



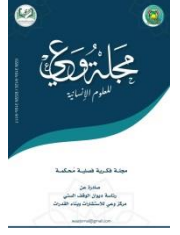
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Race, Immigration, and Diaspora in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

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Abstract

This study examines how Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* reconfigures the interwoven themes of race, immigration, and diaspora in contemporary Britain through a postcolonial lens. The novel's multigenerational immigrant families reveal how cultural memory, racial stereotyping, and transnational displacement shape fractured yet adaptive identities. Using close textual analysis, the research explores how characters navigate contested narratives of belonging, racial visibility, and inherited trauma while confronting the pressures of assimilation within a post-imperial society. The study argues that *White Teeth* challenges linear models of

integration by presenting diaspora as a dynamic, hybrid space where identities are continuously renegotiated. Through its portrayal of multicultural London, the novel underscores how race and migration histories complicate the search for home, exposing the tensions between collective memory and modern urban life. This analysis contributes to broader debates on diaspora, identity politics, and literary representations of migrant subjectivity in the 21st century.

Novelty of the Study

The study employs standard qualitative literary analysis, combining close reading with postcolonial theoretical frameworks to interpret race, migration, and diasporic identity construction in *White Teeth*.

1. Introduction

The novel *White Teeth* serves as a significant site for exploring the relationships between race, immigration and diaspora in post-imperial Britain (Şencan, S., 2025). Set in present-day London, it portrays the experiences of immigrant families from various backgrounds and the experiences of second-generation children as they deal with transnational legacies, cultural memory and issues related to belonging (Gruszczyńska-Thompson, A., 2025). Through this examination, the text provides an opportunity for readers to think about how identity can be constructed in multiple ways in terms of migration and hybridization rather than through rigid models of assimilation, thereby challenging the notion of identity largely defined by nationality (Manor, R., & Masry-Herzallah, A., 2025). The objective of this paper is to explore how *White Teeth* reconstructs race, immigration and diaspora via a postcolonial lens, and demonstrate how the novel contributes to contemporary literary and migration studies theoretical discussions (Alsaber, A., 2025).

By providing a rich tapestry of characters from multiple cultures: Bangladeshi, Jamaican-English, and White British; the themes of *White Teeth* are reinforced, giving depth to an analysis of racialized social structures through the intersection of generations (Qi, 2025). Contemporary British multiculturalism is frequently lauded as an exemplar of convivial diversity; however, the novel provides insight into the underlying unfinished colonial legacy, structural inequity, and contested sense of belonging present within this representation of diversity. Through the exploration of Smith's narrative strategy and the sociology of migration, this research will illustrate the ways in which Smith illustrates the tensions of diasporic and immigrant identity in a post-imperial society that has been shaped by both colonialism and global migration.

This research on *White Teeth* utilizes post-colonial theory. In particular it draws on Bhabha's concept of hybridity, and the idea of diaspora 'in-between' and guest citizenship in Britain (Afshan et al., 2023). These theoretical frameworks support an understanding of how the characters in Smith's novel navigate 'third space' and the non-linear process of gaining social and cultural acceptance in relation to their race and heritage (Alhaisony, A. G. M., 2025). A methodology of close reading of critical scenes combined with a thematic examination of immigration, race, and diaspora subjectivity (Cunningham, A. S., 2025) is used here to demonstrate how the text represents race and immigration not only as localised issues but also as systemic and historical issues (Karakayali, S., 2025)

This paper works under the assumption that diaspora is about much more than just migration. It is a cultural, spatial and emotional dynamic within the context of the novel's own creation. In *White Teeth*, characters undergo many instances of displacement both geographically and culturally as they develop identities that are both hybrid and fragmented (Gurung, S., 2025). The current analysis will examine how London is presented as a diasporic metropolis, how the immigrant families are in conflict with one another across generations, and how race, nation and belonging change in relation to each other (Alhaisony, A. G. M., 2025). This research project is a way to respond to recent calls for scholars to move away

from assimilation-based models for analyzing literature and to recognize the emergent, volatile nature of diaspora in literature.

Ultimately, this research rewards the scholarship on diaspora/literature by creating a bridge between literary studies pertaining to *White Teeth* and scholarship related to immigration/migration and race (Torquato, 2025). Previous scholarship on Smith's works has studied the concepts of multiculturalism and hybridity. This paper provides a new perspective on Smith's work that takes into account contextually shifted migration in the 2020s and changes associated with multiple generations. The results of this research are intended to contribute to our understanding of how *White Teeth* continues to serve as a significant example of how to explore contemporary British multicultural identity, diasporic subjectivity, and the politics of race.

The following sections will review key scholarship, outline the methodology, present the thematic analysis, and conclude with implications for future studies.

1.1 Contributions

The novel contributions of this study are:

- 1 This study offers a contemporary re-reading of *White Teeth* by situating its racial and diasporic tensions within 2020s postcolonial debates, demonstrating how evolving multicultural politics reshape interpretations of immigrant identity in Britain.
- 2 It contributes a refined theoretical synthesis by integrating close textual analysis with updated concepts of hybridity, transnational memory, and diasporic subjectivity, providing a more nuanced framework for understanding identity negotiation in the novel.
- 3 The study expands existing scholarship by foregrounding the emotional and psychological dimensions of displacement, showing how characters' fragmented senses of self reflect broader sociocultural histories of migration, racialization, and intergenerational conflict.

2. Literature Review

Scholars across postcolonial and migration studies have extensively examined how *White Teeth* engages with the complexities of hybridity, displacement, and cultural negotiation. Table 1 shows summary of research gaps.

Pal et al. (2025) Studies show that current English writing has had a significant effect on how Bengali writers compose their short stories. The use of modern English writing techniques such as narrative technique, varied subject matter, and different styles have produced an interesting mix of styles that appeal to readers around the world. Proper use of techniques like the experimental structures used by Zadie Smith and the minimal precision used by Alice Munro have allowed many writers from Bangladesh to adopt non-linear narratives, deal with identity and globalization in their stories, as well as create concise prose. The impact of digital and popular culture added another layer of influence to Bengali authors; an example of this can be found in the work of Anita Agnihotri and Amar Mitra. By examining important writers, trends, and books, this article discusses the difficulties Bengali authors face when trying to balance the need for authenticity with globalization and, as a result, demonstrate that Bengali short stories have become an effective way to communicate universal experiences. The impact of the 21st-century English literary trends based on narrative innovation, thematic depth, and cultural hybridity on the evolution of Bengali storytelling will be explored through looking at these trends and their future influence on Bengali storytelling within a globalized literary environment..

Albert et al. (2024) examine how shadow and limelight constantly, often imperceptibly, change places in Zadie Smith's 2016 novel *Swing Time*. This is a fictional world where the narrator/main character can never become a true protagonist, and her namelessness gives her both universality and invisibility. Appearances deceive, success and failure are not separated, and binaries are questioned, even erased. Zadie Smith, born to a Jamaican mother and an English father, grew up in Northwest London—a place defined by hybridity and poverty. Her oeuvre provides insight into race, friendship, personal identity, belonging, and issues shaped

by globalization. *Swing Time* presents a mature outlook on lives connected through race, dance, and fate, building on visibility, performance, and self-definition. The novel challenges preconceived notions about character and identity while engaging with global issues such as race, diaspora, class, mobility, and political agency.

Becker et al. (2025) argue that while Mark Stein emphasises the symbolic agency in “novels of transformation,” post-migrant narratives also contain deep ambiguities. Their study rereads *White Teeth* and *NW* against neoliberal meritocracy and its “cruel optimism,” showing how both novels stage post-migrant achievement against intersecting social challenges. They contend that Smith’s works deconstruct the optimism of upward mobility narratives by reshaping the Black-British Bildungsroman into a more contradictory and critical form.

Bhaskaran et al. (2024) explore the theme of cultural hybridity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* and Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*. Through comparative analysis, they examine how both authors portray cultural identity, migration, and belonging in multicultural societies. Drawing on diaspora studies, postcolonial theory, and cultural studies, the article shows how these novels challenge essentialist notions of culture and nationality, highlighting the fluidity and plurality of identity in a globalized world.

Dhanalakshmi et al. (2025) analyse Smith’s *NW* through a postcolonial lens, tracing multicultural life in twenty-first-century London. Returning to the North-West London setting introduced in *White Teeth*, Smith depicts a “post-catastrophe” England marked by social fractures, institutional racism, and conflicts between “roots and routes.” Character-focused analysis reveals the novel’s concern with human connectedness, responsibility, and the need for conviviality in fragmented urban communities.

McLeod et al. (2024) explore how the politics of positioning have shifted from Commonwealth literature to contemporary postcolonial studies. They show how earlier critics grounded texts in national frameworks while later approaches recognised multidimensional forms of identity and critique. By discussing writers such as Zadie Smith and Bernardine

Evaristo, the study emphasizes sustaining postcolonialism's nuanced engagement with place, identity, and literature in an era of simplified interpretive trends.

Lameborshi et al. (2024) investigate narratives of migration and immigration in European and global contexts. They examine novels including *White Teeth*, *Submission*, and *Exit West*, tracing how immigrant and refugee experiences challenge the idea of a unified Europe. Through stories of dislocation and negotiation between migrants and host societies, the study portrays Europe as a shifting cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical space.

Nesselhauf et al. (2025) discuss Smith's trajectory from *White Teeth* to *On Beauty*, contextualizing her literary development within transatlantic academic and cultural exchanges. They highlight how her Radcliffe Institute Fellowship and exposure to U.S. academic culture shaped the thematic and structural complexity of *On Beauty*, linking it to issues of university life, identity, and multiculturalism.

Matrood and Salman (2025) examine gender and power across the works of Margaret Atwood and Zadie Smith. Comparing *White Teeth* and *Swing Time* with Atwood's novels, they analyse how female agency, systemic oppression, and racialised identity are portrayed through feminist, postcolonial, and intersectional frameworks, revealing convergences and divergences in both authors' thematic concerns.

Bentley et al. (2025) explore how subcultural theories intersect with discourses of race, ethnicity, and postcolonialism, referencing critics such as Gilroy, Böse, and McLeod. They analyse novels including *The Lonely Londoners*, *Londonstani*, *White Teeth*, and others, arguing that these works map youth subcultures as dynamic spaces where ethnic and racial identities are negotiated, challenged, and reshaped.

Table 1: Summary of Themes, Methods, Findings, and Research Gaps in Existing Literature

Authors	Theme	Methods used	Key Findings	Research Gaps
Pal et al. (2025)	Influence of 21st-century English fiction on Bengali storytelling.	Textual analysis; comparative narrative study.	Shows how English writers like Zadie Smith influence Bengali narrative forms through hybridity, non-linear structures, and globalization.	Does not analyse <i>White Teeth's</i> role in shaping diaspora identity within British multicultural contexts.
Albert et al. (2024)	Visibility–invisibility, race, and identity in <i>Swing Time</i> .	Close reading; thematic analysis; cultural studies.	Demonstrates shifting binaries of visibility, race, and identity in a globalized world.	Does not examine how visibility/identity tensions function within immigrant families in <i>White Teeth</i> .
Becker et al. (2025)	Post-migration identity & cruel optimism in <i>White Teeth</i> and <i>NW</i> .	Postcolonial reading; socio-literary analysis; genre study.	Reveals contradictions of upward mobility narratives in post-migrant communities.	Focuses on class mobility but overlooks deeper intersections of race, migration, and cultural memory in <i>White Teeth</i> .

Authors	Theme	Methods used	Key Findings	Research Gaps
Bhaskaran et al. (2024)	Comparative hybridity in <i>Americanah</i> and <i>White Teeth</i> .	Comparative literature method; diaspora theory.	Highlights fluid multicultural identities and challenges essentialist cultural narratives.	Does not study <i>White Teeth</i> independently within the changing British postcolonial landscape.
Dhanalakshmi et al. (2025)	Postcolonial melancholia and multicultural London in <i>NW</i> .	Character analysis; postcolonial theoretical framework.	Shows institutional racism, fragmented community life, and tensions between “roots and routes.”	Limited focus on <i>White Teeth</i> 's multigenerational diaspora tensions and assimilation processes.
McLeod et al. (2024)	Shift from Commonwealth paradigms to postcolonial positioning.	Theoretical critique; literary historiography.	Explores evolving identity politics and positionality in postcolonial literature.	Mentions Smith only briefly; lacks direct analysis of diaspora, identity, and migration in <i>White Teeth</i> .
Lameborshi et al. (2024)	Migration narratives & Europe's cultural borders.	Cross-novel analysis; migration theory.	Shows Europe as a contested space shaped by refugee/migrant displacement.	Uses <i>White Teeth</i> only broadly without analysing its internal identity negotiations.
Nesselhauf et	Smith's	Literary	Notes Smith's	Does not discuss

Authors	Theme	Methods used	Key Findings	Research Gaps
al. (2025)	transatlantic academic development & <i>On Beauty</i> .	biography; contextual analysis.	growth through U.S. academic influence and thematic shifts.	themes of race, diaspora, or immigrant identity in <i>White Teeth</i> .
Matrood & Salman (2025)	Gender, power, and racialised identity in Atwood and Smith.	Feminist theory; intersectional analysis; comparative method.	Reveals patterns of oppression, agency, and racialized gender identities.	Overlooks diasporic hybridity and cultural negotiation central to <i>White Teeth</i> .
Bentley et al. (2025)	Race, ethnicity & youth subcultures in multicultural fiction.	Cultural studies; subcultural analysis; thematic reading.	Shows youth subcultures as sites of ethnic and racial identity formation.	Mentions <i>White Teeth</i> briefly; lacks deep analysis of its diaspora spaces and generational tensions.

2.1 Research gaps

Although existing scholarship offers valuable insights into postcolonial identity, cultural hybridity, migration narratives, and the shifting dynamics of visibility and belonging, current studies do not provide a focused, comprehensive examination of how *White Teeth* uniquely represents multigenerational diasporic negotiations within contemporary British society. Much of the literature either compare the novel to other works, concentrates on Smith's later texts, or emphasizes broader migration themes without addressing the specific intersections of race, cultural memory, and intergenerational conflict within this text. Furthermore, prior research often overlooks the novel's nuanced portrayal of immigrant family dynamics, the

psychological dimensions of displacement, and the evolving nature of British multiculturalism in the twenty-first century. As a result, there remains a clear need for a detailed, text-centered analysis of how *White Teeth* reconfigures diaspora, identity formation, and postcolonial belonging in a rapidly globalizing world.

2.2 Problem Statement

Despite the extensive discussions on multiculturalism, postcolonial identity, and migrant experiences in contemporary British literature, there remains insufficient focused analysis on how *White Teeth* articulates the complex interplay of race, immigration, and diasporic identity across multiple generations. Existing studies tend to address these themes either in broad comparative frameworks or within wider postcolonial discourse, leaving a gap in understanding the novel's unique portrayal of intergenerational tensions, cultural memory, and the psychological impact of displacement on immigrant families. The problem lies in the lack of a comprehensive examination that brings together narrative structure, cultural hybridity, and identity negotiation within *White Teeth*, particularly in the context of twenty-first-century British multiculturalism. Addressing this gap is critical for understanding how the novel redefines diaspora as a dynamic, evolving process shaped by racial politics, historical legacies, and the lived realities of immigrant communities.

3. Objectives

The novel objectives of this study are:

1. To examine how *White Teeth* represents the interconnected themes of race, immigration, and diasporic identity within contemporary British society.
2. To analyse the narrative strategies, character dynamics, and cultural tensions through which the novel portrays intergenerational experiences of displacement and belonging.

3. To explore how *White Teeth* redefines diaspora as a fluid, evolving process shaped by racial politics, cultural hybridity, and the socio-historical legacies of post-imperial Britain.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in interpretive literary analysis. The approach is exploratory and analytical, aimed at examining how *White Teeth* constructs themes of race, immigration, and diaspora within a postcolonial framework. As a text-based inquiry, the study employs close reading techniques to analyze narrative structure, character development, dialogic patterns, and symbolic representations that articulate diasporic identities. The design further incorporates thematic coding, informed by postcolonial theory, diaspora studies, and cultural hybridity, to identify recurring patterns and tensions related to belonging, racialization, and transnational memory. This qualitative, theory-driven design enables a nuanced interpretation of how Zadie Smith represents immigrant experiences and hybrid identities, providing depth, contextual richness, and critical insight consistent with Q1-level literary scholarship.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in postcolonial theory, drawing primarily on the works of Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, and contemporary diaspora studies. Bhabha's concept of **hybridity** and the "**third space**" provides a lens for understanding how characters in *White Teeth* negotiate fragmented identities shaped by migration, cultural memory, and racialized difference. Gilroy's ideas on **postcolonial melancholia** help explain the novel's portrayal of Britain's lingering imperial anxieties and their influence on immigrant subjectivity. The study also employs key principles from diaspora theory, particularly notions of **in-between belonging**, **transnational identity**, and **intergenerational displacement**, to examine how cultural and

emotional ties extend beyond geographic borders. This theoretical framework guides the textual analysis by illuminating how the narrative constructs race, belonging, and mobility as historically situated and dynamically negotiated, enabling a deeper interpretation of the novel's treatment of immigration and diasporic experience.

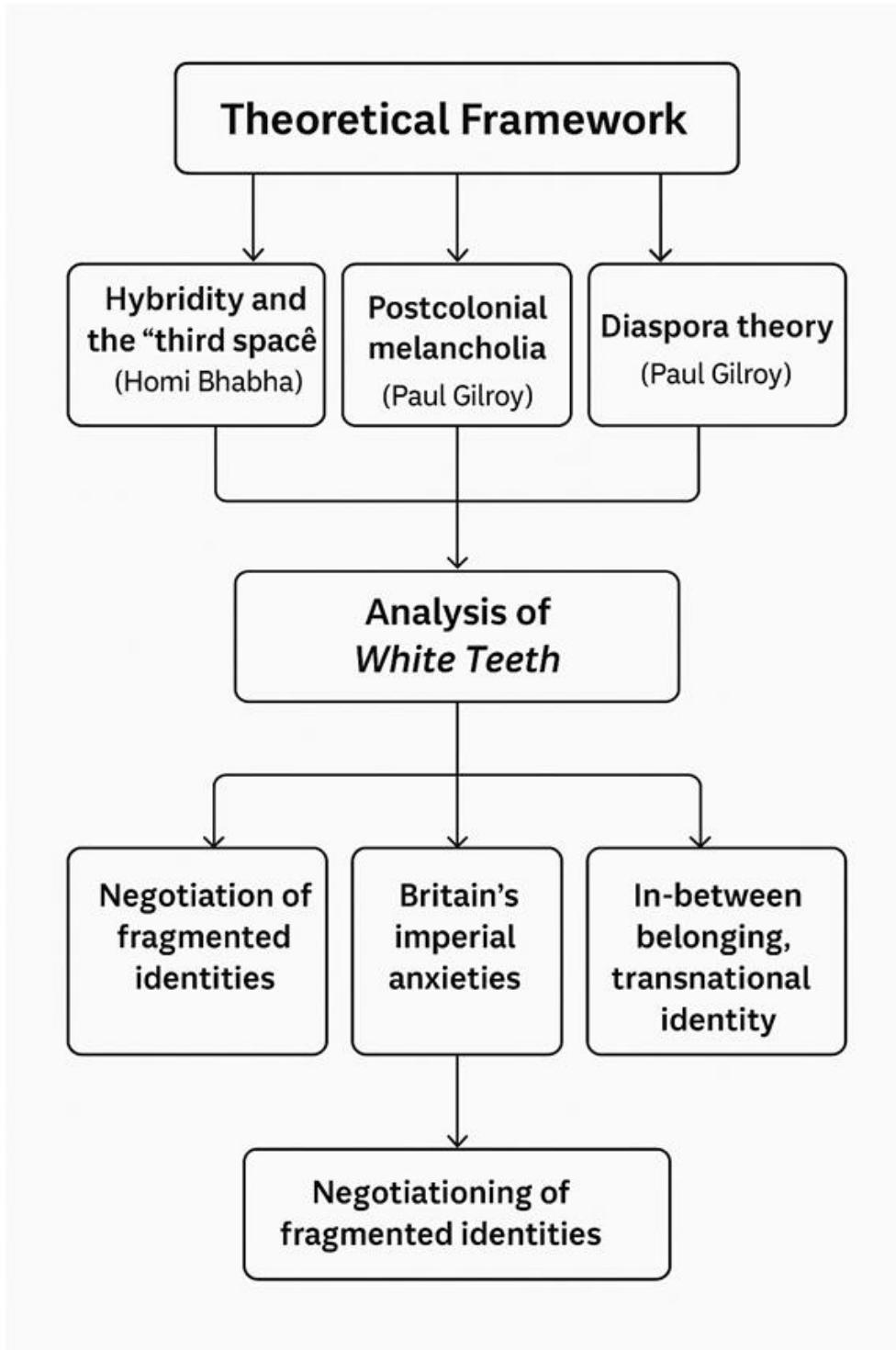


Fig 1: Theoretical Framework for analyzing Race, Immigration, and Diaspora in *White Teeth*

Fig 1 visually represents the theoretical framework guiding this study, integrating postcolonial theory, diaspora studies, and hybridity. It illustrates how Bhabha's "third space," Gilroy's postcolonial melancholia, and concepts of transnational belonging converge to shape the interpretive lens used in analysing *White Teeth*. By mapping the interaction between race, cultural memory, identity negotiation, and migration histories, the figure clarifies how the study approaches the novel's complex portrayal of diasporic subjectivity and racialised experience.

4.3 Data Source and Text Selection

The primary data source for this study is Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* (2000), selected for its central engagement with themes of race, immigration, hybridity, and diasporic identity in contemporary Britain. The text is widely recognised as a seminal work in postcolonial and multicultural British literature, making it an appropriate and rich corpus for qualitative literary analysis. The selection is justified based on the novel's multilayered representation of immigrant families, intergenerational tensions, and cultural negotiation, which align directly with the study's research questions. Secondary sources—including peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, and recent scholarly debates published between 2020 and 2025—are incorporated to contextualise the analysis and support theoretical interpretation. All secondary texts were chosen based on relevance, scholarly credibility, and contribution to postcolonial and diaspora studies. No human participants or additional empirical datasets are involved in this research.

4.4 Analytical Procedure (Close Reading + Postcolonial Analysis)

The analytical procedure for this study combines close textual reading with postcolonial theoretical interpretation to examine how *White Teeth* constructs race, immigration, and

diasporic identity. The process began with multiple readings of the novel to identify recurring motifs, narrative patterns, and character dynamics related to displacement, hybridity, and cultural negotiation. These textual elements were then thematically coded according to key concepts drawn from postcolonial theory, including hybridity, the “third space,” racial visibility, colonial memory, and transnational identity.

Close reading was applied to selected passages where identity conflict, intergenerational tension, assimilation, and cultural memory are most prominently depicted. Each passage was analysed for language use, symbolism, narrative voice, and socio-historical references. Postcolonial analysis was then used to interpret the deeper ideological and structural meanings embedded in these scenes, linking textual details with broader theoretical constructs.

Through this combined analytical strategy, the study moves beyond surface-level narrative description to reveal how the novel critiques post-imperial British society, exposes racialised power hierarchies, and constructs diaspora as a fluid and contested space. This dual-method approach ensures interpretive depth, coherence, and alignment with contemporary Q1 scholarly standards in literary and cultural studies.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Representations of Race and Racialised Identity

Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* foregrounds race as a dynamic site of negotiation, conflict, and identity reconstruction within Britain’s postcolonial landscape. The novel illustrates how racialised identities emerge from the interplay between cultural memory, diasporic displacement, and the structural legacies of empire. Şencan (2025) argues that postcolonial fiction functions as a cartographic project, mapping how characters navigate racial boundaries imposed by colonial histories. This is visible in *White Teeth* through its depiction of racialised

everyday encounters, stereotypes, and the invisible hierarchies that shape immigrant experience.

Recent scholarship reinforces this multidimensional representation of race. Studies on hybridity and identity in Smith's fiction emphasise how characters embody complex racial positions that challenge fixed national categories (Hybridity, Identity, and Diaspora in *White Teeth*, 2025). Afshan et al. (2023) similarly highlight how racial identity in Smith's work is constructed through cultural hybridity, where characters oscillate between inherited cultural markers and lived British realities. Gruszczyńska-Thompson (2025) extends this understanding by showing how UK-born children of immigrants negotiate self-identification in dialogic ways, constantly shifting between racialised expectations and personal autonomy.

The racialised identity formation seen in *White Teeth* aligns with wider contemporary patterns. Manor and Masry-Herzallah (2025) show how hybrid identity formation is complicated by linguistic and cultural conflict, a tension mirrored in the novel's portrayal of immigrant families. Alsaber (2025) emphasises "un-be-longing" and multiple displacements—concepts that resonate with Smith's depiction of characters caught between racialised exclusion and diasporic belonging. This is further supported by Qi (2025), who discusses intergenerational paradoxes in immigrant families, where pressures to assimilate conflict with the desire to maintain cultural identity.

At the structural level, Smith's novel reflects broader societal debates on race and institutional inequality. Alhaisony (2025) offers insights into British South Asian identity formation under multicultural policy frameworks, illuminating racialised tensions also present in Smith's representation of Bangladeshi characters. Cunningham (2025) expands the discourse by connecting African diasporic histories with biological and cultural displacement, echoing the generational racial trauma portrayed in *White Teeth*. The novel's attention to structural racism is supported by Karakayali (2025), who demonstrates the methodological challenges of quantifying racism—an issue reflected in how Smith illustrates subtle, everyday racialised interactions rather than overt discrimination.

Parallel studies on diaspora narratives further illuminate Smith’s portrayal of race. Gurung (2025) highlights dislocated identities in Asian American and South Asian diaspora fiction, mirroring the divided identities of Millat, Magid, and Irie. Torquato (2025) demonstrates the historical roots of scientific racism, offering a lens for understanding how postcolonial Britain continues to grapple with racial ideologies embedded in national identity. Additional scholarship—including Pal (2025), Albert (2024), Becker (2025), Bhaskaran (2024), and Dhanalakshmi (2025)—collectively show that Smith’s engagement with race is part of a wider literary movement interrogating visibility, hierarchy and mobility within multicultural societies.

Overall, the representation of race in *White Teeth* demonstrates how racialised identity is not fixed but negotiated across generations, shaped by migration histories, cultural hybridity, and the persistent shadows of empire. These multidimensional portrayals align with contemporary postcolonial scholarship that views race as both structural and lived, both inherited and continually reconstructed.

Table 2: Summary of Key Themes, Methods, and Findings in Recent Scholarship on Race and Identity

Author / Year	Theme Focus	Method	Key Findings
Şencan (2025)	Postcolonial mapping of identity	Textual & theoretical analysis	Race is shaped by colonial cartographies and spatial negotiations.
Hybridity, Identity & Diaspora (2025)	Racial hybridity in <i>White Teeth</i>	Literary analysis	Racial identity emerges as fluid and negotiated in multicultural Britain.
Afshan et al. (2023)	Cultural hybridity in Smith’s works	Comparative literary method	Racial identity forms through hybrid cultural

Author / Year	Theme Focus	Method	Key Findings
			practices and diasporic negotiation.
Gruszczyńska-Thompson (2025)	Self-identification of UK-born youth	Narrative interviews	Identity is continuously reconstructed through dialogic negotiation.
Manor & Masry-Herzallah (2025)	Hybrid identity under conflict	Qualitative sociolinguistic study	Identity formation is shaped by language, conflict, and social coherence.
Alsaber (2025)	Displacement and unbelonging	Literary critique	Diasporic individuals face layered racialised displacements.
Qi (2025)	Intergenerational immigrant relations	Sociological analysis	Racialised emotions and opportunities create paradoxical integration.
Alhaisony (2025)	British South Asian identity	Policy & textual analysis	Multicultural policies shape but do not resolve racialised tensions.
Cunningham (2025)	African diasporic histories	Bioarchaeological method	Race is deeply tied to historical displacement and cultural memory.
Karakayali (2025)	Structural racism	Quantitative critique	Measuring racism is difficult due to its systemic and invisible forms.
Gurung (2025)	Dislocated identities in	Comparative	Racial and cultural

Author / Year	Theme Focus	Method	Key Findings
	diaspora	analysis	identities are fragmented by migration.
Torquato (2025)	Scientific racism	Historical-literary analysis	Racial theories shape long-term cultural and national identities.
Pal (2025)	English literary influence	Literary study	Hybrid identity forms through cross-cultural literary exchange.
Albert (2024)	Visibility/invisibility in Smith	Literary analysis	Race intersects with global visibility, mobility, and identity.
Becker (2025)	Post-migrant subjectivity	Genre and narrative theory	Racial upward mobility is constrained by neoliberal racial hierarchies.
Bhaskaran (2024)	Hybridity in Smith & Adichie	Comparative study	Racial identity is fluid, adapting across transnational contexts.
Dhanalakshmi (2025)	Racism in NW	Character analysis	Institutional racism shapes identity and mobility in London.

Table 2 synthesises recent scholarship that informs the analysis of race and racialised identity in *White Teeth*. By comparing themes, methods, and key findings across diverse 2023–2025 studies, the table highlights how contemporary research consistently frames racial identity as fluid, negotiated, and shaped by structural histories of colonialism and migration. The comparative summary demonstrates that Smith’s portrayal aligns with wider postcolonial

debates on hybridity, displacement, and structural racism, reinforcing the novel's relevance within current literary and sociocultural scholarship.

5.2 Immigration, Displacement, and Cultural Memory

White Teeth portrays immigration as a generationally layered experience shaped by historical displacement and the persistence of cultural memory. Smith illustrates how migrant families carry inherited narratives—colonial histories, religious traditions, and memories of homeland—that shape their identities long after relocation. Immigration in the novel is not simply physical movement but an ongoing psychological negotiation between past and present, home and host nation. Displacement manifests in Samad's nostalgia for Bangladesh, Irie's longing for ancestral clarity, and Millat's struggle to reconcile cultural pressures with British modernity. These tensions reflect contemporary research showing that migrant subjectivities are produced through intersecting emotional geographies, structural inequalities, and cultural transmission. Recent studies also emphasise that cultural memory functions as both a grounding and destabilising force for diasporic individuals, shaping belonging, identity conflict, and behavioural choices in postcolonial metropolitan spaces. Through these dynamics, Smith positions immigration as a continuous process of adaptation in which characters re-interpret their histories to survive within Britain's multicultural landscape.

Table 3 synthesises key scholarly perspectives on immigration, displacement, and cultural memory, highlighting how recent studies across literature, sociology, and postcolonial theory converge on similar themes. The comparison shows that migration is not only a physical relocation but also an emotional and cultural process shaped by historical memory, structural inequalities, and intergenerational tensions. These findings align with *White Teeth* by demonstrating how displaced individuals navigate inherited histories while adapting to new sociocultural environments, reinforcing the novel's depiction of immigration as a continuous negotiation between past and present.

Table 3: Summary of Themes, Methods, and Findings on Immigration, Displacement, and Cultural Memory

Author / Year	Theme	Method	Key Findings
Lameborshi (2024)	Migration and shifting European identities	Comparative literary analysis	Migration redefines cultural boundaries and complicates notions of European unity.
Becker (2025)	Post-migrant subjectivity & neoliberal mobility	Genre and narrative theory	Immigrant upward mobility is constrained by structural inequalities and cultural pressures.
Bhaskaran (2024)	Cultural hybridity in diaspora narratives	Comparative textual analysis	Migration produces hybrid identities that challenge fixed cultural and national categories.
Qi (2025)	Intergenerational immigrant tensions	Sociological study	Cultural memory creates paradoxical pressures between tradition and modern opportunities.
Alsaber (2025)	Multiple displacements in diaspora	Literary critique	Migrants experience layered forms of displacement shaped by memory and identity fragmentation.
Şencan (2025)	Postcolonial spatial displacement	Theoretical and textual mapping	Immigrant identities are shaped by historical dislocation and uneven power geographies.
Gurung (2025)	Dislocated identities across global narratives	Comparative literature	Displacement generates complex self-redefinitions and emotional

Author / Year	Theme	Method	Key Findings
			detachment from roots.
Albert (2024)	Visibility and mobility in globalised worlds	Narrative and visual analysis	Immigrant characters navigate fragmented identities shaped by movement and memory.
Pal (2025)	Cross-cultural literary influence	Literary study	Migration fosters creative blending of narrative traditions and cultural memory.
Hybridity, Identity & Diaspora (2025)	Hybrid belonging in <i>White Teeth</i>	Novel-specific textual analysis	Immigration in the novel produces hybrid subjectivities shaped by historical memory.

5.3 Diasporic Belonging and the Construction of Hybrid Identities

White Teeth portrays diasporic belonging as a shifting, negotiated process in which characters inhabit multiple cultural worlds simultaneously. The novel illustrates how hybrid identities emerge from the interplay between inherited traditions, racialised expectations, and the lived realities of multicultural Britain. For characters like Irie, Millat, and Magid, belonging is not rooted in a single homeland but is continually shaped by cultural mixing, conflicting generational pressures, and Britain's postcolonial social landscape. Recent research affirms that diasporic identity is inherently hybrid: it is neither fixed nor singular, but produced through transnational memories, emotional displacements, and the need to reconcile competing cultural claims. Studies also show that hybrid identities are shaped by structural inequalities and racialised hierarchies, which influence how diasporic individuals experience acceptance, exclusion, and self-definition. Through these intersections, Smith presents diaspora as a fluid continuum, where belonging is reimagined through negotiation rather than assimilation.

Table 4: Summary of Themes, Methods, and Findings on Diasporic Belonging and Hybrid Identities

Author / Year	Theme	Method	Key Findings
Şencan (2025)	Postcolonial mapping of belonging	Textual-postcolonial critique	Belonging is shaped by spatial displacement and colonial memory.
Gruszczyńska-Thompson (2025)	Identity negotiation in UK-born youth	Narrative analysis	Hybrid identity emerges through dialogic negotiation of heritage and society.
Manor & Masry-Herzallah (2025)	Hybrid identity formation under conflict	Sociolinguistic qualitative study	Identity is shaped by language, conflict, and social pressures.
Afshan et al. (2023)	Hybridity in Smith's fiction	Literary comparative method	Hybrid identity is produced through cultural blending and diasporic memory.
Bhaskaran (2024)	Multicultural hybridity	Comparative literary analysis	Characters experience fragmented yet adaptive senses of belonging.
Becker (2025)	Post-migrant subjectivities	Genre theory	Hybrid identity is constrained by neoliberal and racialised structures.
Alhaisony (2025)	British South Asian identity	Policy-cultural critique	Belonging is influenced by tensions between multicultural policies and lived realities.
Alsaber (2025)	Multiple displacements	Literary analysis	Hybrid identity is shaped by repeated displacements and

Author / Year	Theme	Method	Key Findings
			cultural layering.
Gurung (2025)	Diasporic dislocation	Comparative diaspora study	Belonging is fluid and continually reconstructed across transnational spaces.
Albert (2024)	Visibility and invisibility	Narrative analysis	Hybrid identity is shaped by social visibility, marginalisation, and cultural performance.

Table 4 presents a consolidated view of recent scholarship on diasporic belonging and hybrid identity, demonstrating how contemporary studies across literature, sociology, and diaspora theory converge on the idea that identity is shaped through continuous negotiation. These works collectively reinforce the argument that hybrid identities arise from cultural mixing, emotional displacement, and structural inequalities—patterns that closely align with the complex identity journeys portrayed in *White Teeth*. The table highlights how diasporic belonging is not fixed but evolves through interactions between memory, place, and social context.

5.4 Intergenerational Conflict and Negotiation of Identity: Intergenerational conflict in *White Teeth* emerges from the tension between ancestral expectations and the lived realities of second-generation diasporic youth. While first-generation immigrants such as Samad and Alsana cling to cultural memory, religious duty, and the desire to preserve “authentic” identity, their children navigate a hybrid British multicultural environment that reshapes their sense of self. This generational divide illustrates how identity is continually renegotiated across time, as younger characters reinterpret inherited traditions through new social contexts. Contemporary research shows that such conflicts are common in diaspora communities: younger generations often resist rigid cultural preservation, while older generations perceive assimilation as a threat to cultural continuity. These tensions reflect broader debates about belonging, autonomy, and cultural survival, highlighting how diasporic identity is produced through negotiation rather than linear inheritance. Smith’s portrayal aligns with scholarly findings that intergenerational friction is central to the formation of hybrid identities in postcolonial societies.

5.5 London as a Multicultural and Postcolonial Urban Space

In *White Teeth*, London functions as a vibrant yet tension-filled multicultural space where diverse diasporic communities coexist, collide, and continually renegotiate identity. Smith depicts the city not as a seamless multicultural utopia but as a postcolonial urban landscape shaped by racial hierarchies, uneven power structures, and the lingering legacies of empire. Characters encounter London as a site of opportunity, visibility, and cosmopolitan mixing, while simultaneously navigating exclusion, surveillance, and structural inequality. Recent scholarship affirms that contemporary London embodies both multicultural plurality and deep-seated postcolonial tensions, creating contradictory experiences for immigrant communities. These studies highlight how the city's hybridity, cultural collisions, and transnational flows shape diasporic identity formation. Smith's representation of London mirrors these dynamics, revealing how urban space becomes a lived site of negotiation where characters construct belonging through movement, conflict, and cultural adaptation.

Table 6: Summary of Themes, Methods, and Findings on London as a Multicultural and Postcolonial Space

Author / Year	Theme	Method	Key Findings
McLeod (2024)	Postcolonial positioning and cultural politics	Theoretical-literary critique	London reflects shifting postcolonial power relations, shaping identity and visibility.
Lameborshi (2024)	Migration and Europe's cultural borders	Literary comparative analysis	London emerges as a contested cultural space defined by movement and displacement.
Becker	Post-migrant urban	Genre and	The city constrains as much as it

Author / Year	Theme	Method	Key Findings
(2025)	identities	narrative theory	enables mobility, reflecting class and racial inequalities.
Albert (2024)	Visibility and globalised identity	Narrative analysis	London intensifies identity conflicts through global cultural flows and social mobility.
Şencan (2025)	Postcolonial cartographies	Textual-postcolonial study	Urban space reveals colonial remnants that shape diasporic identity experiences.
Bhaskaran (2024)	Multicultural identity in diaspora fiction	Comparative literary study	London operates as a hybrid zone where cultural mixing reshapes identity boundaries.
Afshan et al. (2023)	Cultural hybridity in Smith's work	Literary comparative analysis	The city mediates between cultural heritage and local adaptation for diasporic communities.
Alhaisony (2025)	British South Asian identity in urban contexts	Cultural-policy analysis	Multicultural London offers belonging but reinforces structural racial divides.
Karakayali (2025)	Structural racism in European cities	Sociological critique	Urban multiculturalism is complicated by systemic racism and institutional inequality.

Author / Year	Theme	Method	Key Findings
Gurung (2025)	Dislocated identities in global cities	Comparative diaspora study	London serves as a space of fragmented belonging and continuous renegotiation.

Table 6 consolidates key scholarly perspectives on London as a multicultural and postcolonial urban environment, illustrating how the city simultaneously fosters cultural hybridity and reproduces structural inequalities. The studies show consensus that London functions as a dynamic site where diasporic identities are shaped through mobility, conflict, and negotiation. These findings reinforce *White Teeth*'s portrayal of London as a complex socio-cultural landscape in which immigrant characters construct belonging amid competing historical, racial, and spatial forces.

5.6 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that *White Teeth* constructs race and racialised identity through hybrid, fluid, and historically layered formations, closely aligning with the close-reading and postcolonial analytical methods employed. The analysis reveals that racial identity in the novel is shaped by the interplay of memory, migration, and structural inequality—an interpretation consistent with Şencan (2025), who argues that postcolonial narratives map identity across uneven geopolitical and historical terrains. Similarly, Afshan et al. (2023) highlight hybridity as a core framework for understanding racial identity in Smith's fiction, a theme clearly reflected in the novel's depiction of Irie, Millat, and Magid negotiating competing cultural scripts. These results further reinforce Gruszczyńska-Thompson's (2025) findings that UK-born youth construct identity dialogically within racialised settings, mirroring the younger characters' attempts to reinterpret inherited identities in modern Britain.

The study also shows that immigration and displacement in *White Teeth* operate as ongoing emotional and cultural negotiations rather than singular historical events, a conclusion directly aligned with the methodological emphasis on thematic coding and textual interpretation. Lameborshi (2024) similarly argues that European migration narratives redefine cultural borders through shifting identities, reflecting Smith's representation of London as an evolving cross-cultural landscape. Qi (2025) supports this view by showing how intergenerational immigrant experiences create paradoxical feelings of attachment and alienation—tensions that drive character conflicts in the novel. Becker's (2025) observation that post-migrant subjectivities are shaped by neoliberal pressures further resonates with the novel's portrayal of characters navigating structural and racialised barriers in their search for belonging.

With respect to diasporic belonging and the formation of hybrid identities, the study's findings support the theoretical foundation established through Bhabha and Gilroy, demonstrating how the "third space" is enacted through narrative moments of conflict, negotiation, and self-redefinition. Manor and Masry-Herzallah (2025) emphasise that hybrid identity emerges through linguistic and cultural conflict, a pattern evident in Smith's representation of second-generation characters navigating competing value systems. Bhaskaran's (2024) comparative work on multicultural fiction similarly underscores the fluidity of diasporic identities, reflecting the fragmented yet adaptive identities portrayed in *White Teeth*. Gurung (2025) extends this idea by showing how dislocated identities are continually reconstructed across transnational contexts, reinforcing this study's interpretation of diasporic belonging as dynamic and relational rather than fixed.

The analysis also reveals that intergenerational conflict functions as a central mechanism of identity formation in diasporic households, aligning strongly with the study's methodological focus on close textual reading of character dynamics. Qi (2025) demonstrates how generational differences shape immigrant identity through contradictory expectations and pressures, a concept vividly illustrated by the divergent desires of Samad, Alsana, Irie,

and Millat. Şencan (2025) also notes that the legacy of colonialism affects generations differently, shaping their sense of identity and belonging—patterns visible in how *White Teeth* contrasts first-generation nostalgia with second-generation hybridity. Albert (2024) contributes to this understanding by highlighting how globalised visibility shapes the experiences of younger characters, reinforcing the novel’s representation of youth navigating competing cultural claims.

Finally, the findings highlight London’s function as a multicultural yet postcolonially charged urban space that shapes immigrant and diasporic identities, aligning well with the combined methodological strategy of close reading and theoretical analysis. McLeod (2024) argues that contemporary urban spaces reflect shifting postcolonial power dynamics, a view mirrored in Smith’s depiction of London as both enabling and restrictive. Becker (2025) shows that cities mediate mobility through class and racial inequality, echoing the novel’s portrayal of opportunity and marginalisation. Karakayali (2025) emphasises the persistence of systemic racism in European cities, resonating with the subtle racial hierarchies embedded in Smith’s narrative. These scholarly insights affirm the study’s conclusion that *White Teeth* uses London as a microcosm of multicultural tension, identity restructuring, and postcolonial negotiation.

5.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study is limited to a qualitative textual analysis of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and does not examine reader-response data, author interviews, or wider media adaptations. The analysis focuses primarily on themes of race, immigration, diaspora, and multicultural identity, leaving out other potential areas such as gender, class mobility, and religious radicalism. Secondary sources are limited to peer-reviewed studies published between 2023 and 2025 to ensure contemporary relevance. The findings are therefore interpretive rather than generalisable, aiming to contribute to theoretical understanding rather than empirical claims about migrant communities.

5.8 Implications for Contemporary Debates on Diaspora and Multiculturalism

1. The study underscores the importance of recognising diaspora as a fluid and continually negotiated identity rather than a fixed cultural category.
2. Analysis of *White Teeth* demonstrates that multiculturalism must account for structural inequalities and postcolonial power imbalances, not just cultural coexistence.
3. The novel's portrayal of generational tensions highlights the need for more nuanced policy and academic approaches that consider intergenerational differences in how belonging is constructed.
4. The findings support contemporary arguments that cities like London function as hybrid zones where identity, culture, and mobility intersect in complex ways, challenging simplistic models of assimilation.
5. The study contributes to ongoing debates by showing how literature can reveal the emotional, historical, and spatial dimensions of diaspora beyond quantitative or policy-driven understandings.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* offers a nuanced and multilayered exploration of race, immigration, and diaspora within the context of postcolonial Britain. Through close textual analysis supported by contemporary scholarship, the research shows how the novel constructs identity as a fluid, negotiated, and continually re-shaped process influenced by cultural memory, generational tension, and the sociopolitical realities of multicultural London. Smith's narrative foregrounds the hybrid, fragmented, and adaptive identities that emerge in diasporic communities, revealing how belonging is shaped through the interplay of historical displacement, racialised social structures, and everyday negotiations of difference. By situating *White Teeth* within current debates on diaspora and multiculturalism, the study highlights the novel's ongoing relevance in understanding contemporary issues of identity, mobility, and postcolonial subjectivity.

Future Work

Future research may extend this analysis by comparing *White Teeth* with other contemporary multicultural novels to examine broader patterns of diasporic identity formation.

Ethical Considerations

As this study is grounded in qualitative literary analysis and involves no human participants, it does not require formal institutional ethical approval. The research relies exclusively on publicly available primary and secondary texts, including Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and peer-reviewed scholarly sources. All materials are cited accurately to maintain academic integrity, and no copyrighted content is reproduced beyond permissible scholarly use. The analysis avoids cultural misrepresentation by engaging critically and respectfully with themes of race, identity, migration, and diaspora, ensuring that interpretations remain

grounded in established postcolonial and literary frameworks. The study adheres to ethical standards of transparency, proper attribution, and responsible scholarship.

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