

Examining Issues of Racial Perception and White Supremacy in Mohsin Hamid's The Last White Man using a Critical Race Theory Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

*This study analyses Critical Race Theory in the context of Mohsin Hamid's 2022 novel, The Last White Man, with particular emphasis on the theoretical construct of White Fragility as articulated by Robin Diangelo (2018). White Fragility demonstrates how black people face racial discrimination while white people protect themselves when people talk about skin colour. A textual analysis method has been applied through this research work. The main research purpose investigates why white people oppress black people. The study investigates how white people consider themselves better than black people while white people receive unfair benefits in different situations and how their racial identity makes them feel safe. The results show that The Last White Man characters' experience oppression through social systems which maintain racial power differences. The widespread distribution of racial advantages to white people in different situations creates significant challenges. White people tend to feel more secure because of their racial identity which leads to dangerous situations. Research findings from The Last White Man indicate that characters of colour are subjected to oppression by white individuals. The narrative particularly highlights the struggles faced by the protagonist, Anders, who encounters numerous obstacles throughout his life. The difficulties he experiences with his family relationships lead to a heart breaking scene in which his mother turns away from him. The analysis shows that society exists as a system which establishes white individuals as superior while designating black people as inferior.*

**Keywords:** Racial Discrimination, White supremacy, Racial discrimination, The Last White Man, White Fragility

## INTRODUCTION

The Last White Man authored by Mohsin Hamid in 2022, has been examined through the framework of critical race theory. The novel depicts white supremacy and racial discrimination as its main themes. The story shows how Anders the main character handles multiple obstacles that occur when his skin color changes. Anders experiences different social reactions after he undergoes the transformation. The character experiences both personal and social challenges according to Khadim (2024). Mohsin Hamid, a renowned Pakistani novelist, uses his writing to show the harsh reality that Pakistani people endure according to Narzary (2021). The author discusses important topics that include racial discrimination, identity, migration, race, racism, and white supremacy.

Mohsin Hamid shows how racial hierarchies affect racial identity through his literary works which examine these complex racial identity issues. Banks (2000) asserts that children experience significant

racial discrimination in contrast to their white counterparts. Omi and Winant (2015) further emphasize that racial identity is not inherent; rather, it is constructed by societal factors. The process of social construction creates different types of disputes which emerge among community members. People exhibit different behaviors because of their racial background which shows that race-based behavior patterns change through social contact with various groups.

Critical race theory emerged during the 1970s and 1980s as a moment which included both activists and scholars who studied the relationship between race and racism and power dynamics (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Derrick Bell stands as the main creator of critical race theory whereas Kimberle Crenshaw and Richard Delgado and Mari Mastuda function as its main co-founders. The theory demonstrates how human societies change their views about people with different skin tones. Asheeke (2023) shows important elements of white fragility because white people tend to assert their superiority over black people who experience systemic victimization from that group. The *Last White* novel demonstrates how society handles complex problems through its examination of white supremacy and racial discrimination.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study investigates Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man* through critical race theory to show its significance. The novel presents racial discrimination and white supremacy as its central themes. The research uses Robin Diangelo's theoretical framework from *White Fragility* to address an existing research gap. The analysis examines how different social groups face discrimination from white people throughout the story of *The Last White Man*. The research holds social value and educational importance because it encourages readers and students and educators to reflect on their racial identity and to identify the everyday discrimination which exists as common practice. The study advances the ongoing discussion about white supremacy and racial discrimination.

### **Statement of the Problem**

*The Last White Man* investigates how society reacts to Anders who experiences racist treatment after his skin color changes. The story shows people changing their skin colors to demonstrate a social system which treats white people as more valuable than those with darker skin. The novel presents important social themes through its focus on racial discrimination and white supremacy which permeate throughout the story. Critical race theory analysis demonstrates that racial discrimination results from systematic and social systems which extend beyond individual moral shortcomings. The critical analysis shows that the main problem arises because society treats whiteness as a hidden standard which only becomes visible when it does not exist. *The Last White Man* examines how racial power structures remain persistent when people lack defined racial identities.

### **Research Questions**

- Q1. How societal changes result from racial discrimination in *The Last White Man*?
- Q2. How does the novel *The Last White Man* depict racial hierarchy between white and Black individuals?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Critical Race Theory**

The authors Afzal, Fatima, and Dar (2023) implement Critical Discourse Analysis as their theoretical framework for this novel. The author presents racial discrimination against black people who experience daily disadvantages because of white superiority in this novel. The study examines black people who face racial injustice and social inequality. Singh and Manzoor (2023) apply Michael Foucault's

Discourse of Racism and Identity Crisis as their theoretical framework to demonstrate how society constructs racial identity. The entire society shows white people as superior. Bhopal (2023) explains that George Floyd lost his life because white police officers killed him for being a black man. Racial discrimination resulted in people being treated as inferior while their needs received minimal attention.

Over the course of history, Black people have faced discrimination which denied them equal rights in various fields such as work, education, and healthcare services. White people maintained control over all areas of existence, which included both personal affairs and social interactions with Black people. Mehboob and Saeed (2024) use Furlough's Critical Discourse analysis (CDA) framework to examine *The Last White Man* through its main character's development and the effects of his skin color-based inferiority complex. Society has consistently pushed Black people to the margins while denying them the dignity that they rightfully deserve. Okello and Maritim (2022) use the theoretical framework which Miles and Huberman established in 1994 to analyze *The Bluest Eye* *The Beloved* and the writings of Dorris Lessing.

The authors of this research study the ways white people treat black people through their discriminatory actions. African Americans have consistently faced systemic disadvantages across various aspects of life, including education, where their schools were often neglected. This group has experienced multiple instances of marginalization which resulted in their designation as "the other." Singh (2024) applies critical Race Theory to analyse "To kill a Mocking Bird." The explanation shows how racism from society creates deep negative effects which last throughout people's entire existence. Jim Crow Laws prohibited Black people from using public buses and churches and schools and hotels and rest rooms which belonged to white people. They faced discrimination in various places while most people directed contemptuous stares toward them.

#### **Studies on *The Last White Man* and Mohsin Hamid**

Khadim and Ali (2024) conduct an analysis of *The Last White Man* through a postcolonial lens. The author uses Franz Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask* as a framework to study otherness and cultural conflict and identity. The study of Homi K Bhabha's concepts from *The Location of Culture* (1994) shows how Mastoi and Shaikh (2024) plan to use his theoretical concepts. They study how people from different cultures experience cultural conflicts and develop hybrid identities and face identity challenges. Mujahid and Aamir (2024) use deconstruction theory with Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask* (1967) to demonstrate how Black Americans experience oppression by White people who treat them as indigenous people. Racism creates a traumatic experience which leads to victims developing an inferiority complex. The author shows how white people maintain hostile animosity and prejudiced views against African descent individuals. Rehman, Tariq and, Ullah (2025) draw on Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, articulating that black individuals are often viewed as the 'other' and consequently face mistreatment.

The conflicts that arise from their racial identity. The author studies the existing social standards and how people react to them. The authors Ijaz Anwar and Farhad (2023) analyse the mental difficulties which the characters face in the novel *The Last White Man*. The scholars Mastoi Shaikh and Mughal (2024) use Homi K Bhabha's Postcolonial theory from *The Location of Culture* (1994) to examine postcolonial issues especially the identity crisis which serves as the main theme in *The Last White Man*. The study asserts that global conditions present multiple complex problems which include racial discrimination and cultural hybridization and the remaining effects of colonialism.

Colleen Lutz Clemens (2022) claims that Mohsin Hamid achieves mastery in storytelling because he creates every sentence and phrase with deep hidden meaning. The artistic style of his writing enables readers to achieve total enjoyment from his novel works.

The research conducted by Khan and Umer (2020) examines how *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2020) uses symbolic elements to express cultural and socio-economic conflicts throughout its narrative. The

research shows how the 9/11 attacks and subsequent American military actions created severe consequences for Muslims who lived in the United States. The authors provide an account of the racial discrimination that emerged after the incident together with the social unrest and political turmoil and religious conflicts that followed. Sadiq Neelam and Javed (2020) use Foucauldian critical theory to analyze the novel *Exit West* through their research work. The research study focuses on how 9/11 attacks caused negative effects for Muslim communities. The research study documents how people from this group experience widespread feelings of fear and anxiety and insecurity. The authors study how violent outbreaks and terrorist attacks and Islamic fundamentalism have become more prevalent in Muslim communities after the 9/11 event. The researchers use Fanon's theories about colonial identity and mimicry and hybridity and the Third space for expression together with Bhabha's concept of the transitional position of the colonized other to analyze *Exit West*.

In this framework, hybridity signifies the intermingling of diverse cultures, whereas the concept of the third space encompasses the intricacies and importance of cultural experiences. In another investigation, Prasai (2025) applies postcolonial theory to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to examine the identity conflicts which main character Changes experiences after moving to the United States for work. He becomes an outsider who faces hostility from Americans because his eastern clothing reveals his cultural background.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research utilizes qualitative research methods which use textual analysis as the main method of investigation. The purpose of qualitative research methods according to Korstjens and Moser (2017) is to study how people perceive their daily existence and their life experiences within their surroundings. The research examines how Anders undergoes a transformation which leads to particular reactions from society. The research study presented in Orange (2023) investigates how people show their behaviours and opinions throughout their daily activities. The research uses Robin Deangelo's work *White Fragility* (2018) as an important perspective for its entire research process.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study employs critical race theory as its main theoretical framework through which it uses *White Fragility* by Robin Deangelo (2018) as its main theoretical framework. The research implements textual analysis as its chosen methodological framework. Disangelo presents multiple essential elements through this particular framework.

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The chapter presents the analysis of the data using a qualitative research approach. The study uses textual analysis to study fundamental ideas about racial discrimination and white supremacy which exist in the chosen texts.

Racial Discrimination

White Supremacy

Racial Discrimination.

1. "Anders notices that his darker skin makes him an object of fear rather than comfort."(53).

The after mentioned lines show that physical appearance determines racial discrimination more than personality traits do. Society perceives Anders differently after he undergoes a skin color transformation even though he keeps his original identity.

2. “Ordinary actions begin to carry risk as society treats his body as a threat.”(58).

Mohsin Hamid argues that people of color need to understand their actions because racial bias creates dangerous situations which lead to others viewing them with suspicion.

3. “The change in race exposes how quickly belonging can be withdrawn.” (61).

Additionally, the alteration in Anders’s racial identity underscores the precariousness of social belonging; upon ceasing to be recognized as white, he forfeits the security and privilege previously afforded by his race. This situation highlights the fragile nature of societal inclusion.

1. Violence and suspicion can follow skin colour, not character or behaviour. (p. 72).

This novel critiques the tendency of racism to overlook individual identity. Numerous individuals face judgement and punishment based on their actions, thereby perpetuating systematic discrimination.

2. Power structures remain intact, even as the racial categories shift. (P. 103).

This indicates that racism is fundamentally structural rather than merely a personal issue; while racial identities may shift, the system of power and inequality persist consistently.

3. He understood now how easily fear could attack itself to skin. (P. 54).

Furthermore, Hamid recognizes the insidious nature of fear, understanding that it can easily be associated with one’s skin colour. This realization underscores the irrational and deeply entrenched nature of racial perception.

7. The world had not changed; only his place in it had. (P. 62).

This highlights the constancy of societal values while illustrating that it is primarily Anders racial identity that shifts, which is turned exposes the racial prejudices he experiences.

White Supremacy.

1. “One morning Anders, a white man, woke up to find he had turned a deep and undeniable brown”. (p.1).

The concept of white supremacy is illustrated. In a notable scenario, Anders, a white male, awoke one morning to discover that his skin colour had profoundly changed to a deep and unmistakable brown.

2. “He was overtaken by emotion... but above all... an expected, murderous rage. He wanted to kill the coloured man who confronted him...to leave nothing standing but himself...” (P. 66).

The character experienced a surge of intense emotions, particularly a profound, anticipated rage that drove him to contemplate the murder of the man of colour who challenged him, with the desire for his own survival as the sole outcome.

3. A white man had indeed shot a dark man, but also that the dark man and the white man were the same.” (P. 56).

It is crucial to recognize that both the white man and the dark man were, in fact, the same individual. Thus the story illustrates that they would not allow him, nor anyone else, to diminish their value based solely on their whiteness.

4. “They would not let him take that, not him nor anyone else – just their whiteness as value or identity.”(P.56)

duals dis not permit him, nor anyone else, to believe that their whiteness alone conferred greater value or identity.

5. At work, Anders became quieter than he used to be, less sure of how any action of his would be perceived.... he had not yet lost all hope that a return to his old role was possible...” (p.60).

The character experienced a surge of intense emotions which included a deep-rooted rage that he had been expecting and this rage made him think about killing the man of colour who dared to confront him because he only wanted to survive. A white man had indeed shot a dark man but also that the dark man and the white man were the same. The story demonstrates that he would not permit anybody to establish his worth through their skin color because they would not give him or anyone else the power to determine their value based only on their whiteness. The two people were not permitted to take their whiteness as their only value because the two people were not permitted to take their whiteness as their only value because the two people were not permitted to take their whiteness as their only value. The two people were not permitted to take their whiteness as their only value because the two people were not permitted to take their whiteness as their only value.

affected his speaking style at work because he spoke less and showed more doubt about how people would perceive his actions. The statement shows that he still keeps some belief about his chances to regain his position. The study uses Robin Diangelo's White Fragility framework to analyze white supremacy and racial discrimination as its main elements. The novel *The Last White Man* shows how skin colour creates negative effects for people who experience it. The story shows how white people historically held more power than black people. People of colour experience systematic oppression which leads to them having fewer rights than white people. Racial discrimination exists throughout every institution which creates ongoing problems that affect white racial inequality. White people respond to these issues by maintaining their comfort while they protect existing racial power structures.

### **CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS**

Through his novel *The Last White Man* Mohsin Hamid demonstrates how skin colour creates internal and external conflicts which continue to affect present-day society. The story reveals how white people use their racial privilege to receive special treatment throughout all aspects of society. People with dark skin tones in this setting face deep identity conflicts which cause them to experience lifelong feelings of social isolation that result in their permanent subjugation. People need to recognize their actual living conditions which will help them achieve better social relationships. The novel shows that characters who white people considered white started to attack black people but their opinions changed when they underwent a skin colour transformation. Robin Diangelo’s framework of White Fragility offers critical insights into the persistent dynamics of white supremacy and racial discrimination within society. *The Last White Man* enables researchers to investigate Marxism and Existentialism and psychoanalytic gender theories through multiple theoretical frameworks.

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