

Exploring Hatred in Angie Thomas's The Hate U Give

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Submission date: 04-Aug-2025 10:03AM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2724893794

File name: NEW_UNCOLLCS_PARAMITHA_INDRA_P.docx (701.23K)

Word count: 2836

Character count: 16585



Exploring Hatred in Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*

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Abstract. This thesis analyses the portrayal of hatred in Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*, focusing on its various forms, causes, and impacts. Hatred is a complex, deeply rooted emotion shaped by personal experiences and social influences. The writer uses a qualitative descriptive research design to identify and analyze the forms of hatred found in the novel. The text is interpreted in depth to explore the social and emotional meanings behind each representation of hatred, using a sociological approach because the novel portrays systemic injustices such as racism and economic exploitation. This thesis applies Gordon Allport's theory of prejudice as the main theoretical framework, supported by several conceptual definitions. The theory of the definition of hatred explains that hate is a broad and focused emotion, marked by deep rejection of individuals, groups, or ideas, often with a desire to violate or erase the object. The theory of causative factors argues that hatred stems from ongoing social inequality and systemic discrimination. The theory of forms of hatred explains that emotional hatred often arises from painful personal experiences such as trauma, betrayal, or unfair treatment, which are internalized as chronic anger and resentment. The theory of relations between hatred explains that hatred is interconnected in a cycle that reinforces itself and impacts society broadly. In the digital era, personal, social, and institutional hatred interact dynamically and spread easily through social media. The theory of the impact of hatred states that hatred damages relationships between majority and minority groups, such as ethnic, religious, or national groups. This qualitative descriptive approach is strengthened with psychological and sociological perspectives to examine narrative elements, character dialogues, and plot developments depicting hatred in the novel. Data is collected through close reading and selecting relevant quotations, then analyzes based on the established theories. The study finds that hatred in the novel appears as racial, institutional, and embraced hatred, expressed explicitly, implicitly, and systemically. Contributing factors include societal stereotypes, media representation, and family or community dynamics. The impact of hatred is significant: it affects individuals' psychological states (trauma, identity conflict, suppression), damages community relationships, and reinforces social divisions through institutional injustice.

Keywords: *hatred, identity conflict, prejudice, social injustice, trauma*

INTRODUCTION

Hatred is a complex and deeply rooted emotion influenced by psychological trauma, personal experiences, and broader societal forces. It often stems from unresolved emotional wounds such as humiliation or betrayal, which, if left untreated, evolve into long-lasting hatred (Tsolakis, 2025). Psychological theories suggest that individuals experiencing such traumas may externalize their pain through hatred as a coping mechanism. Furthermore, cognitive distortions like overgeneralization and attribution

bias distort perceptions and fuel prejudice, making it difficult for individuals to empathize with others (Allaway et al., 2024).

In addition to internal factors, hatred is also reinforced by environmental and social influences. Negative stereotypes, gossip, and group narratives can create biased perspectives even without personal experience. Social identity theory explains how people define themselves through group membership and often develop hostility when they perceive out-groups as a threat (Zafar, 2024). This "us versus them" mentality fosters division and justifies discrimination, contributing to cycles of hatred within communities and institutions.

Angie Thomas's novel *The Hate U Give* powerfully illustrates how hatred functions on both personal and systemic levels. The story follows Starr Carter, a Black teenager who witnesses the police shooting of her unarmed friend, Khalil. This tragedy not only traumatizes Starr but also ignites widespread protests against racial injustice. The novel explores how systemic hatred—manifested through police brutality, racial profiling, and media bias—affects individuals and entire communities (Antepyan-Ruckenstein, 2025). Starr's transformation from silence to activism highlights how individuals can confront oppressive systems through courage and solidarity.

This study applies Gordon Allport's theory of prejudice and hatred to analyze *The Hate U Give*, showing how hatred escalates from verbal antagonism to institutional discrimination (Brogaard, 2020). The novel critiques how racism becomes embedded within societal norms, exposing the role of structural inequality in perpetuating prejudice. However, it also offers a counternarrative, emphasizing empathy, activism, and community resistance as tools to challenge hatred. Ultimately, *The Hate U Give* serves as both a mirror of contemporary racial tensions and a call to dismantle the systemic roots of hatred (Ferguson, 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gordon Allport's theory outlines that prejudice develops progressively, starting from subtle biases and potentially escalating into systemic violence. It begins with antilocution—verbal expressions of bias such as slurs and harmful jokes—that normalize hatred. Then comes avoidance, where people socially distance themselves from marginalized groups, reinforcing exclusion. The next stage is discrimination, where biases translate into unequal treatment by institutions like the police or education systems. This can escalate into physical attacks, acts of violence targeting individuals based on group identity, and ultimately to extermination, the most extreme form, where hatred results in efforts to eliminate the targeted group through violence or oppressive policies. The theory emphasizes that prejudice is learned, not instinctive, and is maintained by social narratives, stereotypes, and group identity dynamics (in-group vs. out-group). In literature such as *The Hate U Give*, these stages show how systemic hatred operates and intensifies, turning individuals into both victims and resisters of institutionalized oppression.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with content analysis to explore the various forms of hatred depicted in *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. The research is interpretive, focusing on the narratives, dialogues, and character actions that reflect

emotional, social, and institutional hatred. Drawing from Cypress (2015) and Bazen et al. (2021), the study emphasizes understanding human experiences within natural contexts through detailed data collection. A sociological approach is applied, particularly using Gordon Allport's theory of prejudice and Marxist literary criticism, with references to Franz Fanon to analyze systemic issues like racism, class struggle, and exploitation.

The primary data is the novel itself published in 2017, 437 pages, selected for its explicit portrayal of various forms of hatred through the experiences of Starr Carter. The research instrument is a thematic analysis framework, which allows the researcher to identify and categorize dominant themes of hatred in the novel. Data collection is carried out through close reading and note-taking, where relevant quotes are extracted and classified into emotional, social, and institutional hatred. These are then analyzed using textual interpretation and relevant social/literary theories to reveal deeper meanings and answer the research questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

¹ In the novel *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas describes three main forms of hatred: Racial Hatred, Institutional Hatred, and Embraced Hatred. Racial hatred appears through discrimination and violence against black characters, such as Khalil's murder which is fueled by racial stereotypes. Institutional hatred is seen in the police, legal, and media systems that reinforce injustice and treat victims unfairly. Meanwhile, embraced hatred emerges as a reaction to repeated oppression, both in the form of gang violence and social resistance. Through the character of Starr, the novel shows that hatred can also be cultivated into a force for peaceful resistance against injustice.

Racial Hatred

In *The Hate U Give*, racial hatred is not limited to overt acts of physical violence, but is also embedded in subtle, symbolic forms particularly through the cultural appropriation of Black identity by white individuals. Starr, the protagonist, points out the hypocrisy of her white classmates who enthusiastically embrace elements of black culture such as slang, hip-hop music, and fashion while distancing themselves from the lived realities and systemic struggles faced by Black communities. This selective admiration, devoid of empathy or engagement with the associated oppression, reflects a deeper form of racial insensitivity. It demonstrates how Blackness can be commodified and consumed as a trend, while Black people themselves continue to be marginalized. This behavior reinforces social inequality by allowing privileged groups to enjoy the aesthetic aspects of a culture without confronting the injustice that shapes it. As Starr observes, this kind of double standard reveals a passive but powerful form of racial hatred one that sustains systemic power imbalances under the guise of cultural appreciation. It is a form of violence that operates silently, through exclusion, erasure, and detachment from accountability.

Institutional Hatred

In *The Hate U Give*, institutional forms of hate are powerfully explained through the actions and biases of systemic structures such as law enforcement, the media, and the education system. The fatal shooting of Khalil by a white police officer exemplifies how police institutions view black men as an inherent threat, even in the absence of weapons or aggression. The lack of officer accountability underscores the racial disparities in the legal system, where justice is not applied equally based on race. This institutional failure is compounded by the media's portrayal of Khalil—not as a victim, but as a drug dealer—which shapes public perception through racialized narratives that strip black victims of their humanity. Moreover, Starr's experience at a predominantly white private school reveals the subtle yet pervasive pressure to suppress her black identity in order to be accepted, reflecting how educational spaces often fail to promote inclusivity. Together, these examples show that hatred in the novel is not limited to individual prejudices, but is deeply rooted in institutional practices that normalize and perpetuate racial injustice.

Embraced Hatred

The Hate U Give reveals a disturbing form of embraced hatred that is not only present but socially justified, normalized, and embedded within everyday interactions. This is seen in the way both individuals and institutions defend Khalil's death by framing him as a criminal, despite the fact that he was unarmed. The media perpetuates this narrative by focusing on Khalil's alleged drug involvement rather than the injustice of his killing, suggesting that his life was less valuable because of his background. Starr's classmate, Hailey, embodies this normalized racism through microaggressions and dismissive comments, refusing to acknowledge the systemic issues that led to Khalil's death. Instead of being challenged, her statements are tolerated or ignored, demonstrating how silence in the face of prejudice allows hatred to flourish. This social complacency transforms racism into something culturally acceptable, where hateful language and attitudes are no longer seen as offensive but as part of the norm. The novel critiques this silence, showing that when society refuses to confront hate, it becomes an accepted part of identity and communication even by those most affected by it.

Explicit Hatred

Starr experiences a cultural double standard that reveals the deep-rooted social injustice surrounding racial identity. Elements of Black culture such as language, fashion, and attitude are considered "ghetto" or inappropriate when expressed by Starr, yet are praised and seen as trendy when imitated by her white peers. This contradiction forces Starr to engage in code-switching: she alters her speech, behavior, and even personality depending on whether she is in her Black neighborhood or at her predominantly white private school. Rather than being free to express her full identity, she must divide herself into two versions to avoid judgment and gain acceptance. This internal conflict reflects the broader societal oppression of Black identity, where authenticity is penalized, and conformity to white norms is demanded. The novel illustrates how systemic racism functions not only through overt discrimination, but also through subtle cultural pressures that silence and constrain marginalized individuals. Starr's experience exposes how racialized expectations limit self-expression and reinforce a hierarchy where white interpretations of Blackness are celebrated while genuine Black identity is suppressed.

Implicit Hatred

Starr navigates a cultural double standard that exposes the deep-rooted racial injustice embedded in society. Black culture, when expressed by Starr or members of her community, is often labeled as unprofessional, aggressive, or inappropriate. However, when the same cultural elements—such as slang, fashion, or music—are adopted by white students, they are considered trendy and "cool." This hypocritical judgment forces Starr to engage in code-switching, where she changes her speech, tone, and behavior depending on whether she is in her Black neighborhood of Garden Heights or her predominantly white private school, Williamson Prep. She describes this as living in two worlds and having to switch identities to fit in, highlighting how Black individuals are often denied the freedom to express their authentic selves in white-dominated spaces. This psychological burden illustrates a form of cultural oppression, where Black identity must be fragmented and sanitized for social acceptance. Through Starr's experience, Angie Thomas critiques how societal norms marginalize minority voices while simultaneously exploiting their culture, reinforcing systemic racism and the silencing of true Black identity.

Systemic Hatred

In the novel *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas portrays Khalil's decision to sell drugs as a consequence of systemic and structural inequality rather than a moral failure. After the loss of his mother's job and the absence of stable economic opportunities in his community, Khalil is driven by the urgent need to support his family. His actions reflect what scholars refer to as structural resentment—a condition in which people are forced to make difficult and sometimes illegal choices to survive within an unjust social system. Despite his intentions, Khalil is quickly labeled a "thug" and a criminal by the media and broader society, even after he is unjustly killed by an unarmed police officer. This response illustrates prejudice-based victim blaming, where the systemic conditions that shaped Khalil's circumstances are ignored and blame is placed solely on his individual choices. Through this portrayal, the novel critiques how society dehumanizes victims of oppression by focusing on their perceived faults while failing to acknowledge the larger structures of inequality constraining their lives.

Media Representation

In the novel *The Hate U Give*, the character Starr has a strong emotional reaction when she remembers Khalil. This shows that racial trauma is more than just physical violence. It also includes the emotional pain of keeping the humanity of victims alive when the system is trying to erase them. After seeing Khalil's death, Starr holds on to her memories of who he really was—his personality, his habits, and their friendship—to resist the labels the media and society force on people. This act of remembrance becomes a form of protest, allowing Starr to challenge the story that portrays Khalil solely as a threat or a criminal. The trauma she feels is not only from the brutal loss, but also from living in a world that tries to justify his death by disregarding his value. By honoring his memory, Starr shows who she really is and brings back the dignity taken away by the system. This changes her personal memories into a strong response to hate and unfairness.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this analysis of ²*The Hate U Give* In the book *Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas shows how hatred can have many different effects on people, communities, and society as a whole. This chapter has shown that the novel's hatred comes in three main forms: racial, institutional, and embraced hatred. Racial hatred is shown in many ways. It is shown through violence and discrimination. It is also shown in small ways, like cultural appropriation. Institutional hatred is represented by systemic injustice particularly within the legal system, law enforcement, and media that perpetuate inequality and deny justice to Black communities. At the same time, embracing hatred shows how some people and social structures justify or normalize hate, allowing it to become a normal part of our culture.

The different types of hatred explores explicit, implicit, and systemic that shows how prejudice can evolve from personal bias into something that's accepted by society. Each form of discrimination has specific examples, like using coded language and showing bias in the media. Some examples of discrimination are also being openly racist and using violence. The story also shows how hatred is caused by many things, like what society tells us, how the media represents things, and how families and communities act. These elements do not act alone, but often intersect, reinforcing the cycles of hate and marginalization.

Finally, the impact of hatred is felt across many areas of life. Characters like Starr go through tough experiences like trauma, emotional suppression, and feeling confused about who they are. Communities suffer from broken trust, fear, and abandonment by institutions. But even in these hard times, the book also shows that people can be strong and stand up for what is right. Thomas not only criticizes the systemic hatred, but also promotes awareness and empathy as tools of resistance. In the end, *The Hate U Give* shows readers a lot of social injustice in the world. It also makes us want to do something about it.

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