

Stereotyping and profiling essay sample



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Stereotyping and profiling is a very debatable concept. Many argue that stereotypes alter the way we think and see the world. Others argue that stereotypes help us plan for certain situations and help us process information in an easier way. Finally, some people believe that stereotypes are inherent and we cannot avoid them. Regardless, stereotypes have been both harmful and helpful in the past. Many instances of both situations are depicted in these short stories, both directly and indirectly. Some examples of indirect stereotypes are depicted in the story at the author's discretion.

This is seen in the composition of the characters and the story lines. The authors in both stories depict the characters as having common features stereotyped to Arabs. Jaha's story depicts the main character as having olive skin and black curly hair. Jaha goes as far enough to say that this look is common to people from Lebanon. The main character even compares himself to the man he is talking to and notes that he fits the American dentist stereotype because he has hairless arms and pink-tipped fingers.

The characters in Kahf's story are portrayed with similar characteristics. Additionally, Kahf portrays the two polar opposites of Arab occupations. Dr. Rashid and her husband are educated and hold doctor degrees. There is also the other stereotype that Mzayyan's husband fulfills; this stereotype is that Arabs, namely the uneducated or immigrants are convenience store owners. The indirect stereotypes are built into the story lines and are more subtle. In Kahf's story, the plot itself is stereotypical.

The husband is rough and abusive while the wife is mostly submissive. She fights back when necessary but for the most part, she is loyal to her husband

even if he doesn't deserve loyalty. Mzayyan refuses to put her husband in jail yet she fears him. The judge confirms the stereotype by siding with Mzayyan, saying that Arab women are known to be submissive and nice. Another stereotype is the rationale that Mzayyan provides for not filing a complaint earlier; she states that she is worried about how that will make her and her husband look in the community.

This vanity and concern with other people's thoughts is definitely an Arab stereotype. In Jeha's story, the stereotypes are depicted a little differently. They are pushed upon the main character as he resists them. Strangers notice his looks, groceries, slight accent, etc. , and immediately stereotype him as a stranger. The main character refuses and claims that he has spent the majority of his life escaping his Arab roots. He is easily upset when individuals ask him questions based on his appearance.

The character believes that everyone should know what parsley is but is upset when individuals ask him questions about parsley, assuming it is an Arab-only herb. The same happens with garlic. Ironically, he stereotypes an individual at the end of the story by asking them the same question he was originally asked, " where are you from? " He addresses the stereotyping issue by implying that stereotypes don't apply since everyone is made of a mosaic. He identifies himself as a mosaic, taking away pieces from American and Arab culture.

As seen with both of these stories, profiling pans out in harmless and even negative ways. For example, Mzayyan's husband may have been wrongly convicted on the basis that women " are submissive. " However on the other

hand, stereotyping can be harmless as seen in the Jeha story when questions are asked about the main character's origin in small talk. It is important to be aware of stereotypes and their implications in our daily interactions in order to prevent any harm.