

In exploring the  
notion of belonging,  
texts reveal the  
influence of identity  
and ...

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



In exploring the notion of belonging, texts reveal the influence of identity and values. An individual's sense of belonging is determined by their relationships with others and their ability to maintain their own strong values and morals whilst conforming to the requirements of the group. Those who refuse to compromise their values for the broader community may find themselves isolated, which in turn may affect their identity. In Shakespeare's tragi-comic play *As You Like It*, the characters form unusual relationships in an alternative environment enabling their true values and morals to be revealed and furthering the development of their identity. In David Frankel's film *The Devil Wears Prada* we see the refreshing nature of displacement from one's natural environment and how following this alternate path exposes the challenges to one's identity. Ultimately, both texts reflect the powerful impact of context on forming value driven relationships, resulting in changes to one's identity and values. An individual's relationship with others impacts upon their ability to belong, revealing the powerful role of values when appealing to the requirements of the group. Some people choose to define themselves through individuality, while others require the presence of others in order to belong. Shakespeare cleverly contrasts the familial relationships between Oliver and Orlando in comparison with Rosalind and Celia in his play *As You Like It*. The strong connection between Rosalind and Celia condemns them into banishment where the allusion to an impregnable bond is formed, "Dearer than the natural bonds of sisters." Their predicament is then juxtaposed with the disconnection between the brothers of Oliver and Orlando, which was created by the mistreatment and inequality experienced through primogeniture. Through emotive language Orlando

enforces how "the horses are better bred" than him, alluding to animalistic treatment of him by his brother Oliver. It is Rosalind and Celia's choice to depend on each other and therefore follow one another into banishment, when Celia claims through hyperbole she "cannot live out of her company." However, in comparison Orlando chooses to be true to his values seeking individuality and independence from his negative relationships with Oliver. His destructive relationship with Oliver is due to a power imbalance and pure greed, driving Oliver's actions. Orlando exposes Oliver's mistreatment through the bold statement "I will no longer injure it," foreshadowing future uprisings and further conflict in the play, before peace can be restored. The play reveals how the relationships between people can shape an individual's idea of themselves, affecting their ability to belong, whether belonging is gained through the positive connections or through the withdrawal from negative experiences. While place can nourish an individual's sense of belonging, it is dependent on one's values and relationships to determine which environment one chooses to connect with. Frankel's film *The Devil Wears Prada* develops two opposing settings, Andy's personal life based around family and friends, such as homely Nate, in comparison to the elite fashion magazine *Runway*, whose editor in chief Miranda lives a more sophisticated life. In the scene following Andy's arrival, her naivety leads her to question "who is Miranda?" in an innocent and unknowing tone, highlighting her ignorance of the fashion world. Andy's personal values of justice continue to question the ethics and morals of the company when she smirks at the superficiality and triviality of Miranda and Nigel's model preparations for the magazine. The Mid-shot with an eye level camera angle

juxtaposed with the immediate full length body image to highlight Andy's lack of appreciation for physical appearance, suggests Andy seeks importance in her personal values and morals rather than from looks. Similarly to Rosalind, Andy relies on her values and morals in an environment where she is isolated and alienated, in order to seek a sense of belonging. Andy's initially strong relationship with Nate too determines which environment she chooses to connect with. Andy shows how her priorities change when she forms a flirtatious bond with Christian and misses Nate's birthday. Nigel foreshadows "when your life goes up in smoke it's time for a promotion" supporting the shallow ideas promoted by the fashion industry. The cake's candles are blown out and the smoke rises exposing Andy's sacrifice of her relationship in order to belong to her chosen environment. Thus, one's values and relationships can have both a destructive and enriching effect on an individual's sense of belonging to place — although Andy loses her connection to home and Nate, she gains one with Miranda and the Runway magazine. A connection to place enriches an individual's sense of self, which can be altered or affected by the harsh realities of their current environment. As You Like It creates two alternative settings with the play, the "envious court" with the personification of the court to convey its hostility and the "Forest of Arden," as a romantic idealized setting. When Rosalind is living in the court, she is deprived of her knowledge and perceived with lesser importance through the alliteration of "bountiful blind woman," confirming that the world is unfair. juxtaposed when she is banished to the Forest of Arden, where she has to sacrifice her identity as a woman and disguise herself as "Ganymede", she is able to expose her true

morals and values. Similarly, the court conveys its hostility when the alliteration and plosive " p" in " painted Pomp" emphasizes the harshness of the court, is contrasted with Duke Senior's rhetorical question " are not these woods more free from peril than the envious court?" Illustrated as a place of nurturing, healing and change, the forest is shown through the courteous tone Oliver uses when he says " Good morrow fair ones." Thus, it was truly the forest that encouraged this sense of renewal and enlightened him upon his developed identity. With the accumulation and onomatopoeia cleverly showcases that Duke Senior feels secure in himself and his environment when he states " tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything." Ultimately, an environment can both enrich and challenge one's sense of belonging, yet overall it will formulate an individual's identity through the changing of morals and values. An act of displacement from the individual's homely environment can expose one's dynamic identity and varied sense of belonging. When protagonist Andy is displaced from her natural, everyday life and directed to work as Miranda Priestley's assistant, her changing identity greatly impacts on her sense of belonging within the environment. Andy tolerates Miranda's humiliating treatment in the hope of receiving a job as a reporter or writer somewhere more prestigious. The photo montage of Andy's new and fashionable clothing suggests she compromises her integrity and values in order to gain experience and a reputation at Runway, evident when Andy forgoes her former values for shallower, superficial ones, related to fashion and sex appeal. Antagonist Miranda represents values of superficiality and ruthlessness when she exclaims " you have no style or sense of fashion"

preclude love and happiness as the key values of human existence.

However, Miranda's influence on Andy can encourage her to choose to align herself with values that do not represent her true identity, such as love, family and personal life. When Andy's true values are juxtaposed with what Miranda has to offer, which means being lonely and isolated, Andy is forced to re-engage with her original values and rekindle her relationship with Nate, re-establish her familial and personal connections, which ultimately convey her real identity. Ultimately, the film reveals how the consequences of displacement can affect an individual's connection to their environment, forcing the realisation of an unrealistic identity, encouraged by negative experiences.