



## The Guises of Denial of Racism in Afro-Iraqi Discourse

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### Abstract in English

This work employs a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. It attempts to show the types of prevalent racism in Afro-Iraqi discourse, as well as the guises of denial of this racism. The analyzed data comprise three international reports that have addressed this subject. The study aims to address the following questions: “What is the type of racism in Afro-Iraqi discourse?” and “What are the guises of denial racism in Afro-Iraqi discourse?” Moreover, the researcher adopts van Dijk’s (1992) theory as a framework for conducting this study.

In light of the results, the following conclusions are drawn: The prevalent racism in Afro-Iraqi discourse is internalized racism, and black people themselves are racist when they categorize themselves according to nationality. Further, mitigation, represented by toning down and euphemism, is the most prevalent form. It accounts for 37% and is used by Afro-Iraqis to relieve them from suffering and to bridge the gap between them and nonblack Iraqis. On the other hand, positive self-representation is commonly used by nonblack Iraqi people to deny racism and create the impression that nonblack individuals are not racist. Whereas, Afro-Iraqis also employ justification to defend the absence of their dialect and the loss of their identity within Iraqi society. Conversely, some Afro-Iraqis use face-saving strategies and excuses to maintain their dignity and deny experiencing racism. Lastly, forms such as redistribution of responsibility and reproach, among others, are not utilized. In short, most of the guises of denying racism appear in Afro-Iraqis discourse rather than nonblack Iraqis as a result of internalized racism.

### Paper Info

### Keywords

*Critical discourse analysis, racism, denial, Afro-Iraqis*

## Introduction

Investigating the ideology of racism in discourse and social contexts is one of the areas of discourse analysis (DA), specifically in CDA, where racism is considered one of the deeply rooted ideologies and social problems in multiethnic societies. According to van Dijk (2008, p.103), in addition to being an ideology, racism is “understood as a complex societal system of ethnically or ‘racially’ based domination and its resulting inequality.” Generally, racism can be either an innate or learnt behavior. As an innate behavior, community members tend to be biased toward their race and exaggerate the physical or cultural characteristics of their ancestors. As a learnt behavior, family, school, and social institutions are the first to establish this abhorrent practice. For instance, when parents mock their children’s genetic traits by saying, “you are a dwarf,” or “your nose is as big as the slaves’ noses,” or even when they tease strangers, as in “look at that man! His face is black like coal!”

However, the need to express the voices of racially oppressed and overwhelmed peoples, marginalized sections of society, as well as victims of social and political problems, leads linguists to employ language theories in this direction, specifically the CDA approach, since its role is to uncover the hidden ideology of the speaker or writer, and highlight gender discrimination, racism, sexism, and marginalization. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, p.65) say, “In the name of emancipation, critical discourse analytical approaches take the side of oppressed social groups. Critique aims to uncover the role of discursive practice in the maintenance of unequal power relations.” van Dijk (2001, p. 352) defines CDA as a type of study that is analytical and directed toward uncovering “the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” Thus, CDA is an approach used to analyze discourse that considers language as “social practice” and examines how ideologies and power relations in language are observed in different ways (Baker & Ellece, 2011). However, the operational definition of CDA for the researcher is that of van Dijk (2001), as it is more comprehensive and covers most social and political issues.

Hence, the current study aims to explore the ideology of racism within Afro-Iraqi discourse, where Black Iraqis face stigmatization through various racist expressions, actions, and behaviors. It also examines different forms of denial of racism. It is important to note that some researchers have applied the theory of denial of racism in discourse, whether spoken or written, such as in presidential speeches, parliamentary debates, or newspaper articles. For example, Petrova's (2000) paper, titled “The denial of racism,” discusses several forms of racism denial and their impacts, using the ERRC's everyday experiences in fighting anti-Roma racism as a guide, and highlights various rhetorical types of denial, mainly concerning Roma. Similarly, Elias (2003), in his article titled “Racism as neglect and denial,” considers neglect and denial as cognitive and functional traits embedded in systemic racial injustices. Furthermore, denial and neglect are related but distinct concepts that are often examined in sociopolitical debates.

Gebhard (2022), in the research article “Racism Plays a Disappearing Act: Discourses of Denial in One Anti-Discrimination Campaign in Higher Education,” responds to a university's anti-discrimination initiative that was reportedly started to fight racism in Canada. The researcher employs discourse analysis, grounded in anti-racist literature and poststructural principles, to examine the constructions of truth about racism that the campaign spreads, as well as the subject positions that emerge from

them. The study shows that the campaign's messaging aligns with national narratives that depict Canadian society as free of racial injustice. Furthermore, the researcher advises future initiatives to be cautious not to reinforce the very inequalities they aim to address by exploring how an anti-discrimination campaign successfully undermined the need for anti-racist action. Nevertheless, the novelty of this study lies in identifying racism and the ways racism denial manifests in Afro-Iraqi discourse through analysis of certain news agencies. The study aims to answer the following questions: "What is the type of racism in Afro-Iraqi discourse?" and "What are the guises of denial racism in Afro-Iraqi discourse?" Along with the main question, the study seeks to identify which form of the guises is most prevalent and why in Afro-Iraqi discourse.

## 2. Theoretical Background

CDA is a form of critical social science that seeks to deepen understanding of the causes and characteristics of social injustices, the challenges in addressing them, and potential solutions. "Social wrongs" can be broadly described as parts of societal structures, systems, or orders that harm human well-being and could potentially be improved, if not entirely eliminated, often through significant changes to these structures, systems, or organizations. Examples include racism, lack of freedom, poverty, and various forms of inequality (Gee & Handford, 2012).

### 2.1 Racism and Race

According to Wodak and Reisigl (2008, P.176), "from a linguistic point of view, the term race has a relatively young, although not precisely clear, etymological history. It dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Fiske (2010) emphasizes that defining racism is impossible without first identifying race. "Race" is generally regarded by social scientists as "a social construct." It plays a crucial role in shaping social reality, even though it is scientifically meaningless when applied to humans—physical traits like skin color do not inherently correlate with differences in ability or behavior.

Enlightenment thinkers and scientists later attributed biological significance to race during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as Europeans began interacting with non-European civilizations. They used the term as a taxonomic subclassification within a species to refer to humans, animals, and plants. Consequently, race was seen as a natural or biological system for classifying the human species. The concept of race was employed to justify and promote exploitation, oppression, and violence against those labeled as nonwhite as Western colonialism and slavery expanded (Fiske, 2010).

The majority of social scientists distinguish between "race" and "ethnicity." One significant difference is that in the case of race, a biological basis is assumed. While ethnicities are defined by perceived common ancestry, history, and cultural practices—all of which are seen as more flexible and self-asserted rather than assigned by others—races are distinguished by perceived common physical characteristics, which are thought to be fixed. Asians are therefore typically regarded as a "race," while Bengalis and Tibetans are regarded as ethnic groups. A nationality, like American, might include multiple ethnic groups (e.g., Italian-Americans, Arab-Americans), even though ethnicity and nationality sometimes overlap.

However, as race, ethnicity, and nationality are all social constructs, groups that were formerly regarded as ethnicities are now viewed as races, and vice versa. Furthermore, several populations that are today considered "white," such as Jews, Italians, and Irish

people, were not previously included in this racial categorization (Clair&Denis,2015, p.875).

## 2.2 Racism

The 1920 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary is where the term "racism" was first used to describe American policy towards Native Americans. The words "racism" and "rationalism" were used interchangeably. The word was first made popular by propaganda against racial eugenics and anti-Semitism that targeted Jews in Germany in the 1930s and throughout World War II. However, the United States' civil rights efforts in the 1960s were the source of the second popularization (Wodak & Reisigl, 2008, p. 176).

van Dijk (1993, p.122) sees racism as a "form of group domination". However, Wilson (1999, p. 14) defines racism as an ideology of racial domination in which the inferior treatment or social positions of other racial groups are justified or prescribed by the assumed biological or cultural superiority of one or more racial groups. When racialization involves the hierarchical and socially consequential valuation of racial groups, it turns into racism even though the process of racialization uses perceived patterns of physical difference, like skin color or eye shape, to distinguish groups of people and make them into "races." Moreover, van Dijk (2010, p.427) visualizes racism as "a system of social domination and inequality that is reproduced in many ways," for instance, by discriminatory practices.

According to Wodak and Reisigl (2008, p.178), racism has no "commonly acknowledged definition" because the use of this term becomes inflationary. They argue that the term racism is extraordinarily expanded and evasive. It encompasses different types and meanings. There is a talk of genetic, biological, cultural, ethnopluralist, institutional, and everyday racism, racism of the top of an elite, racism in the middle, of an old and a new or neo racism.

van Dijk (2014, p. 45) considers racism as "views, practices, and actions reflecting the belief that humanity is divided into distinct biological groups called races and that members of a certain race share certain attributes which make the group as a whole less desirable, more desirable, inferior, or superior." Paula et al. (2022, p. 171) support van Dijk's words, stating that "racism is the relegation of people of color to inferior status and treatment based on unfounded beliefs about innate inferiority, as well as unjust treatment and oppression of people of color, whether intended or not."

## 2.3 Racism and Discourse

Discourse is one of the discriminatory practices, and it is one of the major contributors to reproducing racism because the former is "the principle means for reproducing racism, prejudice, and ideologies"(van Dijk, 2010, p. 427). Similarly, racist beliefs are the basis of discriminatory practices (including discourse). Therefore, discourse is vital in the human production of racism.

van Dijk (2010) believes that most discourse contributes to the production of social racism. He highlights that racism "expresses, persuasively conveys and legitimates ethnic or racial stereotypes and prejudices among white group members, and may thus form or confirm the social cognitions of other whites" (van

Dijk,1993,179, 179). For example, news reports and educational discourse play a key role in shaping society. The hidden curriculum has a significant influence on the formation of dominant ideologies, including those related to race, gender, and class. However, “racist discourse is of course a special case of discourse in general” (van Dijk,1993, p.123).

Both the speaker's relationship to the outgroup and the understanding of solidarity with the ingroup are demonstrated in the discourse. It displays the speaker's social standing in addition to their cognitive and affective states. Upon the arrival of new groups or the emerging salience of an existing group, the discourse can vicariously represent both the attitude to be taken and the imperative actions.

#### **2.4 Racism, Discrimination, and Prejudice**

The reader or the listener may be confused among the three terms racism, discrimination, and prejudice. Racism has been known as the unfavorable and unjust treatment of a specific group because of their race or ethnicity. In contrast, discrimination is conceived as an interpersonal act since it relates to the unfair treatment of individuals based on perceived, categorical differences. However, racism provides a basic foundation for understanding prejudice and discrimination (Fish& Syed, 2010, pp. 5-7)

However, prejudice is a social and cognitive phenomenon. Such ethnic attitudes serve social purposes, such as defending the interests of the ingroup. They are not just a feature of individual beliefs and orientations about social groups; rather, they are a shared form of social representation in a group member that is acquired during socialization processes and transformed and enacted in social communication and interaction. The social functions are reflected in their cognitive structures and usage techniques (van Dijk, 1984, p. 13).

#### **2.5 Types of Racism**

Racism is not always deliberate, overt, or obvious; it is frequently systematic and structural. Systemic and structural racism are “forms of racism that are pervasively and deeply embedded in systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, and entrenched practices and beliefs that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment and oppression of people of color”. (Paula et al,2022, p.171)

Despite their frequent interchangeability, systemic and structural racism have relatively different foci. Systemic racism highlights the role of entire systems, including the institutions that support them, such as the political, legal, economic, health care, educational, and criminal justice systems.

Structural racism highlights the function of the structures (law, policies, institutional practices, and deeply ingrained norms) that support the systems because systemic racism encompasses structural racism. Institutional or institutionalized racism refers to the role that institutional systems and structures play in racial oppression and discrimination. It is sometimes used interchangeably with systemic or structural racism. However, it “also refers specifically to racism within particular institutions”. (Paula et al,2022)

Jones (2000) develops three levels to understand racism they are: institutionalized, personally mediated, and internalized racism. According to Jones (2000, p.1), institutionalized racism “is defined as differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race”. However, personally mediated racism consists of two components: prejudice and discrimination, where prejudice is defined as distinct presumptions about the skills, intentions, and motivations of people based on their race.

Internalized racism is when individuals of the stigmatized races accept unfavorable messages about their own skills and inherent value. It is typified by their lack of confidence in themselves and in people who resemble them. It entails acknowledging the boundaries of one's whole humanity, such as one's range of aspirations, one is right to autonomy, and one's range of acceptable self-expression. It shows up as self-devaluation (racial epithets as nicknames, rejection of ancestral culture, fratricide), resignation, helplessness, and hopelessness (leaving the school, not voting, and engaging in risky health practices), and “an embracing of whiteness such as use of hair straighteners and bleaching creams, stratification by skin tone within communities of color, and “the white man’s ice is colder” syndrome”. However, the researcher believes that this level is the most dangerous because it reveals people’s inner weakness, specifically the denial of origin, which subsequently leads to an inner feeling of defeat and brokenness (Jones, 2000).

### **2.6 Denial of Racism.**

According to van Dijk (1992, p. 484) ‘research indicates that denial is one of the primary components of the modern (new racism). However, most societies and individuals do not want to appear racist, especially after the spread of anti-racism norms and laws, and social media. And because human nature prevails over their actions, some groups cannot control their negative actions; they resort to denying their racist behaviors. So, denial is a strategy that the speaker or the writer follows to hide their racist practices, to avoid negative reactions, and the disastrous consequences of a racial act.

The various ways people deny racism are part of the well-known general speech and interaction tactics, such as maintaining face or presenting oneself in a positive light. Members of the white group often utilize denials, disclaimers, or other strategies to avoid giving their readers or listeners a bad impression when they want to express something disparaging about minorities. That is, “denials have the function of blocking negative interference of recipients about the attitude of the speaker or the writer” (van Dijk, 1992, p. 180). The “denial of racism, the positive representation of Us, also implies the absence, denial, or mitigation of the negative representation of Us. Thus, our history of colonialism, aggression, or racism tends to be ignored or reduced” (van Dijk, 2004, p. 430).

Thus, white people, as a social group, tend to downplay, rationalize, and justify interpersonal and institutional racism to protect their self-esteem, avoid the psychological costs involved, and uphold the privilege of the status quo. This is one way that subtle racism shows itself. Based on the ethnic dimension, this type of denial might be an attempt to dodge moral responsibility and obligation while also supporting white goals by maintaining the hierarchy and dominance.

White nationalist organizations today, for instance, deny that they are racist and assert that pride in one's background and ethnicity does not equate to racism. Thus, denial “is often used as a strategy in the form of disclaimers, mitigations, euphemisms, excuses, blaming the victims, reversal, and other moves of defense, face-to-face keeping and positive, self-presentation” against accusations, criticism of racial discrimination, injustice, and racist attitude” (van Dijk, 1992, p. 48).

### **2.7 The Role of Denial**

If racism is defined as a system of racial or ethnic domination, then the reproduction of racism is likely greatly aided by denying its existence. Yes, this is true. Resistance is often triggered by inequality and domination. However, “when the dominant consensus is that there is no racism, minority groups and their protests or other forms of resistance have a very hard time to be taken seriously”. (van Dijk, 1992, p.96)

### **2.8 The Implications of Denial of Racism**

Denials serve to block negative inferences that recipients may make about the attitudes of the speaker or writer. Such denials can be personal, but are especially prevalent in elite discourse. Additionally, denials carry social, political, and cultural implications; each reflects the fears and interests of ingroup members opposed to outgroup members. Socially, they are meant to ‘save face’ for the entire ingroup. They express ingroup loyalty, white group solidarity, and defend against others, particularly minorities. Notably, social denial is the most powerful and influential type because “the social discourse of denial that persuasively helps construct the dominant white consensus.’ At the political level, denial of racism “works in political discourse to serve for the justification of public policies’ (Khalifa, 2017). Van Dijk (1992, p.96) states that denial makes political issues in a society with ethnic or racial diversity easier to manage and also helps suppress resistance.

Denial should also have cultural components. This includes the self-affirmation of tolerance as a characteristic of modern 'western' culture and the rejection of racism or ethnocentrism. Thus, denial primarily serves as a technique for reproducing hegemony at all levels by controlling opposition, dissent, and resistance.

### **2.9 The Forms and Guises of Denials**

Denials have different forms, such as general denials when the “official group norms that prohibit racism, and that, therefore, they are decent citizens”. On the other hand, there are situational denials, where “individuals deny racist opinions or practices while acknowledging that the group as a whole, or at least some or many other group members, may not share such tolerance”. On the other hand, the denial of racism may take the form of an individual act, especially when the racist adopts the move of *transfer*, e.g., ‘I have nothing against black people, but my daughter does not like to speak with such friends....’ (van Dijk, p.1992).

Mitigation behaviors, which include downplaying, minimizing, or using euphemisms to describe one's bad conduct, are another form of denial. For example, "I did not threaten him, but gave him friendly advice," "I did not insult her, but told her my honest opinion," and so on.

In addition to the actual denial, there are several social and cognitive techniques that are somewhat similar to denials. The first is justification. In casual conversations, someone may defend a harsh behavior or statement about a member of a minority group by claiming that the other person was culpable and thus deserved a negative response,

or by justifying it as a reasonable defense. In other words, the behavior is not denied in this instance, but it is plainly stated that it was justifiable, and disputed that it was bad.

In a similar vein, unpleasant behaviors might be accepted as such while yet being justified. In this instance, exceptional circumstances—or rather, other people—may be held partially responsible. The same is frequently true in higher political-level immigration discussions: we do not allow more immigrants or refugees to enter the country to prevent escalating ethnic tensions in the inner cities. Since the act of denying entrance is acknowledged as a constitutional power of states rather than a negative act, the latter situation may be used as a justification rather than an excuse.

Claiming provocation and blaming the victim are more common excuse techniques. Therefore, based on reported provocations, drug offenses, or other stereotypically associated negative behaviors of young Black people, police may feel justified in taking strong actions against young Black men, as seen in many places in Europe and the US (van Dijk, 1992, p. 94).

Last but not least, reversal is the most powerful form of denial: "They are the true racists, not us." The radical right is known for this kind of reversal, although more moderate anti-racism also shows fewer extreme examples. Reversals are "no longer forms of social defence, but part of a strategy of counter-attack."

At the end of this section, the following moves are going to be used to analyze the data of this study based on van Dijk's (1992) model.

1. Mitigation: toning down and using euphemism or other circumlocutions that minimize the act itself or the responsibility of the accused.
2. Redistribution: of the responsibility or to conceal the agency.
3. Positive self-representation: We are fair, respect human rights, and have a long tradition of tolerance.
4. Denial and Reproach: Usually blaming the victim rather than the perpetrator.
5. Transfer: "individual denials of racism may strategically be made in comparison to 'others'"
6. Face Keeping: To take actions that preserve someone's dignity and social status.
7. Reverse the charges: "is no longer a form of social defense, but part of a strategy of counter-attack".
8. Excuse: "alleging provocation and blaming the victim".
9. Justification: "people may justify a negative act or discourse relative to a minority group member".
10. Accusation, "explicit or implicit accusations".

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 The Material**

The only data material used in this study consists of three reports about Afro-Iraqis, the first from one of the major daily newspapers in the United States, while the other two are from different well-known TV channels. The reports are from: Los Angeles Times, DW Arabia, and Al Jazeera. However, the data is taken from the internet and arranged chronologically, from 2004 to 2022. Where it is selected purposively to reflect the coverage of the most international TV channels. Additionally, the study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the interpretations of words, meanings, discourse, and the ethnography of Afro-Iraqis. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative studies emphasize how social interaction generates social phenomena.

Afro-Iraqis are among the Iraqi minorities living in southern Iraq's cities, especially in Basra. They originate from tribes in eastern African countries, including Nubia, Zanzibar, and coastal regions near the Arabian Sea. Utbah bin Ghazwan helped facilitate African migration from their homelands through various means and brought them to Iraq more than 1,400 years ago, at the beginning of the Islamic conquest. During the British occupation, they worked in agriculture and marsh drainage and were also involved in tribal disputes. Today, their jobs are mostly service-related, such as working on farms, serving as servants in sheikhs' offices, or working as police officers, soldiers, cleaners, or laborers. Like all minorities, they claim to face racism due to their black skin, which creates obstacles in areas like racial marriage and employment. Jadoo, a professor at the University of Basra, points out:

*“Whites are not always willing to marry [blacks] because maybe in future, generations they have black sons”*

Jadoo, through his words, highlights an important issue: the fears of non-black Iraqis regarding African genes and the risk of inheriting them. This is because most Iraqis believe, except for blacks, that white skin is a symbol of beauty. Additionally, people with white skin have more opportunities in life than people of color.

However, this does not mean that the black community is free from discrimination and racist practices. Abdullah immigrated from western Sudan when he was 11. He talks about his experiences in Iraq and says:

*“Most black Iraqis view themselves as being of a higher social stand than native -born Africans.”*

Abdullah says that when he wants to get married, he chooses a black Iraqi woman, but no family accepts him because most black Iraqis believe they are of a higher social status than native-born Africans.

Due to the limited number of linguistic studies on this topic and the nature of the selected data—which shows evidence of racism and discrimination—the researcher anticipates identifying various forms of denial of racism. Therefore, the analysis is based on quotations from the text, followed by comments highlighting different forms of denial. The results are then presented in a table and thoroughly discussed.

### 3.2 The Model

To analyze this study, the researcher adopts van Dijk's (1992) model, based on his theory of the denial of racism: Discourse and the Denial of Racism. According to van Dijk (1992) ‘research indicates that denial is one of the primary components of the modern (new racism). It serves to block negative inferences that recipients may make about the attitudes of the speaker or writer.

van Dijk's (1992) model reveals, through its various forms, that denial of racism can involve several tactics to hide racist behaviors and actions. Here are the main strategies that the researcher uses to analyze the data, supported with examples:

1. Mitigation: *They do not differentiate among us. They are just kidding.*
2. Redistribution of responsibility: *This is not our fault; the previous government bears responsibility.*
3. Positive self-representation: *We are open to everyone, and we embrace dialogue.*
4. Denial and Reproach: *She deserves that, but why does she marry a black man?*
5. Transfer: *They bring destruction to our country.*
6. Face Keeping: *We are treated equally. There is no discrimination against us.*

7. Reverse the charges: *They are the people who bring the bad habits to our society.*
8. Excuse: *Why did you leave the country and come here? We fear that your identity will be lost.*
9. Justification: *Iraqi families adhere to their traditions, so they refuse to marry an Arab person.*
10. Accusation: *Blacks are morally corrupted.*

#### 4. Data Analysis

The following is a quotation from a talk by an Afro-Iraqi citizen, named Abbass, who is 35 years old and his work is as a carpenter:

1. *“Of course, I consider myself to be Iraqi.”*

Abbass perceives himself as an Iraqi citizen with equal rights and privileges, while also denying that most non-black Iraqis can not ignore his African descent. Abbass downplays any discrimination against members of his ingroup.

2. *“Blacks are an intrinsic part of Iraqi society, and generally are treated as such.”*

The reporter of this article asserts that black is one of the basic components of Iraqi society, which is characterized by a mosaic structure. However, this opinion has a bit of exaggeration, and it is not free of any denial, because black Iraqis are not mentioned in the Iraqi constitution as a distinguished component or minority. Thus, the reporter once admits racism and once again denies it. However, for him as a white man, he uses the strategy of positive self-presentation, *“We are fair”, “We treat everyone equally”*.

3. *“Like other Iraqis, they speak Arabic, and most are Muslims belonging to the country’s Shiite and Sunni minority.”*

Once again, the article's reporter notes that Afro-Iraqis speak Arabic and are Muslims to present a positive self-image. Although Afro-Iraqis speak Arabic and come from either the Shiite or Sunni community, it seems unlikely that any of them can secure top positions or represent both groups in government. Clearly, non-black Iraqis still hold the majority of high-ranking roles.

Marydosh Abbass, an Afro-Iraqi man, is 72 years old, says:

4. *“We are just like any other Iraqis, no different.”*

Marydosh himself denies the racism and discrimination against his ingroup members, missing that some black and non-black Iraqis know that “dark skinned Iraqis often are reviewed as less attractive and even inferior.” Marydosh downplays what happens to them, especially how they are seen as different, odd, and unattractive.

5. *“But some black and non-black Iraqis acknowledge that some racial discrimination persists, and dark-skinned Iraqis often are viewed as less attractive and even inferior.”*

The reporter admits to racism and explains how both black and non-black people recognize the existence of racial discrimination against Afro-Iraqis, who are described as unappealing and inferior. Additionally, the discourse within the Iraqi community

labels them with different terms, such as 'Abeed' or 'Zinuge.' However, the phrase "black-skinned people" is used as a euphemism to soften the harshness of these words. Abood Kareem, a director at the University of Basra, College of Fine Arts, says:

6. *"I'm Iraqi," he adds, "I don't consider myself an African."*

Abood denies practicing racial discrimination against his ingroup members and considers himself an Iraqi man, rejecting the idea that some Iraqis still see him as an African descendant. Abood tries to deny the truth to avoid frustration and reduce the mental distress of his ingroup members.

This is the announcement by Mutib Jassim, a sociology professor at Baghdad University, a white Iraqi man.

7. *"We don't have a negative view towards [blacks]. There is nothing like apartheid in Iraq."*

8. *"There is no difference between black and white in Islam."*

9. *"Islam sees everyone as equal. Blacks do whatever work they want."*

Professor Jassim denies segregation and apartheid between white and black-skinned Iraqi people, but this is not true because many Iraqis accept the existence of racial segregation. Many black Iraqis claimed that finding a mate within their race was much more common. When they are all looking for a marriage, they want a beautiful woman, but she should be of black descent, according to one black Iraqi. Not all non-black Iraqis are in favor of racial mixing. Jassim uses a positive self-presentation move to deny racism and discrimination against black Iraqis, that is, "we are not racist", "we treat all equally".

Majeed Majid, a professor of Islamic history at the University of Basra, concludes:

10. *"It is said that they are from Africa, but they are true Iraqis now."*

Majid's opinion aligns with that of many Afro-Iraqi citizens; he considers Afro-Iraqis to be full Iraqi citizens, which they should be, but he denies the dismissive attitude of non-black Iraqis towards this group and their African heritage. Majid emphasizes positive self-presentation, saying, "We are not racist," and "They are part of us."

An inspiring success story by Afro-Iraqi citizen Randa Abdulaziz, who works as a news anchor at Al-Iraqiya TV, the Iraqi government's official channel. She says:

11. *"I hope that entering the media field will be an encouraging factor for other dark-skinned women, pushing them to enter other fields of work, whether in the media or otherwise, and that their skin color will not be an obstacle to achieve their goals."*

Abdulaziz denies practicing any racism against her ingroup members. She claims that skin color does not hinder any ambition, and women with dark skin can pursue any career with confidence. Conversely, Zahraa Hamid, an Iraqi citizen from the Basra district, disagrees with her view. Zahraa admits that opportunities for work and jobs are often limited to attractive women, and physical appearance influences employment prospects. Abdulaziz uses face-saving strategies to deny that she is being persecuted.

12. *"The discrimination that dark-skinned people face is encountered by segment of society, not all of it."*

Abdulaziz claims that certain parts of Iraqi society discriminate against black Iraqis. However, no one admits to engaging in racism toward them. Afro-Iraqis are openly

accepted as part of the Iraqi community. Abdulaziz dismisses most allegations and denies racism.

13. *“Discrimination is a characteristic that exists in all religions, nationalities, and sects, and is not limited to a specific group in society.”*

Abdulaziz justifies the discrimination against her ingroup member by saying that discrimination exists in every society and religion; it is not only a characteristic of Iraqi society.

14. *“The term dark-skinned people is preferred by Afro-Iraqis and they call themselves by it, in order to avoid another names that discriminate on the basis of color, such as blacks, Negro, or other names.”*

Afro-Iraqis accept the term 'dark-skinned people' and use it to refer to themselves, avoiding other labels based on color, such as Blacks, Negro, or similar terms. In this context, “dark-skinned people” serves as a euphemism.

The leader of the Black-Skinned People's Assembly states that the dialect of black Iraqis has disappeared, although some terms from their historic language have survived but have not developed into a full dialect or language.

15. *“He attributes the reason to integration with Arab society and traditions, and the fusion of culture and mentality, which prevented this dialect from continuing except rarely, but the existing accent remained “reminding us of ancient history.”*

The leader of the Black-skinned assembly justifies the disappearance of the Afro-Iraqi dialect by attributing it to cultural blending and mental shifts, as well as assimilation with Arab society and customs. This process has allowed the dialect to survive only occasionally, while maintaining the current accent that reminds us of ancient history.

Saad Salloum, an expert on diversity affairs in Iraq, notes that not only has the Afro-Iraqi dialect disappeared, but their identity has also diminished.

16. *“Saloum returns, saying that the distinctive identity of the Afro-Iraqis melted away due to their presence in the bosom of the Arab Muslim tribes in southern Iraq, their connection to their popular heritage, and their adherence to their religious beliefs, doctrines, and customs.”*

Salloum explains the lack of a “distinctive identity” among Afro-Iraqis by stating that, because they were absorbed into the Arab Muslim tribes in southern Iraq, connected to their popular culture, and kept their religious beliefs, theories, and traditions, their identity gradually disappeared.

#### **4.1 Results and Discussion**

The data analysis reveals various forms of denial of racism, including mitigation, toning down, positive self-presentation, and justification. Furthermore, the ideology of internalized racism practiced by Afro-Iraqis themselves is evident, as they tend to hide their marginalization and racial discrimination while justifying the absence of their dialect and identity. Conversely, non-black Iraqi citizens present themselves as non-racist; they maintain their dignity and adopt a strategy of positive self-presentation. The analysis results indicate that mitigation is the most frequently used form of denial across

all reports. Next, positive self-presentation ranks second, while justification and euphemism occur with equal frequency. However, other forms of denial were not observed by the researcher.

Below is a table that illustrates the frequency and the percentages of the guises of denial as they were observed during this study:

	<b>The guises</b>	<b>The frequency</b>	<b>The percentage</b>
1.	Mitigation (Toning down or using euphemism)	6	37%
2.	Positive self-representation	5	31%
3.	Justification	3	18.9
4.	Face keeping	1	6.50
5.	Excuse	1	6.50
6.	Redistribution of the responsibility	0	0%
7.	Reproach	0	0%
8.	Transfer	0	0%
9.	Reverse the charges	0	0%
10.	Accusation	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on the frequencies and percentages shown in the table above, it is clear that mitigation, represented by tactics like toning down and euphemism, leads with six instances and a rate of 37%. Positive self-representation follows in second place, appearing five times with a rate of 31%. Justification ranks third, with three occurrences and an 18% rate. Other forms of denial, such as face-keeping and excuse, appear in fourth place, each with a frequency of 6.50%. Finally, guises like the redistribution of responsibility and reproach, along with others, do not have examples from the text.

Based on what is happening, the results indicate that most quotations from Afro-Iraqis, especially those that tone down their messages, are used to ease their suffering and bridge the gap between them and nonblack Iraqis. It is also unusual that Afro-Iraqis themselves use a strategy of mitigation to deny racism against them.

On one hand, Afro-Iraqis prefer to use euphemisms when referring to themselves to avoid harsher words, while non-black Iraqis use euphemisms to deny racism. Regarding positive self-representation, the researcher notes that all the quoted examples come from non-black Iraqis or people, yet they are used to deny racism and give the impression that “we are not racist,” “we are fair.” However, the examples that justify their stance are quotations from Afro-Iraqis explaining why they have lost their dialect and their identity within Iraqi society.

#### 4. Conclusion

The current study aims to identify the main type of racism and how racism denial manifests in Afro-Iraqis' discourse by analyzing three reports from different mass media outlets. However, the dominant form of racism in Afro-Iraqi discourse is internalized racism. Mitigation, characterized by softening language and euphemisms, is the most common method; it accounts for 37% and is used to ease Afro-Iraqis' suffering and bridge the gap between them and nonblack Iraqis. Nonblack Iraqi individuals often use positive self-representation to deny racism and create the impression that they are not racist. Additionally, Afro-Iraqis use justification to defend the absence of their dialect and the loss of their identity within Iraqi society. Conversely, some Afro-Iraqis employ face-saving strategies and excuses to preserve their dignity and deny experiencing racism. Furthermore, strategies such as redistribution of responsibility and reproach are not utilized.

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### Abstract in Arabic

يستخدم هذا العمل منهج تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA) ويحاول إظهار أنواع العنصرية السائدة في الخطاب الأفرو-عراقي، وكذلك مظاهر إنكار هذه العنصرية. تتكون البيانات التي تم تحليلها من ثلاثة تقارير دولية تناولت هذا الموضوع. وتهدف الدراسة إلى معالجة الأسئلة التالية: "ما هو نوع العنصرية في الخطاب الأفرو-عراقي؟" و "ما هي مظاهر إنكار العنصرية في الخطاب الأفرو-عراقي؟" بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يتبنى الباحث نظرية فان ديك (1992) كإطار لإجراء هذه الدراسة. وفي ضوء النتائج، تم استخلاص الاستنتاجات التالية: إن العنصرية السائدة في الخطاب الأفرو-عراقي هي عنصرية داخلية، والسود أنفسهم عنصرين عندما يصنفون أنفسهم وفقاً للجنسية. علاوة على ذلك، فإن التخفيف، المتمثل في التخفيف من حدة اللهجة والتعبير الملطف، هو الشكل الأكثر انتشاراً؛ إذ يمثل 37٪ ويستخدمه العراقيون من أصل أفريقي لتخفيف معاناتهم وسد الفجوة بينهم وبين العراقيين غير السود. من ناحية أخرى، يستخدم العراقيون غير السود التمثيل الذاتي الإيجابي بشكل شائع لإنكار العنصرية وخلق انطباع بأن الأفراد غير السود ليسوا عنصريين. في حين أن العراقيين من أصل أفريقي يستخدمون أيضاً التبرير للدفاع عن غياب لهجتهم وفقدان هويتهم داخل المجتمع العراقي. على العكس من ذلك، يستخدم بعض العراقيين من أصل أفريقي استراتيجيات وأعداءً لحفظ ماء الوجه للحفاظ على كرامتهم وإنكار تعرضهم للعنصرية. وأخيراً، لا يتم استخدام أشكال، مثل إعادة توزيع المسؤولية واللوم، من بين أمور أخرى. باختصار، تظهر معظم مظاهر إنكار العنصرية في خطاب العراقيين من أصل أفريقي بدلاً من العراقيين غير السود، نتيجة للعنصرية المستبطنة.