

TURNER'S EVALUATION OF JULIET'S SELF-CATEGORIZATION: A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyses the character of Juliet from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) through the lens of Turner's Self-categorization Theory, focusing on transformation of her identity. The method of data collection of this research is qualitative method. The study finds that initially, Juliet's personal identity as an obedient daughter aligns with her social identity as a submissive individual of an inferior social group. However, her romantic involvement with Romeo initiates a shift in her personal identity. She develops into a courageous individual determined to control her own fate and her personal identity becomes salient over her social identity. By steadfastly asserting her personal identity, Juliet's actions begin to conflict with the rigid norms dictated by her social group. Moreover, Juliet is unable to undergo the process of depersonalization—where she would conform her personal identity to group norms—plays a critical role in her character development and the tragic events that ensue. Hence, the integration of Turner's Self-categorization in this study provides a deeper understanding of the socio-psychological processes underlying Juliet's identity conflict.

Keywords: Juliet, Self-categorization, social-psychological, personal identity, social identity, depersonalization

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Romeo and Juliet (1965) is one of the Shakespeare's famous tragic plays that reflect the societal condition of its time i.e. Elizabethan era. The play mainly revolves around the romantic love between the two protagonists Romeo and Juliet who belong to the families of the Montagues and Capulets. There is deep animosity between these families and they are against the marriage of the two young lovers while their love becomes a dominant force which surpasses familial loyalties and societal restrictions. Hence, the lovers, especially Juliet being a woman of the male-centric Elizabethan society has to fight against her family, friends and the conventionally oppressive societal norms.

This shows that along with love and conflict, Shakespeare presents the theme of identity as well which is the subject of this study. It aims to analyze Juliet's character from the lens of John Turner's Self-categorization theory, focusing on her profound identity transformation. Turner's Self-categorization is an essential aspect of Social Identity Theory from socio-psychological domain. The theory posits that individuals categorize themselves into two different levels of identity i.e. personal and social identity. When individuals align their behaviours and actions with the norms of their social group, their identities are in accordance with each other and they undergo the process of depersonalization. However, the theory emphasizes identity salience, suggesting that if both the identities are in conflict with each other,

the most contextually relevant identity will dominate an individual's behaviour.

Thus, it can be said that in the play, the real cause of tragedy does not spring only from the personalities and tragic flaws of the protagonists but rather the external societal forces also play a crucial part. It is truer in the case of Juliet because Romeo's autonomy is recognized by the society and he does not have to fight for it. While Juliet undergoes a clash between her personal identity as a capable individual, willing to take risks for her love and her social identity as a woman of a society which does not recognize her independent self. If her parents and society at large has considered her a free individual, she would have married Romeo and the disastrous consequences would not have taken place.

By analysing Juliet's identity transition from a compliant individual to a courageous woman, in the light of Turner's Self-categorization theory, this study seeks to provide insight into the complex interplay between her personal and social identities, her reluctance to undergo depersonalization which places her outside the boundaries of her social group and challenges the strict social structures of Verona. Consequently, by examining the psychological and sociological aspects of Juliet's character, her actions and decisions, the paper adds to the social-psychological interpretation of the play and aims to contribute to a richer understanding of Shakespeare's work.

1.2. Problem Statement

The present paper is a social-psychological analysis of Juliet's character from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) in the light of Turner's theory of Self-categorization. Set in Verona, where societal norms dictated strict obedience to family and patriarchal authority, Juliet's journey from a compliant daughter to an independent young woman mirrors the tension between her personal identity and social expectations that comes with her social identity. The drama's unfolding events—her secret love for Romeo, defiance of her parents' wishes, and ultimate decision to take control of her fate—reflect Juliet's transformation from a dutiful daughter to a self-reliant individual.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

- 1- To examine the initial harmony between Juliet's personal identity and social identity in the play *Romeo and Juliet*.
- 2- To analyse the conflict between Juliet's transforming identities and the norms of her social group.

1.4. Research Questions

- 1- How does Juliet's initial personal identity align with her social identity in the play *Romeo and Juliet*?
- 2- How does Juliet's transforming identities conflict with the norms of her social group?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study contributes to a deeper literary analysis by offering insights into the connection between classical literature and modern social psychology. The research also contributes to the field of social psychology by highlighting how its theories can be applied to analyse the social dynamics and psychological mechanisms behind character development within a literary work. Furthermore, the study provides a valuable framework for discussion of the complex interrelation between identity and societal influence and sheds light on the continued relevance of classical literature in contemporary discussion of identity crisis.

2- LITERATURE REVIEW

Zhang (2017) analyses the characters of Romeo and Juliet from the perspective of humanism. Through his study, Zhang found out that the developing characters of Romeo and Juliet are the embodiment of Shakespeare's humanistic mindset because in the play they transform from innocent and naïve to brave individuals who stood up against the society. Even their death proved a sacrifice for the dissolution of the old feud between the two families and promoted welfare between them.

Sinta & Ambalegin (2020) in their paper analyse the character of Juliet in the light of Simone de Beauvoir and Sylvia Walby's theory of feminism to highlight her struggle against the patriarchal society. The study highlighted that Juliet was a victim of the male-dominated society. Her father was forcing her to marry the man that he had selected for her. She was treated as an object to be exchanged in marriage and contested by men.

Kottman (2012) underscores that *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) is not only a love story of two individuals who want to be together but are separated by the societal forces. Rather, the study points out that the protagonists' self-realization and freedom clashes with the rigid societal boundaries and gives the play a tragic structure. In a similar vein, Yi (2015) concluded that *Romeo and Juliet*, is a play about idealistic metaphysical love that cannot be realized in the material world because of the hostile environment surrounding the protagonists.

Alizadeh & Ghaffary (2022) utilizes Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, to define Lacan's contribution to the philosophy of love by providing an analysis of the idea of love in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) and its relationship to the Lacanian conceptions of desire, subjectivity, fantasy, the Real, and death. They found out that Lacanian concepts, such as object petit a, and the Symbolic, illuminate aspects of *Romeo and Juliet*'s love, leading them to know that neither of them can understand what the other desires, and what they believe they themselves desire is merely an illusive construct of their own fantasies.

Similarly, Rini (2012) in her paper examined the structural components and the main character's personality development from a psychoanalytic perspective Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The structural analysis makes it clear that Shakespeare intended for this drama to convey the idea that love can be fatal and that adolescent love is naïve. Based on the psychological study, it reveals that *Romeo and Juliet*, possess traits like naïve emotion, a strong sense of affection and tenderness that guide their actions and culminated in tragic ending of their lives.

Nani (2013) in her study determines whether aspects of the self-concept are upheld by the main character in Zara Zetira ZR's novel *Every Silence has a Story*, as well as how the self-concept is used throughout the narrative. Bracken's theory of Self-concept is employed to analyse the six components of the main character's self-concept. The identified aspects are social, competence, affect, academic, physical and family adherence of the main character of the novel.

The above review and analysis of the relevant existing literature shows that Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) has been researched from various perspective such as humanism, feminism,

psychoanalytic etc. The present study analyses the character of Juliet from a social-psychological lens of Turner's Self-categorization. From the presented review, it can be observed that this study proves to be a new approach towards the play. It aims to increase the play's interpretation while focusing on the social-psychological mechanism behind Juliet's character development.

3-RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Theoretical Framework

3.1.1. John Turner's Theory of Self-Categorization

Human beings assign social categories to both themselves and other people. In other words, people are naturally divided into groups based on designated categories (like gender or ethnicity), attained states (like political affiliation or occupation), and other pertinent factors. Social categorization is important because it guides people through a social world that is characterized by hierarchies and group distinctions, but it also serves as the foundation for harmful social stereotypes (Tajfel, 1969).

Theory of Self-categorization is a theory in social psychology proposed by John Turner, a social psychologist, in 1980s and 1990s. The theory is a constituent part of social identity approach. At the heart of a social identity approach is the social identity construct itself, defined as "those aspects of a person's self-concept based upon their group member ships" (Turner & Oakes, 1986, p. 240). According to Turner et al. (1987), a person's Self-categorization is a part of their self-concept, which is the set of cognitive images of themselves. To be more precise, Self-categorization is the mental assembly of oneself and others. People who belong to one category as "us", as opposed to people who belong to another category "them".

People thus see themselves in a multifaceted manner—in terms that are both idiosyncratic (i.e., a personal identity), as well as collectively shared (i.e., a social identity). Individual minds become interdependent when social identities are salient and, conversely, collective influence can be diminished when only personal identities are at stake. In this manner, people act as individuals or as group members and Self-categorization theory endeavors to explain the circumstances that shift people along this continuum of identification, as

well as some of the consequences of these shifts (Turner & Oakes, 1986).

Additionally, the theory distinguishes between social and personal identity as two distinct levels of Self-categorization. It also clarifies how Self-categorization and self-perception changes from a personal to a social identity depending on the social setting. The perceiver has behavioral and cognitive flexibility due to the variability of Self-categorization, which also guarantees that cognition is always shaped by the social context in which it takes place (Turner et al., 1994).

Here, the phrase personal identity refers to self-categories that characterize a person as distinct from other (ingroup) people in terms of their individual differences. Social categorizations of oneself and others are referred to as social identities. Thus, social identity describes the collective social categorical identity that is shared by all members of the group (Turner et al., 1994). Moreover, Self-categorization theory posits that a person's decision to classify themselves under a collective category (group) relies on how relevant that category is at the time (Turner, 1999). It means that how much a group member's membership influences their social perception and behavior in a particular setting as well as how much they perceive themselves as different from and similar to other group members (Turner, 1999). It is also important to emphasize that a person's values -and in turn identities- are mediated by society, influenced by relevant social processes, and subject to change

Shifts in how one classifies oneself and others, as well as group-based assessments of oneself and others (such as stereotyping), demonstrate how self-categories are oriented toward a reality where people and groups interact dynamically and continuously.

For instance, consider an individual's stereotypes that males are autonomous and women are dependent. These prejudices need to be viewed in the context of the larger intergroup dynamics and common perceptions of the interaction between men and women in society. This intergroup dynamic and the social comparison of "males" to "females" might occasionally play a particularly prominent role in influencing people's social identities, attitudes, and behaviors in a particular setting. Additionally, a fixed stereotype that has been created and stored along the lines of "men are

independent" and "women are dependent" will not serve the perceiver well when the dynamics of the interaction between men and women in society alter (Turner & Reynolds, 2011).

The Self-categorization is comparative, variable and fluid; therefore, the emerging self-identity is not a comparatively fixed mental structure but rather the expression of a dynamic process of social judgment. The varying outcomes of this judgmental process are the specific self-categories that arise in various settings. The perceiver is then defined in terms of how he or she changes in relation to others within the frame of reference and this allows the person to control themselves in the face of a constantly shifting social reality.

Mostly, there are probable psychological and objective factors responsible for the prominence of one or the other self-category, which may reinforce or contradict each other. The theory argues that there is a continuous competition between Self-categorization at the personal and group levels and that self-perception evolves along a continuum characterized by the conflict between the two and their fluctuating relative strengths (Turner & Oakes, 1989).

In addition, it suggests that individual self-perception tends to become depersonalized when shared social identity becomes salient. In other words, people tend to define and view themselves less as distinct individuals and more as members of a common social category. (Turner et al., 1987). Their conduct and self-perception become depersonalized, and sense of self undergoes a change.

3.2. Research Methodology

The study employs a social-psychological lens of Turner's Self-categorization to analyze the character of Juliet from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1965). The method of research used is qualitative method to explore the transformation of Juliet's identities in the play. The qualitative method proves effective for a comprehensive textual reading to highlight the instances of evolution of Juliet's identities.

3.3. Research Design

This study uses the research design of character analysis which falls under the qualitative method of research. Character analysis is used to study the

character development of Juliet from play *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) by William Shakespeare.

4- DATA ANALYSIS

The Elizabethan society to which *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) belong is a male-dominated one. Men held the primary position as decision makers of the household. In such strict patriarchal society, women are controlled by men, they are guided by fathers before marriage and by husbands afterwards. Hence, the behavioural guidelines provided by rigid societal rules, customized the lives of women who are hardly left with any autonomy.

As Eales says in her book,

In early modern England, male dominance was reinforced through a fully articulated political theory of patriarchy in which the function of men as heads of households and as fathers was believed to be analogous to the role of the monarch (Eales, 1993, p.4).

On the contrary, to the women of her society, Juliet did not manifest the expected behaviour of her group rather believe in exercising personal agency. Despite, the societal pressure that came as a part of her social identity, she demonstrated control over her life choices and decisions.

According to Self-categorization theory, Self-categorization is hierarchical. In other words, it recognizes social and personal identity as two different levels of Self-categorizations. The social identity refers to one's sense of self as a member of a collective group with traits and characteristics that are shared with other group members, whereas personal identity refers to one's sense of self as a unique individual with unique traits and characteristics (Turner et al., 1994). Thus, according to Turner et al. (1987), the self can be conceptualized at various degrees of inclusivity (e.g., me as an individual; me as a member of a group; me as a human being). Further, the degree to which an individual defines the self is shaped by how person's interaction with other members of the same group and other groups.

Similarly, Juliet also categorizes her identity throughout the play. At the beginning, Juliet's understanding of herself and her place in the world is shaped by the prototype of her social group. Her personal identity is that of a naïve and obedient daughter which aligns closely with her social identity as a young woman in Verona and a

member of the secondary group of society. As her identity is mainly defined by her membership, hence her behaviour is shaped and influenced by the male-dominated society. This is manifested in the scene where Juliet's father is having a conversation with Count Paris, Juliet's suitor, as he alone decides *whom she will marry*. Capulet says to Juliet,

"An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend." (Act III, Scene 5).

It is a reminder that she has no voice in choosing her husband and exerts little control over her fate. Her personal identity reflects the roles and restrictions imposed on her because of her group belonging. She is compliant, and adheres to the expectations placed on her as she shows willingness to consider Paris as a suitor. Also, she dares to love on the premise of receiving her mother's consent as she herself says to her,

*"I'll look to like, if looking liking move.
But no more deep will I endart mine eye
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly."* (Act I, Scene 4).

Juliet's initial social identity influences her sense of duty and she conforms to the norms prescribed by her group. However, as she falls in love with Romeo, she experiences a sudden shift in identity salience and her self-categorization undergoes a significant transformation. Her romantic relationship takes precedence over her personal identity and challenges her loyalty to her group, leading to an internal conflict and the ultimate redefinition of identities. As Turner suggests that an individual's sense of self or personal identity might change based on the social setting in which they find themselves. Because self-categories are socially comparable and always relevant to a frame of reference, therefore they are fundamentally flexible, fluid, and context-dependent (Turner et al., 2006).

Juliet's decision to pursue a relationship with Romeo marks the beginning of her personal identity shift towards a self-assertive, self-reliant individual determined to control and shape her own destiny. Her new found courageousness is reflected in her behaviour as she says,

*"Go ask his name. If he be married,
My grave is like to be my wedding bed."* (Act I, Scene 5).

As Turner argues that an individual is more likely to categorize oneself in terms of their own group if

the perceived differences between members of their own group are smaller. Also, the person will be seen as a fit if they upheld the stereotypical beliefs of the group (Turner et al., 1999). Juliet no longer categorizes herself with her social group and one of the most rebellious acts by Juliet is that she decides to marry Romeo, defies her father's wish, and refuses to marry the man he has selected for him. By doing this, she completely disregards the rigid norms of her group and no longer complies with the obligation imposed by her social identity. Instead, the power that is denied to her because of her social identity is regained within the context of her romantic relationship. Diverging from her previous docility, Juliet's personal identity becomes dominant, guides her actions, and completely opposing her group customs she proposes to Romeo.

*"If that thy bent of love be honourable,
Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow,
By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
Where and what tie thou wilt perform the right."*
(Act II, Scene 2)

Moreover, Juliet's social identity defines her status as a lesser individual of the society as whose ultimate destiny is marriage. Her father being a patriarch cannot see her role outside the institution of marriage. He infringes on her autonomy and forces her to marry Paris. As Juliet stands up for herself and pursues her desires, he threatens her to oblige and emotionally abuses her,

*To go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church,
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.
Out, you green-sickness carrion! Out, you
baggage! You
tallow face!* (Act III, Scene 3).

Lady Capulet, in juxtaposition to Juliet, and like other women of her group, has accepted her personal identity as a submissive woman in the society. She does not defend her daughter, pressurizes her to accept her father's decree and find happiness with Lord Paris. She responds to Juliet's pleas with,

*"Talk not to me, for I'll not speak a word.
Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee"* (Act III, Scene 5).

Furthermore, Turner argues that individuals define themselves as members of a distinct social category. They learn or develop the appropriate, expected, desirable behaviours that are correlated with group membership. They assign the norms

and attributes of the category to themselves (internalization) through the process of depersonalization. Their behaviour therefore becomes normative as their social identity and group membership becomes more salient. Turner (1987). However, Juliet maintains her individuality and completely diverges from the behaviour expected of her. Her personal identity as a brave woman remains dominant, preventing her from merging her self-perception with her social identity. Because of the failure of reconciliation between her self-categories- personal and social identity- she does not undergo the process of depersonalization where individuals align their behaviour and actions with the group norms.

The denial of Juliet's liberty and pressure from her parents to follow their desire reinforces the conflict between her self- categories. To keep control over her destiny and exercise what little bodily autonomy she has, she inevitably decides to commit suicide. In a fury, she declares,

"If all else fail, myself have power to die" (Act III, Scene 5).

The lack of freedom to pursue her personal identity as an autonomous being leads to tragic consequences. She does not want to marry a person she does not love and Death seems to her as the only way out. She does not want to live in a society where she has to live according to the oppressive norms designed for her group. Therefore, rather than living an unhappy life, she chooses to die beside Romeo, a decision she makes on her own, for herself.

5-CONCLUSION

This study is conducted from the theoretical standpoint of John Turner's Self-categorization to analyse the character of Juliet from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The study concludes that Juliet experiences a significant transformation, driven by the interplay between her personal and social identities. At first, her personal identity is that of an obedient daughter who conforms to the expectations of her family and social group. Thus, her personal identity aligns with her social identity as a dutiful woman following the norms of her social group.

However, her love at first sight with Romeo catalyzes a profound shift in her Self-categorization and marks the beginning of the conflict between her identities and social group.

Although, women of that times are provided little agency, Juliet becomes a self-reliant and determined individual who starts to fight for her autonomy. She stands her ground and chooses Romeo as a life partner despite the pressure from her parents and society. As her personal identity becomes more salient, it dominates her behaviour and she shows resistance to depersonalization—her refusal to fully conform to her social group's norms—and wants to live life according to her own standards.

Moreover, her personal identity takes precedence over group membership and highlights the strength of her personal desires. The societal constraints imposed by her social group and parents, contradicts with her end goals and ultimately leads her to the decision of taking her own life. Hence, her determination to defend her personal identity, assert her bodily autonomy and the quest to control her fate results in tragic consequences.

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