navigating conflict is an inevitable part of human life that is complex and different for every individual; it may have positive or negative connotations on an individual's identity and the way they relate to others. The amount of influence conflict has on shaping an individual's identity and relationship with others may also depend on how an individual chooses to navigate their conflict. Shakespeare's Elizabethan play *The Taming of the Shrew* and Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* explore the impacts of conflict on individuals, not necessarily negatively but how experiences in conflict can empower an individual by giving them a stronger sense of identity. The two texts also explore how conflict may form strengthen relationships and how a person's navigational strategies may differ depending on values of their context but that ultimately, an individual's experience in navigating conflict will always affect one's identity and relationship with others.

An individual's identity and ability to navigate conflict may interrelate; society's views of an individual shapes the individual's view of themselves which in turn affects the individual's navigational strategies. Katherina in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is perceived as a "devil" and "fiend from hell" by men for her outspoken personality while her sister Bianca is regarded as "sweet Bianca" and "jewel". The juxtaposition between the two sisters reveal Shakespeare's intention to expose and challenge the ideal behaviour of women in the Elizabethan era as submissive and inferior to men. Petruchio's intentions to tame Katherine into the ideal wife dehumanizes her as he metaphorically refers to Katherine as "my falcon", illustrating his dominance in the relationship and ability to shape her identity. Katherine's response to Petruchio's attempt to tame her initially reflect society's view of her as a "shrew", resorting to verbal and physical means. However, as Katherine learns from her experiences, she announces in her final speech that "a woman moved is like a fountain troubled." The simile may at first imply that Katherine has conformed to society's expectations of an obedient wife, but Shakespeare has cleverly integrated another meaning; water is flexible and a necessity that men can't live without. Thus, at the end of the play, Katherine's experiences in conflict has allowed her to navigate her conflict in a way that empowers her identity as a woman.

Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* also explores men's dominance and the role of women established by the Taliban. The identity of individuals can often be shaped by society's beliefs which may affect their navigational strategies; men often believe that physical violence is the way to assert their dominance. The two female protagonists of the novel, Mariam and Laila, are brought up with different values and beliefs ingrained into them by their family. Mariam is repetitively called by her mother as a "harami" (bastard) and a "burden" which leads to Mariam growing up believing that it is part of her identity. However, Laila is born into a loving and supportive family who tells her that "when this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men." Hosseini creates the contrast between the two characters in order to reveal that the way an individual's identity has been shaped can affect their navigational strategies. Laila believes in standing up for herself in order to regain power and equality for women in society, evident when she stands up for Mariam who says "nobody's ever stood up for me before". Laila eventually makes Mariam realize her identity and importance as a woman which therefore reveals that a person's understanding of their identity is shaped by the people they're surrounded by, and experiences in conflict can lead to discovery of one's true identity.

Furthermore, Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* explores the interrelation between an individual's navigational strategies and the strengthening of a relationship with another. Katherina's conflict arises when she is forced to marry Petruchio where a relationship of constant disagreement is formed. Katherina in the relationship is deemed as a commodity which Petruchio "will be master of what is mine own" and lists as "my horse, my ox, my ass, my anything." Katherina's initial response to the conflict by attempting to reassert her dominance "my tongue will tell the anger of my heart" does not improve the relationship with Petruchio until she eventually is able to play along with Petruchio's game. By agreeing to whatever Petruchio says, "What you will have it named, even that it is, and so it shall be so for Katherine", Katherina finds that she is finally able to get whatever she wants. Katherina has found that by playing along with Petruchio's rules she is able to overcome her conflict which strengthens her relationship with Petruchio evident through the stage direction "she kisses him" openly showing her affection. Petruchio also calls her "my sweet Kate" for the first time with a tone of sincerity. It is through their experiences with conflict that Katherina and Petruchio are able to finally learn to navigate their conflict with a strategy that finally unites them together.

Similarly, conflict enables new relationships to form within individuals who are experiencing similar conflict, allowing them to consolidate and take comfort in each other to endure through conflict. The nature of Laila and Mariam's relationship is at first a resentful one with spiteful exchanges between the two in which Mariam calls her "a whore...a thieving whore, that's what you are!" in their first fight. Name-calling becomes a strategy for both characters to target their grief and anger inside, revealing how conflict can isolate individuals. Interestingly, Hosseini develops the relationship between the two characters into a relationship of camaraderie and consolation where Mariam finally finds "the first true connection in her life of false, failed connections." Mariam's feelings represent the symbiotic relationship between her and Laila which drives Mariam's willingness to kill their husband in order to save Laila from getting killed. Mariam's dialogue "I meant it, I meant it for you, Laila jo." reveals her readiness to sacrifice herself to the Taliban in order for Laila to be able to live her life freely. Their inseparable connections remains even after Mariam's death through the symbolism "Mariam is in Laila's own heart, where she shines with the bursting radiance of a thousand suns." Hence, Hosseini reveals how conflict can unite individuals where the relationship formed provides resilience and motivation which help the individuals overcome conflict.

Ultimately, the two texts reveal that when navigating conflict, context and values of society can shape an individual's identity and affect their navigational strategies. Conflict also does not always have negative connotations, but may positively build and strengthen relationships within individuals which motivate them to persist and successfully navigate through conflict.