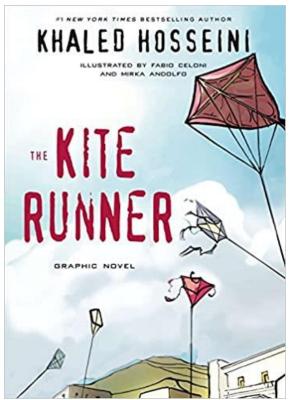
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Negative Impacts of Racialism and Ethnocentrism of Afghans in The Kite Runner

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Abstract

Racism is a global phenomenon that identifies certain people as superior and others as inferior in social cultures based on physical characteristics, ethnicity, race, and nationality. *The Kite Runner* is a novel that depicts racial discrimination, racism, and ethnic strife in Afghanistan's society between Pashtuns and Hazaras, two different races and ethnic groups. Racism and ethnicity are sometimes confused as synonyms; however, ethnicity is a subtype

of racism in social culture. Racial discrimination occurs when a person receives unequal treatment because of their actual or perceived race, as well as when a person is treated less favorably or denied the same opportunities as others in a similar circumstance because of their race, birth country, ethnic origin, or skin color. As we all know, ethnic groups exist in every country; however, in most developed countries, ethnic groups with similar origins and customs might or might not be judged identically by power-hander ethnic groups, whereas ethnic groups without similar origins and customs have never been judged identically by power-hander ethnic groups. Afghanistan, for example, is a truly multi-ethnic country.

Using Afghan people as an example, this study examines social concerns, cultural issues, racial discrimination, and scientific research on people's races and ethnic characteristics. Racism and racial prejudice are two flaws in human society from the 16th through the 19th century; however, they are not considered scientific findings. As a result of Feagin's rejection of human diversity, this research will look into the root causes of ethnic biases and racial discrimination among Afghans in the novel, as well as the reasons for their ethnic behavior.

Keywords: Discrimination, Racialism, Ethnocentrism, Pashtun, Hazara, *The Kite Runner*

Introduction

Post-colonialism is a term that spans across ideas of imperialism, modernity, racism, ethnicity, culture geography, and post-modernism, and is implicated in all of them (Ashcroft, 1989). The term "post-colonialism" is commonly used to describe the transition from colonialism to self-determination among formerly colonized countries. According to Homi Bhabha, "post-colonial perspectives interfere in those ideological discourses of modernity that aim to lend hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and disparate, sometimes disadvantageous histories of nations, races, groups, and peoples" (Bhabha, 1994). Imperialism is described as a wealthy and powerful country's dominance over a weak country (Appiah, 1986), and it can take many forms, such as military, economic, and cultural exploitation. As a result, it served as a vehicle/target via which European countries' culture and practices affected the rest of the globe. However, the colonized faced tension and resistance as a result of the major countries' imperialism. In any case, these events marked the beginning of a new era known as post-colonialism, not the conclusion of a period. Postcolonial literature addresses the social, cultural, and political difficulties that colonized countries face after gaining independence from colonizers. The issues and effects of a country's colonization are frequently addressed in postcolonial literature, particularly questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people, as well as themes such as racialism and colonialism. Postcolonial (post-colonialism) is a term

that refers to a body of literary theory and practice that is used to represent this new period of study. Postcolonial (post-colonialism) is concerned with a variety of experiences: Migration, enslavement, repression, resistance, representation, diversity, race, gender, and location are all issues that need to be addressed. Despite these circumstances, which can be found in a variety of places, including post-colonial literary works, post-colonial literature is a genuine response to empire and colonialism. Because the word post denotes after the colonial time, post-colonial literature is a proper response to empire and colonizers in order to all of these scenarios that occur from a variety of sources, involving literary works released after the colonial period, "postcolonial literature refers to works that have been influenced by the imperial practice from colonization to present day" (Allan, 1998).

Furthermore, this section of research reflects the impacts and bad consequences of colonialism, two of which are the themes of racism and racial discrimination that existed between humans and in most countries between the 16th and 19th centuries. Any differentiation, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, color, descent, a national or ethnic origin that has the intention or effect of nullifying and handicapping someone else is referred to as "racial discrimination." When a person is treated unfairly because of their real or perceived race, this is known as racial discrimination, "In America, the authors described racism as 'the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group" (Arthur, 2007).

Ethnicity is a subtype of racism that is frequently used as a controversial replacement for the term racism. As a result, ethnicity may or may not play a role in a race. In reality, ethnicity refers to a group of people who share the same background, "origin, history, values, attitudes, and behavior" (Yetman, 1999) — but who may differ in terms of clothes, rituals, or religion. Ethnicity refers to the cultural differences that exist among citizens of a country. As a result, ethnicity can be referred to as a cultural identity of human beings in society. Therefore, culture impacts people's dress, habits, and even morals, and so plays an essential role in the division of people into distinct groups. Materials such as clothes and clothing as well as non-materials like language, and conventions, are examples of cultural objects. According to Yinger, an ethnic group is defined as follows: "a sector of a broader community whose residents are regarded to have shared origin and to share significant aspects of a common origin and culture by themselves and/or others" (Banton, 2018). He did not distinguish "race" from "ethnicity," but rather embraced differences defined by color, language, religion, or some other shared feature of origin, and considered ethnicity as "functionally continuous with kinship. "Race can be characterized as a biological inheritance that is passed down from generation to generation in the form of "physical traits, gene pools,

and character qualities" (Barfield, 2004). Though countries and cultures change, the effects of racism and racial discrimination, such as oppression, repression, prejudices, and prevention, are the same. Racism is defined as "the behavior when people treat individuals differently because they belong to a certain racial group" (Charles D, 2001). Races are made up of diverse groupings based on inherited physical and behavioral characteristics. Gordon W. Allport's hypothesis is supported as: "civilized men have gained notable mastery over energy, matter, and inanimate nature...But, by contrast; we appear to be living in the Stone Age so far as our handling of human relationships is concerned" (Allport, 1954)). As a result, there are two sorts of racism or discrimination: racist behavior by powerful or superpower countries against colonized or weak countries, and conflicts and heartbreaking struggles among ethnic groups in colonized or colonizer countries, the latter known as ethnicity (Goodson, 1998).

For decades, Afghanistan has been subjected to foreign intrusion, particularly from neighboring nations, as a religious and multiethnic country that has been described as racist and ethnocentric. Internal disputes and violence backed by neighboring countries led to systematic massacre of minority ethnic groups in Afghanistan, such as the Hazara.

In 2003, Afghan-American novelist Khaled Hosseini published *The Kite Runner* in English. It was adapted into a graphic novel in 2007, which gained widespread critical acclaim in the United States. Amir, a young Afghan child, and his wealthy father, an Afghan ethnic Pashtun who lives with his Hazara servant Ali and his son Hassan, are central to the plot.

Despite the fact that Hazaras were treated inferior to Pashtuns, Amir and Hassan were two good friends from different ethnic groups in Afghanistan. As the novel develops, major schisms emerge between these close friends, and when the Soviets invade Afghanistan, Amir and his father, Baba, flee to the United States to survive. Baba and Amir faced challenges in America, as some Americans were hostile toward them and Afghans. They continue to live there, and Amir succeeds as a writer in maturity after repeated attempts. After receiving a call from Pakistan, Amir discovers a means to atone for his misdeeds. Amir returns to Afghanistan at the end of the tale and takes Hassan's son to live with him and his wife in America. In spite of the fact that the novel covers a wide range of topics such as friendship, violence, immigration, destitution, and so on, this paper focuses on the influence of racism and racial prejudice on Pashtun and Hazara concerns.

Joe R. Feagin, an American sociologist, rejects the notion that poor individual as an ethnic tribe is inferior to others. The purpose of this article is to examine the primary causes

of racial discrimination and ethnic behavior among Afghan characters in *The Kite Runner* as well as the social, scientific, and political description of racist characters in the novel, in order to demonstrate that, as Feagin points out, these were all just pretexts used by the country's upper classes. Because of a shortage of mineral and agricultural resources, they are used all over the world to achieve their goals, which include dominance over other people and exclusive exploitation of natural characteristics (Feagin, 2014).

The novel's main protagonist Amir's good reaction in other parts of the plot is to return to Afghanistan to bring Hassan's son to America. Amir's compassion for Hassan's child is intended to atone for his prior faults, as well as his concern about ethnic and racial tensions in his homeland.

Literature Review

There are several discussions and definitions on the subject of racism. Many people have questioned the concept of race, and there are many distinct and sometimes opposing perspectives on the matter. Racism is a way for people to communicate their hidden and explicit beliefs toward others in society, according to John Arthur's book *Race*, *Equality*, and the Burdens of History (2007). Scientifically, the race is defined as an arbitrary selection of identification of specific physical or biologically transmitted characteristics. According to one scientific theory, everyone in the world has the same genetic background. In this sense, a tall blonde with green eyes and a short black person may share genetic structure. Most crucially, the race is a socially constructed term that divides people into distinct groups, despite the fact that these characteristics are not innate, because they have an impact on a person's social and economic position. Some people believe that one particular group is superior to another owing to biological traits. This ideology emphasizes that some people are unable to accomplish their best wishes in life owing to physical and facial disparities with others and that in order to make a livelihood, they must always obey their superiors. As a result, culture acts as an ideology, tyrannizing and directing a population based on a fictitious sense of awareness (Mohamed, 2013). This concept has a negative impact on people's lives, preventing social and cultural growth and, in certain situations, resulting in captivity. When children are labeled with socio-cultural identities like "Hazara," they are enslaved to an idea that is far from nature, but rather a socio-cultural construct that restricts their physical and cognitive freedom to grow into the persons they want to be (Smith, 1996).

The contentious argument concerning human differentiation in the late 1700s and early 1800s was centered on the question of race. Europeans exploited their white supremacy to govern the colonial people as a result of colonizer countries' efforts during the colonization of Asian and African countries by European powers. Charles Darwin is one of them,

demonstrating in the Norton Critical editions that people of varied body shapes and skin colors are descended from "barbarous races" incapable of working, obtaining education, and so on (Spickard,1992).

Racism is based on biological taxonomies, racial discrimination is based on a process of social division into categories related to races, and ethnicity is the cultural identity of a group of people who share a common nationality, and ethnicity is the cultural identity of a group of people who share a common nationality. Different cultures occur within varied ethnic groups, including different forms of clothing, religions, dialects, accents, and others.

They were different in terms of socioeconomic status, geographical location, and other factors. Most human civilizations have multiple social ranking structures at any one moment. Some persons are categorized according to their racial or ethnic group, while others are classified according to their sex, age, or social class, with each social class having its own set of rewards, benefits, and other distinctions passed down from generation to generation. *The Kite Runner*'s labor structure is based on ethnic classification. Since 1747, the Pashtuns have ruled and dominated Afghanistan, with the destitute Hazaras serving as their common slaves.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine racism, racial prejudice, and ethnic perspectives among Afghans in Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* because it is obvious that Afghanistan is a bilingual and multiethnic country. Feagin's arguments on the human distinction between persons, as well as his engagement in the establishment of this notion in society, are used to study and comprehend the work. Feagin refutes the view that some groups can be distinguished from others based on physical and biological traits and that such definition, while seemingly based on scientific observations, are not accurate or factual, and are far from being near to scientific observation. According to Feagin, these artifact classifications are based on popular perceptions from the 16th through the 19th centuries. The descriptions and analysis that follow provide a comprehensive overview of ethnic perspectives in Afghanistan.

Discrimination and Racialism Behavior of Individuals Between Two Groups -- Pashtuns and Hazaras in Afghanistan

Tajiks, Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Hazara, Turkmens, Baluchs, Nuristanis, and other ethnic groups live in Afghanistan's war-torn country, which had a population of almost 40 million people by 2021. As a result, Afghanistan is described as follows: "a country made up of many ethnic groups with diverse cultural traits, such as language, religious traditions, physical

appearance and apparel, and customs..." (Goodson, 1998). *The Kite Runner*'s story and events took place in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States, with a focus on the Pashtun and Hazara ethnic groups, which possibly account for 46% and 9% of Afghanistan's population, respectively. Furthermore, the term "majority" encompasses not just the Pashtun population of Afghanistan, but also their power, influence, and riches. While the term "minority" relates to the Hazaras and others, it also refers to a lack of economic, political, and social power and influence, as well as some Hazaras' denial of social, political, and other rights. According to Amir in the story, most of the time, Hazaras were oppressed by Pashtuns. After being forced to evacuate their homes and lands, they were slaughtered by Pashtuns. They were compelled to work as slaves by Pashtuns: "The book said that my people had killed the Hazaras, driven them from their lands, burned their homes, and sold their women" (Hosseini, 2003).

A lot of issues are cited by Pashtuns for their hostile behavior. The fact that Pashtuns have dominated Afghanistan since the Durrani Empire was created in 1747 was one of their grounds (Umami, 2020). Afghanistan was the heartland of the Khorasan Empire for centuries. When the monarch of Persia suggested in the 18th century that all people must convert to Shia, most people in this land refused, especially Pashtuns living in the south of Afghanistan. Under the leadership of Durrani, the southern Pashtuns eventually stormed Kabul and took control of Afghanistan. For centuries, Afghanistan has been the mainland of the Persian-speaking Empire, particularly the Tajiks. When the king of Persia declared in the 18th century that all people in Persia and Khorasan must convert to Shiism, the majority of the people in this land, as well as Pashtuns in southern Afghanistan, were opposed to this declaration and attacked Kabul, where they quickly took control of Afghanistan under Durrani's leadership. The Hazaras, on the other hand, were a minority and disenfranchised ethnic group in Afghanistan's central provinces who were thought to be of Mongolian descent, and as Amir declares: "they were Mongol and that they looked a little like Chinese people" (2012). In the 13th and 14th centuries, Hazaras resided in Afghanistan four centuries before the Pashtuns, and when they rebelled against Pashtuns' persecution and harassment in the 19th century, the Pashtuns deprived them of various rights of the social, including the right to education. This tyranny has been a significant betrayal for them, and considering to Amir's positive attitude, he condemns his tribe and handles this sensitive topic in his novel:

According to the texts, my forefathers massacred the Hazaras, evicted them from their homelands, set fire to their homes, and sold their women. According to The Kite Runner book, one of the reasons Pashtuns had they— were rarely discussed in school literature and their ancestry was barely acknowledged in passing. While seeing through Baba's belongings, I achieved one of my mother's old history books [...] and was astonished to see a whole

chapter on the Hazara history. Hassan's family has a unique story to tell! My people, the Pashtuns, were accused of oppressing and mistreating the Hazaras, according to the report. It is reported that in the nineteenth century, the Hazaras attempted to revolt against the Pashtuns, but that the Pashtuns suppressed them with unimaginable savagery.

Another significant distinction is that the bulk of Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims, whereas the Hazaras are Shia Muslims. This circumstance leads to further isolation Hazaras in society, provoking indignation among Afghan Sunni Muslims at times. When Amir's teacher, for example, encourages him in school, he says:

The following week, after class, I handed the book to my teacher and pointed to the chapter about the Hazaras. He grinned as he gathered his papers and skimmed a few pages before returning the book. He mentioned that one thing Shi'a people do is passing themselves as martyrs. He wrinkled his nose as he said the word Shi'a as if it were a disease.

In a section titled "National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities," the US Department of State's 2012 report on Afghanistan stated, "Ethnic tensions among various groups continued to result in conflict and deaths." Sunni students at Kabul University, for example, attempted to persuade ethnic Hazara students not to embrace Shiite religious customs on November 24 (Yang, 200).

Moreover, Pashtuns mocked and offended Hazaras because of the shape of their eyes and, particularly, their faces, a problem that the author addressed multiple times in the novel, particularly in the first half. Amir exemplifies this type of behavior when he says, "It also stated several facts I already knew, such as the fact that Hazaras are mice-eating, flat-nosed, load-carrying donkeys. I'd heard some of the kids in the area calling Hassan such names" (Hosseini, 2007).

The historical and facial distinctions between Pashtuns and Hazaras were clearly utilized by Pashtuns in order to completely rule and govern the country, as seen by the accompanying sentences. Feagin thinks that from the 1400s until the early 1900s, power elites exploited more than 80% of the world's people by using racist individuals and racially discriminatory ideologies. Many of Feagin's conceptual frameworks, such as the underpinnings of racial prejudice, are typically created, codified, and maintained by those at the top of society, although this construction takes place in ongoing interaction with the views and practices of ordinary citizens.

Considering what Feagin expresses about people and their differences, Afghan society is persuaded that other ethnic groups of Afghanistan in this land are biologically distinct from each other, and Mongolian Hazaras are not equal to other Afghans at all. Almost every non-Hazara character in *The Kite Runner* has applied negative labels to the poor Hazaras, whether consciously or unconsciously, including Amir, Hassan's close friend who is rigidly controlled by these names. Amir pretended to read a book to Hassan one day while actually making up phrases with his tongue, which he liked when he discovered Hassan was engrossed in the book's stories.

All these reasons caused Pashtuns to perceive themselves through Hazara's eyes and act brutally against them. In the story, Amir and Hassan are depicted as two opposing personalities from the same culture who come from extremely different backgrounds: wealthy and impoverished, Sunni and Shia, Pashtun and Hazara, strong and miserable. For example, the protagonist proclaims the issue of ethnicity, racial prejudice, and racism right at the opening of the story:

I became the person I am now on a chilly rainy day in the winter of 1975, when I was twelve years old. At the same time, I was hiding behind a falling mud wall and staring down the road beside the icy creek.

Hassan is claimed to have been raped by a band of Pashtun thugs, who are ethnically opposed to the Hazara. The author begins his work by discussing sexual violence, indicating the dismal state of Hazaras in Afghanistan and Pashtun sentiments about Hazaras. Therefore "The Hazaras have historically experienced discrimination and have been seen as "the traditional underclass" of Afghan society" (Lamer, 2011). The importance of ethnicity in the thoughts of the story's characters is foreshadowed by such a start. The author underlines ethnicity once more at the end of this chapter, due to Amir's clarification, "I thought of the life I had lived until the winter of 1975 came and altered everything. And shaped me into the person I am today."

The harmful impacts of racial discrimination and racism are a crucial topic that Feagin also emphasizes, stating that racist relations systems separate both the perpetrators of racist crimes and the beneficiaries of racist acts from their original communities. He claims that racism and racial discrimination divide members of a community, such as superior and inferior races, and cause them to compete with one another; one group tries to maintain its unjustly privileged position in the community, while the other fights to end suppression of the privileged race or ethnic group, and this competition prevents both groups from developing a common consciousness. John Joseph, states "racial discrimination causes

genocide or "ethnic cleansing", slavery and oppression. It also causes tremendous moral, cultural, and economic suffering to a country" (Macionis, 2011) Amir never showed his sentiments toward Hassan, despite the fact that they were raised together, and no one came close to them, because his unconscious mind was loaded with beliefs and terminology centered on human distinctions and Pashtun supremacy over Hazaras. Similarly, despite his tolerance for Hazaras, Amir's father adopted a unique attitude toward them:

Strangely enough, I had never considered Hassan and me to be friends. In any case, not in the traditional sense. It made no difference that we taught each other how to ride a bike without using our hands...... Because it is tough to overcome history. Religion isn't any different. Nothing could ever change the fact that I am a Pashtun while he is a Hazara, that I am a Sunni while he is a Shi'a. There is nothing. (Hosseini).

The work also shows Afghanistan's strong racial prejudice and ethnic relations, as well as how the system prevents prominent people from having a more favorable attitude toward minority ethnic groups. As a result, considering International Letters of Social and Humanistic Science, this ethnic mentality in the Afghan community serves as "pain" for both superiors and inferiors. It torments both Amir and Hassan in *The Kite Runner*, the ethnic delegates from Pashtun and Hazara, respectively.

Assef and his associates, all Pashtuns, find an opportunity to rape Hassan as a result of Amir's incompetence and fear in another catastrophic scenario. In addition, after torturing Amir, Assef tells Amir in a hospital dream that they are both Pashtuns with the same mentality about Hassan, and we're the same, you and me. You nursed with him, but you're my twin. As a result, Assef was unable to distinguish between Amir himself, mistaking them for affluent Pashtuns doing the same crime; Hassan is raped by Assef, while Amir's dread allows him to perform the crime. This fact demonstrates that, while Amir was aware of Assef's violent conduct, he was only a bystander at the crime scene and did not try to help Hassan. Assef is likewise a prejudiced guy who is severely passionate about the Hazara being excluded from Afghanistan. Assef is described as "a sadistic and sociopathic teenager. He is a killer and a pedophile and above all a supremacist racist" (Shamnad, 2010). He is a son of a German mother and an Afghan father, according to an American philosophy professor and legal theory expert. Assef, who has blue eyes and blond hair, is in charge, of "attitudes that include unjustified hostility toward a racial group" (Yinger, 1976). He has a strong dislike towards Hazaras, and his behavior toward them reveals some violent feelings. His animosity for Hazaras stems from Hitler's decision to transfer certain Germans to Afghanistan, particularly to Nuristan, where the majority of the population had blue eyes and blond hair (Stephen 2002). The issue was particularly crucial to Hitler since these Germans did not

approve of being of Aryan heritage because of their facial characteristics. In *The Kite Runner*, Assef is hell-bent on expelling all Hazaras from Afghan territory, which he sees as a mission because they say that Afghanistan is Pashtun land and that Pashtuns are the actual Afghans and the country's legitimate heirs. As a result, Assef refers to Amir and his father as "an embarrassment" in Afghanistan. They are convicted because of their support for Hassan and his father. The most important part of the narrative plot in *The Kite Runner* takes place around the middle of 1970s just before the Taliban's emergence. Hassan is the effective character in this section of the *Kite Runner*. In actuality, the destitute Hassan in *The Kite Runner* is a mixed Hazara who's partly Pashtun ethnicity is suppressed throughout his childhood. In Kabul, he witnessed the Taliban's socio-political oppression of Afghans including the Hazara people. "The political suppression undergone by the Hazaras during this period [1929-78] was unprecedented and unsurpassed throughout the history of Afghanistan. [...] Throughout this period the Hazaras lived as a nation imprisoned at the hands of their Pashtun captors" (Mousavi, 1998).

Furthermore, Assef has joined the Taliban, who are predominantly Pashtuns, when he was a young boy in order to achieve his aim, and he informs Amir that Afghanistan is like if it were a gorgeous large mansion filled with junk Hazaras, and that it is his task to clean it up. As a result of all these factors, Assef also massacred a large number of Hazaras in an orchestrated massacre in Hazarajat, the Hazara ethnic group's hometown. Assef is proud of the massacre, but he calls Amir a traitor who has deserted his homeland and went to a Western country.

Despite all of the points made about ethnic inequality, ethnic conflicts between Pashtun, Hazara and brutal acts by individuals such as Assef against Hazara, some symbols in the novel *The Kite Runner* demonstrate that these conflicts can be resolved within the Afghans' community and Afghanistan can be transformed into a united country. Hassan and Amir, both are from different ethnicities of Afghanistan, Amir is from the Pashtun tribe and Hassan is from the Hazara ethnic group, who had a deep childhood friendship and mutual devotion, but Amir betrays his close buddy. Hassan stood by Amir throughout his childhood, even when he was threatened with being raped by bully Assef and his pals. Finally, as an adult, Amir acknowledges Hassan as his half-brother and makes amends for his previous betrayals. When he returns to the country of Afghanistan and saves Hassan's son Sohrab from Assef, his life was on the verge of death. Ethnic conflicts in Afghanistan, according to the research, are the result of racism, racial discrimination, and ethnicity; they play major roles along the road, and the aforementioned themes are the underlying reasons.

Conclusion

In terms of the definitions of racism, racial discrimination, and ethnicity, it is possible to conclude that racism, racial discrimination, and ethnicity are more social constructs than biological differences, as evidenced by the actions and deeds of some groups of people who exploit their facial preferences. Racism and racial discrimination have severe consequences, the most serious of which is exclusion from all human rights, which encompasses additional bad effects of racist perspectives such as oppression, prejudice, and racial discrimination, as well as a societal imbalance. The powerful ethnic group with money and power has wrong attitudes regarding other ethnic groups and seek to seize control of society, characterize their status in society, destroy and despise the other groups. They exploit the human difference myth, which was formed between the 16th and 19th centuries, to demonstrate their superiority over others. Racialism, prejudice, and Ethnocentrism are the significant issues in Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner*, particularly in the early chapters, when Amir and his father were in Afghanistan, and also in the subsequent chapters, which deal with the Taliban's reign. The author emphasizes Pashtuns' unjust behavior, including that of Amir and his father, as well as the atrocities against Hazaras. Feagin argued against the human distinctions position, claiming that face or biological differences do not indicate superiority and that as a result, superiority should not be allowed. Pashtuns behave haughtily in the novel, disparaging the Hazaras' facial characteristics and portraying them as Pashtun slaves who are not acceptable in Afghan society.

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