

Identity and belonging essay



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Belonging to one group, (for example a racial group) can entirely shape how a person is perceived by other different groups. Excluding people exist as a natural part of social interactions. People make decisions about which groups they will socialise with and which groups and individuals they won't socialise with. People often discriminate on the basis of race, gender and religion. Historically, and even in modern times identification based on race or religion or ethnicity can isolate, alienate and push one away from people who identify themselves as different.

This is particularly true of South Africa during the Apartheid period. The film *Skin* explores in depth issues surrounding identity and belonging. These issues in society will concentrate on what it means to identify as black or white in the context of segregation at school, as well as isolating from family in order to pursue romance, and Apartheid issues that have an impact on greater society. In the western world education plays a major part in the evolution of a person's identity. The concept of schooling contains both education and socialising.

The majority of a person's life is inhabited in schools, as they spend thirteen years of their lives in school. Factors such as friends, popularity, romances and bullying all happen at school. Through their journey in school many people have formed a way of establishing groups according to their popularity. To be a part of the group that has high demands due to having popularity means to become like that group in every way such as in appearance and choice of fashion. In the film 'Skin' the life of Sandra Laing in school shows how a black individual is excluded by the whites in joining their group and socialising with them.

Even if she is born to a white family she is still considered a ‘coloured’ person due to her rare genetic anomaly that caused her to have black skin colour. Her school was completely unaccepting of people who have black skin due to a form of segregation called ‘apartheid’ in South Africa. Sandra was constantly excluded from these groups, as she was racially discriminated by the teachers and her peers. Being, in the white group meant that a person had many privileges as opposed to someone from a black group. There is establishment of groups even in the modern times.

Most groups in current times determine popularity by the use of fashion.

Most groups in schools consist of individuals trying to follow two particular fashion statements which is ‘Swag’ and ‘indie’. If a person is not part of these particular groups they are discriminated against by those groups for having a different taste of fashion. Schools have given the opportunity for individuals to establish groups which could lead to many issues in society. Family plays a major factor in the development of person’s life.

It has a large role in shaping a person’s identity, as an individual is bound to spend the majority of their lives within a family environment. It is a foundation of where an individual starts their strenuous journey to discovering their identity and where they belong. Family is the force that helps an individual discover the ability to interact socially, which could possibly lead to them getting their own acquaintances and life partners. Families play a huge part in your romantic choices, as they will want a person to get a suitable partner in life that would accustom to their values.

‘Skin’ shows how Sandra picks Petrus, who is a black individual to be her husband. Her family had prejudice towards her choice in husband, as her

family had completely disapproved her of marrying a black man. Her choice had caused many issues in her family, as her family is now looked upon by society being very unacceptable. The issue of segregation had a huge part to play in this factor because of her father like every other typical white person in South Africa was thought to comply with the terms of 'Apartheid'.

The main reason her family had opposed of this relationship choice was because they were racist themselves and didn't like the idea of a black person in their family. This shows how Sandra had been completely rejected by her father and brothers due to her marrying a black man. Her choice of belonging to a group had pushed her away from her real group which is her family. This idea of prejudice between families over relationship choices can be seen in the Shakespearean play, 'Romeo and Juliet'.

This plays resembles Sandra's situation, as the protagonists Romeo and Juliet have to go against their family to be with each other due to their family having a long conflict between each other. The resolution is that neither the family nor the lovers reached a settlement for the conflict. This is a proof that being in one group pushes us away from the other. Society has a large contribution towards shaping an individual's identity. Most of what a person follows is based society's rules and regulations. Most of a person's values and morals are shaped by the incentives of society.

Society is where a person applies the identity they have obtained from family and school into action. It contributes in a large way to the establishments of groups. Society contains many groups within it such as racial groups, religious groups and ethnic groups. Most of these groups could

possibly isolate and alienate individuals who are considered to be different to them. 'Skin' shows the concept of segregation in action, as the black people are treated poorly by the white people due to their difference in colour.

Segregation was main concept among people in South Africa during the 1960's, as they used to describe this form of segregation as 'apartheid'. This film shows how Sandra is being segregated by her whole community for being a black, as they are to live in separate suburbs and go to schools which are different to the white people. Society in that time was completely overruled by the white majority, as they had complete say in the matters of the nation due to their control of education and technology.

This concept of segregation by skin colour classifications can be seen in history during the time African-Americans were segregated by the white American. Many individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi have fought against the cruelty of segregation. This identifies the fact that being in one group can push us away from the other and through that process it could lead to conflicts. Belonging in one group can completely push us away from another, as this is proven historically and is evident throughout the current outcomes of society.

Many conflicts and issues that have happened due to one group pushing away the other. Most violence and discrimination arise due to the fact that an individual cannot successfully belong in one group without the acceptance of the other. The majority of the conflicts throughout history (which could be either religious or racial) have been the outcome of groups pushing away other groups due to arguments in each. It is evidenced

historically that belonging in one group can push us away from the other due to conflicts.