
The Importance Of Gender In Romeo And Juliet

Behavior is something that is affected by several different factors. Whether it is friends, parents, or brain development, all of these have a direct connection with human behavior and the choices humans make. In Romeo and Juliet, this is proven to be true, especially with the character Romeo. External forces and gender roles drastically affect Romeo due to him being a teenager, thus leading him to make certain choices.

Teenage brains work very differently than adults' brains, leading them to also behave differently. This is relevant to Romeo, because he is a teenager whose actions are affected by him being a teen. Studies show that teenagers make decisions based on a gut feeling, while adults more often use planning and logic (Mallari). This is proven to be true several times, in Romeo's case. For example, Romeo was greatly encouraged to marry Roselyn at the beginning of the play, but as soon as he saw Juliet, he forgot all about her (Shakespeare 61,67). Romeo decided to pursue a relationship with having no background knowledge of Juliet, but just claimed he loved her the moment he saw her. In this moment, Romeo was using a "gut feeling" and not logic or reason. Teenagers are also often said to be more impatient. When Romeo was interested in Roselyn, he was depressed thinking she did not want to be with him in return (Shakespeare 21-27). However, shortly after, he went to the party where he saw Juliet, who did reciprocate interest in him. This shows that Romeo was just desperate to find a partner, revealing his impatience of a teenager.

Parents play a huge role in the way their children behave and the choices they make. Throughout Romeo and Juliet, Romeo's parents are not in the play often. However, when they are, they seem to have given up on helping Romeo with his depressed disposition at the beginning of the play (Shakespeare 19). Their way of parenting Romeo is very similar to a permissive style of parenting. "They often encourage their children to talk with them about their problems, but they usually don't put much effort into discouraging poor choices or bad behavior" (Mallari). Several times, especially toward the beginning of the play, Romeo's parents do encourage Romeo to find someone to talk to about his disposition, but have a helpless attitude in being that for him. This could lead Romeo to have the impression that his parents do not care, thus causing him to make more poor choices.

Being accepted is something that many teenagers desire and hold to a very high importance. With Romeo, what his friends say and how they treat him have a direct connection with his behavior. Romeo's friends make fun of him often, leading him to not feel like he is in an accepting environment when he is around them. For example, when Romeo was coming back from a party and his friends were teasing him, he soon after ran to Juliet (Shakespeare 75-79).

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This shows that Romeo did not feel comfortable and accepted around his friends, so he ran to Juliet, where he knew he would. However, Romeo still does care about his friends, to the point where his care towards them caused one of the characters being killed. When Romeo's friend was killed by Tybalt, Romeo ended up killing Tybalt, his wife's cousin of one hour at the time (Shakespeare 149). Romeo did not think about the potential consequences before killing Tybalt, showing that his emotions and care towards his friends overruled his logic, causing him to make a poor choice.

In the time period Shakespeare wrote Romeo and Juliet, gender roles and expectations were very prevalent. This is relevant to Romeo because he was constantly surrounded with these roles and expectations being enforced. One of these being encouraging men to use women for their own happiness and personal gain. Benvolio and Mercutio heavily enforced this on Romeo, claiming that a girl was what he needed to cure his sadness (Shakespeare 51). Romeo subconsciously listened to his friends, showing that he had no instinct to question this kind of mentality. Men were also encouraged to be the ones to pursue women, while women were just seen as objects to be owned by men. Women were pressured to marry from a very young age and were given the impression that their identity was found in their marital status (Shakespeare 43,47). This means that Romeo could have felt like his masculinity would have been in question if he did not have a partner, causing him to be desperate.

Some might claim that most of Romeo's behavior is because of genetics and factors that are already ingrained in him. "the majority of what we experience day-to-day (the emotions, beliefs and impulses) takes place in the unconscious and is not viewable to us in the conscious mind" (Mallari). However, Romeo's behavior is more influenced by external factors and his environment. Especially being a teenager, Romeo has multiple influences affecting him at all times. "Behaviorism is a worldview that assumes a learner is essentially passive, responding to environmental stimuli." (Mallari). While for adults' behavior it may be affected more by biological and subconscious factors, Romeo is a teenager and has many more external factors making behaviorism more relevant for his case.

In conclusion, Romeo's choices are heavily impacted by external factors and gender roles due to him being a teenager. Factors such as brain development, gender roles, friends, and parents all have a direct connection to Romeo's behavior and choices. All of these could be something that affects many day-to-day lives, without it being realized.

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