

IMAGINING THE POST-RACIAL SOCIETY: RACE AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT IN MOHSIN HAMID'S *THE LAST WHITE MAN*

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Abstract

Mohsin Hamid's The Last White Man (2022) reimagines contemporary racial discourse through an extraordinary fictional premise in which white individuals gradually awaken with dark skin. Rather than interpreting race as an immutable biological characteristic, the novel exposes its ideological foundations by demonstrating that racial identities derive meaning from historical, political, and cultural systems of power. This article examines Hamid's novel through the theoretical perspectives of Critical Race Theory and racial formation theory to investigate how the narrative deconstructs whiteness and imagines the possibility of a post-racial society. Employing qualitative textual analysis, the study explores the transformation of social institutions, interpersonal relationships, and collective identities following the disappearance of conventional racial categories. The findings indicate that Hamid does not advocate a simplistic vision of racial harmony; instead, he demonstrates that genuine post-racial transformation requires dismantling institutional privilege, confronting historical inequalities, and reconstructing social relationships through empathy rather than inherited racial hierarchy. The novel ultimately challenges readers to recognize race as a socially constructed mechanism of power while envisioning more inclusive forms of human coexistence. By integrating Critical Race Theory with contemporary literary criticism, this article contributes to ongoing debates concerning race, identity, globalization, and speculative fiction in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Post-racial Society, Social Construction of Race, Critical Race Theory, Mohsin Hamid, Contemporary Fiction, Whiteness, Identity, Magical Realism

Introduction

Few concepts have generated more sustained debate in contemporary social theory than the idea of a **post-racial society**. Since the late twentieth century, globalization, migration, multiculturalism, and increasing demographic diversity have challenged traditional understandings of race and national identity. At the same time, persistent racial inequality has demonstrated that legal equality alone cannot eliminate the historical structures through which privilege and discrimination continue to operate. Consequently, scholars increasingly argue that race should be understood not as a biological reality but as a dynamic social construction shaped by institutions, ideology, and historical power relations.

Contemporary literature has become an important space for exploring these debates because fiction possesses the capacity to imagine alternative social realities that expose hidden ideological assumptions. Rather than simply reflecting existing society, literary narratives frequently challenge dominant understandings of identity by presenting unfamiliar situations that encourage critical reflection. Within this tradition, Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man* occupies a distinctive position. Through the extraordinary phenomenon of universal racial transformation, the novel dismantles conventional assumptions concerning whiteness, belonging, citizenship, and identity while inviting readers to reconsider the social foundations of race itself.

Unlike traditional narratives that depict racial conflict primarily through historical oppression or ethnic confrontation, Hamid reverses the conventional direction of racial experience. Individuals who previously occupied positions of racial privilege suddenly become members

of historically marginalized communities through unexplained physical transformation. Importantly, Hamid provides no biological explanation for this event. The absence of scientific causation is a deliberate narrative strategy that shifts attention away from genetics and toward society's interpretation of racial identity. Readers are therefore encouraged to recognize that racial categories derive significance not from biology but from cultural meanings collectively assigned to physical appearance.

This narrative strategy aligns closely with the theoretical assumptions of Critical Race Theory and racial formation theory. Both perspectives reject biological essentialism while emphasizing that race functions as an ideological system organizing political authority, economic opportunity, and social legitimacy. The transformation experienced by characters throughout *The Last White Man* demonstrates that identity remains relatively stable despite changes in physical appearance, whereas social reactions change dramatically because institutions continue assigning value according to racialized perceptions. Consequently, the novel illustrates that race operates primarily through systems of interpretation rather than natural difference.

The concept of the post-racial society has frequently been misunderstood within political discourse. Some commentators employ the term to suggest that racism has already disappeared, while others criticize post-racial narratives for ignoring continuing structural inequalities. Hamid adopts neither position. Instead, his novel imagines a transitional society struggling to redefine itself after the collapse of traditional racial classifications. Violence, fear, denial, adaptation, and reconciliation coexist throughout the narrative, illustrating that historical systems of privilege cannot disappear without generating profound psychological and institutional consequences.

Furthermore, Hamid extends discussions of race beyond national boundaries by situating transformation within a global context. The novel avoids identifying a single country or political system as uniquely responsible for racial inequality. Instead, racial transformation occurs across multiple societies, suggesting that the ideological construction of race constitutes an international rather than exclusively national phenomenon. This universal perspective enables Hamid to examine whiteness as a global system of symbolic authority while simultaneously emphasizing shared human vulnerability.

Although existing scholarship has recognized the novel's engagement with race and identity, relatively few studies have systematically investigated its representation of the post-racial society. Most literary criticism focuses upon magical realism, migration, postcolonial identity, or globalization while paying comparatively limited attention to Hamid's philosophical critique of racial construction itself. Consequently, important questions concerning institutional transformation, collective identity, and the future of racial discourse remain insufficiently explored.

This article argues that *The Last White Man* should be interpreted as a literary exploration of post-racial possibility rather than merely a narrative concerning racial transformation. By applying Critical Race Theory and racial formation theory, the study demonstrates that Hamid critiques both biological understandings of race and simplistic post-racial optimism. Instead, the novel imagines social transformation as a gradual ethical and institutional process requiring empathy, historical awareness, and collective reconstruction.

Literature Review

The relationship between race and social identity has occupied a central position in interdisciplinary scholarship for several decades. Sociologists, historians, legal scholars, and

literary critics increasingly agree that race cannot be understood solely through biological explanations. Instead, racial categories emerge through historical processes that assign political, economic, and cultural significance to physical differences. This theoretical shift has profoundly influenced contemporary literary criticism, encouraging scholars to investigate how fiction constructs, challenges, or deconstructs racial identities.

Critical Race Theory has become one of the most influential frameworks for examining these issues. Scholars including Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, and Cheryl Harris argue that racism functions as an ordinary component of social institutions rather than an exceptional moral failure. According to CRT, legal reforms alone cannot eliminate racial inequality because privilege continues to reproduce itself through educational systems, political institutions, media representation, economic structures, and cultural narratives. These theoretical assumptions provide an important foundation for understanding Hamid's fictional society, where racial hierarchy persists despite dramatic physical transformation.

Closely related to CRT is racial formation theory, developed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant. This perspective conceptualizes race as a historical process through which societies continually create, transform, and reorganize racial meanings. Race therefore remains neither fixed nor biologically determined; instead, its significance changes according to political struggles, institutional practices, and cultural representation. Hamid's novel reflects this theoretical framework by illustrating that racial identity acquires meaning only through collective interpretation. The unexplained transformation of bodies does not automatically eliminate racism because institutions initially continue interpreting individuals according to inherited assumptions regarding race and belonging.

Recent literary scholarship has increasingly explored speculative fiction as a powerful medium for interrogating social inequality. By constructing alternative realities, speculative narratives reveal ideological assumptions that often remain invisible within ordinary social life. Magical realism, dystopian fiction, and speculative realism allow authors to question accepted categories while exposing the historical contingency of social norms. Hamid employs this strategy by refusing to explain racial transformation scientifically. Instead, the narrative concentrates upon society's responses, emphasizing that racial conflict emerges primarily from social interpretation rather than biological difference.

Existing criticism of *The Last White Man* has highlighted themes of migration, displacement, identity, and globalization. Several scholars interpret the novel as an allegory of multicultural coexistence, while others emphasize its critique of nationalism and xenophobia. Although these perspectives contribute valuable insights, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to Hamid's reconstruction of the post-racial society as a philosophical concept. Many studies acknowledge racial transformation without systematically examining how institutions, communities, and identities evolve after conventional racial categories begin collapsing.

Another limitation within current scholarship concerns the tendency to interpret the novel exclusively through postcolonial theory. While postcolonial perspectives illuminate the historical dimensions of race and empire, they do not fully explain Hamid's engagement with systemic privilege, whiteness, and institutional transformation. Critical Race Theory provides complementary analytical concepts capable of addressing these dimensions more comprehensively.

Accordingly, this study combines Critical Race Theory with racial formation theory to investigate how *The Last White Man* imagines race as an evolving social construction rather

than a biological fact. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the article contributes to emerging scholarship examining the future of racial discourse within contemporary global literature.

Research Gap

Although *The Last White Man* has attracted growing scholarly attention, existing studies primarily examine magical realism, migration, globalization, and postcolonial identity. Relatively little research has explored Hamid's conceptualization of the post-racial society or his sustained critique of race as a socially constructed institution. Furthermore, few studies integrate Critical Race Theory and racial formation theory to analyze how the novel reconstructs social institutions, collective identities, and racial meanings following the collapse of whiteness as the dominant social category. This article addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on post-racial transformation as both an ethical and institutional process.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how Mohsin Hamid constructs race as a socially produced rather than biologically determined category.
2. To analyze the novel's representation of institutional and social transformation following racial change.
3. To investigate Hamid's vision of the post-racial society through Critical Race Theory and racial formation theory.
4. To evaluate the implications of the novel for contemporary discussions of race, identity, and global multiculturalism.

Research Questions

1. How does *The Last White Man* challenge biological understandings of race?
2. In what ways does the novel represent race as a social construction?
3. How are institutions and social relationships transformed during the transition toward a post-racial society?
4. What vision of social justice and collective identity does Hamid ultimately propose?

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily informed by **Critical Race Theory (CRT)** and **Racial Formation Theory**, two complementary frameworks that conceptualize race as a historical and social construction rather than a biological reality. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive analytical lens for examining Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man*, particularly its critique of whiteness, institutional privilege, and the possibility of a post-racial society.

Critical Race Theory emerged during the 1970s and 1980s through the work of legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams. Dissatisfied with traditional civil rights approaches that emphasized formal legal equality, CRT argued that racism persists because it is deeply embedded within political institutions, educational systems, economic structures, legal frameworks, and cultural practices. Rather than existing solely as individual prejudice, racism functions as an ordinary and normalized feature of modern societies.

One of CRT's central assumptions is that **race is socially constructed**. Delgado and Stefancic explain that racial categories possess no inherent biological foundation; instead, societies assign meaning to physical characteristics through historical and political processes. Consequently, race changes across time and differs among cultures because its significance depends upon social interpretation rather than genetic reality. Hamid's novel embodies this principle by refusing to explain why white individuals suddenly acquire dark skin. The

narrative intentionally avoids biological causation, directing readers toward the social meanings attached to race instead of physical transformation itself.

Another important CRT concept employed in this study is **whiteness as property**, introduced by Cheryl Harris. Harris argues that whiteness has historically functioned as a valuable social asset conferring legal rights, economic opportunities, political authority, and cultural legitimacy. Whiteness therefore operates not merely as physical appearance but as an institutional resource protected through historical systems of power. In *The Last White Man*, this institutional value becomes immediately apparent when characters lose their white appearance. Their transformation destabilizes access to previously unquestioned privileges, demonstrating that whiteness functions as a socially protected position rather than a natural human condition.

The study also incorporates **Michael Omi and Howard Winant's Racial Formation Theory**, which conceptualizes race as an ongoing historical process through which societies create, negotiate, and transform racial meanings. According to this perspective, race is continuously reconstructed through political struggles, media representation, legal institutions, and cultural practices. No racial identity possesses permanent meaning because historical conditions continually reshape systems of classification and power.

Hamid's narrative strongly reflects this theoretical understanding. As increasing numbers of people undergo racial transformation, established categories gradually lose their social coherence. Institutions built upon assumptions of racial hierarchy experience uncertainty because familiar classifications no longer provide reliable foundations for organizing social life. This fictional scenario demonstrates that racial meanings depend upon collective agreement rather than biological permanence.

Another concept particularly relevant to Hamid's novel is **racialization**. CRT argues that societies continually assign social meanings to bodies, producing expectations regarding morality, intelligence, citizenship, criminality, and cultural belonging. Throughout the novel, transformed individuals encounter new interpretations from neighbors, colleagues, governments, and media institutions. Although their personalities remain unchanged, society attributes different meanings to their appearance. Hamid thereby illustrates that racialization is fundamentally an interpretive process rather than a biological reality.

Finally, this article draws upon the concept of the **post-racial society**, not as the complete disappearance of race, but as a theoretical aspiration requiring profound institutional transformation. Hamid neither celebrates nor dismisses this possibility. Instead, he portrays post-raciality as an unfinished process characterized by conflict, adaptation, ethical reflection, and social reconstruction. Consequently, the novel aligns with CRT's insistence that meaningful equality requires structural change rather than symbolic declarations of racial harmony.

Research Methodology

This article employs a **qualitative textual analysis** informed by interpretive literary criticism. The objective is not to quantify textual elements but to examine how narrative structure, characterization, symbolism, dialogue, and imagery collectively construct meanings concerning race, identity, and institutional transformation.

The primary source of data is Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Last White Man* (2022). Passages describing racial transformation, public reactions, governmental responses, interpersonal relationships, and changes within social institutions constitute the principal analytical corpus.

These textual materials are interpreted through concepts derived from Critical Race Theory and Racial Formation Theory.

The analytical procedure consists of four interconnected stages.

First, significant passages illustrating racial transformation and changing social relationships are identified through repeated close reading.

Second, these passages are organized according to thematic categories including whiteness, social construction, institutional transformation, collective identity, fear, adaptation, and post-racial reconstruction.

Third, each thematic category is interpreted using theoretical concepts including systemic racism, racial formation, racialization, whiteness as property, and social construction.

Finally, individual analyses are synthesized to explain how Hamid imagines the gradual emergence of a society no longer organized exclusively around inherited racial hierarchy.

Throughout the analysis, close textual interpretation remains central. Rather than treating theory as an external framework imposed upon literature, this study allows Hamid's narrative to interact dynamically with contemporary debates concerning race and identity.

Analysis and Discussion

Race as a Social Construction Rather than Biological Reality

Perhaps the most radical aspect of *The Last White Man* is Hamid's complete rejection of biological explanations for race. Unlike traditional speculative fiction that frequently attributes physical transformation to scientific experimentation, supernatural intervention, or technological catastrophe, Hamid deliberately refuses to explain why individuals awaken with different skin colors. This narrative silence is neither accidental nor incomplete. Instead, it functions as one of the novel's most significant political and philosophical strategies.

By eliminating biological causation, Hamid redirects readers' attention toward society's reactions. The transformation itself receives comparatively little scientific discussion because the narrative's primary concern lies elsewhere. The novel repeatedly demonstrates that physical appearance acquires meaning only through collective interpretation. Consequently, readers are encouraged to recognize that race derives significance from ideology rather than biology.

Critical Race Theory provides an illuminating framework for understanding this strategy. Delgado and Stefancic argue that race functions as a social invention designed to organize power rather than a natural classification derived from genetics. Hamid dramatizes this theoretical insight through fictional narrative. Characters remain psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually consistent after transformation. Their memories, values, moral commitments, and personalities remain remarkably stable despite dramatic physical change. The only substantial alteration involves society's perception of them.

This distinction is crucial. If race were genuinely biological in its social significance, transformation would necessarily alter essential aspects of personality. Hamid rejects this assumption completely. The persistence of individual identity despite altered appearance demonstrates that racial categories exist primarily within systems of social interpretation rather than human nature itself.

Furthermore, the novel repeatedly exposes contradictions within racial thinking. Individuals who previously trusted neighbors, colleagues, and family members suddenly become suspicious once physical appearance changes. Yet nothing meaningful has altered except visible skin color. Hamid thereby illustrates how racial prejudice depends upon symbolic associations rather than objective evidence.

The transformation also destabilizes long-established assumptions concerning national identity, citizenship, and cultural belonging. Many characters continue speaking the same language, practicing the same customs, and maintaining identical personal histories. Nevertheless, public perception changes dramatically because racial appearance has historically functioned as a visible marker through which societies assign legitimacy and belonging.

This fictional scenario reflects Racial Formation Theory's argument that race acquires meaning through historical and political processes rather than biological difference. Institutions continuously reconstruct racial categories according to changing social conditions. Hamid imagines an unprecedented historical moment during which these categories lose coherence, forcing societies to confront the arbitrary foundations upon which racial hierarchy has been established.

Deconstructing Whiteness as the Invisible Norm

A second major contribution of *The Last White Man* concerns its systematic deconstruction of whiteness. Throughout much of modern history, whiteness has operated as an invisible social norm against which other identities have been defined. Because dominant identities frequently appear universal, individuals occupying privileged positions rarely perceive whiteness as a distinct racial identity.

Hamid deliberately reverses this historical pattern. Instead of portraying racial minorities as perpetual objects of observation, he places formerly white characters at the center of racial transformation. This reversal destabilizes the invisibility traditionally associated with whiteness.

Before transformation, whiteness functions silently throughout everyday life. Characters move confidently through neighborhoods, workplaces, governmental institutions, and social spaces without questioning whether racial identity influences these experiences. Institutional privilege remains largely unnoticed because it appears entirely ordinary.

Following transformation, however, this invisibility disappears. Formerly unquestioned assumptions concerning safety, authority, acceptance, and legitimacy become uncertain. Everyday activities require new forms of emotional and psychological negotiation. Public spaces previously experienced as neutral become sites of anxiety, surveillance, and vulnerability.

Hamid thereby illustrates Cheryl Harris's concept of whiteness as property with remarkable literary sophistication. Whiteness provides institutional benefits comparable to valuable social property. Individuals inherit these advantages through historical systems of racial classification rather than personal achievement. Once this symbolic property disappears, access to institutional confidence likewise becomes unstable.

Importantly, Hamid avoids reducing whiteness to individual morality. Many transformed characters remain compassionate, ethical, and emotionally complex. The novel therefore distinguishes structural privilege from personal virtue. Individuals may unknowingly benefit from unjust institutions without consciously endorsing racial discrimination. This distinction reflects one of Critical Race Theory's most important contributions to contemporary social analysis.

Moreover, Hamid demonstrates that deconstructing whiteness does not require reversing systems of domination. Instead, the novel gradually imagines a society in which whiteness loses its privileged institutional status altogether. The objective is neither replacing one dominant identity with another nor establishing new forms of racial hierarchy. Rather, Hamid

proposes dismantling the ideological structures through which race has historically organized social value.

The gradual disappearance of whiteness as the normative social category therefore represents more than demographic change. It symbolizes the possibility of reconstructing institutions according to principles of shared humanity rather than inherited racial privilege.

Institutional Transformation and the Collapse of Racial Hierarchies

One of the most significant contributions of *The Last White Man* is its representation of institutional change following the widespread racial transformation of society. Hamid demonstrates that race is not merely a matter of individual identity but a foundational principle through which modern institutions organize power, legitimacy, citizenship, and belonging. As racial categories begin to dissolve, institutions that previously relied upon visible distinctions experience profound instability. The novel therefore expands discussions of race beyond interpersonal prejudice by emphasizing its structural and institutional dimensions.

Critical Race Theory argues that racism is reproduced through ordinary institutional practices rather than isolated acts of discrimination. Educational systems, legal institutions, labor markets, media organizations, immigration policies, and political structures continuously reinforce racial inequalities by normalizing privilege while marginalizing alternative identities. Hamid illustrates these theoretical principles through fictional narrative. The mysterious transformation affecting formerly white populations exposes the extent to which social institutions depend upon racial classifications for maintaining order and authority.

Initially, governmental institutions respond with uncertainty and confusion. Officials struggle to explain the unprecedented phenomenon because conventional legal and political categories no longer correspond to visible reality. Administrative systems designed around inherited racial classifications become increasingly ineffective. This institutional confusion illustrates that bureaucratic authority often relies upon stable categories of identity. When these categories collapse, institutions must reconsider the assumptions upon which they have historically operated.

The media similarly plays a central role in constructing public interpretations of transformation. Rather than presenting objective information, media narratives frequently amplify uncertainty, speculation, and social anxiety. Continuous reporting transforms individual experiences into collective political crises, encouraging citizens to interpret racial transformation through fear rather than understanding. Hamid thereby critiques contemporary media cultures that frequently sensationalize racial issues while reinforcing binary divisions between insiders and outsiders.

Public institutions also reveal the historical relationship between race and security. As transformed individuals become increasingly visible, surveillance intensifies within public spaces. Communities previously perceived as safe begin implementing protective measures intended to preserve social order. Although these actions are often justified through the language of security, Hamid demonstrates that they frequently reproduce older patterns of exclusion directed toward newly racialized populations. Critical Race Theory interprets such developments as examples of institutional racism operating beneath apparently neutral administrative practices.

The workplace represents another important site of institutional transformation. Professional competence, educational qualifications, and personal experience remain unchanged following racial transformation, yet perceptions of credibility become increasingly unstable. Hamid illustrates that occupational authority frequently depends upon social expectations associated

with race rather than objective merit alone. Individuals who previously occupied respected professional positions encounter subtle changes in interpersonal treatment despite possessing identical abilities and qualifications. This narrative exposes the hidden influence of racial assumptions within supposedly meritocratic institutions.

Educational institutions also undergo significant transformation. Younger generations adapt more rapidly to changing racial realities than older populations whose identities have been shaped by long-established systems of racial classification. Hamid suggests that education possesses transformative potential because future generations may develop social identities less dependent upon inherited racial hierarchies. Nevertheless, he avoids simplistic optimism by acknowledging that educational reform alone cannot eliminate structural inequality without broader institutional reconstruction.

Another important institutional dimension concerns immigration and national identity. Throughout the novel, governments struggle to distinguish between citizens and outsiders once traditional racial markers lose coherence. Hamid thereby exposes the extent to which national belonging has historically depended upon racialized assumptions. Citizenship, often imagined as a neutral legal category, emerges instead as a historically constructed institution deeply intertwined with race, culture, and political power.

The novel further illustrates that institutions do not transform automatically following demographic change. Historical systems of privilege continue influencing social practices even after visible racial boundaries become unstable. Consequently, institutional reform requires conscious ethical and political reconstruction rather than passive adaptation. This insight closely aligns with Critical Race Theory's insistence that structural inequality cannot disappear simply because overt racial categories become less visible.

Ultimately, Hamid portrays institutional transformation as a gradual and often painful process. Old systems resist change while new forms of social organization remain uncertain. This tension reinforces the novel's central argument that dismantling racism requires reimagining institutions themselves rather than merely altering individual attitudes.

Collective Identity and the Emergence of a Post-Racial Society

Perhaps the most ambitious aspect of Hamid's novel lies in its attempt to imagine how collective identity might evolve after the collapse of conventional racial classifications. Rather than presenting racial transformation as the conclusion of history, the narrative depicts it as the beginning of a prolonged social transition during which communities gradually renegotiate the meaning of belonging, citizenship, and humanity.

The concept of the post-racial society remains highly contested within contemporary scholarship. Some political commentators interpret post-raciality as evidence that racial discrimination has largely disappeared, whereas Critical Race Theory rejects such interpretations as historically premature because structural inequalities continue shaping social life. Hamid adopts neither extreme position. Instead, his fictional society illustrates that the disappearance of visible racial distinctions does not automatically eliminate racism. Historical memories, institutional practices, and cultural narratives continue influencing interpersonal relationships long after physical transformation occurs.

Initially, collective responses are dominated by fear and uncertainty. Communities interpret transformation as a threat to social stability rather than an opportunity for ethical reflection. Rumors circulate rapidly, conspiracy theories emerge, and political leaders struggle to maintain public confidence. These reactions reveal how deeply racial identity has been integrated into collective consciousness. Hamid demonstrates that societies accustomed to organizing

themselves through racial distinctions experience existential anxiety when these distinctions become unstable.

However, as transformation becomes increasingly widespread, social attitudes begin gradually changing. Individuals who once perceived racial difference as exceptional encounter increasing diversity within their own families, neighborhoods, and workplaces. This normalization reduces the ideological power previously attached to whiteness because racial categories no longer function as reliable indicators of identity or social status. Hamid thereby illustrates that repeated social interaction possesses transformative potential by weakening inherited stereotypes.

The novel repeatedly emphasizes that shared vulnerability creates opportunities for ethical reconstruction. As more individuals experience uncertainty, exclusion, and social dislocation, empathy gradually replaces fear within many interpersonal relationships. Formerly privileged populations begin understanding experiences previously associated primarily with racial minorities. This reversal does not erase historical injustice but instead expands the possibility for mutual recognition across inherited boundaries.

Collective identity therefore shifts from biological similarity toward ethical coexistence. Communities gradually redefine belonging through relationships, shared experiences, and mutual responsibility rather than inherited racial characteristics. Hamid does not suggest that cultural differences disappear; rather, he imagines a society in which diversity no longer functions as the primary basis for political hierarchy or social exclusion.

Importantly, this transformation remains incomplete throughout the novel. Violence, discrimination, and institutional resistance continue alongside increasing acceptance. Hamid deliberately avoids presenting post-raciality as a utopian endpoint because historical systems of domination cannot be dismantled instantly. Instead, the novel portrays post-racial society as an ongoing ethical project requiring continuous commitment to justice, equality, and collective responsibility.

From the perspective of Racial Formation Theory, this process represents the reorganization of racial meanings rather than their complete disappearance. New social identities emerge while older categories gradually lose ideological authority. Hamid therefore imagines history as dynamic rather than deterministic, suggesting that societies possess the capacity to reconstruct themselves through changing cultural practices and political institutions.

Discussion

The present study demonstrates that *The Last White Man* should be understood as a sustained critique of race as a socially constructed system of institutional power rather than merely a speculative narrative about physical transformation. By refusing to provide biological explanations for changing skin color, Hamid deliberately redirects analytical attention toward the cultural, political, and institutional processes through which race acquires meaning.

One of the article's principal findings concerns the instability of whiteness. Throughout the novel, whiteness functions not as an objective biological identity but as an historically privileged institutional position. Once physical appearance changes, social authority, legitimacy, and belonging become uncertain despite the continuity of individual personality. This narrative strongly supports Critical Race Theory's argument that race operates primarily through social interpretation rather than biological reality.

The analysis also demonstrates that Hamid rejects simplistic understandings of the post-racial society. Transformation alone does not eliminate historical inequalities because institutions continue reproducing inherited patterns of privilege. Genuine social reconstruction therefore

requires ethical reflection, institutional reform, and collective responsibility rather than symbolic declarations of racial equality.

Another important contribution concerns the novel's global perspective. Hamid intentionally avoids restricting racial transformation to a particular nation or historical event. Instead, he presents race as an international ideological system influencing diverse societies simultaneously. This global orientation expands Critical Race Theory beyond exclusively American contexts while demonstrating the continuing relevance of racial analysis within transnational literary studies.

Furthermore, the article illustrates that speculative fiction provides valuable opportunities for examining contemporary political questions. By constructing an impossible yet emotionally plausible scenario, Hamid enables readers to recognize ideological assumptions that frequently remain invisible within ordinary social experience. The novel therefore confirms literature's capacity to contribute meaningfully to interdisciplinary debates concerning justice, equality, and social transformation.

Conclusion

Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man* offers a powerful literary exploration of race as a historically contingent and socially constructed institution. Through the extraordinary premise of universal racial transformation, the novel dismantles biological understandings of race while exposing the institutional foundations of whiteness, privilege, and inequality.

Applying Critical Race Theory and Racial Formation Theory demonstrates that Hamid's narrative is fundamentally concerned with the reconstruction of social meaning rather than physical transformation itself. Characters remain psychologically and morally consistent despite changes in appearance, whereas institutions and communities struggle to reinterpret inherited systems of identity and belonging. This distinction confirms that race functions primarily through cultural interpretation and political organization rather than biological difference.

The study further demonstrates that Hamid neither celebrates naïve post-racial optimism nor accepts racial hierarchy as historically inevitable. Instead, he imagines post-racial society as a gradual ethical project requiring empathy, institutional reform, historical awareness, and collective responsibility. Transformation remains incomplete, reflecting the continuing complexity of dismantling deeply embedded systems of privilege.

Ultimately, *The Last White Man* contributes significantly to contemporary literary and racial scholarship by demonstrating that speculative fiction can illuminate the ideological foundations of social life while encouraging readers to imagine more equitable forms of collective existence. Hamid's novel challenges inherited assumptions concerning race, belonging, and identity, affirming literature's enduring capacity to reimagine the future of human coexistence.

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