

# Diaspora in Elemental Movie

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**Abstract.** The dynamics of diaspora are investigated in this research to see how they are portrayed in the animated film "Elemental." In this study, a qualitative content analysis approach is utilized to investigate the narrative of the film in order to discover instances of diaspora and racial prejudice that were experienced by the characters. The study focuses specifically on the Ember family from Fireland. In order to provide a framework for its study, the research makes use of postcolonial theory, the idea of diaspora, and theories of racial discrimination. Through the utilization of theories from R. Cohen (1997) for the purpose of assessing the causes of diaspora and theories from Alba & Nee (1997) for the purpose of evaluating the effects, the study intends to categorize the causes and effects of diaspora as well as the many forms of racial discrimination that are depicted in the film. The classification system developed by Allport (1954) is applied to distinguish the many types of discrimination that are associated with racial prejudice. The following is a list of the findings from this research: (1) The Ember family's post-diaspora experiences include assimilation and inter-racial relationships. (2) The diaspora of the Ember family in "Elemental" is driven by two fundamental factors: the potential for economic opportunity and the possibility of a natural disaster. (3) In Element City, the Ember family is subjected to a number of different types of racial discrimination, including verbal hostility, behavioral avoidance, and segregation.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Movie, Post-colonial, Racial Discrimination.

## 1 Introduction

A phenomena that has been around for a very long time, immigration has its origins in human history, dating back to the beginning of the emergence of homo sapiens [1]. Individuals move for a variety of reasons, most frequently in search of improved chances and resources in the hope of achieving a more hopeful future [2]. In some cases, immigrants are forced to relocate because of socioeconomic pressures; however, other causes, such as a lack of adequate protection in their native country, can also be a driving force behind migration [3]. Immigrants are defined as those who were born in one nation and have permanently settled in another one [4]. Diaspora is a phrase that is used to describe communities that are located outside of their native regions [5]. Immigrants can be recognized as being a part of a diaspora.

A collective experience of displacement and cultural bridging is what is meant by the term "diaspora." This experiences create a complex interplay between homelands and hostlands, which in turn helps to cultivate a distinct sense of identity and belonging for the groups who are affected by it [6]; [7]. This dynamic transition gives rise to what academics refer to as "post-

diaspora," which represents an evolution in the connection between the diasporic group itself, as well as the homeland and the hostland [8].

Diaspora communities, on the other hand, are frequently subjected to discrimination because they are living as minorities in new contexts. It is possible for discrimination, which is defined as conduct that gives preference to one group over another [9], to take many different forms. One of these forms is racial discrimination, which occurs when individuals are treated unfairly because of their race [10].

There is a possibility that members of the diaspora will be affected by this sort of prejudice, which will create obstacles to equitable treatment and social integration. Diasporic experiences and racial discrimination are regularly depicted in film scenarios in order to elicit emotional responses and cultural insights from viewers. Films are strong mediums that can be used to portray these experiences, connecting audiences with difficult societal concerns through the use of visual storytelling [11]. The incorporation of diasporic storylines into cinema, which are rooted in cultural themes and relationships between different cultures, makes these stories accessible to audiences all around the world [12]. When diaspora components are incorporated into films, audiences are given the opportunity to gain insights into the lived experiences of these people, which fosters empathy and understanding that goes beyond the realm of artistic expression [13].

The film *Elemental*, which was directed by Peter Sohn, functions as a narrative vehicle that brings attention to themes of racial discrimination and diaspora. As a result of drawing inspiration from Sohn's own personal experiences as the child of immigrants who moved from Korea to the United States, the film depicts the lives of Ember, a resident of the Fire element, and her immigrant family in a metropolis that is populated by a variety of natural elements that represent different socioeconomic classes. In the same way that Sohn's family left their hometown, Fire Land, to start a new life elsewhere, Ember's family departed their homeland after a storm devastated their existence there. Their new home, Element City, is characterized by societal problems, such as prejudice and discrimination against those who are of the Fire element. As a result, this movie is a reflection of Sohn's past, as much like Ember's family in the novel, Sohn's family also had to deal with the challenges of adjusting to life in the Bronx and maintaining a small business. As Cinder, Ember's mother, describes their relocation to Element City, the diaspora aspect of *Elemental* is communicated through speech. This is especially true in the context of the conversation. During her recollection, she emphasizes the difficulties that they encountered as immigrants by describing how the storm drove them to leave Fire Land. Ember's description of being rejected at Garden Central Station, where she is advised by other inhabitants to "burn somewhere else," is a clear example of the portrayal of racial prejudice in the story. A form of racial discrimination known as segregation occurs when members of minority groups are denied access to social resources and institutions on the basis of their ethnicity or race. This scenario is an example of segregation. The fact that Ember and her father are prevented from entering public venues due to the fact that they are residents of Fire is an example of the wider social exclusion that minorities are subjected to. This type of exclusion is a true component of diasporic experiences.

The previous research conducted by Atmantika [14] investigated the racial prejudice that was depicted in the movie *Fruitvale Station*. Based on Gordon Allport's thesis, the researcher identified four distinct categories of racial discrimination. Nevertheless, the current research not only investigates racial discrimination but also examines diaspora characteristics within *Elemental*. This research focuses upon the concepts that have been discussed previously. The purpose of this research is to investigate how the film *Elemental* depicts the causes and effects of diaspora and discrimination in a fictitious framework that is still socially relevant. This will

be accomplished by analyzing the movie screenplay and the dialogues of the characters. As a result,

Elemental functions on numerous narrative levels, combining amusement with sociocultural critique. It does this by drawing similarities to Sohn's own heritage as well as the more general experience of immigrants. This movie highlights the journey of leaving one's birthplace as well as the challenges that are encountered in a different environment. It places an emphasis on the problems that immigrants confront and their ability to persevere through them.

The researcher is encouraged to contemplate topics such as belonging, identity, and resiliency in the face of discrimination on the basis of these experiences, which are presented in the video. In the end, the purpose of this research is to investigate how the film *Elemental* portrays diaspora and racial prejudice. Specifically, the research will analyze the subtle ways in which the film depicts the journey of an immigrant and the societal obstacles that come with living as a minority in a new area.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Postcolonial in Literature**

Through the critique of the residual influence of colonialism on representations and identities, postcolonial theory investigates the ways in which various cultural manifestations have been influenced by colonial history, particularly in the realm of literature. According to Ashcroft [15], postcolonialism encompasses all cultural features that were influenced by colonial control. On the other hand, Loomba [16] places an emphasis on postcolonial studies as a form of resistance to colonial dominance. As Ponzanesi [17] points out, postcolonial theory is a discursive instrument that may be used to critique Eurocentric images of oppressed cultures that are seen in a variety of media, including literature. These representations frequently reveal underlying biases and power relations. This theory has made it possible to conduct a detailed investigation of postcolonial identities, resistance, and hybridity. It has shed light on the ways in which colonized persons and cultures navigate and assert their identities within a setting that has been historically formed by oppression [18]. Furthermore, as Lye [19] points out, postcolonial studies are a critique of the ways in which writing from colonial powers has distorted the realities of colonized people, while writers from countries that were formerly colonized are currently working to reclaim their voices and histories. In this way, postcolonial analysis investigates the conflicts and interactions that occur between colonizers and colonized people. It demonstrates how literary expressions from both sides of the colonial divide show a complicated heritage of cultural hybridity, resistance, and identity creation.

### **2.2 The Concept of Diaspora**

The term "diaspora," which comes from the Greek word for "scattering" [20], was originally used to refer to exiled communities such as the Jewish community. However, in recent years, the meaning of the term has expanded to include any group that lives outside of their homeland while yet preserving cultural ties [21]. A fluid and ever-evolving identity that is shaped by displacement and the mingling of cultural components from both the ancestral homeland and adopted homeland is what we mean when we talk about diaspora today. For the purpose of portraying the challenges of belonging and identification in a foreign place, diaspora authors

frequently mix languages, tales, and cultural elements from their homelands into their works of fiction. It is common for socioeconomic pressures, safety concerns, or natural calamities to be the driving forces behind diasporic migration. Migrants frequently regard relocation as a strategy for economic diversification and resilience in the face of adversity. [22].

### **2.3 Elemental Movie**

Elemental is an animated film that will be released by Pixar in 2023 and directed by Peter Sohn. The film will investigate topics related to social class and cultural identity within the context of a city in which elements of earth, fire, water, and air may coexist. Throughout the course of the narrative, Ember, a fiery young woman who comes from an immigrant Fire family, and Wade, a sensitive water city inspector, are brought together to face the problems that they face in Element City. Despite the fact that she helps run the shop that her family owns, The Fireplace, Ember suffers with her anger and the discrimination that her family experiences. Despite the fact that Wade finds infractions of the shop's rules, he is moved by Ember's predicament and agrees to assist her in fixing things. While they are looking for answers, they start a secret connection, which forces them to contend with cultural differences and the expectations of their families. In spite of the fact that Wade vanishes for a short period of time, Ember is left feeling heartbroken, their relationship grows stronger as they save Fire Town from a flood. In the end, Ember comes to the realization that she loves Wade, and the two of them reunite. As the movie comes to a close, Ember decides to pursue a new professional opportunity while also paying tribute to her family and ancestry.

## **3 Method**

Within the framework of Cole's [23] methodology, which examines written, spoken, or visual signals, the qualitative content analysis was selected as the research strategy. For the sake of conceptualizing the representation of diaspora and racial prejudice, this analysis focuses on the speech and narrative that are contained inside Elemental movie. All of the information that was used in this investigation came from the script for the film Elemental, which was written by Peter Sohn, John Hoberg, and Brenda Hsueh and consisted of 124 pages. It largely focused on discussions and storylines that symbolize racial discrimination and diaspora, and it did it through the Ember family. Further context and support for the analysis was offered by additional reference sources, which included articles, books, and academic papers linked to theories of racial discrimination and diaspora experiences.

The technique for collecting data consisted of numerous steps, including seeing the movie Elemental multiple times in order to comprehend the plot, reading the screenplay multiple times, and highlighting areas of conversation and narrative that were associated with racial discrimination and diaspora.

For the purpose of preparing for a more in-depth analysis, these procedures guaranteed that a full comprehension of the film's portrayal of these issues was achieved. The research separated the data that was important to racial discrimination from the data that was relevant to diaspora in order to conduct the analysis. R. Cohen's [24] theory for causes and Alba & Nee's [25] theory for effects were utilized in order to examine the data pertaining to the diaspora. The data was classified as either a cause or an effect. Allport's [26] five categories of racial discrimination

were utilized in order to analyze the data pertaining to racial discrimination. At last, the findings and conclusions of the study were arranged in accordance with these analyses, which provided a concise summary of the topics of racial discrimination and diaspora that were discussed within Elemental.

## 4 Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Result

#### 4.1.1 Data

Using the theory developed by Cohen (1997) and Alba & Nee (1997), the research was carried out with the purpose of determining the factors that led to the occurrence of diaspora in the film. And the theory developed by Allport to identify the various forms of racial discrimination that are depicted in the film Elemental. This film contains fifteen pieces of information, some of which are as follows:

Table 1. Data

NO	Type of Data	Frequency	
1	Causes of diaspora	Vicim diaspora	3
		Trade diaspora	7
2	Effects of diaspora	Errosion of ethnic identity	3
		Rise of intergroup marriage	2
Total		15	

#### 4.1.2 Data Analysis

##### 4.1.2.1 Cause of diaspora

In the film Elemental, the factors that lead to diaspora are investigated via the lens of Cohen's (1997) framework. This framework classifies diaspora according to the reasons for relocation, and it is broken down into four categories: victim diaspora, labor diaspora, imperial diaspora, and trade diaspora. In this study, two primary explanations are identified, with a particular emphasis on the concept of victim diaspora, which Cohen defines as movement that is motivated by traumatic experiences being experienced. In the book Elemental, Ember's mother, Cinder, describes the traumatic events that occurred during her family's relocation from Fire Land, their native land, to Element City.

##### A. Data on Victim Diaspora

Cinder: *“There is a reason we left Fire Land... Oh, Ember. We loved it there so much. Most everyone had a Blue Flame, and it connected us all together...”* (Page 39)

As Cinder explains, prior to moving to Element City, their family enjoyed their existence in Fire Land, which held profound cultural significance for the Fire race. This significance was symbolized by the blue flame that they all shared. This flame symbolized a sacred bond among the Fire race, while also eliciting feelings of melancholy and grief for the place that had been their home in the past. Nevertheless, this oneness was disrupted by a storm that was extremely destructive.

Cinder: *"It was hard living, but your father began to build a life for us. We put everything into it. But then a great storm came."* (Page 39)

They were forced to relocate because the tremendous storm destroyed their home as well as everything they had worked for, leaving them with no other option. The relocation was not only uncomfortable from a geographical standpoint, but it was also emotionally taxing, and it left permanent scars on their lives. In their conversation, such as when Cinder says, "we had to leave...everything. Our home," it is clear that they are experiencing a great deal of anguish as a result of the loss of their nation and the necessity of beginning again in Element City. The spirit of victim diaspora is captured in this portrayal, which illustrates the emotional and physical displacement that many people undergo as a result of such tragic events. The voyage that Bernie and Cinder take to Element City, where they intend to start a business, serves as an illustration of the trade diaspora in the novel *Elemental*.

According to Cohen (1997), the term "trade diaspora" refers to communities that relocate overseas for the purpose of conducting business, obtaining official approvals, learning local customs and languages, and facilitating business without fully blending into the local culture. Upon arriving, Bernie and Cinder are required to go through an official immigration process, which is representative of their admission as legal residents and is represented by a paper that has been stamped. They are granted rights in Element City as a result of this designation, which enables them to initiate their business activity.

#### B. Data on Trade Diaspora

- a. *Narrative*: "It's their turn for processing. They hurry over to a welcoming wood immigration official." (Page 2)
- b. *Narrative*: "The official presses his nose onto an ink pad and then onto a document on the table, leaving an official stamp." (Page 2)

Once they have been granted legal recognition, Bernie and Cinder realize that it is necessary for them to converse in the local language rather than in their own tongue, which is Irish. Their relationship with the wood immigration official, who has difficulty understanding their Irish names, is a representation of this. At some point in time, Bernie and Cinder decide to teach their daughter Ember the local language in order to assist them in managing their business. The fact that Ember utilizes the language when she is speaking to a water teenager is evidence that the family has adapted to the linguistic conventions of Element City, which is necessary for their commercial endeavors.

Regardless of their official status and the fact that they are learning the language, the shop continues to be the primary reason for the family's relocation. A chat in which Cinder confesses, "That is why we came here," provides further evidence that this mission is being fulfilled. With Bernie's store serving as the primary motivation for their relocation, the phrase "to build all this" (page 40) is spoken. As a result, the shop becomes a representation of their tenacity and will to achieve success.

In the future, when the shop is in danger of being flooded, Ember's efforts to protect it demonstrate the profound significance that the shop holds for the family. Wade, a resident of the area, eventually suggests to Ember that she should leave the shop in order to ensure her own safety, but she retorts with a stern "No!" I am referring to my father's entire life. Nothing is going to happen to me! (page 114). As a result, this demonstrates the importance of the shop to the family's identity and the sacrifices they have made, highlighting their dedication as members of the trade diaspora..

#### 4.1.2.2 Effects of Diaspora

Diaspora not only influences the experiences of newcomers, but it also has the potential to influence the cultural identity and ethnic identity of the society that is hosting them. According to Alba and Nee (1997), diaspora influences include the deterioration of ethnic identities and the increase in the number of marriages between people of different groups, both of which eliminate prejudices and change the boundaries of social relationships. On the basis of Alba and Nee's approach, this analysis investigates both of the effects that occur in *Elemental*.

##### A. Erosion of Ethnic Identities

According to Sears (2003) [27], the term "eroding ethnic identity" refers to the process by which an individual's ethnic culture becomes less prominent as a result of factors such as assimilation or inter-group relations. When Wade, a character from the Water race, interacts with Ember, a character from the Fire race, he challenges the norms that have traditionally been observed by the Fire race. There is a practice that involves determining compatibility by burning a stick, and the smoke that is produced suggests the possibility of a connection between the two parties.

- a. *Example*: "Ember sniffs herself. Then she lights a stick. Cinder turns to Wade and gestures smugly. His turn. He looks at his finger. No way to light the flame" (Page 93). In the beginning, Cinder, Ember's mother, is under the impression that this ritual is only available to members of the Fire race because it requires fire to light the stick. Wade, on the other hand, is able to adjust by directing Ember's light through his body of water, which results in a magnifying effect that illuminates the stick, which surprises both Ember and Cinder. A double helix is formed by the smoke, which means that compatibility is present:
- b. *Dialogue*: "Cinder: See, Ember, it cannot be" (Page 93).
- c. *Narration*: "He focuses the beam of light onto the stick. And it works!... The intermingling smoke turns into a double-helix" (Page 93).

The action taken by Wade demonstrates that the traditions of the Fire race have the potential to be inclusive and to bridge the gap between the races. The fact that Wade is able to demonstrate compatibility despite his Water race ancestry is a prime example of the breakdown of ethnic borders demonstrated by this event.

##### B. Rise of Inter-group Marriages

According to Schoen (1989) [28], the term "inter-group marriages" refers to unions that take place across social or ethnic barriers, with the goal of fostering societal integration and minimizing separation. The relationship between Ember and Wade grows stronger throughout the course of *Elemental*, culminating in a statement of love and devotion despite the fact that their elemental natures are different.

- a. *Dialogue*: "Ember: I want to explore the world with you, Wade Ripple! I want to have you with me, in my life. Forever!" (Page 120). This sincere comment gives the impression that she is looking for a long-term relationship, potentially even marriage. The romantic bond between Ember and Wade exemplifies the possibility of inter-group interactions that go beyond the conventional bounds of people of different races. Immediately after Ember has made her proclamation, she embraces Wade, and the two of them share a passionate kiss, which is represented by the light that shines throughout the room:

- b. *Narration*: “Then, they KISS! LIGHT shines through the room. It’s breathtaking...” (Page 121). Even if marriage is not specifically addressed, the romantic milestone gives the impression that they will be together for the rest of their lives. Through its symbolic representation of hope and a fresh start, the light draws attention to the significance of inter-group connections in overcoming social barriers, which may finally result in marriage.”

## 4.2 Discussion

This research highlights the intricacies and substantial repercussions of diaspora, as illustrated by the experiences of Ember's family in *Elemental*. The discussion in this research examines the experiences of the family. “In this study, Ember's family is identified as examples of both victim and trade diaspora. This identification is based on Cohen's [24] taxonomy of diaspora kinds, which includes victim, labor, imperial, and commerce diaspora. They are a representation of the victim diaspora because they were forced to leave their homeland as a result of a natural disaster. In addition, their relocation is driven by economic considerations, as Bernie develops a firm in Element City with the intention of providing a better future for his family. This aspect of their migration is consistent with the features of trade diasporas. By learning the local language, they are able to more easily assimilate into the host society, which is essential for both their professional and social integration here.

In addition, the research investigates the cultural transitions that diaspora communities frequently experience, shedding light on the ways in which the presence of other ethnic groups can have an effect on the ethnic identity and customs of the community. Wade's participation in *Elemental* causes traditional Fire race rites to be disrupted, such as the customary practice of reading smoke signals from burning sticks in order to determine compatibility. According to the findings of the study, the fact that members of the Water race are able to participate in this tradition represents a shift in the exclusive nature of the customs of the Fire race, which ultimately results in a "erosion of ethnic identity." Through this transformation, ethnic barriers are blurred, which opens the door to cross-cultural connections and even the possibility of marriages between people of different races.

This phenomena is consistent with the results of Baldatun [29] regarding the impacts of assimilation on diaspora families. Examples of this phenomenon may be observed in the film *The Karate Kid*, in which diasporan families adopt new cultural behaviors in order to navigate their host society. In addition to cultural alterations, the study is also concerned with the substantial role that prejudice plays in the process of shaping the experience of being a diaspora. Discrimination of different kinds is experienced by members of the Fire race in Element City. These forms of discrimination include verbal hostility, avoidance, and systemic isolation. Examples include discriminatory housing practices, such as landlords who are unwilling to rent to families of the Fire race, and public exclusion, which may be seen in the restricted access that Fire race families have to communal venues such as the Central Garden. According to Devi and Gaurav's [30] examination of Black identity discrimination and Fatimazzahroh and Latifah's [31] study on prejudice against the Joseonjok in film, this treatment is akin to racism that occurs in the real world. Even if they are intended at imaginary races, the discriminatory activities that are depicted in *Elemental* serve to demonstrate the discrimination and exclusion that diaspora communities confront in a variety of contemporary societies. A further demonstration of the psychological and social toll that discrimination exacts is provided by this study. The Fire race's



dignity is undermined by the persistent exclusion and prejudice that they face, which contributes to the social barriers that prevent them from fully integrating into Element City. Restrictive public areas and policies that alienate members of society are examples of the isolation that the Fire race must endure. This segregation contributes to the perpetuation of systemic inequalities and the stigmatization of minority groups.

Along the same lines as research on marginalized Black identities, Ember's family goes through the process of dehumanization, which is a common consequence of discrimination related to diaspora. In conclusion, the findings of the research provide a complex knowledge of the effects that is caused by prejudice, assimilation, and diaspora. Elemental demonstrates how diaspora experiences require both adaptability and resilience in the face of obstacles by using the story of Ember's family as an example. In light of the findings of the study, it is imperative that cultures establish hierarchical structures that are inclusive of cultural diversity and acknowledge the significance and promise of multiculturalism..

## 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Ember family's experience serving as a diaspora in the television show "Elemental" sheds insight on the difficulties and consequences associated with migration. The twofold nature of their diaspora, as stated by Cohen's thesis, is demonstrated by the fact that they were uprooted as a result of a natural disaster and because they were looking for business possibilities. Both the diaspora and the host cultures undergo major transformations as a result of the family's assimilation into Element City through the adoption of a language and the integration of cultural practices. These changes include the promotion of interracial partnerships and cross-cultural interactions. However, their voyage is also marked by a variety of types of discrimination, including as verbal hostility, avoidance, and segregation. These forms of discrimination reveal the deeply ingrained racial preconceptions that exist in the culture that is hosting them, which ultimately undermines the dignity and rights of the Fire race.”

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