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Language and Literature

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Why Family Impacts Identity

Do you recall Azula's cunning character from *Avatar the Last Airbender*? Azula's family has shaped her identity. She couldn't run to her mother for help and her father is demented. Family impacts the identity of a character. In *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis, the families of Parvana and Shauzia proved to be a salient element that impacted their identities.

Parvana's family had a positive influence that helped structure her identity in various, distinct ways. Parvana's family gradually reduced to poverty and a family member died young. Even though they experienced many grievances together, because they have each other, they were able to move forward and continue to pick each other up. When father gets taken away to prison, Parvana and her mother had a great deal of courage to go up to the guards and beseech his freedom. They came back unsuccessful, and Parvana's mom lost hope. However, Parvana did not, and over time, she was able to recover with the help of Parvana and Nooria.

The influence of Parvana's family also shaped her personality. She reflects an empathetic, risk taker, with a strong will. When she put her safety on the line by becoming a boy, it reflects her taking risks to provide for family. In chapter 7, Parvana made contact with a Taliban soldier. She appeared empathetic towards his sorrow for his wife who passed away. On page 74, it mentions, "Up until then, she had seen Talibs only as men who beat women and arrested her father." She felt astounded by the encounter. It made her see the Taliban as humans with emotions. She displays strong will towards the conclusion of the book. Her family has

become so important to her that she can not feel at peace unless her family's guaranteed safety. Again, she takes a huge risk and leaves her home to search for her family.

Contrary to Parvana, Shauzia's family impacted her identity negatively. We do not get to see much of Shauzia's family, but from what we do know about them, it makes the reader get an idea on why Shauzia acts the way she does. She stated that disruption takes place frequently in her home. She can't go to them for emotional support or comfort. If conflict became common in my home, it would cause me a load of grief and pain as well. Shauzia does not show a lot of empathy and seems to fight mainly for herself. She doesn't give her all to support her family and even hides money from them so she can pay to get out of Afghanistan. When Parvana and Shauzia were excavating up bones, she was very enthusiastic about the fact that she would make money. It seems unethical. Those people departed in such a horrible way, they do not get proper graves, and now others use their remains in exchange for money. She was willing to abandon her home, her family, so easily to save herself, something Parvana could never do. Shauzia does not have a well grounded relationship with her family so when she thought of moving away, she did not even think of a way to help them.

A clear discrepancy between Shauzia and Parvana's identities exist because of their families. We live with our families and that will affect us one way or another. Our current situation in quarantine makes us constantly under their influence.