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Starr Carter's intersectional resistance in Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*

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Abstract. This study analyzes Starr Carter's voice as a form of resistance shaped by her intersectional identity in Angie Thomas's The Hate U Give (2017). The research focuses on the relationship between intersectional discrimination and the development of resistance as represented through Starr's experiences as a young Black girl. Drawing upon Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory and resistance theory, this study investigates two major issues: the types of intersectional discrimination that shape Starr Carter's voice and the ways in which her voice functions as resistance to racism and systemic injustice. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with an interpretative approach. The primary data are obtained from the novel The Hate U Give, particularly dialogues, narration, and character descriptions related to Starr's identity, experiences, and responses to oppression. Secondary sources, including books and scholarly journals on intersectionality, resistance, and literary criticism, are also utilized to support the analysis. The findings reveal that Starr's voice is shaped by three interconnected forms of discrimination: racial discrimination, gendered expectations, and age-based discrimination or adultism. Racial discrimination is represented through police violence, racial profiling, media stereotyping, and the criminalization of Black identity. Gendered expectations pressure Starr to regulate her emotions and language to avoid stereotypes associated with Black girls, while adultism causes her testimony and experiences to be underestimated despite her role as the primary witness to Khalil's death. These intersecting oppressions initially produce fear, trauma, and silence. However, Starr gradually develops critical awareness and transforms her silence into resistance. Her voice evolves through three stages: silent resistance, personal resistance through testimony and truth-telling, and collective resistance through public protest. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that The Hate U Give portrays voice as a powerful instrument of empowerment, identity affirmation, and resistance against systemic injustice within contemporary young adult literature.

Keywords: Adultism, Gendered Expectations, Intersectionality, Racism, Resistance

INTRODUCTION

Racism continues to shape social, political, and cultural life in contemporary society, particularly in the United States. Although overt forms of racism have declined, systemic racism remains embedded within institutional norms and policies that reproduce inequality across generations. (As Feagin, 2020:45) argues, these structures operate in

subtle ways, making racial injustice appear normalized and often unavoidable. As a result, such conditions influence everyday experiences and limit opportunities for marginalized communities.

For African Americans, racial discrimination manifests across various social domains, including law enforcement, education, economic systems, healthcare, media representation, and housing. (Silva, 2018:3) defines this condition as structural racism, in which institutions interact to sustain racial hierarchies. Within these systems, black individuals are frequently subjected to surveillance, stereotyping, and unequal treatment, shaping how they navigate social life.

The situation becomes more complex for Black women, who experience racism alongside gender-based expectations. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw's, 1989: 139-140) explains that overlapping identities produce forms of oppression that cannot be understood when race or gender is examined separately. (Crenshaw, 2017:32) further emphasizes that Black women are often rendered invisible within both feminist and anti-racist discourses, highlighting the need for a more integrated analytical approach.

From a literary perspective, these social conditions are not examined as empirical realities, but as representations constructed within narrative texts. Literature provides a space where complex social issues are explored through characterization, plot, and narrative voice. In this sense, characters function as interpretative sites through which readers can understand how oppression is experienced and negotiated. Therefore, the analysis of literary characters becomes central in revealing how identity and resistance are constructed within the text. (Bickmore, 2016:12) suggest that Young Adult literature enables readers to critically engage with social issues while fostering awareness of systemic injustice.

The Hate U Give (2017) exemplifies this literary function by presenting the story of Starr Carter, a sixteen-year-old Black girl who witnesses the fatal police shooting of her childhood friend. Starr's life is divided between her Black neighborhood, Garden Heights, and her predominantly white private school, Williamson Prep. The development of Starr's voice throughout the narrative reflects a gradual and complex process. Her initial silence, shaped by fear and social pressure, evolves into a form of resistance as she begins to articulate her experiences. This progression indicates that resistance is not immediate, but emerges through continuous negotiation between identity, trauma, and social expectation. Beyond portraying racial injustice, the novel emphasizes the importance of voice as a form of resistance. Starr's transformation from silence to activism becomes a central element of the narrative.

This study argues that Starr Carter's resistance is constructed through the intersection of race, gender, and age, and that these intersecting identities shape the development of her voice as a form of resistance throughout the narrative. Consequently, *The Hate U Give* portrays resistance not merely as an individual response to racial injustice, but as a dynamic process emerging from multiple systems of oppression. Although numerous studies on *The Hate U Give* have explored themes such as racism, identity, and social resistance, these elements are often examined in isolation rather than as interconnected processes. Several scholars have analyzed racial injustice or highlighted the significance of identity, while others have focused on forms of resistance within the narrative. However, limited attention has been given to how these dimensions interact, particularly in relation to the role of voice. In addition, while some research adopts an intersectional perspective inspired by Kimberlé Crenshaw, it tends to emphasize identity formation

without fully addressing how intersecting identities influence the emergence of resistance.

LITERATURE RIVIEW

Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory was introduced by (Crenshaw, 1989:139-140) as a critical framework for analyzing how multiple social identities interact and produce complex forms of oppression. This theory challenges the single-axis approach, which tends to examine discrimination through one category of identity only, such as race or gender. Crenshaw argues that the experiences of Black women cannot be fully understood if race and gender are treated as separate categories, since both operate simultaneously in shaping social inequality (Crenshaw, 1989:139-145).

Intersectionality views identity as relational and interconnected. Social categories such as race, gender, class, and age do not function independently, but interact with one another within broader structures of power. As a result, individuals who occupy more than one marginalized position may experience layered forms of discrimination. This perspective is significant because it allows the researcher to examine oppression as a complex process shaped by racism, sexism, age-based marginalization, and institutional inequality. In this study, intersectionality theory is used to analyze Starr Carter's experiences in *The Hate U Give*. Starr's position as a young Black girl places her within intersecting systems of oppression.

Resistance Theory

Resistance theory provides a conceptual framework for understanding how individuals respond to oppression and unequal power relations. According to (Freire, 1970:35-36) resistance is closely associated with the concept of *conscientização* or critical consciousness. This concept refers to the process through which marginalized individuals develop awareness of social injustice and begin to challenge oppressive systems and dominant ideologies. In this regard, resistance should not merely be interpreted as an act of opposition, but also as a process of awareness, empowerment, and social transformation.

In literary studies, resistance may be represented through a character's speech, silence, emotional responses, personal decisions, and participation in collective action. Resistance does not always emerge in the form of direct confrontation; rather, it may gradually develop through self-awareness, testimony, self-expression, and communal participation. According to (Foucault, 1978:95-96) power relations always create possibilities for resistance, since individuals continuously negotiate and respond to structures of domination. Through this perspective, literary characters can be analyzed as figures who negotiate power and challenge dominant narratives.

METHOD

This chapter describes the research method applied in this study. It covers several components, including the research design, literary approach, research instrument, data source, data collection procedure, and data analysis procedure. This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative research is commonly used to examine non-numerical data such as words, narration, dialogues, and textual expressions found in literary works. According to (Creswell, 2014:4) qualitative research aims to explore and interpret meanings related to social and human experiences. Therefore, this approach is

considered appropriate for literary studies because it enables the researcher to investigate meanings and representations presented within a literary text.
The analysis in this study focuses on textual evidence taken from Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*, including narration, dialogues, and character portrayals related to Starr Carter's experiences and identity. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:3) explain that qualitative research emphasizes the interpretation of data within its social and contextual dimensions. Accordingly, this study applies a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze how Starr Carter's voice is represented as a form of resistance shaped by her intersectional identity in *The Hate U Give*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of Starr Carter's development in Angie Thomas's The Hate U Give. The discussion focuses on how intersecting forms of oppression, race, gender, and age, affect the formation of her voice as a tool for resistance. The analysis draws upon first-person narration, narrative events, and dialogue to demonstrate how Starr moves from silence to personal and collective resistance. The chapter is structured according to the stages of her voice development, maintaining alignment with the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and resistance theory.

Types of Intersectional Discrimination Shaping Starr Carter's Voice

In The Hate U Give, intersectionality is reflected in the ways Starr Carter navigates racialized policing, gendered expectations, and the marginalization of youth perspectives. Her racial identity exposes her to stereotyping and police profiling, while her gender places pressure on her to regulate emotions and behavior in different social contexts. In addition, her age often results in the dismissal of her perspective by adults and institutions. Following Crenshaw's (1989:139–145) argument that race and gender cannot be examined as separate, single-axis categories, the following sub-sections demonstrate that Starr's discrimination is never experienced along one dimension alone; each incident of racial profiling is simultaneously inflected by expectations tied to her gender and by the diminished credibility assigned to her because of her age. Therefore, intersectionality theory provides the analytical framework for understanding how these overlapping identities shape Starr's worldview, vulnerability, and voice.

Racial Discrimination and Criminalization

Angie Thomas builds racism in the novel out of more than physical violence; it also runs through the everyday assumption that Black neighborhoods and Black people are inherently linked to danger. Narrated in Starr's own voice, the story treats racism as an ordinary feature of institutional life, most visibly through policing and news coverage. Viewed through Crenshaw's (1989:139–145) lens, these are not stray incidents but the opening layer of Starr's oppression, the racial axis on which the gendered and age-related pressures examined later in this discussion are then built.
One of the first illustrations is the set of instructions Maverick gives his daughter before she ever has to face an officer alone:
The other talk was about what to do if a cop stopped me. Momma fussed and told Daddy I was too young for that. He argued that I wasn't too young to get arrested or shot. "Starr-Starr, you do whatever they tell you to do," he said. "Keep your hands visible. Don't make any sudden moves. Only speak when they speak to you"" (Thomas, 2017: 24)

This quotation reveals how racial fear has become normalized within Black communities. The phrase "wasn't too young to get arrested or shot" suggests that encounters with the police are treated not as moments of protection, but as dangerous situations requiring survival strategies. Through Starr's perspective, Angie Thomas emphasizes that racism operates systematically, since Black individuals are viewed with suspicion regardless of innocence. That this survival code is deliberately transmitted from father to daughter also anticipates Crenshaw's (1989:139–145) point that racial vulnerability is not experienced by an abstract, ungendered, ageless Black subject; here it is passed specifically onto a Black daughter, foreshadowing the gendered and age-based dimensions of her marginalization discussed later in this chapter.
The escalation of violence that follows further reinforces the novel's criticism of racial prejudice:

"Khalil does. He opens the driver's door.'You okay, Starr-'Pow!
One. Khalil's body jerks.
Blood splatters from his back.
He holds on to the door to keep himself upright.
Pow!
Two. Khalil gasps.
Pow!
Three. Khalil looks at me, stunned.
He falls to the ground." (Thomas, 2017:27)

This passage demonstrates how Black bodies are constructed as threatening even in harmless situations. Khalil's simple act of checking on Starr is immediately interpreted as dangerous, showing how racial bias shapes the officer's perception. The staccato rhythm created by the repeated *"Pow!"* and the numerical count of the shots strip the moment of any narrative cushioning, emphasizing the fragility of Black life within racist systems of authority that, following Crenshaw (1989:139–145), treat Black identity itself as sufficient grounds for suspicion regardless of the actual behavior involved.
Racial discrimination continues after Khalil's death through media representation, which reconstructs his identity through stereotypes connected to crime rather than portraying him as a victim:

“On the monday night news, they finally gave Khalil's name in the story about the shooting, but with a title added to it — Khalil Harris, a Suspected Drug Dealer. They didn't mention that he was unarmed. They said that an "unidentified witness" had been questioned and that police were still investigating." (Thomas, 2017: 106)

Through this quotation, Angie Thomas criticizes how media discourse contributes to the dehumanization of Black victims. Khalil's humanity is erased and replaced with a label connected to crime, while the phrase "unidentified witness" conceals Starr's own presence and testimony, emphasizing how institutional narratives can override a firsthand account. In Crenshaw's (1989:139–145) terms, Khalil is reduced to a single, flattened racial category, criminal suspect, precisely because the institutions reporting on his death do not account for the fuller, intersecting realities of who he actually was.
Starr resists this criminalizing narrative directly when she is questioned about Khalil's character during her deposition.

"I know the answer to her question. I knew it when I saw Khalil at the party. He never wore new shoes. And jewelry: Those little ninety-nine-cent chains he bought at the beauty supply store didn't count. Ms. Rosalie just confirmed it. But what the hell does that have to do with him getting murdered? Is that supposed to make all of this okay? Gomez tilts her head. "Starr? Can you please answer the question?" I refuse to make them feel better about killing my friend. I straighten up, look Gomez dead in her eyes, and say, "I never saw him sell drugs or do drugs." (Thomas, 2017: 104)

This quotation reflects Starr's refusal to let questions about Khalil's appearance or possible poverty be used as justification for his death. By deliberately meeting Gomez's gaze and answering firmly, Starr resists the underlying assumption that respectability, or the lack of it, determines whose life is treated as worth protecting. This line of questioning shows Crenshaw's (1989:139–145) point in practice: the deposition treats Khalil's race and presumed class position as though they were relevant evidence about the shooting itself, and Starr's refusal to accept that framing is the first sign that she recognizes, and begins to push back against, this compounded bias.
Finally, Starr's conversation with her father situates Khalil's death within a larger, cyclical structure of inequality:

"Pac rapped 'bout that stuff too, yeah, but he also cared 'bout uplifting black people," says Daddy. "Like he took the word 'nigga' and gave it a whole new meaning – Never Ignorant Getting Goals Accomplished. And he said Thug Life meant–" "The Hate U Give Little Infants F**s Everybody"! I censor myself." (Thomas, 2017: 166)

This exchange with Maverick demonstrates that racism, in Starr's understanding, is interconnected with poverty and is cyclical, affecting communities across generations rather than being reducible to a single officer's decision. This supports Crenshaw's (1989:140–145) argument that racial discrimination does not operate independently but interacts with other categories such as class, producing a more specific and compounded form of marginalization than race alone would explain. Read together, this sequence shows racial discrimination in the novel operating through several interconnected channels: parental survival instructions, police violence, media framing, and Starr's own emerging refusal to accept the criminalizing narrative built around her friend. As the following sub-sections show, these same channels do not act on Starr independently of her gender and age, but combine with them, consistent with Crenshaw's intersectional framework.

Gendered Expectations and Silencing

In addition to racial discrimination, Starr Carter also experiences gendered expectations that contribute to the silencing of Black girls. As a young Black female character, Starr exists at the intersection of race and gender, where she must constantly regulate her behavior, language, and emotional expression depending on her social environment. Following Crenshaw's (1989:140–145) argument that Black women experience oppression differently from white women because race and gender intersect in shaping their social realities, Starr is not merely expected to behave politely as a girl in general; she is specifically expected to avoid the stereotype of the *"angry Black girl,"* a burden her white classmates at Williamson do not carry.

At Williamson Prep, Starr constructs a second identity in order to adapt to an environment that expects assimilation into whiteness, a practice closely connected to code-switching:

“That means flipping the switch in my brain so I'm Williamson Starr. Williamson Starr doesn't use slang - if a rapper would say it, she doesn't say it, even if her white friends do. Slang makes them cool. Slang makes her "hood." Williamson Starr holds her tongue when people piss her off so nobody will think she's the "angry black girl." Williamson Starr is approachable. No stank-eyes, side-eyes, none of that. Williamson Starr is non-confrontational. Basically, Williamson Starr doesn't give anyone a reason to call her ghetto. " (Thomas, 2017: 73-74)

This quotation reflects Starr's fragmented identity and emotional conflict. The repetition of "Williamson Starr" emphasizes the existence of a constructed persona built specifically to survive within a white-dominated environment one whose central rule is silence and restraint rather than honest expression. Each rule Starr lists, no slang, no "stank-eyes," being "approachable", exists specifically to avoid the racialized-gendered stereotype of the "angry black girl" that Crenshaw (1989:140–145) identifies as a burden unique to the intersection of race and gender, one that a white classmate using the same slang or the same tone would not face.
The cost of that restraint becomes visible when Starr finally breaks it during an argument with her friend Hailey:

“Hailey expresses sympathy for Officer One-Fifteen, believing that he lost everything while trying to do his job and protect himself. Starr is deeply upset because Hailey prioritizes the officer's life over the injustice experienced by Khalil. Unable to continue the conversation, Starr decides to leave. When Hailey insists that the officer's life matters too, Starr firmly argues that society has always valued the officer's life more, emphasizing that this unequal treatment is the real problem!" (Thomas, 2017: 224-225).

Angie Thomas portrays this outburst as the product of prolonged emotional pressure rather than impulsiveness. Starr's "gruff" voice and tight throat mark the physical strain of holding back, and her decision to finally speak, even briefly and without composure, shows the gendered expectation of remaining agreeable beginning to crack under the weight of grief and anger, exactly the emotional cost Crenshaw (1989:140–145) describes when a Black girl's silence is demanded regardless of what she has just witnessed.
A different register of Starr's voice appears back in Garden Heights, where slang returns naturally rather than as something to be suppressed:

"All the way? Bruh, all what way? Down the street
Garden Heights Starr is all up in my voice right now." (Thomas, 2017: 160)

Here, *"Garden Heights Starr"* reasserts itself, illustrating that the silencing described in the Williamson Prep passage is context-specific rather than an innate trait. The ease of this voice, compared to the calculated restraint of "Williamson Starr," underscores how much conscious effort gendered and racialized self-censorship actually requires, and how differently Starr's race and gender are policed depending on which space she occupies, precisely the kind of context-dependent marginalization Crenshaw's (1989:140–145) framework is designed to capture.

The accumulated pressure of switching between these two selves eventually erupts beyond both of them during a physical confrontation with Hailey:

"I hit at Hailey with my fists, and she slaps and claws me upside my head. I push her off, and she hits the floor. Her skirt goes up, and her pink drawers are out for everybody to see. Laughter erupts around us. Some people have their phones out.
I'm no longer Williamson Starr or even Garden Heights
Starr. I'm pissed." (Thomas, 2017: 337)

This scene marks the point at which suppressed anger stops being manageable through either persona. Angie Thomas presents this eruption not as empowerment but as loss of control, an unproductive release of the same anger that will later be channeled into structured public protest. Because Starr must abandon both *"Williamson Starr"* and *"Garden Heights Starr"* simultaneously, this moment demonstrates Crenshaw's (1989:139–145) core claim that Black women's experiences cannot be explained through race or gender examined separately: neither identity script, built to manage race and gender pressures individually, is adequate once both collapse under stress at once. Read as a sequence, these four moments trace how gendered expectations demand silence and self-regulation from Starr, and how that regulation strains, cracks, and finally collapses under the weight of grief she is not permitted to express.

Age and Adultism

In addition to racial and gender discrimination, Starr also experiences oppression related to age, in which adults and institutions repeatedly treat her testimony with doubt or as secondary to their own authority even though she is the only eyewitness to Khalil's shooting. Consistent with Crenshaw's (1989:139–140) claim that systems of oppression interact rather than operate in isolation, this doubt is never directed at Starr as a generic *"young person"*; it is specifically a young Black girl's account that is questioned, which links the following examples back to the racial and gendered dynamics already discussed in 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

This is visible during Starr's deposition, when the attorney Gomez questions her account of why Khalil approached the car:

"Okay, Gomez says, and takes a deep breath.
"Do you know why Khalil came to the door, Starr?"
"I think he was coming to ask if I was okay."
"You think?" (Thomas, 2017: 103)

The single word *"You think?"* subtly undermines Starr's credibility, treating her direct, lived knowledge as uncertain simply because she is a minor. Read through Crenshaw's (1989:139–140) framework, this doubt is not simply about her age in isolation; the same tone of casual disbelief is not shown toward the adult officer's account elsewhere in the deposition, indicating that Starr's youth is being weighed together with her race in how seriously her testimony is taken.

Starr's mother intervenes to redirect the deposition's focus away from Starr and Khalil and back to the officer responsible for the shooting:

"Whoa, wait one second," Momma says. "Are y'all putting Khalil and Starr on trial or the cop who killed him?" Wilkes looks up from his notes.
" I don't quite understand, Mrs. Carter?" Gomez sputters.
"You haven't asked my child about that cop yet,"
Momma says. "You keep asking her about Khalil, like he's the reason he's dead. Like she said, he didn't pull the trigger on himself."
"We just want the whole picture, Mrs. Carter. That's all."
"One-Fifteen killed him," I say. "And he wasn't doing anything wrong. How much of a bigger picture do you need?" (Thomas, 2017: 104-105)

This exchange exposes how institutional questioning defaults to scrutinizing the young Black witness and victim rather than the officer who fired the shots, a pattern Momma names explicitly. This is precisely the kind of compounded marginalization Crenshaw (1989:139–140) describes: Starr is doubted not simply because she is young, nor simply because she is Black, but because the deposition process treats a young Black witness as more suspect than an armed adult officer. Starr's own closing line, delivered without hesitation, shows her beginning to reject the framing being imposed on her.
The clearest marker of how age shapes the reception of Starr's voice appears when she finally speaks before the grand jury:

“I scoot closer to the mic and clear my throat.
"My name" My small voice sounds like a five-year-old's.
I sit up straight and try again.
"My name is Starr Carter. I'm sixteen years old." (Thomas, 2017: 328)

Starr's voice initially regressing to sound childlike captures the psychological weight of this marginalization: she is acutely aware that her age may cost her credibility in the very room where the truth about Khalil's death is being decided. Consistent with Crenshaw's (1989:139–140) argument that intersecting identities compound one another, this is not simply nervousness before a crowd; it is the accumulated effect of already being doubted for her age, her race, and, in earlier scenes, for how she is expected to speak as a girl. Her decision to sit up and try again, however, is the first sign that she will not let that perception silence her.

Starr’s Voice as Resistance to Racism Influenced by Her Intersectional Identity
Throughout the narrative, Starr Carter's voice undergoes a significant transformation. At the beginning of the story, her voice is restricted by fear, trauma, and social pressure following Khalil's death. However, as her awareness of injustice develops, she begins to speak out and eventually participates in collective resistance. This trajectory is examined through resistance theory, specifically Freire's (1970:35–36) concept of conscientização, the gradual process through which a marginalized individual develops critical awareness of injustice and begins to challenge the systems that produce it. As stated in the theoretical framework of this study, intersectionality theory and resistance theory are closely connected because Starr's resistance cannot be separated from the racial, gendered, and age-based marginalization discussed in 4.1; the three sub-sections that follow trace how that marginalization is answered, in stages, from silence, to individual testimony, to participation in collective action.

Initial Silence and the Formation of Critical Consciousness

Following Freire's (1970:35–36) argument that critical consciousness begins before it becomes visible action, this stage examines the moments when Starr's silence itself marks the earliest, still-forming stage of her awareness. At the crime scene itself, Starr's voice fails her completely, even though she desperately wants to protect what remains of Khalil's dignity.

"The cops rummage through Khalil's car. I try to tell them to stop. Please, cover his body. Please, close his eyes. Please, close his mouth.
Get away from his car. Don't pick up his hair-brush.
But the words never come out. (Thomas, 2017: 29)

This passage shows silence at its most involuntary: Starr's thoughts are fully formed, even urgent, yet trauma and fear prevent her from voicing them at all. Silence here is not a choice but a shutdown imposed by shock. In Freire's (1970:35–36) terms, this moment precedes conscientização rather than expressing it: Starr already perceives the injustice unfolding around Khalil's body, but has not yet developed the critical awareness or the safety needed to act on that perception.
That same silence takes a more deliberate, internal form once the media begins reshaping the narrative of Khalil's death.

"On the Monday night news, they finally gave Khalil's name in the story about the shooting, but with a title added to it — Khalil Harris, a Suspected Drug Dealer. They didn't mention that he was unarmed. They said that an "unidentified witness" had been questioned and that police were still investigating. After what I told the cops, I'm not sure what's left to investigate." (Thomas, 2017: 106).

Here Starr's private thought, *"I'm not sure what's left to investigate"*, registers quiet disbelief even though she says nothing publicly. This marks the beginning of what Freire (1970:35–36) calls conscientização: Starr has already recognized the gap between what she knows and what is being reported, even while she remains an unnamed, silent "witness" in the public account. Her silence at this stage is therefore not the absence of awareness but its earliest form, the point at which critical consciousness has formed internally but has not yet found a public voice.

Speaking Up as Personal Resistance

Freire's (1970:35–36) framework, conscientização does not stop at recognizing injustice; it moves toward action once the individual begins to name that injustice aloud and act on it. Starr's first deliberate act of vocalizing her trauma, rather than suppressing it, occurs when she discloses a previous loss to her attorney, Ms. Ofrah.

"I turn to Ms. Ofrah. "When I was ten, I saw my other best friend get murdered in a drive-by." ... "I've tried to forget it, but I remember everything. The shots, the look on Natasha's face. They never caught the person who did it. I guess it didn't matter enough. But it did matter. She mattered." ... "And I want everyone to know that Khalil mattered too." (Thomas, 2017: 216)

This disclosure links Khalil's death to a pattern of loss Starr has carried since childhood, and it is the first time she connects speaking with justice rather than danger. Her statement, *"I want everyone to know that Khalil mattered too,"* marks a conscious decision to pursue testimony rather than remain silent, the moment Freire's (1970:35–36) conscientização turns from private recognition into a deliberate, spoken commitment to act. Ms. Ofrah's response, agreeing to represent her, turns that decision into concrete action.

That resolve is tested when Starr must actually speak before the grand jury, where the same line already discussed as evidence of adultism can equally be read as an act of personal resistance:

"I scoot closer to the mic and clear my throat.
"My name-" My small voice sounds like a five-year-old's.
I sit up straight and try again.
"My name is Starr Carter. I'm sixteen years old." (Thomas, 2017: 328)

Read in this context, the same passage shows Starr consciously overriding her own fear. Rather than letting her voice's childlike register stop her, she sits up and tries again, completing the sentence on her own terms. The act of correcting herself, rather than the words themselves, is what makes this a moment of personal resistance: it is a small, deliberate refusal to let fear have the final say, and it shows Freire's (1970:35–36) conscientização operating in real time, awareness becoming action within the space of a single sentence.

Public Protest as Collective Resistance

Starr's transformation becomes most visible when her voice moves from personal testimony into the public sphere. For Freire (1970:35–36), conscientização is ultimately a collective, not only an individual, process: critical consciousness becomes fullest when it is shared and acted upon together with others facing the same oppression. This shift begins when Ms. Ofrah steps outside her role as attorney and hands Starr a literal instrument of voice.

"Ms. Ofrah takes my hand and leads me through the crowd."Fire me," she says. "Huh?" "Tell me you no longer want me to represent you." …"Good. As of now I'm not your attorney. So if your parents find out about this, I didn't do it as your attorney but as an activist. You saw that bus near the intersection?" "Yeah." "If the officers react, run straight to it. Got it?" ... She takes me to the patrol car and motions at her colleague. The lady climbs off and hands Ms. Ofrah the bullhorn. Ms. Ofrah passes it over to me. "Use your weapon," she says." (Thomas, 2017: 405)

The bullhorn, explicitly named *"your weapon,"* reframes Starr's voice as an instrument of confrontation rather than something to be regulated or doubted. Ms. Ofrah's insistence that Starr fire her, so that what follows happens *"as an activist"* rather than as an attorney, and her practical instruction about which bus to run to if the officers react, together signal that the fight has moved beyond the legal system and into direct, collective action, the point at which Starr's individual conscientização, in Freire's (1970:35–36) sense, joins a wider, organized effort rather than remaining a private conviction.

Starr then uses that instrument to address the police and the crowd directly, converting personal grief into public indictment.

"My name is Starr. I'm the one who saw what happened to Khalil," I say into the bullhorn. "And it wasn't right." I get a bunch of "yeahs" and "amens" from the crowd. "We weren't doing anything wrong. Not only did Officer Cruise assume we were up to no good, he assumed we were criminals. Well, Officer Cruise is the criminal." The crowd cheers and claps. Ms. Ofrah says, "Speak!" That amps me up. I turn to the cops. "I'm sick of this! Just like y'all think all of us are bad because of some people, we think the same about y'all. Until you give us a reason to think otherwise, we'll keep protesting." More cheers, and I can't lie, it eggs me on. "Everybody wants to talk about how Khalil died," I say. "But this isn't about how Khalil died. It's about the fact that he lived. His life mattered. Khalil lived!" I look at the cops again. "You hear me? Khalil lived!" "You have until the count of three to disperse," the officer on the loudspeaker says. "Khalil lived!" we chant. "One." "Khalil lived!" "Two." "Khalil lived!" "Three." "Khalil lived!"" (Thomas, 2017: 406–407)

Here Starr's individual testimony becomes a collective chant, with the crowd answering her line for line even as police issue a countdown to disperse. The scene stages Starr's voice directly against institutional authority, refusing to be silenced by the threat of the count itself, and shows the collective dimension of conscientização Freire (1970:35–36) describes: awareness of injustice, once shared, becomes harder for institutional power to suppress than it was when Starr held it alone.
The protest's central image, the hairbrush Khalil was holding when he was shot, becomes a rallying chant that binds Starr's individual testimony to the crowd's collective outrage.

"A hairbrush is not a
gun! A hairbrush is not a gun!"
It's contagious and echoes all around us. Seven, DeVante, and Chris join in.
"A hairbrush is not a gun," I mutter. Khalil drops it into the side of the door. "A hairbrush is not a gun."He opens the door to ask if I'm okay. Then pow-pow" (Thomas, 2017: 403)
By turning a single physical object from the night of the shooting into a shared chant, the protest converts one girl's eyewitness account into a collective demand for accountability. Taken together, these three moments show voice moving from something Starr alone must reclaim into something an entire community reclaims with her, completing the arc from silence to Freire's (1970:35–36) fully collective conscientização.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that Starr Carter's voice develops through the influence of intersecting forms of discrimination related to race, gender, and age, answering the first research question through Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory, which shows that these three forms of discrimination are neither separate nor sequential but continuously overlapping and mutually reinforcing. Through first-person narration and emotional conflict, Angie Thomas portrays how systemic racism, gendered expectations, and adult authority contribute to Starr's fear, silence, and emotional struggle after witnessing Khalil's death. However, these experiences gradually shape her critical awareness and encourage her to challenge the oppression surrounding her. As the narrative progresses, Starr's voice transforms from silence into personal and collective resistance through testimony, self-expression, and public protest, answering the second

research question through Freire's (1970) concept of conscientização, which explains this transformation as a gradual development of critical consciousness moving from silent awareness, to individual testimony, to collective action. Therefore, The Hate U Give ultimately presents voice as an important instrument for confronting injustice, reclaiming truth, and resisting the erasure of marginalized experiences, demonstrating that Starr's intersectional identity, as theorized by Crenshaw, and her development of resistance, as theorized by Freire, are, as this study has argued, inseparably connected.

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the final conclusion of the study based on the analysis discussed in the previous chapter. The conclusion is organized according to the two statements of the problem formulated in this research. The first statement of the problem discusses the forms of intersectional discrimination that shape Starr Carter's voice in Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*. The second statement of the problem analyzes how Starr's voice functions as a form of resistance to racism as influenced by her intersectional identity. In relation to the first statement of the problem, the analysis shows that Starr Carter's voice is influenced by three interconnected forms of discrimination, namely racial discrimination, gendered discrimination, and age-based discrimination. Racial discrimination is portrayed through police violence, racial profiling, media stereotyping, and the criminalization of Black identity. Starr's experiences as a young Black girl demonstrate that racism operates not only through direct acts of violence, but also through institutional systems and dominant social narratives that marginalize Black communities. These experiences contribute to Starr's fear, silence, emotional trauma, and gradual awareness of systemic injustice.

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