

Postmodern Elements in Two Novels: Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in The Tangerine Scarf* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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Abstract— This qualitative research studies postmodernism, postmodern culture and the postmodern mind in two novels namely Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2009) and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). By focusing on postmodern elements, this research investigates the lives of immigrants who came from South Asia and Syria, as well as the major challenges these immigrants encounter in adapting to American culture. Immigrants face problems such as a yearning for home, trying to find a sense of belonging in a new land and a sense of displacement. They are also confronted by additional challenges while trying to navigate postmodern American culture.

Keywords—The postmodern mind, postmodern culture, postmodernism, 9/11

I. INTRODUCTION

THIS research explores how postmodern culture affects the thoughts of individuals who live in the age of postmodernism by trying to understand the postmodern mind. In addition, this research analyses how postmodern ideals influence social relationships between the immigrants and Americans in the novels. The acceptance of their American identity is one of the major challenges that the immigrants face in addition to the other challenges of accepting multiple identities or multiple selves.

The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf features the lives of immigrants who moved to America in the 1970s and the events are set in Indiana and Minnesota as well as other parts of America. The author places much emphasis on the life journey of Khadra Shamy, the female protagonist who has an inquisitive mind as she fathoms the events that unfurl in front of her eyes. She moves to America with her family due to a political coup in Syria. Since Khadra's parents are Muslim missionaries and is surrounded by a protective closely-knit society of immigrants and recent Muslim converts, she is conditioned to be judgemental to any event that is deemed unsuitable by her parents. However, during her stay in Philadelphia, she interacts with many people of various ethnicities and backgrounds as America is a multicultural country. The author charts Khadra's emotions, struggles and the different phases of change as she comes to terms with the reality around her.

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* explores events as narrated by the main character of the novel, Changez, to an American stranger. This novel is set against

the backdrop of America and Pakistan before and after the events of 9/11. Changez, who is a professor in Pakistan, was a former student of Princeton University and an analyst trainee at one of the most prestigious firms in America. He gives an account of his personal life and thoughts to the American stranger whom he approaches outside a restaurant in Lahore. His thoughts and actions display numerous ambiguities and confusion, yet his warm hospitality compels the American stranger to listen to Changez's life experiences and accounts in America. Eventually, when darkness falls, Changez's ceaseless questions and the stranger's body language create fear and suspicion between them.

A qualitative research approach has been used by applying the theory of postmodernism and the concepts of postmodern culture and the postmodern mind to the two novels. The present movement, Postmodernism serves as a form of opposition to Modernism. Modernism differs from postmodernism because postmodernism applauds and celebrates the notions of change, fragmentation, alienation and the new reality. These notions, however, were feared during Modernism. Postmodernism and its specific branches of postmodern culture and the postmodern mind will be analysed based on the two novels by Mohja Kahf and Mohsin Hamid.

The existing problem is that there are multiple definitions of postmodernism used in different disciplines. One of the widely-accepted definitions is that postmodernism is an international movement. It seeks to differ from the security of tradition and attempts to provide answers towards understanding the contemporary world. The world is borderless and so, this movement encompasses all cultures and societies. Thus, by using the definition above and explanation on postmodern culture by Jean-François Lyotard and the postmodern mind by Christopher Nash, I would like to explore whether the characters are able to cope with different cultures and clashing traditions and the challenges of adapting to the postmodern culture. This research has not been attempted. Thus, I aim to examine whether these interpretations of postmodernism could address the problems faced by immigrants in the novels.

II. METHODOLOGY

The term 'Postmodern' was coined during the 1960s and is used to categorise a group of writers namely Samuel

Beckett, John Barth and Donald Barthelme, who experimented with high modernism in the 1920s and 1930s (Childs & Fowler, 2006). In addition, the term 'postmodern' appeared in commentaries related to modern American art in 1968 (McAuliffe, 1997). Postmodernism is defined as "a style or a genre" whereas postmodernity "...refers to an epoch or period" (Malpas, 2005, p. 9). According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (2001), the word 'postmodernism' does not possess any fixed connotation and is widely-debated among theorists. This led to the notion that various interpretations of the term exist and are applied in different fields. However, the term is mostly applied to literature (Quayum & Rosli Talib, 2000) and contemporary culture (Baldick, 1990). Postmodernism refers to a contemporary culture which that started in the 1960s and still continues today (Hart, 2006; Cahoone, 1996; Malpas, 2005). Childs and Fowler (2006) offer an extensive explanation of postmodernity and postmodernism. Both state that postmodernism entails three aspects of interaction pertaining to the socio-cultural context. Firstly, postmodernism arises as a movement that replaces Modernism which is seen as incompetent to address the socio-political environment of the West after 1945.

The second aspect consists of its "deeply ambiguous political character" (Childs & Fowler, 2006, p.186). Postmodernism creates a culture that is strongly connected to Marxism. This is supported by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva, in which the political struggles of the Left or the minority groups were granted special attention. In this case, other competing ideologies will cease to exist or are deemed as inferior in the intellectual discourse of postmodernism. As a continuation of the second key aspect, the third aspect leads to the strong support for marginalised politics. This is due to the socio-economic changes in the West which propels power and position to marginalised politics (Childs & Fowler, 2006; Antonio, 2000). The third key aspect refers to the rejection of objective truth. Proponents of postmodernism affirm that there is no objective truth because all knowledge is considered as subjective. If objective truth is embraced as knowledge, this will result in injustice, oppression and subjugation towards minority groups and women (Zimmermann, 2013).

Postmodernism gained attention in America in the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1970s, American literary critics, Ihab Hassan and William V. Spanos, were among the first writers to use the term 'postmodern' to differentiate between modernism and postmodernism in art and culture. These ideas reached France because philosophy in France underwent another radical change in the 1960s when the method of rational inquiry into truth was no longer used by philosophers. Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Michel Foucault (1926-1984) as well as Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) took these ideas and added local threads, thus introducing a new theory, postmodernism. The Postmodern theory was formed by critiques of structuralism. Known as post-structuralism, it attempted to describe the truth about reality (Best & Kellner, 1991). Trained in the school of structuralism, Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, Lyotard and Barthes discovered that theories of Marxism, existentialism, psychoanalysis and phenomenology were no longer relevant to address human problems of that

period. Since then, postmodernism gained acceptance in colleges and universities in America and France, and then to the rest of the English-speaking world (Hart, 2006). Postmodernism, studied at length by Lyotard, Derrida and Foucault, is the movement that addresses the Western society. In this study, the characteristics of postmodernism as a worldview are used in analysis of the two novels.

The postmodern mind is a specific branch of postmodernism involving the growing influence of technology in ensuring an information-based culture of living that can be adopted by all countries without any notion of borders and control (Nash, 2001, p.2). Consequently, that type of lifestyle that is "open, plural, fluid" (p.3) allows an individual to construct reality the way he or she wishes to see it. There are several features of the postmodern mind based on Christopher Nash's description. The terms 'postmodern thinking' and 'narcissistic consist of the same meaning. The postmodern mind is a concept that revolves around the mental processes of humans who reside in the postmodern age. Human beings develop multiple selves because they have responsibilities that demand their commitment in this contemporary period. These multiple selves also might require individuals to lead secret lives such as having a different sexual orientation or professing a different religious faith from that of their family members. They believe that other people, for the exception for a selected few, have no right to be a part of these multiple selves. For some, postmodern thinking enables them to reinvent their lives if they are dissatisfied with the ones they have. Another feature of postmodern thinking is that it encourages irony. Humans with postmodern minds tend to show contrastive behaviours that are different from expectations of their families or communities. This usually causes puzzlement for others and it is difficult for listeners or respondents to decipher the true meaning and intention of the person. In reference to the postmodern ideal that individuals possess power and freedom of expression, postmodern thinking exemplifies narcissance. This places emphasis on individualism and also allows for an individual to disconnect from other people in terms of social interaction if that is what they wish. The postmodern mind exposes humans to negative views of the world. Instilled with the belief that the world is out to punish them, human beings tend to experience feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness. This will cause them to look at themselves in fragments or find themselves as incomplete persons. Nash (2001) asserts that people should be blamed for propagating postmodern thinking since they are the cause for creating technological development leading to a phenomenon he terms as information explosion. The acquirement of too much information by individuals causes more bewilderment and confusion and it will be difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction (Tarnas, 2001; Locke, 2002). This paper explains the two concepts of postmodernism which are the postmodern culture, which is based on Jean-François Lyotard's work, *The Postmodern Condition* (1979/1999) and Christopher Nash's description of the postmodern mind as understood from his book, *The Unravelling of the Postmodern Mind*.

III. POSTMODERN CULTURE IN MOHJA KAHF'S *THE GIRL IN THE TANGERINE SCARF*

The chronicles of Khadra's life begin with her family moving to the United States when six years-old. In narratives of her childhood, her parents are a strong influence in shaping her opinions of the Americans and the American culture. The Shamys live in exile, away from the comforts of home after fleeing from a totalitarian regime. Eva Hoffman, a Polish American academic, explains that "The exilic position is congruent with exactly those qualities which are privileged in a certain vein of post-modern theory: marginality, alterity, the de-centered identity" (2016, p.3). Therefore, living in a state of instability, Khadra's parents attempt to make sense of their surroundings by protecting themselves and their children with layers of fear. This is how Khadra views the Americans during her childhood. This opinion was influenced by her parents' prejudice of Americans. In the first few years of their stay in Indiana, there is minimal interaction between Khadra's parents and white Americans except for their neighbour, old Mrs. Moore, who had lived in Syria when she was younger. Being geographically removed from their roots and living in a new land, the United States, the Shamys experience the loss of the centre, their locus of familiarity. Furthermore, they view the United States in fragmented pieces or separated spheres, judging the lifestyles and appearance of white Americans and the American culture as abominable. In other words, they give in to their fear of the Americans and the American culture.

In addition, the Shamys and the Muslim converts share a common characteristic. The Muslim converts possess the inclination to learn the authentic teachings of the religion in order to incorporate them in their life on non-Muslim land. They need to navigate the confusion of forsaking their previous knowledge and their practices and to relearn Islam. Once they have rid themselves of their confusion, they converge as a group to survive the challenges together. The similarity that binds them together is the loss of the center; comfort and familiarity. For the Shamys and the other Muslim immigrants, the loss of the center points to the dislocation of place. For the converts, the loss refers to the previous knowledge of their former religious faith. These characters are confronted by this experience because postmodern culture already exists in 1970s America. This observation is in line with Jean-François Lyotard's (1979/1984) analysis of postmodern culture, that one of the main characteristics of postmodernism is anti-foundationalism. In this regard, previous knowledge is deemed unreliable if one wishes to understand the reality or solve the problems that exist in the postmodern world. In addition, any past knowledge would not be able to address the contemporary issues of the present day.

As understood from this novel, the cultural practices of the Shamys and the 'ethnic' immigrants, and past knowledge held by the converts prove to be unsuitable in the United States. As a result, feelings of confusion and uncertainty ensue after they are removed from a sense of familiarity. This is further expounded by Lyotard (1979/1999) where he mentions that postmodern culture emerges as an effect of capitalism:

But capitalism inherently possesses the power to derealize familiar objects, social roles and institutions

to such a degree that the so-called realistic representations can no longer evoke reality except as nostalgia and mockery, as an occasion for suffering rather than for satisfaction. (p. 74)

Instead of succumbing to their suffering and loss, the Muslim community in Indiana revives the spirit of kinship and unity by offering each other solace and moral support. This helps them to address the confusion in their lives. Another reason for their unity is also contributed by the fear and suspicion the white Americans have for this newly-formed Muslim community in their residential area. In the novel, Indiana is described as a small state that is suffering from an economic crisis which affects the farmers greatly. Pertaining to the state of American society in the 1970s, American sociologists, Bernice A. Pescosolido and Beth Rubin (2000) indicate that the welfare of the Americans was not looked after as a result of changing economic structures and policies. A heightened sense of insecurity, inequality and uncertainty existed in America during that period. These emotions were further aggravated by the influx of immigrants, as shown in the novel with the arrival of the small Muslim community who opens a religious center in central Indiana. Since there was no friendly interaction between the Muslims and the non-Muslim American community, a binary division developed which spread the idea that Muslims are the opposite of Americans (Tariq Ramadan, 2012). Postmodern culture that was becoming more prevalent in America made it difficult for Americans and immigrants to blur the lines of divisiveness that existed between them. Since the world has turned global, differences should be embraced and assimilated to produce a new culture that encompasses all else. The novel indicates that it is challenging for the Americans and immigrants to overcome their differences and live together by stressing on their similarities.

Not only did postmodern culture impose challenges on Americans and the American Muslim community, the people in the American Muslim community are also described as having to overcome diverse opinions and practices among them. The United States was a melting pot of cultures during the 1970s and Khadra comes across different groups of Muslims in the new community. All of these observations and encounters with different spectrums of the faith cause more bewilderment for Khadra. She is forced to deconstruct her understanding of her faith and reconstruct her views on the knowledge that she receives from her experiences within the small missionary community and outside the circle of the community. By reassessing her views, she comes to terms to the fact that she has to make amendments to her previous thoughts in order to accommodate the new understanding of the reality around her. This postmodern characteristic is stated by Lyotard (1979/1984) as:

Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities: it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy. (p. xxv)

In brief, Khadra's life in America propels her to immerse herself in postmodern culture, allowing her to re-evaluate and embrace differences, accept similarities to form a new common identity.

Marriage, which is another chapter in Khadra's life, transforms her from an innocent girl to a mature woman. Juma, her husband approves of Khadra's personality as "He liked that she had not lost her Arab identity despite being raised entirely in America" (Kahf, 2006, p.201). Nonetheless, he forgets that while Kuwaiti culture is built on the basic tenets of conservative Middle-Eastern culture which stresses on collectivistic norms, American culture encourages individualism and freedom of thought. In a postmodern society, there is more orientation towards the individual. The individual possesses more space to construct his or her own decisions in determining the next course of action (Pescosolido & Rubin, 2016). There is more freedom of choice for the individual and personal decisions are not governed by the community. This conflict, which centers on individualism, marks the first sign of the eventual collapse of their marriage.

Khadra's behaviours are social constructs which are derived from the country in which she is raised in, the United States. Another characteristic of postmodernism is anti-essentialism which denotes that human behaviours are social constructs resulting from power systems such as culture, economics and politics. Khadra's behaviour is influenced by the environment that surrounds her life in the suburbs of Indiana and in Indiana University, Bloomington. This first marital conflict revolves around the issue of Khadra cycling to places. Although it is a common activity for women to cycle in the United States and Khadra finds no fault with cycling, it is embarrassing for Juma to have an Arab woman, moreover his wife, to be cycling. Khadra's opinion on the issue is a by-product of the American social culture that she grows up in whereas Juma's view on the issue is based on Arab customs of propriety for women. The second conflict revolves around traditional gender roles within a family structure. Juma holds the cultural belief that his marriage with a Syrian lady is a status symbol in the eyes of the Kuwaiti community. As an Arab wife, Khadra is required to fulfil the wifely role of supporting her husband in every possible way to enable him to gain prestige in the family and society. Furthermore, in a traditional Arab household, a wife should prioritise the other family members above everything else, including putting aside her needs and wishes. On the contrary, since Khadra is raised in America, her actions deconstruct those expectations altogether. In this respect, Khadra deconstructs traditional female roles in an Arab household and reconstructs the traditional ideas of an ideal Arab wife to an individual whose opinions matter and who should be allowed to make her own decisions. In the end, her decision to have an abortion draws the curtains on their marriage. She could not picture her future with Juma as she imagines their future life as one that is trapped a small, confined space that one day will suffocate and kill her. In this sense, her actions and responses to the challenges in her marriage prove that they are social constructs of postmodern culture and they contradict with traditional Arab cultural norms. Khadra deconstructs conventional ideals of how she should lead her life as an Arab woman and attempts to find new perspectives to rebuild her life as an individual.

It can be observed that she encounters several selves and identities during her travels and her brief marriage. Readers may identify her as a Syrian Arab from her country of birth, as an American after pledging citizenship, as a religious

Muslim from birth and her exposure to religious sources and as the wife of a conservative Kuwaiti man. In the context of experiences that she battles with, she constantly struggles to understand her identities and popular societal opinions of those identities. These multiple selves brings about confusion as the knowledge that she holds on to has to make way for the new reality that unveils before her eyes and the new understanding that dawns on her mind. Therefore, this newly-found knowledge challenges her to question everything that she knows. The nature of postmodern culture is to cast doubts on past established knowledge and eventually calls for its rejection.

Khadra's assimilation into American society takes place when she stays in Philadelphia instead of in Indiana. Postmodern culture disregards the past and solely focuses on the present. By thriving in the new landscape, Khadra and the other immigrants are able to progress in their lives with multiple identities. They are also able to think critically about their social environment and the people around them, and to choose the course of life that they wish. Living in postmodern American culture permits them the freedom to think as an individual, to shape their lives and not to adhere to societal demands. Secondly, one of the characteristics of postmodernism is to decenter past customs and norms and to look at social constructs that are influenced by social, economic and political forces. Khadra is an evidence of a social construct that results from power systems. When her marriage enforces traditional Arab values on her, she resists and breaks away from the marriage to discover and accept her multiple identities as a Syrian, an American, a Muslim and a woman. Postmodern culture allows her to embrace and explore all these multiple selves without conforming to a particular set of standards imposed by the society or culture.

IV. THE POSTMODERN MIND IN MOHSIN HAMID'S *THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST*

The American stranger and readers are allowed into the realm of Changez's mind and his mental processes as he narrates his life experiences in Lahore, Pakistan and New York, America. By using narratives and flashbacks, Mohsin Hamid is able to express confronting themes in this novel. Hamid refers to the position of America as a superpower, the victimisation of people by her role as a global finance capital, the psychological effects experienced by those who were affected by the 9/11 tragedy and the ensuing government policies and social reactions in the aftermath of the attack.

The postmodern mind, which is a specific branch of postmodernism, aspires to provide extensive information on how human minds operate in a new environment when they are surrounded by great changes and great technological advancement. After learning how the postmodern mind works, we are able to fathom the lifestyle and work changes that are caused by human actions. Postmodernism exists due to technological advancement, and therefore humans need to adjust their lifestyles to adapt to the new environment and new patterns of lifestyle.

The postmodern mind should not only be viewed as an ideology but it should also be viewed at an angle that involves mental processes of human beings. Two important terms are applied repeatedly in this discussion and these terms are 'narcissism' and 'narcissance'. The traits of narcissism are

identified as internal factors that influence Changez's and Erica's mental processes. The external factors that affect their mental processes can be traced back to the features of narcissance. Therefore, narcissism and narcissance act alongside one another to produce the responses of the postmodern mind. In this discussion, the term 'postmodern thinking' is used simultaneously with the term 'narcissistic thinking' as the two notions consist of the same meaning as affirmed by Cristopher Nash (2001), a psychologist in postmodern thinking.

The mental processes of the two important characters in the novel, Changez and his American girlfriend, Erica and how these mental processes shaped their responses to the postmodern culture are investigated. Changez's life in America speaks volumes of success as shown by his first steps on the grounds of Princeton University, his acceptance as an analyst at a prestigious valuation firm, Underwood Samson and Company and his newfound love in the form of an American woman by the name of Erica. He acknowledges the feeling of being accepted into the elite circle of American society. Life is smooth-sailing for him until the collapse of the World Trade Centre in New York City. This tragedy causes his and Erica's worlds to crumble into a mental trap of suffering. Changez's suffering is a result of the multiple selves which are formed from his experiences in America. His mental processes attempt to grasp, accept and eventually reject the selves that he creates in his mind. As a result of all these processes, Changez becomes confused while his multiple selves are being dissolved. At the end, what is left of his psyche is a sense of emptiness. The postmodern mind causes human beings to view themselves as fragments and thus, possess extremely fragile identities. Erica, whom he loves, was in New York when the tragedy struck. Erica experiences complex mental processes leading her to struggle with her inner self. After Chris' death due to lung cancer, she loses her centre by experiencing a loss of reality and the disintegration of her mind and body. This analysis is supported by Nash (2001) who comments that:

The crisis arises, in other words, when our self-picture is a troubled or fractured or incomplete one. This coincides compactly with the postmodern theoretical understanding that indeterminacy in general is extricable from the indeterminacy of the 'subject' (p.104).

Erica finds herself fragmented and dissolved as she tries to recuperate from the loss of her boyfriend, Chris. Her mind dissolves into many fragments, namely her own imagination in which she locks herself in an imaginary world with Chris. It is a place where Changez could never possibly enter. Secondly, she becomes Chris as Chris is already part of her. Medovoi (2011) believes that "The hanging image of Tintin's island hints at Erica's melancholic nostalgia for her narcissistic over-identification with Chris, in which the two form a kind of omnipotently self-enclosed romantic oneness that was ultimately destroyed by Chris's illness and death" (p.14). This is proven when she tells Changez that she and Chris grew up together and they shared the same activities until their selves were intertwined with each other. Even after his death, she puts on Chris' shirt during her vacation to Greece. Erica informs Changez that she and Chris think and act alike and this gives us an understanding as to why Chris'

death causes Erica to experience self-dissolution. Owing to this reason, she requires medication in order to remain connected to reality. She finds it difficult to distinguish and separate her inner self from Chris.

This discussion sheds light on Changez's and Erica's multiple and dissolving selves. One of the objectives that postmodernism aspire to meet is the erasure of the self and any opportunity to fully understand one's self and other people (Martin & Sugarman, 2000). Changez and Erica are left confused in their consciousness and are uncertain of their own selves. Their mental processes reveal that they possess extremely fragile identities in which they are constantly battling with their inner consciousness in their attempt to assume the selves they desire or feel responsible for. In conclusion, Changez's and Erica's mental processes resonate with postmodernism. Their minds display strengths in opposing any rigid system imposed by conventional thinking whether, it is informed by social expectations or familial obligations. They are adamant in following their own course of actions even though they may suffer due to the constant constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing their selves and mental processes. In analysing the mental processes of these two main characters in the novel, the novel hints that narcissistic thinking and postmodern lifestyle are best summed up as living with and accommodating to pain and there is no solution to this pain. Postmodernism will not be able to address the problems of the society and yet, it will linger for a long time.

V. CONCLUSION

One of the research aims is to determine to what extent postmodern culture may affect the immigrants and their thoughts in the novels. In both novels, Changez and Khadra were born in supportive and closely-knit families. Due to this reason, it is clear that they are deeply attached to their families. However, as adults, there is a need for them to become detached from their families in order to pursue a life of self-discovery and to accomplish their personal dreams. Yet, feelings of uncertainty and confusion continue to plague them since postmodern culture advocates for separation and the collapse of traditional family values such as unity, security and support in order to make way for the realization of a person's dreams. It is little surprise that even though Khadra and Changez treasure the emotional support and intimacy from their family, they still opt to create a distance from them to fulfil their life missions. Postmodern culture inclines greatly towards individualism and this shapes the lifestyle of the characters living in the postmodern age. The second goal of this research is to explore the major challenges that the immigrants face in relation to the postmodern culture around them. In extending the previous discussion, the collapse of family institutions, marriage institutions and human relationships constitute major obstacles that Khadra and Changez face in America. The erasure of solid relationships in their lives cause them to lose their centre and force them to recuperate from their losses. Their yearning for a sense of belonging is part of human nature and the cruelty of postmodern culture that seeks to abolish the sense of belonging cause great suffering and trepidation to the two protagonists. Another primary issue that creates create conflict within the characters is the acceptance of American

identity. Khadra feels guilty after the pledging ceremony and that by being an American citizen, she is betraying her own religion by supporting America, a country that has played an instrumental role in creating the chaos in the Middle East. Eventually, she succeeds in shedding off this negative feeling by embracing the diversity of American culture during her encounters with fellow citizens at the University of Indiana and in Philadelphia. In Changez's case, his acceptance as an analyst trainee at Underwood Samson caused him to readily accept his identity as an American. However, he rejects being associated with America after the 9/11 tragedy which enforces his sense of being betrayed by America and questions his loyalty to Pakistan and his fellow Muslims in Afghanistan. The third objective of this research is to study the influence of postmodern ideals in social relationships among the immigrants themselves and between the 'ethnic' immigrants and Americans in the novels. Khadra displays a strong spirit of unity and kinship towards the 'ethnic' immigrants in her community and the converts that form the

congregation of the Dawah community. Even though she chooses to distance herself from them to regain new perspectives in life, she finds herself able of returning to Indiana and being warmly accepted into the community. In comparison, the postmodern ideal to live in isolation can be identified in Changez's choice to become only attached to Erica while at the same time, he dissociates himself from the other immigrants and Americans.

There are several limitations recognised in this study that can steer future research. This research is limited to immigrants who are highly-educated and possess a tertiary level of education. Secondly, they comprise predominantly of Muslims from closely-knit communities. Whilst this study contributes new knowledge, it cannot be assumed that its findings can be generalised to other immigrants of the same or different background and faith. It is important to acknowledge cultural differences, family background, education and diverse human experience.

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