



Journal homepage: <https://jll.uoch.edu.pk/index.php/jll>

---

## Quietly Loud: Unearthing Aversive Racism in Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* (2017)

<sup>1</sup>Radma Gul, <sup>2</sup>Saima Ayaz, <sup>3</sup>Laila

---

<sup>1</sup>M.phil Scholar at Department of English, University of Peshawar [radmagul@gmail.com](mailto:radmagul@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer in English, National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Peshawar Campus [saimaayaz@numl.edu.pk](mailto:saimaayaz@numl.edu.pk)

<sup>3</sup>Visiting Lecturer in English, National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Peshawar Campus

[Laila.sher@numl.edu.pk](mailto:Laila.sher@numl.edu.pk)

---

### Article Info

\*Corresponding author: (Laila)

Corresponding Author email

[Laila.sher@numl.edu.pk](mailto:Laila.sher@numl.edu.pk)

### Keywords:

*aversive racism,*  
*in-group member,*  
*out-group member,*  
*pro-ingroup orientation,*  
*interracial mistrust*

### Abstract

The current study explores a fairly unnoticeable but rampant kind of racism known as aversive racism, identified by Samuel L. Gaertner and John F. Dovidio; in Angie Thomas's sensational work *The Hate U Give*. It illuminates the way different characters in the novel are racists without meaning to be and how racism only exists in their subconscious of which they are ignorant. They consciously believe in the equality of all races. The present study is a dive into the psyche of the aversively racist characters and analyzes how their subconscious racist beliefs shape their behavior. It divulges the different ways aversive racism is practiced and how Black people and other minorities suffer because of it as depicted in the novel. The research contributes to creating awareness regarding this detrimental racism and its pernicious effects in society, like how it stimulates interracial mistrust and resentment among the Black and White races; and how it may be inhibited. The critical analysis of the novel also yields that aversive racism could very well be the major cause of the spontaneous killing of Black people at the hands of White cops. It also elucidates how society remains divided and broken because of these racial issues presented in the novel. The entire system in America being aversively racist is also unveiled through a thorough dissection of the book.

### Introduction

The world we live in today is considered at the peak of its modernity, advancement, and maturity. Barbaric historical practices like slavery, inequality, oppression, and outright racism, although still in existence, are scorned by the vast majority of the people and are considered to be in the past. Yet, it is regrettably not unusual to observe people of a particular race or creed being mistreated even in present times. The news is always rife with reports of murders, unjust imprisonments, and many other unwarranted incriminating accounts of Black, Arab, or immigrant people. This maltreatment is not only confined to substantial issues like not giving minorities their due rights or access to limited resources. A behavioral aspect is involved in further driving particular communities into a proverbial corner. It is a psychological obstacle in which people strongly believe they are non-racists, however, subconsciously they harbor racist opinions. Although they may not realize it, their relatively 'innocuous' remarks, jokes, or actions can give them away. Such a form of racism is called 'Aversive Racism'.

Aversive racism is a theory that explores how people subconsciously or implicitly behave differently when dealing with a member of a particular minority group such as Blacks, immigrants, or any other creed or ethnicity. They rationalize their aversion to a particular group by appealing to rules or stereotypes.

The novel *The Hate U Give*, by the African-American author Angie Thomas, was published in 2017. It is narrated from the perspective of Starr Carter, a teenage Black girl who is the main protagonist. She witnesses her friend Khalil getting shot by the police while he is unarmed and has done nothing to deserve it. The novel loudly portrays the amount of trouble, psychological trauma, and hardship Starr goes through to try and highlight that Khalil was unjustly murdered, in a White community. Even though she risks her and her family's life by speaking up in various interviews and on news broadcasts, her efforts remain futile. The White police officer does not get convicted.

So, the novel richly and lucidly depicts different kinds of racism the Black community faces in contemporary American society; aversive racism being one.

*The Hate U Give* is Angie Thomas's debut novel. Starr Carter's character embodies Thomas's own experiences as a Black girl in a predominantly White school. The problems Starr encounters trying to adjust and be accepted at school and how conscious she is about every one of her moves. The novel is inspired by a true incident akin to the one Thomas composed. It was the shooting of a 22-year-old black man, Oscar Grant, in 2009 when he was completely defenseless and undeserving of the handling he received. According to witnesses' claims, the officer detained him assuming that he was involved in a fight, and then shot him without warning. The officer was only charged with second-degree (as opposed to first-degree) murder, after a lot of protesting, and sentenced to only two years in prison; of which he only served 11 months in a safe private cell. The incident is also one of the first instigators of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Thomas initially wrote a short story stimulated by Grant's case which won her a prize as a student, prompting her to develop it into a full-length novel. It was not the first incident of its kind and therefore needed to be talked about profusely. It is why the novel immediately received such high acclaim. It does not address the common old-school ways of racism but the new ones of the modern age. The focus of the study is all the characters of contemporary American society depicted in the novel. There are numerous incidents of carelessly wrongful murders of African Americans at the hands of the police, which makes this novel a vital piece for analysis. We have very recent examples of Daunte Wright (2021), George Floyd (2020), Breonna Taylor (2020), Stephon Clark (2018), Philando Castile (2016), Tamir Rice (2014) and the list goes on. In most of these cases, the officers were not prosecuted, even after killing a kid as young as 12 years old; and all of them either stemmed from misunderstandings on the side of the police or were deliberate killings.

Thomas's books are credible for not only discussing the problems Black people confront concerning White society but also the predicaments they face within their own Black community. Hence Thomas has not depicted her community as perfect but has taken the initiative to talk about the flaws and the system that engenders them, herself. Her novels feature coming-of-age stories in which the characters change positively along the way. They initially hide in their shells and are afraid but become stronger, more confident, and proudly embrace their identities later. They become more mature. The works could also be classified as feminist novels since the protagonist is usually a girl who finds her voice and pushes through many hurdles to try to change some state of affairs.

This study explores the aversive racism displayed by characters in Angie Thomas's novel *The Hate U Give*; as it is a venomous issue that needs to be efficiently addressed. It contributes to the existing trove of knowledge about the book *The Hate U Give* by analyzing it from a new perspective i.e. aversive racism which is embedded in the very roots of a society to which people are completely oblivious and therefore hurting others inadvertently. It can be directed at members of a particular province, country, religion, ethnicity, and even colored family members. Race is at the top of that list. The world can never be a peaceful place as long as these kinds of racial divides exist. Therefore, this research provides an incentive for introspection; by highlighting the various covert ways people can be racists and how they can work towards overcoming it. It accentuates the aversive racism Black people and other minorities face in the US today and the world in general. The paper provides a comprehension of how and why it exists. It also suggests ways to inhibit its serious effects on society and make it better.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

*The Hate U Give* received glowing reviews from critics upon its publication. It tackles sensitive and prevalent issues such as police brutality and systemic racism without sugarcoating anything. The book is a conversation starter. For many critics and readers, the novel is reminiscent of the timeless classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* for its scrutiny of race, morality, and justice. The *Guardian* commended Thomas for weaving a story that balanced personal grief with activism (Wheatle, 2017). Starr Carter is a multi-dimensional character whose voice is made more authentic and stronger by Thomas by providing her with the background and circumstances for an unfiltered view of her firsthand experiences in the White community. Copious literature is available on Thomas's magnum opus primarily tackling the fatality of racial injustices. Certain researchers have highlighted the lack of intersectional feminism in the novel, which furthers the divide between Black and White women by studying Hailey's character, who is a representation of some White feminists (Hubler, 2019). Other papers have looked at Starr's double consciousness while navigating two parallel worlds: her own and the White people's (Baker, 2017). Although the novel predominantly addresses the issues of racial prejudice and police violence, the issue of racism is more subtly woven into the fabric of the story. It enlightens us to how despite the various laws declaring black people as equal citizens and providing them equal opportunities, there is still a lot to be desired in how it is acted out.

Apprillia (2020) opines that Starr is not openly prejudiced against by the students at her school regarding her race but it is that quiet discrimination that eats away at her. Her feeling of inferiority in the socio-economic system

stems from her wish to be embraced by the White community. Kamilia (2020) argues that the novel *The Hate U Give* lucidly depicts how the Black population is always victimized by police brutality, how it affects them psychologically, and how they consequently react to such violations.

In talking about the social space occupied by marginalized people, Rudds (2016) explains how even the housing facilities of African Americans lead them to be stereotyped in society as people who come from ghettos. The ghettos themselves have certain stereotypes associated with them; such as blues and hip-hop and also socially destructive tags such as violence, poverty, and thugs. Since such stigmatization is prevalent till now it elucidates that people's minds regarding the understanding of social space have almost not changed at all.

According to Irawati (2018), racism is widespread in the social environment of the novel *The Hate U Give* because people assume bad things about Black people and that is a crucial factor in how they easily accept that Khalil deserved to be murdered. The distinction between the atmospheres of the White and Black areas is also visibly depicted as the serene and safe area and the area full of troubles and riots respectively.

Every society has a festering issue of criminal activities. However, Hanon (2004) comments that a majority of Americans associate Black men with criminality and violence, even if they do not acknowledge it. NYCLU (2019) stated that Black males between 14 and 24 years of age accounted for 38% of reported police stops between 2014 and 2017. In the same vein, Clarisa (2020) argues that according to some psychologists, fear stems from the implicit racial bias of Whites against Blacks. That is why the moment the police officer in the novel *The Hate U Give* sees Khalil move; he spontaneously perceives it as a sign of danger and shoots him.

Banjo (2019) explains how recent hit African-American films portray black and white characters, their relationships, and how they impact society. She illustrates what she calls the paradox of post-racialism and asserts how the natural and normal depiction of interracial friendships among Blacks and Whites in movies plays an influential role in blinding us to forms of modern racism and their effects on racial minorities in America.

Regarding the role of media in propagating biased ideals, Thombre (2020) highlights how the media in the novel fortifies the stereotypes and racial prejudices by focusing on depicting Khalil Harris as a thug or criminal; but not as a needy boy trying to earn to get his grandmother treated for cancer. Ynitri (2019) elucidates that according to very recent research, adult African Americans report how they still experience racial slurs and insensitive racial comments and also struggle with negative assumptions regarding their race in America. In *The Hate U Give*, Hailey's dad does not want her to spend the night at Starr's because she lives in the 'ghetto' where he does not want his daughter to be.

The protagonist's, Starr's, father instills in her from a young age to be cautious around White cops, as elucidated by Pinem (2020). She is taught to avoid any behavior that might deem her suspicious, recognizing that as a minority they had to conform to the demands of the Whites. This vigilance is rooted in the comprehension that giving them the wrong impression could cost Black people their lives. Additionally, research in the labor market demonstrated that resumes with White sounding names were given 50% more preference than those with Black sounding names in America. Even in the investigation regarding Khalil, the investigators' focus is more on his history and background rather than on the officer accountable for shooting him. They attempt to find reasons to justify his killing.

A thorough review of the available literature indicates a dearth of research analyzing the subtle acts of racism depicted in the novel from a psychological perspective, which this paper attempts to rectify. Overt racism has been investigated from every angle, but the characters in *The Hate U Give* are not explicit racists. Their racial attitude is a reaction incited by subconscious beliefs.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is qualitative. An interpretive approach has been used to uncover the different instances of aversive racism and their variety in the novel. All the diverse characters and their behaviors are analyzed using the aversive racism theory as explained in the theoretical framework.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The racial theory of aversive racism proposed by Samuel L. Gaertner and John F. Dovidio (1986) has been used to critically examine the characters and systems that promote this racial bias in *The Hate U Give*. Joel Kovel coined the term aversive racism. The theory explores how negative evaluations of racial/ethnic groups are realized by persistent avoidance of interaction with other racial or ethnic minorities. Aversive racism is characterized by more complex, ambivalent expressions and attitudes nonetheless with prejudicial views towards other races; as opposed to overt racism (Dovidio, J. F. & Gaertner, S. L., 2004). People who behave in an aversively racial way may hold strong egalitarian beliefs and will often deny their racially motivated behavior; but may change their behavior when dealing with a member of a minority group (Gaertner, S. L., & Dovidio, J. F., 1986).

Aversive racism theory is characterized by a conflict between positive aspects of people's conscious attitudes,

the denial of personal prejudice, and the harboring of underlying negative feelings and certain convictions about particular minorities.

Due to the current cultural values in the United States, most Whites have strong principles and beliefs concerning fairness, justice, and racial equality. However, because of an array of normal cognitive, motivational, and sociocultural processes that promote intergroup biases, most Whites also develop some negative feelings and beliefs about Blacks, of which they are ignorant and completely dissociate from their non-prejudiced self-images. These processes include the spontaneous categorization of people as in-group and out-group members on the basis of race (and the associated cognitive biases), motivations for status for oneself and one's group, and socio-cultural processes that promote stereotypes and system-justifying ideologies. Aversive racists discriminate in situations in which normative structure is weak or when they can justify or rationalize negative responses based on factors other than race (Gaertner, S. L., & Dovidio, J. F., 2000).

In such circumstances, aversive racists engage in behaviors that eventually harm Blacks but in ways in which they can retain their non-prejudiced self-image. An additional distinctive of aversive racism is that it often involves more positive attitudes and reactions toward Whites than toward Blacks, signifying a pro-ingroup rather than an anti-outgroup orientation. It maneuvers to systematically restrict opportunities for Blacks and members of other traditionally underrepresented groups, adds to miscommunication between factions, and also brews interracial distrust (Kovel, J., 1970). By having a better understanding of aversive racism people can work towards making or contributing to policies that can hinder its effects, like by focusing responsibility on decision-makers. They can also help identify ways to exterminate unconscious or inadvertent bias. The effects of aversive racism have been as destructive and pernicious as those of customary, overt racism (e.g., restrictions in economic opportunities). This paper unveils the numerous kinds of micro-aggressions and aversive racism against black people and other minority groups depicted in Angie Thomas's novel *The Hate U Give*.

## DISCUSSION

The current study analyzes different instances of aversive racism in the novel *The Hate U Give* by the popular African-American author Angie Thomas. The story features Starr Carter, who is the sole witness to Khalil's murder, at the hands of a White police officer. Her trauma, the struggle between her desire to reveal the truth to the world, and her simultaneous reluctance have all been brilliantly portrayed in the novel. The prime focus of the study is Starr Carter and other characters who struggle with aversive racism and micro-aggressions in school and other surroundings. Furthermore, the research uncovers its various detrimental effects on both the Black and White societies.

In the novel's beginning, the scene where Khalil and Starr get pulled over by the police for having a broken taillight is described. The officer pulls Khalil out of the car for arguing with him even though Khalil complies with his orders. Then when the officer's back is turned Khalil opens his car door to check on Starr and instantly gets shot thrice by the officer. Afterward, the officer is depicted as devastated. "*One-Fifteen sits on the sidewalk with his face buried in his hands. Other officers pat his shoulder and tell him it'll be okay*" (p. 33) The extract explains how the officer fires at Khalil *impulsively* rather than as a deliberate act. The officer believes he is doing his job as a completely impartial person, and has a genuine reason to stop Khalil. Yet at the critical moment when Khalil opens his car door, the officer assumes he is about to do something and shoots him before he processes his actions. It depicts the workings of his mind to be racist. Even the other officers, instead of sympathizing with people associated with the deceased, comfort one-fifteen as if his actions were merely a mistake and could be overlooked. All these behaviors reflect signs of aversive racism.

There is further proof that the officer, Brian, is known to be a nice, non-racist person at his workplace, by Blacks and Whites alike. His incrimination as an aversive racist can be parsed through a conversation between Starr's father, Maverick Carter, and her uncle Detective Carlos. Carlos opines that the shooting was not a matter of Black and White but about the boy being a drug dealer which must have threatened the officer. Maverick contradicts it by stating that if it were a White kid from a rich locale, it would not have happened. "... *he thought Khalil was a drug dealer, a thug. Why he assumed that though? By looking at Khalil?*" (p. 67) Carlos being Black himself explains on behalf of a White person who had killed a Black boy. It suggests that Brian was not an overt racist. Yet Maverick's points prove him an aversive racist because he feels threatened by Khalil for no reason. Hence, his racism and fear are something so internal and subconscious that neither he nor anyone else could identify it.

In chapter fourteen, Starr watches Brian's father's interview on Brian's behalf. He talks about Brian as a pitiful victim explaining how he was afraid for his life and wanted to get back to his family. He quotes Brian saying, "*Pop, soon as I pulled him over, I had a bad feeling,*" [...] "*Brian turned around and saw something in the car door. He thought it was a gun-*" (p. 304) These lines too prove how deeply rooted Brian's fear and perceptions were and how he automatically thought that he saw a gun when it was just Khalil's hairbrush. Hence, this is aversive racism at work because Brian unconsciously associated violence and aggression with Black people which led him to react as he



did.

It is mentioned in the same interview that Brian loved working in Garden Heights, Starr's Black neighborhood, because he wanted to make it a better place. Starr narrates,

*"Slave masters thought they were making a difference in black people's lives too. Saving them from their 'wild African ways.' [...] I wish people like them would stop thinking that people like me need saving."* (p. 303) These lines explain how Brian deep in his mind still thought about Blacks as savages who needed civilizing. He considers it a favor, a selfless act towards them. The idea might never have manifested in his mind in this way as he strongly believed himself to be performing a social service regardless of race; yet he found *victims* who needed such help only among Black people. This belief also proves him an aversive racist.

Starr later in her interview mentions that the officer keeps his gun pointed at her until help arrives, even after shooting Khalil. *"[I]m tired of them assuming. Especially when it comes to black people."* [...] *"This all happened because he [...] assumed that we were up to no good. Because we're black and because of where we live. [...] His assumption killed Khalil. It could've killed me."* (pp. 351-352) These lines clarify that the officer's mere speculation kills Khalil, not some concrete crime he had committed. No matter how the officer felt later, he deserved to be punished.

Starr goes to a prestigious predominantly White school called Williamson. She gives a detailed account of the characteristics she needs to be careful about or do differently so she would not be labeled with any of the Black people tags at school. She makes sure not to look angry even when she is and never gets in a fight with anyone. She talks about how it is okay for them to use slang because it looks cool, but for her to use it would mean being from the hood or ghetto. She, therefore, hates changing herself because of them.

So long as Starr acts refined, does not do anything inviting ridicule, and imitates the White folk, they somewhat accept her as an in-group member. However, she is well aware that if she does anything the Blacks are stereotyped for, their attitude towards her will change. Almost all the kids at school are seemingly non-racist. Nonetheless, Starr's cautious behavior stems from experiencing their aversive racist behavior, even though she could not outright stamp them as such.

Starr dates a White boy, Chris, at school. She says, *"I can't lie, we get the 'why is he dating her' stare that usually comes from rich white girls."* (p.107) This explicates how anomalous it seems to the Whites that a White boy would date a Black girl. They never state anything to Starr or Chris, or even discuss it among themselves. They only stare in a way that betrays their thoughts. Outwardly, they could find no reason to consider it wrong. However, their deeply rooted aversive racism leads them to categorize Chris as their in-group member and Starr as an out-group member. This makes it hard for them to accept their relationship. Starr indicates that everyone expects her to date the only other Black guy at school because that is what they consider *normal*.

The most potent example of an aversive racist in the book is one of Starr's best friends, Hailey. She and Starr have been close friends since childhood. They have each other's backs. In certain moments, however, it becomes conspicuous that Hailey is an aversive racist.

While playing a basketball game with Starr she says, *"Pretend the ball is some fried chicken. Bet you'll stay on it then."* (p.140) This ignites an immediate spark of contention between the two friends. Associating fried chicken exclusively with Blacks as something they ravenously eat is an inappropriate and offensive racist stereotype. It is a subtle racial remark that may not be counted as overt racism and therefore is overlooked. When Starr confronts Hailey about it, she says, *"It's fried chicken day!..."* [...] *".... You think I was being racist?"* [...] *"After everything we've been through, you think I'm a racist?"*

*"You can say something racist and not be a racist!"* (p.141) It is lucid how vehemently Hailey denies being a racist. She feels affronted about Starr even remotely suggesting that. She reasons that fried chicken was what they had just had for lunch; maintaining her non-racist stance. Her aversive racism is exposed by the fact that she directs such a comment only at Starr among all the people playing. Starr's reply demonstrates how such derogatory comments do not mark a person as racist only because it is not overt racism. It is, nevertheless, aversive racism. Hailey after talking it out with her again, says, *"... to accuse me of being racist, Starr? How can you even?"* (p. 143) This divulges her as an aversive racist because she remains non-racist in everyone's eyes and strongly believes it about herself too. Instead, she makes Starr feel guilty about accusing her.

At one point in the story, the Williamson students decide to protest Khalil's death as there is a 'Justice for Khalil' slogan circulating in the Black community. However, the only reason they choose to do it is so they can create a commotion and cut classes. Hailey is delighted about the idea but comments that it feels wrong to protest a drug dealer's death. Starr feels infuriated about how that concerns his murder when he was blameless. His being a drug dealer is revealed after his death. Hailey again accuses Starr of overreacting and goes on enthusiastically with the protest.

The reason Starr feels irate is firstly about how insignificantly Khalil's death is treated. Hardly any of the

students have any genuine remorse or sympathize with him. Instead, they use his death as their ticket to cutting classes. Secondly, it is Hailey's remark about not having to protest a drug dealer's death, which is all Khalil is in their eyes. They did not care about or even comprehend the rest of the picture. None of the students outright discriminate against Khalil based on his race. They even think they are doing something moral by protesting his death. Yet, with more probing scrutiny, it is ostensible how little they think about the unfairness of the case, and find his drug dealing a justification for his homicide. Hence, it evidences a case of aversive racism.

Starr watches the interview of Officer Brian's dad with both her friends Maya and Hailey. The person speaks about Brian as a miserable sufferer in the case, who had been subjected to both verbal and physical abuse. He describes Starr and Khalil as two menacing kids who kept cussing at him and could have taken him down. He also weeps about how hard it was for the entire family to deal with it. Hailey's immediate response to it is, "*This is awful, that poor family.*" [...] "*His son lost everything because he was trying to do his job and protect himself. His life matters too, you know?*" [...]

"*His life always matters more! That's the problem!*" (pp. 305-306) The dialogue is yet another substantiation of Hailey being an aversive racist. She immediately sympathizes with the White family when she hears their story and pities their suffering. She does not offer Khalil or his family the same sympathy because she cannot see the injustice in the case. She genuinely thinks the officer was protecting himself from the danger that was Khalil. This is an illustration of the pro-ingroup orientation of an aversive racist rather than anti-outgroup; because she tends to stand with and sympathize with her in-group members i.e. Whites, as opposed to the out-group members. Starr's response about White lives mattering more irritates Hailey who retorts that Starr wants to make herself feel better by blaming her. Starr's comment highlights how the entire system always favors White lives over Black. In such cases, the Blacks hardly get the justice they deserve.

Early in the novel, Hailey silently unfollows Starr's Tumblr when she starts reblogging all unfair Black killings. When Starr confronts her about it, she becomes furious again that Starr is insinuating she is a racist. Starr replies, "*I never even mentioned race.*" (p. 307) Maya reveals to Starr that Hailey unfollows her because she did not want to see all that 'black stuff'. The above exchange reasserts Hailey as an aversive racist. She is not an overt racist and does not dislike Blacks considering she is Starr's friend, but seeing all those Black issues subconsciously makes her uncomfortable and she therefore unfollows Starr. When she does not have a solid reason to give Starr, she steers the conversation toward her being accused of racism when there is no mention of it. It is because she desperately wants to preserve her non-racist image that the slightest insinuation of being racist riles her up.

Maya, who is Chinese, also discloses a racial remark Hailey makes to her. "*Hailey asked if we ate a cat. Because we're Chinese.*" (p. 309) This small segment represents the aversive racism Asians and other ethnic minorities receive in America. It proves that aversive racism is not only directed at people of color but rather at any minority or ethnic faction that is deemed as out-group members. Hailey thinks of it as an innocuous joke but it deeply offends Maya because it disrespects her culture. Hailey asserts, "*I'm not apologizing because it was only a joke! It doesn't make me a racist.*" (p.412) Hailey makes jests that stem from stereotypes about different races but never lets herself believe they are inappropriate or racist, because of which she conserves her non-racist image in her mind. Her subconscious, however, has such typecasts and beliefs drilled into it. Hence, Hailey checks all the boxes as an aversive racist.

Williamson's elitism and wealth are other factors that make Starr feel out of place. "*I suddenly remember how different I am from most of the kids here.*" (p. 98) About Chris, Starr remarks, "*I try to forget that he has an entire floor as big as my house and hired help that looks like me.*" (p. 103) The majority of the Black population is usually poor or average in America with no proper job opportunities. Starr's mother is a nurse and her father runs a small store in the neighborhood. They use whatever they earn to send their children to a good school because the local Black ones in their vicinity are breeding grounds for everything bad; like drugs, violence, and other immoralities. This displays how vastly different the Black and White spheres are. Khalil becomes involved in drug dealing because his grandmother gets fired from her job as she suffers from cancer and is going through chemo. So, he is left with no other avenue to fend for himself and afford her treatment with the small jobs that do not pay enough. He does nonetheless intend to quit the drug business after a while.

Maverick Carter has a discourse regarding these issues with his daughter Starr in which he elucidates various points. The dialog embodies the essence of the entire book. Maverick explains how when society mistreats the low, oppressed factions, it bites them later. That is why people fear them as well. He explicates that the low sections of society are in a pitifully corrupt state because they are not provided with room to earn legally even if they want to. Job opportunities are limited for them. Even if they could find jobs, they are not competent enough because they do not get quality education. Hence, like all other impoverished areas, they have no choice but to resort to unlawful moneymaking. Once they get involved in that, they either spend the rest of their lives in prison or lose so much money in the process that they are back to square one. Then they cannot get jobs due to their reputation and are again left

with no choice but to revert to their old ways. *“Corporate America don’t bring jobs to our communities, and they damn sure ain’t quick to hire us.[...] even if you do have a high school diploma, so many of the schools in our neighborhood don’t prepare us well enough.” [...] “That’s the hate they’re giving us baby, a system designed against us.”* (p. 212) The deficit in the area of the Blacks cannot be attributed only to faults with them but with the system. Nothing is done to improve their conditions and they are left to fend for themselves. Everyone in Garden Heights has small laborious jobs. Starr mentions how her friends live in ‘mini-mansions’ and are scared to spend time at her home in Garden Heights. In the earlier statement about Chris, Starr implies that the maids and servants at his house are mostly Black, suggesting those were the only jobs easily available to them.

Maverick Carter illuminates that the entire system has been designed against them; which is the cause of their poor circumstances no matter how hard they tried. The job prospects, good facilities, resources, etc. are all limited for the Blacks. Although the system in America boasts of being non-racist, it certainly is aversively racist. The Blacks and other minorities are not deliberately being kept from jobs or being neglected; it is done aversively. The system comes up with certain justifications for choosing Whites over others without blotting its non-racist facade. Hence it is a pro-in-group organization.

After Khalil’s death, Starr is summoned to the police station for her witness account. The detectives question her about how Khalil was acting during the incident; whether he was drunk, angry, speeding, not complying, etc. She tells them he had done nothing wrong and the officer had first yanked him out. The detective’s response to this is, *“Because Khalil was hesitant, right?”* (p. 126) Starr responds that he had complied and was getting out but the officer had still pulled him out, checked him thrice, and then shot him the moment he opened his door. After listening to this, they ask about his affiliation with drug dealing. Starr’s mother Lisa Carter, cuts in stating that their interrogation sounded like they were convicting Starr and Khalil instead of the cop. *“You haven’t asked my child about that cop yet, [...] “You keep asking her about Khalil like he’s the reason he’s dead.”* (p. 130) This reveals how the detectives maneuver the system to work in their favor when they are supposed to investigate the case. They assume everything incriminating about Khalil during the incident that would explain why the officer had shot him. When Starr informs them about the officer’s harassment, they try to justify his behavior, guessing that Khalil must have hesitated. When Starr refutes all their assumptions, they switch to asking about his drug dealing business. Starr feels they are not investigating the case but justifying it. The detectives say they want the entire picture. They are supposedly investigating it with complete impartiality. However, in such cases, their aversive racism rises to the surface. They subconsciously favor their in-group member over Khalil, an out-group member.

Even the media wrongfully portrays Khalil as a drug dealer and gang member, but not as the kid who had been murdered unfairly. Starr responds in an interview that everyone is focused on things he may have said or done to get himself killed. *“I didn’t know a dead person could be charged in his own murder,”* (p. 350) Starr highlights how the media effectively makes it reasonable that Khalil had been killed. The main issue gets buried under layers of excuses. There is no rage against the White officer. It can also be observed how easily people accept the justifications as true because of their subconscious stereotypes regarding Blacks; about them being violent gangsters and drug dealers. It makes them all aversive racists.

Another facet of aversive racism is that it prompts interracial distrust. The paper explores various instances of mistrust among the two races in *The Hate U Give*. Due to the aversive racism Black people face in America, they develop trust issues with the Whites. This mistrust works both ways.

Starr’s father advises her at a very young age about how to behave around a cop if they ever stop her. *“... you do whatever they tell you to do, [...] “Keep your hands visible. Don’t make any sudden moves. Only speak when they speak to you.”* (p. 28) This shows the level of mistrust and fear that Black people have of White cops because Black killings at the slightest provocation are not uncommon. Maverick Carter as a Black parent makes sure his daughter never becomes one of those victims and gives her clear instructions that could help keep her safe. Just before the incident of Khalil’s death, Starr wonders if any of his elders gave him the same advice. Khalil questions the cop about why they were stopped and makes the sudden move of opening the door when the officer’s back is turned; which gets him killed. So, this inscribed mistrust of White cops is discernibly due to their aversively racist behavior which the Blacks have thoroughly experienced.

Maverick Carter is the most cynical of all the characters about White people and finds it hard to trust them. He also does not get along with his brother-in-law, Carlos, because he is a police officer with a prestigious rank and lives among White people. Carlos’s sympathies therefore lean more towards them than his own people but his views change later.

Starr, afraid of his reaction, keeps the fact that she is dating a White boy a secret from her father. *“I’ve heard the stuff you’ve said about interracial couples. I didn’t want you talking about me and Chris like that.”* (p. 332) This depicts that her father has trouble tolerating it because he feels baffled that Starr would not choose her own people over Chris. It is hard for Maverick to accept him because of interracial trust issues.

Starr also occasionally faces the same dilemma about whether it is okay for her to date a White guy. “[A]m I betraying who I am by dating him?” (p. 133) This divulges that Starr is not entirely comfortable in her relationship with Chris. In the back of her mind, she has doubts about him and keeps her Black life and its issues concealed from him. This evidences interracial mistrust. Since Starr cannot be herself around other White people because of their aversive racism, her skepticism about all of them, including her closest friends, becomes an automated response. Starr does not want Chris to view her in the same light as Khalil. She avoids telling Chris about him simply because he is white. She does not expect him to understand her problems from her perspective and is doubtful about trusting him with such private and sensitive matters. It hints at the underlying trust issues embedded in her mind.

A glimpse of the ‘self and other’ theory can also be viewed in the novel. Starr expresses how she acts more sophisticated and refined by default around the Whites and cannot be herself. She checks her language and also makes sure to adopt their accent. “*It always happens around ‘other’ people...*” (p. 122) She does not trust them to treat her well or as an equal if she acts like a typical Black girl. This line shows the concrete demarcation between her race and the Whites. She refers to them as ‘other’. This too is a depiction of interracial mistrust.

Starr breaks into a physical fight with Hailey because of her persistent negative views regarding Khalil’s death. Her mother reprimands her saying she behaved exactly the way ‘they’ expect, like an uncivilized kid from Garden Heights. Starr narrates, “*There’s Them and then there’s Us. Sometimes they look at Us and don’t realize They are Us.*” (p. 415) Her mother constantly reminds her to behave well in front of ‘Them’ because they are the majority and hence the authority. The Blacks always feel the need to get on Their good side. Starr conveys that they are all the same people and need to be treated as such but the Whites do not look at them the same way. Starr and Chris are showcased as role models who learn to trust and care for each other despite their differences because Chris tries to understand her problems instead of overlooking them.

The situation escalates at the novel’s end because of the increasing anger, mistrust, and hatred between the races. Despite all of Starr’s life-risking efforts, the cop is not indicted. All Black people feel infuriated about the verdict. They seek to appease their anger through vandalism and arson of White-owned businesses. There are riots with people shouting, “*A hairbrush is not a gun*” and “*Justice for Khalil!*”

Starr feels hopelessly enraged after hearing the decision and decides to participate in the riots. Chris tries to talk her out of it saying it would not solve the problem, at which she bursts out, “*And neither did talking!*” [...] “*I did everything right, and it didn’t make a f\*\*\*g difference. I’ve gotten death threats, cops harassed my family, somebody shot into my house and all kinds of s\*\*t. And for what? Justice Khalil won’t get? They don’t give a f\*\*\*k about us so fine. I no longer give a f\*\*\*k.*” (p. 462) Such fervent feelings of animosity build up from aversive racism. Despite credible evidence, the officer is not charged. It is a statement to all Black people that their lives are not as significant as the Whites and similar choices will still be made in the future. This brews interracial mistrust that is deeply rooted in the fabric of society, lasts for generations, and continues to threaten peaceful coexistence.

## CONCLUSION

The study exposes a modern form of racism known as aversive racism in Angie Thomas’ *The Hate U Give*. Aversively racist people do not discriminate against minorities overtly but it is conspicuous in their behavior toward them. The characters of Officer Brian, Hailey, and the detectives all display aversive racism in the novel. They are subconsciously biased against Black people while upholding the persona of moral and impartial people. The paper reveals the catastrophic effects of aversive racism such as interracial mistrust and micro-aggression which culminate into full-blown animosity between the two races. It manifests in riots, shaky and insecure relationships, and unwelcoming behavior between both races in the novel. The aversive racism rooted in the edifice of the American system is also disclosed in the research. The Black population has always been disadvantaged in the form of unequal job opportunities, limited access to resources, and the poor condition of their settlements, as showcased in the book. Aversive racism also materializes in the shape of interracial mistrust which is devastating for a society. It is the cause of continual exclusion, rejection, and ultimately antagonism between the races.

In the current era, the mainstream population professes egalitarian beliefs. Therefore, subtle racism and micro-aggressions towards particular races and ethnicities can only be attributed to aversive racism. This issue exists not only in America but in any place where minorities or different races reside. This research serves to make people more conscious of it. It also aims to help close the gap between the so-called in-group and outgroup orientation and help society become more accepting. Aversive racism cannot be overcome unless people learn to be truly empathetic. Trevor Noah proficiently states that all the bad apples in the system commit unjustifiable deeds but the question is, where are the good apples; the heroes who work toward stopping such things from happening? Hence, once people become cognizant of aversive racism, they can work toward disabling it and live harmoniously with people of other ethnicities and communities.



## REFERENCES

- Aprillia, R. (2020). *Internalized racism in Angie Thomas' The Hate U Give*. Nigeria.
- Baker, K. (2017, November 1). Double consciousness in "The Hate U Give".
- Banjo, O. (2019). *The myth of colourblindness*. In *The paradox of post-racialism: Black Hollywood's voice in post-racial discourse* (pp. 89-112). University of Cincinnati.
- Clarisa, W. (2020). *Racial profiling in Angie Thomas' The Hate U Give*. Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Pragoya.
- Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (1986). *Prejudice, discrimination and racism*. Orlando: Academic Press.
- Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2004). *Aversive racism*. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 36, pp. 1-52). Elsevier Academic Press.
- Gaertner, S. L., & Dovidio, J. F. (2000). *Reducing intergroup bias: The common ingroup identity model*. Philadelphia: Psychology Press.
- Hanon, L. (2004). *Race, victim precipitated homicide, and the subculture of violence thesis*. *The Social Science Journal*.
- Hubler, A. (2019). In *Proceedings of the Children's Literature Association Conference*.
- Irawati, S. A. (2018). *The struggle of Black people to avoid stereotypes in Angie Thomas' The Hate U Give*. Semarang: Diponegoro University.
- Kamilia, Z. (2020). *Police brutality towards African Americans in 21st-century young adult literature*. Mohamed Kidher University of Biskra.
- Kovel, J. (1970). *White racism: A psychohistory*. NY: Pantheon.
- Pinem, P. (2020). *Racial discrimination portrayed in Angie Thomas' novel The Hate U Give*. Medan: University of Sumatera Utara.
- Rudds, C. T. (2016). *Invisible men: Space, race, and housing in African American literature*. Urbana, IL.
- Thombre, N. (2020). *The Hate U Give: A modern wake-up call to subtle racism*. *The Stanford Daily*.
- Thomas, A. (2017). *The Hate U Give*. NY: HarperCollins.
- Wheatle, A. (2017, April 8). *The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas review – racism and police brutality*. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/apr/08/the-hate-u-give-angie-thomas-review-alex-wheatle>.
- Ynitri, N. W. (2019). *Racism in the novel The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas*. Udayana University.



@ 2024 by the author. Licensee University of Chitral, Journal of Linguistics & Literature, Pakistan. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).