

ABSTRACT

This research probes into the psychological dimensions of cultural identity in the novel *Scarlet Song*. It bridges the gap between culture and cognition by identifying the connection between cultural identity and behavioural intentions. Engaging with Social Categorization Theory, it delineates the process of the character's identification with the culture and how it engenders identity crisis. It emphasizes that cultural identity, or any group identity, is not a comfortable label that the characters in the novel can take on without surrendering to adopting group behaviour. It studies the co-existence of multiple identities in the consciousness of the characters, especially the protagonists, and what happens when two identities are active in human cognitive system simultaneously. Drawing on the evidences from the novel, it takes into account the switching between cultural and personal identities, identity commitment and identity salience.

My thesis analyses the difference in the identity formation of the protagonists by contextualizing it in postcolonial multiculturalism. It engages with Althusser's concept of 'ideology' and 'false consciousness' to explain the creation and operationalization of the cultural matrix in the novel. It encompasses squarely the forces of culture that spread a web around the people of Senegal, invading their personal identities and limiting their experience. It also argues that even in a strong cultural stranglehold, the characters in the novel are still capable of asserting their agencies. My thesis opens up a debate for more nuanced models of identity formation in a world that is still facing the aftermaths of colonization. Its purpose is twofold, first, it aims to find ways of mobilizing stereotypes and reducing prejudice, second, to envision a situation under which such a re-conceptualization of self becomes possible where culture has restrained impact.