Name

Instructor Name

Subject

Date

Race

Race and identity are the most significant ongoing debates of the twenty-first century because, in a postmodern era, objective realities are replaced by subjective truths. Likewise, a unicentric idea of an individual's identity cannot be formed. However, in today's world, people still face identical stereotypes and prejudices because of their race and origin. These issues are highlighted in theatrical plays as an attempt to highlight one of the plights of a modern man. This essay revolves around identity issues as major themes in the plays, *How I Learned to Drive*, *The Humans,* and *Disgraced*. Likewise, characters from these plays are compared to signify the identity issues faced by them as a universal feeling.

The character of Li’l Bit in *How I Learned to Drive* discusses the idea of a fragmented female identity. She develops the idea of the world and her identity by pulling out bits and pieces of memory from her traumatic past. Likewise, she is manhandled and misguided by her elders who do not accept her life choices and represent a patriarchal and misogynist mindset. She has been told by the voice of her grandfather, “MALE GREEK CHORUS. *(As Grandfather.)*How is Shakespeare going to help her lie on her back in the dark? *(Li’l Bit is on her feet.)*” (Vogel 10). This represents the social dilemma of objectifying a woman’s body and encouraging her to beautify her sexuality and not her cognitive abilities in life. Besides, she cannot distinguish her desires for her uncle and sometimes, views him either as a patron or a pedophile. Likewise, the effect of memory dominates her life. In the same manner, Erik from *The Humans* can also be seen driven by his memories of the 9/11 incident. Moreover, his memories haunt his present life and he cannot come around viewing life as a series of both good and past events. Although he denies his discomfort when he visits New York City, “I do not hate traveling to New York, no, no, I don’t . . .” (Karam 10) but he has developed PTSD after viewing human deaths. However, as compared to Li’l Bit, Erik does not face sexual abuses and his troubles result from the incident that happens later in his life. Being a man, he enjoys extramarital relations as well and society does not judge him because of his gender superiority.

The play *Disgraced* deals with the life events of a Pakistani-American lawyer, Amir who wants to assimilate into the American culture. Despite being a Muslim, he transforms into a radicalistic individual who denies religion and questions the divine laws. Likewise, it is not easy for him to survive in his home country by keeping his native identity close to him. Besides, this play also deals with the theme of 9/11 as described in *The Humans*. However, as a non-native American citizen, Amir has a lot of identity-related pressure on him because as an outsider, he is not welcomed in Western culture. Unlike both the characters, Li’l Bit and Erik, he has to go through racial stereotypes and threats of Islamophobia following the 9/11 incident. These lines from the play highlight his anxieties, “The next terrorist attack is probably gonna come from some guy who more or less looks like me” (Akhtar 51). Likewise, his Jewish wife Emily, cheats on him with his coworker Isaac which is similar to Erik cheating on his wife in *The Humans.* However, Amir gets in serious trouble for beating Emily because, in the West, Asian men are stereotyped as irrational and impulsive beings. Quite on the contrary, he cannot escape from the American legal proceedings because he is an immigrant, whereas, on the other hand, Uncle Peck enjoys freedom as a pedophile.

These three plays deal with the identity experiences of three characters in different circumstances and signify identity issues. Moreover, Erik suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder because of 9/11 which portrays him as a person who wants to identify with simple country life. Li’l Bit suffers the loss of her true female identity because of misogyny and sexual abuse. Furthermore, Amir has to transform his identity as a radicalized thinker in America to escape ethnic and racial stereotypes. These characters share certain differences and similarities which point to the universal debate of identity issues in the twenty first century.

**Work Cited:**

Karam, Stephen. *The Humans (Revised TCG Edition)*. Theatre Communications Group, 2016.

Akhtar, Ayad. *Disgraced*. A&C Black, 2013.

Vogel, Paula. *How I Learned to Drive*. Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1998.