Overview

*Everyday Use* shows that valuing one’s own sense of self and individuality proves to be more fulfilling than society’s expectations. This is demonstrated in the final scenes of the story when Maggie no longer compares herself to her sister and learns to appreciate the traditions and culture she was raised in. Patricia Hill Collins makes the argument that skin color privileges people who are white; however, *Everyday Use* makes the argument that although Dee is of African American ethnicity, it is her willingness to conform and hide who she really is that allows her to become an active member of society.

This thesis is sound because my first and second sentences introduce the idea that learning to accept one’s self for who they truly are is more important than trying to live up to societal expectations. My thesis reiterates the ideas presented in the first and second sentences while using them to make a claim about Dee’s character in the text.

Outline

1. Dee represents society’s expectation of a young woman and the standard that Maggie and her mother are being compared to and encouraged to conform to.

* This paragraph will talk about the harshness of societies’ expectations of women and the toll it takes on the individual, Maggie, who does not “measure up” to these expectations in the eyes of society or Dee.
2. In order to become a recognized member of society Dee is forced to conceal her cultural identity so she can leave it all behind her and make something of her life.

* This paragraph will demonstrate how Dee chose to value society’s ideals instead of creating her own and compromises who she is just to fit in. This paragraph will also talk about how Dee uses her beauty and outward appearance of being a “civilized” individual to get what she wants, like a husband and a life apart from the environment she grew up in.

3. The end of the story gives readers the impression that there is no place in society for masculine women which becomes clear when Maggie and her mother refuse to change their ways and succumb to society’s standards even though this labels them in society’s eyes, and in Dee’s opinion, as “uncivilized” and “irresponsible”.

* This paragraph further demonstrates that women in this story are having an identity crisis, especially women who have more cultural backgrounds. This story proves that non-white women have no definite place in society, and this story supports the idea that non-white women are considered to be outcasts and too irresponsible to be active and successful members of society.

Secondary Sources

Abstract:

This article brings to light many of the stereotypes surrounding women of various races including Latina and African American women. The article describes how white people view many women and their lifestyle choices as living off of welfare, food stamps, and free housing. In addition, these women are stereotyped as being too irresponsible to make their own choices regarding the health or reproductive aspects of their family or themselves.

**Relating to my Paper:**

I will use this article to incorporate some of the stereotypes about women of different races and tie that how these women are staying true to their culture and the way they were raised much like how Maggie and her mother are choosing to live their lives. I will also explain that since Dee has reinvented herself she is beginning to think these things about her family and stereotype them the same way white people do.

**Abstract:**


Patricia Hill Collins makes the argument in this article that being of the white race automatically gives individuals of the white race privileges. White people experience these privileges everyday but do not realize it because we were born into this type of lifestyle and Collins claims that we are unable to realize how life would be for someone not of the white race. She lists off many privileges that we take advantage everyday and it is these privileges that people outside the white race are denied of which make their lives more difficult and make them feel inferior to the white race.

**Relating to my paper:**
I would like to include that many of the privileges denied to non-white people Dee works very hard to achieve herself even though it means erasing her past and culture. I would also talk about the necessities that are being denied to Maggie and her mother but because of the way they are raised they are pretty ambivalent to these things or ideas. I also want to include some of the privileges that Collins mentions in her article.

Abstract:

Marilyn Frye outlines the various institutions that cause people to become oppressed. This includes the educational system, the government, church or religious affiliations, and sometimes society itself and the expectations in impresses upon the members of that society. Also another important point she brings up is that women are often the ones being oppressed and are the ones often responsible for making other women feel oppressed.

Relating to Paper:
I think it is really important to talk about oppression of women in this paper because the main characters of this story are African American women who are oppressed by society and are often forced to conform to societal norms.

Abstract:

Matthew Mullins explains how the African Americans were coping with living in an oppressive society while analyzing Dee’s character. He makes the claim that since going away to school
Dee has become more of a spectator of her culture and heritage rather than being a member of her cultural community or family. Dee has reinvented herself to be a strong independent black woman who is a trail blazer and aims to make something of herself while creating her own identity. Although she means well, Mullins begins to wonder why Dee is such an unlikable character; against all odds Dee aims to do something with her life in a society that expects black women to conform.

**Relating to thesis:**

I can use this article to talk more about Dee’s rejecting of her culture and mull over why readers feel inclined to dislike Dee. There is an interesting contrast brought up in this article about her being unlikable for objectifying her family while also being a strong independent black woman who aims to make something of her life and I think this would be interesting to explore.

**Abstract:**


Joe Sarnowski focuses on Dee and how she claims to have a deep understanding of her culture but is very distant with her heritage and culture. After going away to school and reinventing herself her family becomes the only connection she has with her heritage. Dee is very disconnected with the culture she was raised in which is shown when she changes her name. Her name then becomes another artifact she is able to display or tell people about if she ever chooses to regain her cultural connection.

**Relating to thesis:**
This article will help me to explain the new way in which Dee views her family and the culture she grew up in. This article also clarifies that Dee has reinvented herself but in doing so has also lost or hidden a crucial part of who she is but by doing this she has become a more active member of society.