



Family Responsibilities, Social Traditions, and the Formation of Individual Choices as Reflected in Quinn's *Bridgerton* Series

Hanny Nur Mardhiyah Norma Mangarengi*

Universitas Muslim Indonesia, Makassar, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 November 2025

Revised in 16 November 2025

Accepted 30 January 2026

Keywords:

Family Responsibilities

Social Tradition

Individual Choices

ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze how family traditions and responsibilities shape individual choices as reflected in Julia Quinn's *Bridgerton* series. The purpose of this research is to elaborate on family traditions and responsibilities that shape the individual choices of characters in the *Bridgerton*. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing Social Stratification Theory (Karl Marx and Max Weber), Decision-Making Theory (Herbert A. Simon), and Genetic Structuralism (Lucien Goldmann) as analytical frameworks. Data were collected through close watching and textual analysis of *Bridgerton (The Duke and I and The Viscount Who Loved Me)*, focusing on dialogues, scenes, and character interactions that reflect the influence of family and social hierarchy. The data were analyzed by describing the findings and interpreting them through the chosen theories. The results show that family traditions and social hierarchy play a significant role in limiting individual freedom; characters such as Daphne Bridgerton, Simon Basset, and Anthony Bridgerton are compelled to prioritize family honor and social expectations over personal desires. The research highlights that despite holding high social status, their autonomy remains constrained by societal norms and expectations.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: author@institute.xxx



1. INTRODUCTION

Culture plays a pivotal role in shaping individual and collective identity, reinforcing social bonds, and mediating human interactions with both the natural and social environments. Through cultural practices, individuals cultivate a profound understanding of the self and recognize their position within broader social structures. Cultural norms and values significantly influence the development of healthy, harmonious social behaviors and relationships. Moreover, culture contributes to the preservation of the natural environment by embedding local wisdom and sustainable practices. In addition, culture also serves as a vital source of creativity and artistic expression for individuals and groups in society (Hudaya, 2023).

The *Bridgerton* series, adapted from the novels by American romance writer Julia Quinn (born Julie Cotler in 1970), has achieved widespread popularity. Quinn, a graduate of Harvard University with a degree in art history, initially considered a career in medicine before dedicating herself to writing. Her first novels, *Splendid and Dancing at Midnight*, were published in 1995. The *Bridgerton* series, which includes titles such as *The Duke and I* and *The Viscount Who Loved Me*, has received critical acclaim, including multiple nominations and awards from the Romance Writers of America.

This study employs Roland Barthes' semiotic theory as its analytical framework. Building upon Ferdinand de Saussure's model of the linguistic sign, Barthes expanded semiotics to examine how signs operate within cultural contexts. Central to Barthes' approach is the concept of myth as a second order of signification, whereby signs acquire layered cultural and ideological meanings. In this framework, signs possess not only literal (denotative) meanings but also connotative layers that reflect deeper cultural and ideological values. Literature also functions as a form of communication, as a gateway to explore and introduce culture, social dynamics, and the intricacies of human existence (Yudith et al., 2024). This perspective is particularly valuable for analyzing literary and visual texts, as it enables the uncovering of hidden meanings embedded in everyday cultural products. The present research seeks to provide deeper insight into the social and cultural dynamics depicted in the *Bridgerton* series. The characters' struggles not only illuminate personal narratives but also mirror persistent social pressures and familial obligations that remain relevant in contemporary societies.

The writer hoped that this study will encourage readers to reflect on how similar hierarchical patterns manifest in their own cultural contexts, particularly the enduring influence of hierarchical structures in Indonesian society. Ultimately, the research aims to serve as a reference for future studies while offering additional

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: author@institute.xxx

perspectives on social hierarchy. It may also prompt reflection on how attitudes toward individuals from lower social strata shape social behavior, decision-making processes, and interpersonal relationships.

2. METHOD

This research employs qualitative research methods by following established procedures and principles. The data were collected through close reading and in-depth understanding of Julia Quinn's *Bridgerton* series, particularly *The Duke and I* and *The Viscount Who Loved Me*. The data were then analyzed using descriptive textual analysis to examine character dialogues and interactions within the novels. This research aims to analyze how family traditions and responsibilities shape individual choices and influence social behavior, decision-making processes, and interpersonal relationships.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Bridgerton's literary and social allusions enhance its exploration of responsibility, identity, and constrained autonomy by drawing on historical class systems, patriarchal family structures, and Regency-era English conventions.

Extract 1. The internalization of societal norms that equate a woman's value with her marital status is reflected in Daphne Bridgerton's dialogue, "*I have no other value.*" This statement illustrates how individual identity is shaped by dominant cultural expectations. It aligns with Karl Marx's concept of ideological reproduction, in which individuals absorb and reproduce the prevailing values of the ruling class, particularly aristocratic standards. Furthermore, Ricoeur (1977) argues that cultural narratives possess the power to shape identity through shared symbolic structures.

Extract 2. Simon Basset's declaration, "*I cannot give you children,*" represents a clear defiance of paternal expectations and aristocratic lineage. Despite holding the title of Duke, his refusal to produce an heir symbolizes a rejection of social closure. According to Weber's theory of stratification, elite groups maintain their power through mechanisms such as marriage and inheritance. By resisting the archetypal role of the "noble heir," Simon challenges these structures. Kövecses (2010) further suggests that such resistance gains significance because it draws upon deeply embedded cultural metaphors and societal myths. Simon's stance also reflects his personal struggle with trauma and inherited systems of power.

Extract 3. Anthony Bridgerton's dialogue "*You are my sister. That is my responsibility*" demonstrates how the preservation of social status, rather than emotional considerations alters his decision. His controlling attitude toward his sister reflects a sense of duty grounded in family honor and social expectations. This corresponds with Herbert A. Simon's concept of bounded rationality, whereby decision-making is constrained by factors such as tradition, obligation, and limited autonomy. Hogan (2016) observes that literary representations of such structural constraints heighten the emotional intensity of the narrative. In this context, Anthony's sense of responsibility evolves into a form of dominance.

Extract 4. Anthony's statement, "*I am the man of the house,*" explicitly affirms his dominant role, reflecting the societal expectation that men hold authority within the domestic sphere. It highlights the reinforcement of patriarchal authority through Anthony's assertion of control over his family. This is consistent with Weber's theory of legitimacy and authority, which posits that social roles are sustained through both formal and informal norms. Violet's subtle resistance suggests an underlying tension within generational and gendered roles. The scene ultimately conveys themes of power, sacrifice, and constrained identity, illustrating how both male and female characters are shaped by inherited expectations.

Overall, these literary and cultural references collectively construct a critical perspective on gender norms and social hierarchy in *Bridgerton*. Beyond its romantic narrative, the series offers a nuanced reflection on

responsibility, individuality, and the cost of privilege within a rigid class-based society by integrating historical allusions and theoretical perspectives into character interactions.

4. CONCLUSION

Julia Quinn's *Bridgerton* incorporates layered cultural and sociological references that reinforce the series' exploration of constrained autonomy and identity within rigid social structures. These allusions highlight the tension between societal expectations and individual agency, particularly through characters such as Simon Basset and Daphne Bridgerton. Their experiences reflect an internal struggle shaped by social conditioning, as individuals are raised to fulfill predetermined roles within aristocratic society. This tension aligns with Weber's and Marx's theories of social stratification, which emphasize that identity is largely constructed through inherited roles and class expectations. Consequently, the narrative illustrates the persistent conflict between personal agency and social conformity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hanny Nur Mardhiyah Norma Mangerangi is a student in Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Ilmu Komunikasi, dan Pendidikan of Universitas Muslim Indonesia, Makassar, Indonesia. Her scholarly interests are family issues and social hierarchy.

Madeline Yudith obtained her Master's degree in English Language Studies, majoring in English Literature at the Postgraduate Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University (UNHAS), Makassar, Indonesia in 2023. She completed her Bachelor's degree in English Literature, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, UNHAS, in 2020. Her scholarly interests are social issues, psychology phenomenon, and autobiography novel. She has published some articles in reputable journals. She is currently a lecturer in Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Ilmu Komunikasi, dan Pendidikan of Universitas Muslim Indonesia, Makassar, Indonesia.

REFERENCES

-
- [1] 8Flix. (n.d.). *Bridgerton transcript 1x04: An affair of honor*. Accessed on <https://8flix.com/assets/transcripts/b/tt8740790/Bridgerton-transcript-104-An-Affair-of-Honor.pdf>
- [2] Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2025). *Hierarchy*. Accessed on <https://www.britannica.com>
- [3] Hashmi, A. S., Shah, S. K., & Nawaz, M. S. (2023). *Bridgerton By Julia Quinn As An Inter-Text Of Female Universal Voice: A Critical Discourse Analysis*. *Russian Law Journal*.
- [4] Hudaya, S. S. R. (2023). *The Importance of Culture in Society*. *Jurnal Kependik*. <https://online-journal.unja.ac.id/kopendik/article/view/28959>
- [5] Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848). *The Communist Manifesto*. Penguin Classics.
- [6] Prastowo, A. (2011). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif dalam Perspektif Riset Pendidikan*. Ar-Ruzz Media.
- [7] Quinn, J. (2000). *The Duke and I*. Avon Books.

-
- [8] Quinn, J. (2006). *The Viscount Who Loved Me*. Avon Books.
- [9] ScienceDirect. (n.d.). Social Hierarchy. Accessed on <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/computer-science/social-hierarchy>
- [10] Scraps from the Loft. (n.d.). Bridgerton: Season 1, episode 2 – The duke and I – transcript. Accessed on <https://scrapsfromtheloft.com/tv-series/bridgerton-s01e05-the-duke-and-i-transcript/>
- [11] Simon, H. A. (1997). *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organizations* (4th ed.). Free Press. (Original work published 1947)
- [12] The Script Lab. (n.d.). Bridgerton Pilot Transcript. Accessed on <https://thescriptlab.com/wp-content/uploads/scripts/Bridgerton-Pilot.pdf>
- [13] Vitalaya, N. (n.d.). Gender Inequality in Bridgerton: The Duke and I (2000) by Julia Quinn: A feminist perspective.
- [14] Weber, M. (1922). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. University of California Press.
- [15] Yudith, M., Arafah, B., Syam, N. I., Saadillah, A., Sarmadan, & Rusli, M. (2024). Preventing mental disorders: The significance of recognizing nice girl syndrome symptoms in Gaskell's Ruth. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 15(5), 1645–1652. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1505.25>