

IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION IN AUDREY NIFFENEGGER'S *THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE*

Sephatama Buana Perkasa Ganinda

English Department
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya
Sephatama03@gmail.com

Yoseph Bavo Agung Prasaja

English Department
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya
agungprasaja@untag-sby.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study explores the importance of identity as a characteristic continuously evolves through social interaction and life experiences. Identity transformation involves significant changes in values, beliefs, social roles, and life goals. These changes are often influenced by internal and external conflicts, trauma, or experiences that compelled individuals to adjust their worldviews. In Audrey Niffenegger's novel *The Time Traveler's Wife*, identity transformation becomes a central theme, particularly in the characters of Clare Abshire and Henry DeTamble. The study employs Hernan Turner's relational identity theory, Erik Erikson's personality psychology theory, and Henri Tajfel's social identity theory to analyze the dynamics of the main characters' identity transformations. Identity is understood as a dynamic process shaped through interpersonal relationships, social membership, and psychological and environmental factors. A qualitative descriptive approach strengthened by psychological literary analysis is used to explore the narrative elements of the novel. The study finds that emotional relationships and psychological challenges arising from the uncertainty of time significantly influence the characters' values, beliefs, and social roles, while also demonstrating how they cope with internal and external conflicts. The study concludes that the emotional relationships and psychological challenges faced by Clare Abshire and Henry DeTamble in dealing with the uncertainty of time have a significant impact on changes in their values, beliefs, relationships, and social roles. These changes not only affect their understanding of themselves but also illustrate how they overcome internal and external conflicts to achieve a sense of identity wholeness. By exploring these dynamics, the study offers a different perspective on identity formation within complex and ever-evolving relationships.

Keywords: *Identity, Dynamic, Emotional, Psychology, Relationship*

A. INTRODUCTION

Identity is a unique characteristic that differentiates each individual from other individuals. As social creatures, humans always interact with each other and cannot live alone. Humans rely on the presence and support of others because, in this world, people depend on each other to live and develop ((Swann Jr & Bosson,

2010). Humans create social groups as they strive to survive and build their lives. These interactions lead to the formation of various living environments, such as nuclear families, extended families, or community groups. Society often depicts humans as subjects because they reflect behaviors that can be observed in different aspects of life (Hogg, 2016). This situation naturally occurs because in organizations or relationships between groups, there are differences in interests that cannot be avoided and can give rise to both individual and social conflicts. Various types of conflict can occur, one of which is inner conflict. Inner conflict is a personal struggle caused by two or more opposing desires or ideas competing for dominance in a person's mind. This conflict can influence a person's attitudes, behavior, actions, decisions and can even cause transformation within themselves.

A major shift of identity is one's self-perception. A major shift of identity is in one's self-perception. This self-perception is called transformation (Wagoner, 2010). Transformation is influenced by several factors, including a psychological change is a change in a person's self-perception, which frequently includes adjustments to their internal values, beliefs, attitudes, and aspirations. Significant life events, such as trauma, a personal loss, or other occurrences that contradict an individual's preexisting perception of who they are and where they fit in the world, are usually the cause. For example, losing a loved one may make someone reassess what matters most to them, which may result in them prioritizing other life goals or adopting new beliefs (Strauss, 2013). In a social setting, this shift may also show up as a change in roles. A person who transitions from being a student to a professional, for instance, could form a new identity in response to their new obligations and demands. Over time, psychological transformation can result in more comprehension of one's identity and purpose conversely, existential transition describes a significant change in person's understanding of the meaning and purpose of their life (Strauss, 2013).

Identity transformation can be seen in Clare Abshire and Henry DeTamble as the main character in the novel. where the Clare Abshire experiences stress, emotionality, lack of self-confidence, waiting, and feeling lonely because he has the ability to always travel through time uncontrollably and has to struggle to face their life. Conflict and resolution can lead to identity transformation. Characters may face moral dilemmas, social pressures, or personal crises that force them to reevaluate who they are and what they stand for (Carroll, 2004). In the context psychology and social influences play an important role in shaping and transforming identity. Characters may experience shifts in identity due to changes in cultural or social environments. Relationship interaction with other characters can catalyze identity transformation. Relationships, whether positive or negative, can lead characters to discover new aspects of themselves or change their perception of who they are.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method which aim to answer the problem statement. According to (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research delves into non-numerical phenomena, focusing on understanding the "what and "how" behind human behavior, thoughts, and feelings in relation to a specific subject. In this study the researcher also uses psychological approach because identity

transformation related to psychological problem. As (Kandel et al., 2014), stated the psychology explore human social behavior such as reasoning, problem solving, memory attitudes, conformity, friendship, and any other mental processes relate to human behavior. This approach aims to understand and explain human behavior, memory, cognition, emotion and development through analysis literary works. The psychological approach helps in understanding human condition through literary works with detailed research. The main data are taken from the novel *The Time Traveler's Wife*. The novel was written by Audrey Niffenegger and it has 546 pages as data course. The data are in form of words, phrase, sentence or group of sentences which relate to the topic of analysis identity transformation, and which are taken from the novel.

C. THEORETICAL REVIEWS

1. Relational Identity

Identity is a concept that highlight how an individual's sense of self is shaped and evolves through relationships and social interaction with others (Hermann-Turner, 2020), defines context of relational identity, the focus is how interpersonal relationships influence and mold a person's self-understanding perspective that often see identity as a static, fixed entity separate from social interaction, instead, relational identity suggest that self-concept is not inherent but rather dynamically constructed through ongoing social engagement and relationship. *Relational Self: Ethical and therapy Perspectives* (Hermann-Turner, 2020), a book by Herman and Turner, describes how social and ethical interactions that form in a therapy setting help to understand and shape an individual's identity. Relational identity demonstrates how the experience of relationships with other people shapes, develops, and transforms the self, and how ethical and emotional elements play a role in this process.

2. Personality Psychology

(E. H. Erikson, 1959), stated that there are 2 personality psychology which appears:

a. Definition of Self-Identity

One of important task in human life in understand one's true self. Socrates, a renowned Greek philosopher, stated that knowing oneself is the foundation for human interaction with oneself and serves as a strong basis for interaction with others. self-identity is a crucial element that reflect an individual's personal identity. A person who successfully develops their identity will be better equipped to take on appropriate roles in life. Conversely, adolescents who fail to form a clear identity may experience confusion about themselves.

b. Factor Influencing Identity

In the development of a teenager's self-identity, there are several crucial factors that play a significant role in the identity formation process. The 8 important factors include:

- 1) **Family Factors:** One of the most important factors in adolescent identity development is the influence of the family. A family that practices a parenting style filled with love, support, and care plays a crucial role in shaping a teenager's identity.

- 2) Environmental Factors: Regardless of how well a child is raised within the family, environmental factors can significantly impact their identity development
- 3) Physical Factors: Physical attributes also play an important role in adolescent identity development.
- 4) Cognitive Factors: Cognitive factors, or a person's way of thinking, is crucial in the developing of a teenager's self-identity.
- 5) Emotional Factors: Emotional regulation plays an important role in identity development.
- 6) Social Factors: Similar to environmental influences, social factors, such as relationships and interactions with others, play a vital role in identity formation.
- 7) Moral Factors: Morality is another important aspect of identity development.
- 8) Peer **Influence**: If teenagers associate with positive influences and maintain healthy relationships, this will reflect in their self-identity.

3. Social Identity

Social identity theory suggests that identity serves the purpose of "binding" individuals to classify their membership in a group. Additionally, the theory holds that what people do, think, and feel reflects the collective values they acquire from the social group or organization they belong to. It also examines the efforts group members make to enhance their group's status and position.

a. Social Categorization

In this context, social categorization is described as “words or object that cut slices through human groups”, which helps individuals navigate the social world by distinguishing between ingroup and outgroup members. this process is a quick and efficient method for gathering information about others, aiding social perception, and reducing uncertainty. It offers clear expectations about others and oneself.

b. Social Identification

Social identification reflects the internal psychological criteria of group membership, as opposed to external attribution criteria (Fujita et al., 2018) At this stage, social identification relies on three key components of social identity, which are:

1. Cognitive component, which involves the awareness of one's membership in a group.
2. Evaluative component, referring to the value or significance that an individual attributes to their group membership.
3. Emotional component, which relates to the affective experiences or feelings associated with belonging to a particular group.

c. Social Comparison

After individuals categorize themselves as part of a group and identify with that group, the next stage is social comparison. According to Tajfel and Turner, social comparison is essential for shaping social identity, as individuals use others as a point of reference to evaluate their own attitudes and abilities.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Cause and Effect of Identity Transformation

a. Crisis Identity

The first Cause refers to events in the novel that occur unexpectedly and can be explained by conventional understandings of identity. These events that often occur in everyday life are considered a form of identity crisis. While these crises are acceptable within the context of the story, they can be logically explained through traditional views of self and identity

"It's hard being left behind. I wait for Henry, not knowing where he is, wondering if he's okay. It's hard to be the one who stays."

"When I am out there, in time, I am inverted, changed into a desperate version of myself. I become a thief, a vagrant, an animal who runs and hides." (Niffenegger, 2003: 05).

The data above describes the profound impact that their relationship has on their respective identities. Clare's sense of self is tied to Henry's presence; she feels the weight of waiting for him, which creates an emotional burden. Her identity is not just hers but is intricately connected to Henry's temporal existence; this creates a constant Tension between presence and absence, stability and chaos, forcing Clare and Henry to constantly redefine themselves, which contributes to the ongoing process of identity formation.

"It's just like mine," says myself, amazed. "How did you get it?"

"The same as you. It is the same. We are the same."

"You're me."

"When you are older." (Niffenegger, 2003: 42)

The data above shows a conversation between two different version of Henry, this explores in depth crisis caused by awareness of changes in oneself in the future. This moment illustrates how interaction with the older self-give rise to internal conflicts and existential questions. Complex internal dialogue, where identity is defined through relationship with future versions of the self. This relationship gives rise to feelings of alienation as well as connectedness, indicating as crisis rooted in an awareness of the inevitability of change.

b. Interpersonal Relationship

After experiencing an identity crisis, readers often question Henry and Clare's interpersonal relationship. Their relationship is greatly affected by Henry's uncontrolled time travel, which causes emotional and practical challenges.

"It's so hard, Henry. I feel like I'm always waiting for you. I never know when you'll be here or when you'll be gone. It's like being married to a ghost." (Niffenegger, 2003: 182).

The data above shows, the emotional toll and isolation she experiences due to Henry's time traveling. Her words reflect feelings of uncertainty, frustration, and the sense of an unfulfilled relationship, as she navigates the complexities of being with someone who is constantly absent. the unpredictability that defines their marriage, Clare's lack of control over Henry's comings and goings exacerbates her emotional instability. In many relationships, predictability and routine help build security and trust, but Clare is denied that foundation. The uncertainty of Henry's

presence creates a constant undercurrent of anxiety and makes it difficult for Clare to plan her life or find a sense of normalcy.

“Henry, do you realize what it's like for me? I never know where you are, or if you're safe. I can't plan a future with you because you might not be there.

I'm sorry, Clare. I wish I could control it.”

“But you can't. And I love you, but sometimes it's too much.” (Niffenegger, 2003: 210)

The data above shows, serves as a profound exploration of the identity crisis Clare faces in her relationship with Henry. Her struggle with relational identity reflects the emotional challenges posed by Henry's time traveling, as it destabilizes her sense of self and ability to plan for the future. The intersection of relational and social identity reveals how her emotional isolation impacts her connection to others, while personality psychology highlights the strain on her emotional resilience. Clare's experience underscores the complexities of love, identity, and the human need for stability in relationships, revealing the profound impact of unpredictability on personal identity and emotional well-being.

c. Psychological Experiences

on the psychological experiences experienced by Clare. Clare often experiences a profound sense of anticipation mixed with loneliness. From a young age, she knows about Henry and waits for his visits, which are sporadic and unpredictable due to his time traveling. This waiting creates a sense of longing and isolation, as she lives a life filled with intervals of absence.

Henry, do you ever feel like you're missing out on the present because you're always in different times? "

"All the time. It's like I'm living in a constant state of déjà vu and anticipation, never fully able to relax and enjoy the moment. "

"It must be exhausting, constantly having to adapt to different situations and environments. " (Niffenegger, 2003: 207).

The data above shows deeper into their psychological experiences, highlighting how they cope with the emotional and mental strain of their situation. It emphasizes the importance of their love and support for each other in maintaining their mental well-being. the impact of time travel on both him and Clare. Henry's struggle to stay present and the resulting anxiety reflect the challenges of living with a condition that disrupts temporal continuity.

2. Paradigm of Identity Transformation

a. Change Values and Beliefs

Clare Abshire's values and beliefs evolve significantly as she navigates the complexities of her relationship with Henry DeTamble, a man with a genetic disorder that causes him to involuntarily time travel. Clare's character growth is influenced by her experiences with Henry, her own personal struggles, and the passage of time.

“Clare, have you noticed how much our values and beliefs have shifted since we first met?

Definitely. We've both grown so much, and our experiences have shaped our perspectives in profound ways.”

“For me, the time traveling has made me realize the importance of living in

the moment. I used to be more focused on the future, but now I value the present more than ever.”

“I’ve noticed that change in you. You’ve become more present, more attentive to the here now. It’s one of the many things I love about you.” (Niffenegger, 2003: 465).

The data above suggests that through communication and introspection, people in deep relationships can improve understanding of themselves. It demonstrates how a new sense of identity may be created via shifts in values and beliefs in meaningful relationships. It serves as a catalyst for transformation, inspiring introspection through a shift in self and a fresh perspective on life's purpose.

b. Changes in Social Roles

At this stage, Clare tells Henry about her problems with Change in social roles. As a wife, she takes on the responsibilities and emotional labor associated with managing a household and supporting Henry through his time-traveling. This is complicated by the fact that Henry often disappears, leaving Clare to handle many aspects of their life alone.

“Clare, I've been thinking about how much the world has changed in terms of social roles since we first met. How do you feel about the shifts we've seen, especially in expectations around gender and relationships? ”

"It's been fascinating to watch. I think we've both benefited from the loosening of traditional roles. It's given us more freedom to define our relationship in our own terms, without feeling pressured to conform to outdated norms. "(Niffenegger, 2002: 541)

The data above shows that relationships with other people influence the way individuals understand themselves and their role in a relationship. where values such as partnership and open mutual support are at the center of their relationship. this reflects a change in personality values that are more adaptive and open, allowing to act based on personal preferences and needs, rather than simply following societal expectations. changes in social roles enable profound identity transformations in the way one views oneself.

c. Memory and Identity

In memory and identity Clare discussing about her experiences time linearly to Henry. She first meets Henry as a child when he time travels to her past. Her memories of Henry are layered and complex because she meets him at different ages, and he often has knowledge of their future interactions.

“It’s challenging. My identity feels fragmented at times. I have memories of things that haven't happened yet for others, and sometimes I revisit moments from my past with the knowledge of what’s to come. It makes it difficult to stay grounded in one version of myself.” (Niffenegger, 2003: 170).

the data above shows, the complexity of the psychological and emotional impact of time travel experienced by Henry on his self-awareness and memory. The difficulty in keeping a coherent sense of identity, the disorientation caused by non-linear experiences, and the constant struggle to remain grounded are central themes. Despite these challenges, Henry’s focus on his core values and his relationship with Clare provide him with a sense of stability and identity. Henry discusses the

challenges of maintaining a cohesive sense of self when his experiences and memories are non-linear. Clare expresses how she copes with the differences in their experiences of time and the impact it has on their relationship.

3. Coping Identity Transformation

a. Establish Personal Boundaries

Clare can focus on defining her own space and limits within the relationship. This could mean setting aside time that is just for herself, separate from Henry and the complexities of their relationship, allowing her to maintain a sense of individuality.

"You know, Henry, as much as we talk about our connection and how it sustains us, I've been thinking about how important it is for us to have our own space, too. To establish personal boundaries. "

"I understand that, Clare. With everything we've been through, it's easy to get so wrapped up in each other that we forget to take care of ourselves as individuals. Having our own space doesn't mean we're any less connected; it just means we're taking care of ourselves so we can be better together." (Niffenegger, 2003: 271).

The data above shows that a person's identity is often influenced by close relationships, such as in romantic partnerships. This suggests that the characters do not want to lose themselves in the relationship, but instead strengthen their identities through personal boundaries. By holding space for themselves, they ensure that their relationships do not become a source of dependency, but a connection that allows the individual to grow independently. Maintaining personal boundaries is an important step in building emotional resilience and mental health.

b. Development of Self-Awareness

In this situation Clare can keep a journal to document her thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This practice helps her gain clarity about how her identity is evolving and provides a space to explore who she is outside of her relationship with Henry. In this situation Clare can keep a journal to document her thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This practice helps her gain clarity about how her identity is evolving and provides a space to explore who she is outside of her relationship with Henry.

"Loving Henry has taught me so much about myself. I've learned to be patient, to be strong, to find happiness even in the waiting. But more than anything, "

"I've learned that I'm more than just a part of this relationship. I'm Clare, with or without Henry, and that self-awareness is what keeps me grounded." (Niffenegger, 2003: 178).

The data above shows, Clare's role and identity are closely connected to her relationship with Henry, but they are not solely defined by it. This suggests that her sense of self does not entirely rely on Henry. While navigating an identity transformation, Clare also cultivates a deeper understanding of who she is as an individual. Although her love for Henry remains a significant aspect of her life, Clare comes to recognize that her identity extends beyond their relationship, allowing her to develop a more independent and multifaceted sense of self.

c. Developing Resilience Through Adaptability

Clare faces significant challenges in developing resilience and adaptability due to her marriage to Henry, whose uncontrollable time travel frequently disrupts their life together. Her transformation into a strong and adaptive individual is evident through her varied emotional, social, and psychological experiences

"It's not just the time traveling that's hard. It's everything that comes with it—being apart, the unpredictability. But somehow, we keep finding our way back to each other. I've had to learn to be patient in ways I never thought possible. To live with uncertainty, to accept that things won't always make sense. It's exhausting, but I think it's made me stronger. You've always been strong, Clare. Even when things are at their hardest, you don't give up. You adapt. That's one of the things I love most about you."

"And you've taught me that love isn't just about the easy moments. It's about staying when it's hard, about finding hope when everything feels impossible. (Niffenegger, 2003: 340).

The data above shows, Clare and Henry's experiences illustrate the emotional and physical hurdles caused by Henry's time travel, leading to a continuous sense of unpredictability that motivates them to build resilience by deeply dedicating themselves to each other. Emotional resilience increases when they become more adept at embracing uncertainty and facing challenges without giving in to despair. This expedition demonstrates a mental adjustment that allows Clare to grow emotionally, even in high-pressure situations.

d. Strength in Sacrifice

Clare's sacrifices are depicted as deliberate decisions stemming from love, dedication, and self-awareness, not as signs of weakness or inaction. These sacrifices contribute to her sense of self, illustrating how she turns obstacles into a source of resilience. Her profound affection for Henry is believed to be worth enduring the difficulties and ambiguity of their bond. Even though Clare feels lonely and frustrated while waiting for Henry, she shows impressive patience, which she sees as a sign of her inner fortitude.

"It's not that simple. Loving you means accepting all of it—the time travel, the unpredictability, the waiting. But sometimes, I wonder what my life would've looked like if things were different. If I could've had a life that wasn't shaped by waiting."

"I think about that, too. I think about how much easier your life would've been without me in it. And it kills me because I know I can't give you the normalcy you deserve." (Niffenegger, 2003: 286).

The data above shows, Clare and Henry's emotional resilience in navigating the realities of their relationship is rooted in Clare's profound acceptance of Henry's condition, while also grappling with reflective questions about how her life might have unfolded without such sacrifices. These dynamic shapes Clare's identity as she learns to embrace all her emotions, accepting an unconventional love while maintaining introspection about her own journey. It reveals Clare's internal process of adapting to the emotional challenges of their relationship, highlighting her ability to accept imperfection and find strength within it. Clare and Henry demonstrate that true strength arises from embracing life's imperfections and discovering value in love that is both complex and deeply meaningful.

E. CONCLUSION

The main character's Henry DeTamble and Clare Abshire journey in the novel that reveals their emotional and psychological development, which is influenced by complex relationships and challenges that come from the unique nature of the passage of time. Henry initially defines himself largely based on his role as partner, gradually finds his own identity. that the transformation of Clare Abshire's identity was influenced by her relationship with Henry, where she could not control the passage of time, so Clare was always waiting for her husband to arrive. Clare's beliefs, and social roles undergo major changes due to her relationship with Henry and the challenges she faces during these uncertain times and his absence. These factors shape Clare's identity in the face of an identity crisis that increases her strength and ability to live her life independently of Henry's influence.

Clare experiences an identity transformation, flued by moments of reflection, personal growth, and Henry's encouragement to find strength within herself. As she confronts the reality of Henry's absences, she learns to embrace solitude and focus on her artistic pursuits, friendships, and family. The psychological experienced by Clare cause anxiety, fear of loss, and a struggle to find meaning in life face the psychological challenges face by individuals in complex relationships.

The interaction between Clare and Henry showcases their relationship, as the trigger caused by Henry's ability to time travel pushes Clare's emotional fortitude to the brink. In the midst of it, they both show extraordinary dedication and fortitude to maintain their love. Clare realizes that he loves for henry gave her the courage to face and accept their strange status, even in the face of extreme psychological stress. This shows that Clare and Henry identities underwent mutually influencing transformation, shaped by their relationships to time, space and the world.

REFERENCES

- Carroll, J. (2004). *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, human nature, and literature*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203505274>
- Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (Vol. 2). Norton New York. https://doi.org/10.30965/9783657768387_048
- Erikson, E. (1959). Theory of identity development. *E. Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle*. Nueva York: International Universities Press. *Obtenido de Http://Childdevpsychology. Yolasite. Com/Resources/Theory% 20of% 20ident Ity% 20erikson. Pdf.*
- Fujita, M., Harrigan, P., & Soutar, G. N. (2018). Capturing and co-creating student experiences in social media: A social identity theory perspective. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 26(1–2), 55–71.
- Hermann-Turner, K. M. (2020). Integrating relational-cultural therapy into counseling practice. *Counseling the Contemporary Woman: Strategies Interventions across the Lifespan*, 31.
- Hogg, M. A. (2016). Social Identity Theory. In S. McKeown, R. Haji, & N. Ferguson (Eds.), *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives* (pp. 3–17). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319->

29869-6_1

- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Strauss, A. (2013). Transformations of identity. In *Human behavior and social processes* (pp. 63–85). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315008196>
- Swann Jr, W. B., & Bosson, J. K. (2010). Self and identity. *Handbook of Social Psychology*.