

CHARACTER NETWORKS AND RELATIONAL DYNAMICS IN ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

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Abstract

Human relationships lie at the core of narrative fiction. In *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, although feminist, postcolonial, and psychological perspectives have been widely explored, the structural dynamics of character interaction remain underexamined. This study addresses that gap by applying Social Network Theory to analyse how patterns of centrality, clustering, and bridging shape the novel's relational architecture and thematic development. The research combines close reading with computational network analysis to map and quantify character interactions, including dialogue and non-verbal communication. Using weighted undirected graphs, the study visualises the evolving structure of relationships in the narrative. The analysis reveals that Eugene's dominance is reflected in his central network position, marked by coercive influence. At the same time, Kambili and Jaja serve as bridging figures, facilitating shifts toward autonomy and resistance. Clustering analysis highlights the contrast between Eugene's household, with its closed, hierarchical structure, and the open, communal network surrounding Auntie Ifeoma in Nsukka. These findings suggest that *Purple Hibiscus* constructs its narrative through dynamic social networks, where power, identity, and transformation are negotiated through changing patterns of connection.

Keywords: Character Networks, Centrality and Power Dynamics, Clustering and Community Structure, Social Network Analysis, *Purple Hibiscus*

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to apply computational literary analysis to the interpretation of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. It extends the analysis of Adichie's work beyond thematic interpretation and stylistic critique to the novel's structural and relational architecture. While previous studies have examined *Purple Hibiscus* from different perspectives, including but not limited to feminist, postcolonial, psychological, and linguistic vantage points, the patterns of affiliation, isolation, dominance, and transformation that characterize the interactions that govern the narrative progression in the text appear to have been overlooked. The centrality of human relationships in narrative fiction calls for a thorough investigation of the structural patterns that shape these interactions, which are often invisible to conventional literary analysis. This paper aims to fill this gap in scholarship by applying social network theory to Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. Social network theory provides a visual representation of character dynamics, with nodes (vertices) representing characters and edges representing their interactions or relationships. Not only do these representations serve as visual aids, but they also function as analytical tools that reveal how power and intimacy flow across the novel's character network.

A critical impetus for this approach is the growing recognition by Digital Humanities scholars that visualizing social networks, especially their evolution over time, can foster deeper theoretical insights. As Moody and McFarland (2005) argue, dynamic network visualization enables us to trace how structures emerge, stabilize, and disintegrate through processes of character interaction, a dimension often ignored in conventional literary interpretation.

Indeed, the literature on social network theory identifies two types of network visualization: static and dynamic. The former is a single, non-interactive graphic representation showing all nodes and edges of a network at a single moment in time or after aggregating over time, while the latter is a visual depiction of a network that evolves or updates over time. Several scholars (Uddin et al. (2010), Thompson et al. (2017), Ahn et al. (2014), Mahajan & Gokhale (2018), Zheng et al. (2018), Li et al. (2017), etc.) argue that the static network analysis cannot show how relationships evolve, how nodes enter and exit the network, and how influence or communication flows over time. However, it is these particular areas wthattthe static network analysis fails to capture that breathe life into a literary piece. In the words of Agarwal et al. (2012), the static network analysis flattens out

... the action in order to bring to light something that was obfuscated previously. However, time and its passage play a crucial role in literature. Literature is, after all, built in layers, with successive scenes stacking up on each other. Texts reveal information not all at once, like a network, but in spurts. This is not merely an unfortunate side-effect of the medium, but a central element that authors manipulate and that is central to extracting “meaning” (89 – 90).

No doubt, Agarwal et al. sum up the reasons why the static social network visualization proves insufficient for serious literary analysis. It is completely unthinkable to reduce all the actions, the narrative progression, the character development – all the complex processes that make up a novel – to a graph that pays no attention to the temporal specifics of the text. However, we cannot discard static social network analysis in a hurry; it offers a bird's-eye view of a text's relational ecosystem, illuminating macro-structural features such as centrality, clustering, and peripherality. This kind of graph reveals at a glance which characters dominate the narrative space, which are marginalized, and how tightly knit or fragmented the novel's social fabric appears.

However, this bird-eye view must be complemented by another type of analysis that aligns more faithfully with the temporal logic of fiction, where characters are introduced gradually, bonds are forged or broken in response to events, and relationships evolve in ways that reflect emotional, psychological, and political development. It is precisely here that the dynamic network visualization proves indispensable. As Weng et al. (2013) observe, dynamic networks exhibit closer alignment between narrative temporality and network structure, thereby enabling an analysis that moves in tandem with the story. Based on the above, this paper adopts a mixed-methods approach that combines static and dynamic social network analyses of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. By adopting this dual approach, this paper brings into the conversation on the novel two modes of understanding social relations in the text – one that maps the novel's overall relational landscape, and another that accounts for its evolution over time. This paper analyzes the character's social network in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. The specific objectives of the paper are to examine centrality and power dynamics in *Purple Hibiscus*, analyze clustering and community structure within the narrative, investigate bridging roles and social mobility across the character network, and explore the novel's thematic implications for its social architecture.

Character Social Network

Network analysis has become an increasingly valuable tool in literary studies, offering a means to uncover structural patterns in character interactions that are not always visible through close reading. Early computational approaches emphasized speech attribution as a foundation for network construction. Elson, Dames, and McKeown (2010), for example, employed natural language processing techniques to attribute quoted speech to characters in sixty nineteenth-century novels, generating interaction networks that revealed correlations between narrative setting and character activity. However, because their method restricted ties to quoted speech, it overlooked other forms of contact (such as thoughts, unquoted dialogue, or descriptive encounters), thereby limiting the completeness of the networks produced.

Building on this foundation, scholars sought to broaden definitions of interaction. Sack (2006) refined the categorization by distinguishing the purposes of contact, such as legal investigation or philanthropy, and by incorporating both direct, face-to-face exchanges and weaker, indirect ties. Similarly, Celikyilmaz, Hakkani-Tür, and Feng (2010) constructed networks from topical similarity in character speech. While these approaches expanded the interpretive potential of network analysis, they relied on subjective classification criteria, reducing replicability across corpora. Moretti (2011) underscored related limitations in his analysis of *Hamlet*, noting that unweighted, undirected edges failed to capture the asymmetry and intensity of relationships. He argued that more sophisticated tools (such as weighted and directed networks) are essential for representing the nuances of narrative interaction.

Recent work has responded to these critiques by incorporating temporal and structural refinements. Agarwal et al. (2012) showed that static networks “flatten” narrative time, exaggerating certain relationships, whereas dynamic social network (DSN) models can more accurately capture evolving roles and shifting character importance. Their study of *Alice in Wonderland* demonstrated how distinguishing between observation and interaction events allows computational models to align more closely with narrative perspective and structural flow. This argument resonates with earlier cautions that static abstractions distort the temporal layering through which literary meaning is constructed (Berger-Wolf et al., 2006; Perry, 1979).

Other contributions extend network analysis across languages, periods, and media. Kubis (2021), analyzing 930 Polish novels with an automated NLP pipeline, revealed systematic historical differences in narrative style: nineteenth-century works contained larger casts and greater modularity, while twentieth-century texts featured fewer but more dialogically dense character sets. By validating English-language findings in a Polish corpus, Kubis demonstrated the cross-linguistic robustness of network approaches to literary history. Song (2023) advanced this scalability further by applying neural networks and natural language processing to vectorize characters, cluster them, and predict traits and gender with over 95% accuracy. His study illustrates the potential of AI to overcome the subjectivity and inefficiency of manual character analysis, enabling more objective large-scale literary interpretation.

Hybrid approaches seek to reconcile quantitative efficiency with qualitative interpretive depth. Chen and Wang (2016), in their analysis of the *Journey to the West Prequel*, combined one-mode (character-character) and two-mode (character-event) network analyses with close reading, uncovering hidden identities and thematic conflicts that chapter-based approaches had obscured. Likewise, Labatut (2022) applied complex network analysis to European graphic novels, manually annotating 63 volumes of the *Thorgal* series. His study demonstrated small-world properties, hierarchical structure, and disassortativity, while

highlighting how methodological choices (such as filtering out minor characters) alter network properties and interpretive conclusions.

Taken together, this body of work illustrates the maturation of character social network analysis in literary studies. Early speech-based models established the feasibility of computational approaches but were hampered by narrow or subjective definitions of interaction. Subsequent innovations – ranging from weighted and directed networks to dynamic temporal models, hybrid qualitative-quantitative frameworks, and AI-driven clustering – have broadened the methodological repertoire. Collectively, these studies show that network analysis not only reveals latent narrative structures but also enables comparative, scalable investigations across languages, genres, and media, making it a powerful tool for advancing digital humanities research.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts social network theory, which focuses on the relational structures through which human interaction is organized. The conceptual roots of social network theory can be traced to Jacob L. Moreno, who, in 1934, introduced the practice of sociometry and the use of sociograms to depict interpersonal relations. Moreno's innovation marked a decisive turn from individualistic accounts of social life to an understanding that behaviour, influence, and identity are deeply embedded in networks of relations. Later, scholars like Harrison White, Linton Freeman, Wasserman, and Faust (1994) extended and formalized this approach.

Central to Social Network Theory is the idea that relations, rather than individual attributes, are the most important predictors of social outcomes. Actors are not independent units but are instead embedded in webs of connections that shape their opportunities, constraints, and patterns of interaction. These relation patterns are not random but are structured as hierarchies of influence, flows of communication, and spaces of inclusion and exclusion. The position an actor occupies within a network – whether central, peripheral, or intermediary – profoundly affects access to resources and the exercise of power. Furthermore, the strength of ties, the density of clusters, and the presence of gaps or "structural holes" all contribute to shaping how information circulates and how authority or resistance is enacted within a given system.

The language of social network theory encompasses a broad range of terminology, including degree centrality, betweenness centrality, closeness centrality, network hubs, bridging, and structural holes. Degree centrality, the most rudimentary indicator of an actor's structural positioning and emergent power within a network, quantifies an actor's connectedness by tallying its direct ties to other actors. Betweenness centrality captures the extent to which an actor occurs on the shortest paths between other pairs of actors, thus revealing its broker or gatekeeper potential. Closeness centrality reflects an actor's efficiency in reaching others and the degree of independence from intermediaries. The notion of hubs denotes highly connected or structurally influential nodes. Bridging and structural holes emphasize the value of actors who connect otherwise disconnected clusters, acting as brokers or bridges (Burt, 1992).

Applied to literature, Social Network Theory offers a robust interpretive framework for examining characters not merely as isolated textual entities but as nodes embedded within relational architectures. As Moretti (2011) argues in his formulation of a "network turn" in literary studies, such an approach allows critics to perceive hidden structures of hierarchy, dependence, and resistance that are often obscured by traditional close reading. In *Purple Hibiscus*, these insights are particularly resonant.

This study suggests that *Purple Hibiscus* is not only thematically rich but also presents characters that are structurally bound in relationships that define their roles in the narrative. Reading the novel through the lens of Social Network Theory thus enables a deeper appreciation of how power is distributed, challenged, and reconfigured within the network of human connections.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach by combining qualitative textual annotation and analysis with quantitative network analysis and visualization. The primary data source was Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, from which character interactions were systematically extracted. The process began with a close reading of the novel, during which the researcher identified instances of quoted and reported speech, as well as non-verbal communication, as markers of social interaction between characters. The researcher chose this method of character interaction because it encompasses both explicit and implicit forms of relational engagement in the narrative and captures verbal exchanges, mediated accounts of dialogue, and physical or gestural cues that signal social connection.

The annotation was conducted manually to ensure interpretative accuracy and contextual sensitivity. Each interaction was tallied to determine the frequency of contact between character pairs. This manual counting process enabled the researcher to preserve narrative details that might be overlooked by fully automated extraction methods, particularly when character references or communicative acts are embedded in complex sentence structures or culturally specific idioms.

The annotated dataset was then converted into a structured format suitable for computational analysis, with each record consisting of a source character, a target character, and the corresponding interaction frequency (weight). This data was analysed and visualized using three Python libraries: NetworkX (for graph construction and calculation of social network measures such as degree centrality, betweenness centrality, and closeness centrality), SpaCy (for text processing and named entity recognition to validate character identification), and Matplotlib (for generating high-resolution static network visualizations).

Using NetworkX, the network was modelled as an undirected, weighted graph, where nodes represented characters and edges represented the presence and strength of interactions, determined by frequency counts. The weights assigned to each edge corresponded directly to the number of interactions between the connected characters. Centrality metrics were computed to assess structural positions and the distribution of influence across the network. Matplotlib was employed to produce precise, interpretable visual representations of the static network, highlighting relational patterns, community structures, and relative positions of characters.

This methodological design allowed for both a macroscopic examination of the overall social architecture of *Purple Hibiscus* and a microscopic tracing of the specific communicative events that underpin it. By combining manual qualitative coding with computational analysis, the study ensured methodological rigour while preserving fidelity to the text's narrative subtleties.

Centrality and Power Dynamics in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*

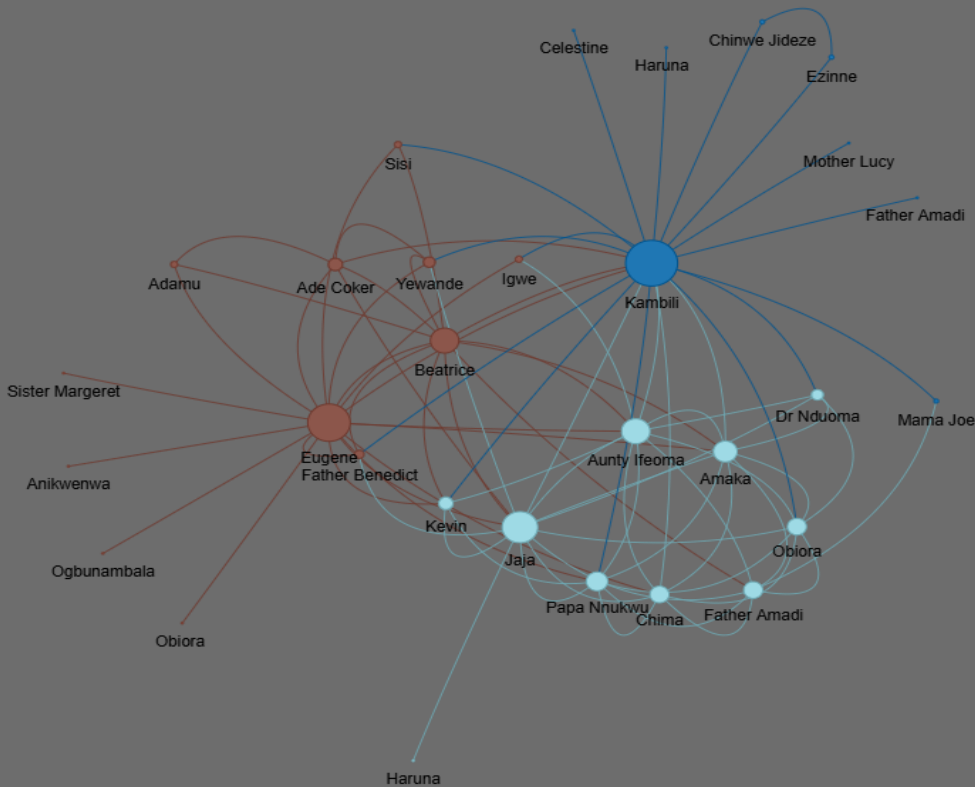


Fig 1. Static Social Character Network of *Purple Hibiscus*

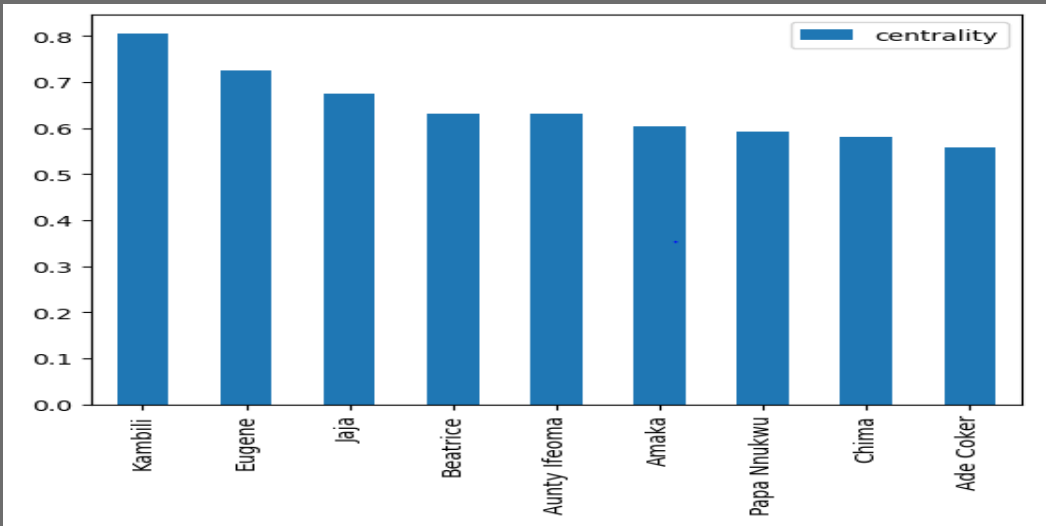
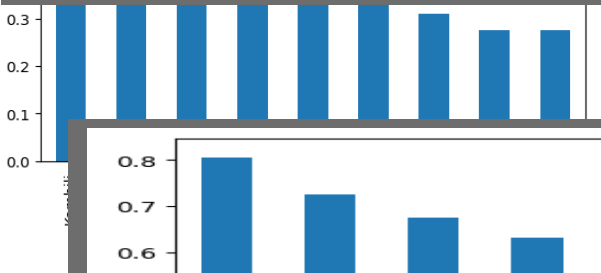


Fig 4. Closeness Centrality in *Purple Hibiscus*

At the core of this network stands Eugene Achike, a patriarch, businessman, political influencer, and devout Catholic, who is the most influential figure. His dominance, however, is coercive rather than connective. Kambili's account of Palm Sunday, in which he lashes out at Jaja for missing communion, reveals the violence through which he maintains his hub-like status:

Papa looked around the room quickly, as if searching for proof that something had fallen from the high ceiling, something he had never thought would fall. He picked up the missal and flung it across the room, toward Jaja. It missed Jaja completely, but it hit the glass *étagère*, which Mama polished often. It cracked the top shelf, swept the beige, finger-sized ceramic figurines of ballet dancers in various contorted postures to the hard floor, and then landed after them. Alternatively, it landed on their many pieces. It lay there, a huge leather-bound missal that contained the readings for all three cycles of the church year. (p. 15)

Here, Eugene's centrality is sustained by fear. His ties extend widely – to priests, nuns, editors, employees, and family – but each connection is structured by vertical authority. His high closeness centrality, moreover, signals the reach of his ideological influence, which penetrates even into the lives of those at the margins of his network, such as the journalist Ade Coker, whose dissent ultimately costs him his life.

Against this authoritarian hub, Kambili emerges as a figure of transitional centrality. At first, her position is one of silence and enclosure. This circumscribed world maps onto her father's tightly bound cluster. However, her sojourn in Nsukka begins to reconfigure her position. Through new ties to Amaka, Obiora, and especially Father Amadi, she gains betweenness centrality as a bridge between authoritarian enclosure and the liberating openness of her aunt's household. The network metaphor here reflects a more profound narrative truth: Kambili's growing capacity to connect across clusters parallels her movement from enforced silence to an emergent voice.

Jaja, too, embodies a form of transitional centrality, though his trajectory is more confrontational. His betweenness centrality reflects an increasing independence that culminates in his ultimate act of defiance. In assuming responsibility for his father's death, he reconfigures the family's relational structure. Although protective rather than factual, Jaja's declaration dramatizes the shift from subordination to self-determination. His centrality is no longer transitional but sacrificial, a position that destabilizes the authoritarian hub his father embodied.

In contrast to Eugene's coercion and Jaja's revolt, Auntie Ifeoma models a connective form of centrality. Her household, unlike Eugene's, is decentralized, its ties marked by laughter, debate, and mutuality. If Eugene's hub enforces silence, Ifeoma's hub fosters dialogue. Structurally, she bridges Enugu and Nsukka, authoritarian rigidity and intellectual freedom. Thematically, she offers Kambili and Jaja a living model of alternative authority – one that is nurturing rather than repressive.

Taken together, these dynamics suggest that centrality in *Purple Hibiscus* is never singular in meaning. For Eugene, it entrenches domination; for Kambili, it marks the fragile emergence of autonomy; for Jaja, it embodies resistance and sacrifice; and for Ifeoma, it represents the possibility of connective, liberatory power. By aligning structural position with narrative

trajectory, Adichie's novel demonstrates that power is not only enacted through characters' words and actions but also through the evolving architecture of their relationships.

Clustering and Community Structure in *Purple Hibiscus*

One of the most illuminating dimensions of social network analysis is the study of clustering – the tendency of characters to form tightly knit groups whose internal ties are denser than their connections to outsiders. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie constructs two principal clusters whose contrasting structures dramatize the novel's central conflict between authoritarian repression and liberatory openness. These are the Enugu household of Eugene Achike and the Nsukka household of Auntie Ifeoma. The opposition between them is not merely thematic but architectural: the relational logic of each cluster encodes its values, its vulnerabilities, and its possibilities for transformation.

The Enugu cluster is defined by its rigidity and verticality. At its center stands Eugene, whose authority saturates every tie in the network. His household operates as a tightly bound system where interactions occur primarily through him and are governed by fear and silence. The family members – Beatrice, Jaja, and Kambili – are all linked to Eugene, but not directly to one another in any meaningful sense. Their relations are mediated and constrained, producing what social network theorists call a star-shaped cluster: many ties radiating from a single hub, but few horizontal connections among the peripheries. Such structures may appear cohesive but are, in fact, brittle, as they depend entirely on the central node. In literary terms, this cluster embodies authoritarian control, in which silence is both a symptom and a mechanism of domination.

In stark contrast, Auntie Ifeoma's household in Nsukka exemplifies a decentralized and web-like cluster. While she is the household's anchor, ties circulate freely among her children – Amaka, Obiora, and Chima – and extend outward to visitors such as Kambili, Jaja, and Father Amadi. Here, interaction is multilateral rather than unidirectional. Ifeoma's centrality is not coercive but facilitative, allowing her children to speak, argue, and even challenge her. Kambili is stunned when Ifeoma openly mocks Eugene's rigid schedules:

Auntie Ifeoma stared at the paper in Jaja's hand. Then she started to laugh so hard that she staggered, her tall body bending like a whistling pine tree on a windy day. "Eugene gave you a schedule to follow when you are here? Nekwanu anya, what does that mean?" Auntie Ifeoma laughed some more before she held out her hand and asked for the sheet of paper. When she turned to me, I brought mine, folded in crisp quarters, out of my skirt pocket. (p. 132)

This laughter, alien to Kambili's experience in Enugu, dramatizes the ideological opposition between the clusters. Where Eugene's cluster enforces silence, Ifeoma's fosters dialogue. Structurally, it is more resilient: the density of ties is distributed rather than centralized, enabling the circulation of ideas and emotions even in the absence of one node.

The thematic force of clustering in *Purple Hibiscus* emerges most clearly in the movement across boundaries. Kambili and Jaja, initially contained within the Enugu cluster, experience a profound transformation upon entering Nsukka. Kambili, in particular, undergoes a structural and psychological reconfiguration as she forms ties beyond her father's authority. The turning point occurs during her encounters with Father Amadi, who encourages her to voice herself: "*I laughed. It sounded strange, as if I were listening to the recorded laughter of a stranger being played back. I was not sure I had ever heard myself laugh*" (p. 186). This

moment of laughter signifies more than a fleeting emotional release; it marks her integration into the Nsukka cluster and her gradual emergence from silence. Social network theory describes such positions as boundary-spanning ties, and in the novel, they become metaphors for personal awakening.

Jaja's transformation is equally marked. His exposure to Nsukka emboldens him to resist his father's authority, culminating in his symbolic refusal to attend communion. In network terms, his shifting ties weaken Eugene's cluster's cohesion while strengthening his alignment with the alternative community.

The juxtaposition of these two clusters illustrates how social structures embody thematic tensions. Eugene's household encodes the dangers of centralized control, where all ties reproduce obedience and fear. Ifeoma's household, by contrast, models a decentralized community that nurtures autonomy, dialogue, and growth. The bridges between them – Kambili, Jaja, and Ifeoma herself – make possible the circulation of alternative values across otherwise sealed boundaries.

Thus, clustering in *Purple Hibiscus* does more than organize the novel's social map; it dramatizes the conflict between autocracy and freedom, silence and speech, stagnation and transformation. By mapping clusters, we see how the novel encodes repression and liberation not only in characters and themes but also in the very architecture of its relational worlds.

Bridging Roles and Social Mobility in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

In social network theory, bridging roles are vital because they connect otherwise isolated clusters, allowing the circulation of resources, information, and alternative values. Ronald Burt terms these gaps "structural holes" – openings in the network that only certain actors can span. In *Purple Hibiscus*, figures such as Auntie Ifeoma, Kambili, Jaja, and Father Amadi bridge the authoritarian cluster of Eugene's Enugu household with the open, dialogic cluster of Nsukka. Their bridging positions do not simply restructure the network; they also dramatize the novel's exploration of social mobility, liberation, and identity transformation.

Auntie Ifeoma stands out as the most explicit bridge, straddling two clusters divided by both kinship and ideology. While she is Eugene's sister, her home in Nsukka embodies values directly opposed to his. By welcoming Kambili and Jaja into her household, she creates a relational passage between authoritarian closure and pluralistic openness. If Eugene's hub enforces silence, Ifeoma's bridge introduces noise, dialogue, and vitality. Her ability to connect these worlds is not merely structural but thematic: she becomes the medium through which Eugene's children encounter alternative models of family, faith, and authority.

Kambili's narrative stance positions her as a structural bridge. Initially, she is fully enclosed within her father's cluster, her ties circumscribed by his authority. However, her visit to Nsukka initiates a profound structural shift. As she forms new ties with Amaka, Obiora, and Father Amadi, her betweenness centrality increases, gradually making her a living bridge between clusters. Through Kambili, silence gives way to voice, and authoritarian submission gives way to mediation. She carries across the values of openness, affection, and intellectual curiosity that Nsukka embodies.

Jaja also occupies a bridging role, though his trajectory emphasizes resistance more than mediation. His betweenness centrality grows as he aligns increasingly with Ifeoma's cluster, culminating in his open defiance of his father. His bridging role is most dramatically expressed in his final act, when he assumes responsibility for Eugene's death. Structurally, he undermines Eugene's dominance by positioning himself as the family's central protector. His

bridging role thus enables mobility not just across clusters but across identities – from subordinated son to sacrificial leader.

Father Amadi exemplifies a different kind of bridging, one that spans not just households but ideologies. His form of Catholicism contrasts sharply with Eugene's punitive orthodoxy. By encouraging Kambili's voice, he bridges the divide between a faith that silences and a faith that liberates. Kambili recalls her rare experience of joy in his presence: "*I laughed. It sounded strange, as if I were listening to the recorded laughter of a stranger being played back. I was not sure I had ever heard myself laugh*" (p. 186). Here, Father Amadi bridges the gap between repression and self-discovery, offering a religious model that affirms life rather than disciplines it.

The significance of these bridges lies in their capacity to facilitate social mobility. In network theory, mobility occurs when actors gain access to new clusters and resources, enabling them to renegotiate their identities. For Kambili and Jaja, ties to Nsukka provide precisely the mobility they need, allowing them to imagine life beyond their father's control. Without bridges like Ifeoma, Amadi, or their own emergent roles, the two clusters – Enugu and Nsukka – would remain isolated, reproducing stagnation and repression.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, bridging is both a structural and thematic principle. It connects closed and open worlds, authoritarianism and freedom, silence and voice. By dramatizing how characters occupy and transform these bridging roles, Adichie illustrates that liberation is not only psychological but also relational: it emerges through connections that span boundaries and open pathways into new modes of life.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that applying Social Network Theory to Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* illuminates dimensions of the text that remain obscured in conventional literary analysis. The analysis uncovered how power, intimacy, resistance, and transformation circulate through the novel's social structure. The integration of static and dynamic network approaches revealed both the macro-structural features of the narrative – such as centrality, clustering, and bridging – and their temporal evolution as the plot unfolded.

Centrality measures clarified that influence in the novel is not monolithic: Eugene's dominance is sustained through coercive centrality, while Kambili's and Jaja's transitional positions highlight the potential for resistance. Clustering analysis highlighted the contrast between Eugene's authoritarian, insular household network and Auntie Ifeoma's open, pluralistic community in Nsukka, dramatizing the thematic tension between repression and liberation. Bridging roles, especially those embodied by Kambili, Jaja, and Ifeoma, illustrated how characters negotiate structural holes, enabling the circulation of alternative values across otherwise disconnected communities. These structural insights correspond to the novel's thematic preoccupation with silence and voice, control and freedom, and oppression and transformation.

The analysis reveals that meaning in *Purple Hibiscus* is not only encoded in its language, imagery, and themes, but also in the patterned relations that bind its characters. Network analysis thereby enriches our understanding of how identity and power are socially constructed and contested in literary texts. *Purple Hibiscus* emerges as a novel deeply concerned with the structure of human connection. Its characters are not simply isolated agents of plot but nodes embedded in evolving networks of intimacy, violence, and possibility. Social network analysis, by making hidden scaffolding visible, affirms that the story of Kambili and her family is at once a story of authoritarian closure and the fragile but persistent search for liberation.

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