

Physical or physiological difference essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



These defects, or the thing that make you different, is one thing that Irving Coffman, an American Sociologist, would call a sociological discourse in the notion of stigma or consult you as a minority in society. In other words, an individual with a physical, cultural or psychological difference who is then treated differently from the rest of society is defined as a minority group. In addition, Stigma according to Coffman, is the characteristics that these minorities have that make them different from the rest. It is with these “stigmas” individuals that takes a toll on the mind and body of the person that makes them try to become the norm or even mask their condition in order to fit in. In order to describe a minority that is stigmatized one first needs to break down the term minority.

A minority can be separated into four categories; the first being a cultural, physical, or physiological difference that is not similar to those of the normal population. Secondly, there are unequal experiences and treatments that these individuals go through that are based on their stigma. Thirdly, the minority status is put upon you and not necessarily chosen and lastly individuals of this stigma group form a strong front when confronting or dealing with their stigma. Now with this broken down, we can now say that those that are blind, deaf, and/or homosexual can be considered a minority. These individuals cannot help the way that they were born or raised, so living in a society that does not meet your needs or even tries to understand the world from your point of view, makes it challenging for one to want to live in the normal society. In Robert Murphy's book, *The Body is Silent*; he tells his readers that he is a minority in today's society. It all started in 1972, at the age of 48 when he started to get spasms, which became increasingly

serious. It was only in 1976 that he first saw a neurologist, and he eventually was told he had a tumor inside his spine.

He became familiar with seeing medical specialists of different kinds and he endured several stays in hospitals. While the treatments may have slowed the growth of the tumor, the doctors told him that they could not remove it, and that it would steadily grow and restrict his movement, ultimately leading to his death. He brings his anthropological skills to his discussion of the world of the disabled.

The Body Silent is both a memoir and also reflection on the meaning of disability in contemporary society. By being a paraplegic, Murphy was often distraught because he was separated from the rest of the world and he could not "blend in". Many disabled people blame their isolation on a hostile society and often they are right. Our lives are built upon a constant struggle between the need to reach out to others and a contrary urge to fall back into ourselves. Among the disabled, the inward pull becomes compelling, often irresistible, outlining in Tara relief a human propensity that is often perceived only dimly' (Murphy, 109). It is with Murphy's experiences that are examples of the internal feeling of the "us" vs.. "them" and the hostility of being considered as a "them".

Stigma on the other hand is addressed in Irving Saffron's book *Stigma- Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. This book deals with the effects of varying degrees of social and self-identity awareness that arise when stigmatized individuals interact with "normal". According to Coffman there are three types of stigma: The Body (physical), The Character (personal), ND

The Tribal (social). We see that these customizations have a relationship between attributes and stereotypes when Coffman says, " A stigma is really a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype...

Part because they are important attributes that almost everywhere in our society are discrediting" (Coffman, However we are not fully aware that our uses of these stereotypes can create an anticipation of things fitting into but then turn out to be an expectation. Typically the word stigma has a negative connotation and like I mentioned above the words " stigma" and " minority" are related because minorities are often stigmatized for their differences which is upsetting in my eyes. By definition, of course, we believe that the person with a stigma is not quite human.

.. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination. Which reduces his life chances... We use specific stigma terms such as cripple, bastard, moron in our daily discourse as a source of metaphor and imagery , typically without giving thought to the original meaning (Coffman 5).

In conclusion, I consider this to be rooted in the concept that individuals are uncomfortable with the unknown and things that are different. Using a story that has just surfaced the news, if two wives want to have a baby and then mistakenly was injected with the sperm of an African American man, they now feel uncomfortable being mothers to a mixed child because they are pushed out of their norm. They never had to experience the world in an African American, mixed, or minority's shoes, making them stigmatize because they are white women raising a black child and the child stigmatized because he doesn't resemble his parents. If one really thinks about the word

stigma and what it implies, there is a sense of irony in the meaning and how others act around those that are disabled. I believe that there is a categorization on the "normal" because with them being uncomfortable around "different" people makes them a minority in its self. There insupportableness comes from their lack of knowledge on individuals that are different. However, those that are considered to be minorities learn their entire lives on how to act "normal" so that they can fit in and I do not like that.

I consider that individuals should be taught to accept anyone and that there isn't a "right" way to look or act because we are all human beings. How can we teach society to not place people into categories based on their mental capability, looks and ways? And how can we teach minorities that it is okay to be yourself and that there is no "normal"? The both of these questions are difficult to answer because we have a society that is so deeply rooted in the judgment and placement of those that do not belong. This deeply rooted American history continues to repeat itself sadly, by now discriminating against those that are different, which repeats the ongoing cycle for people to fight to become "equal" in society. Handicapped people are now fighting for easier access into buildings, apartments, and even jobs. It is sad to think that someone is not offered the job because they are blind, cannot walk or even talk. Murphy describes the United States as a very rejecting country towards the disabled when saying, "There is a clear pattern in the United States, and in many other countries, of prejudice toward the disabled and debasement of their social status, which find their most extreme expressions in avoidance, fear, and outright hostility" (Murphy, 1 12). These individuals

are viewed as inferior human beings solely because they are lightly different than the majority. In relation, homosexuals are minorities that also have difficulty with getting housing and jobs.

According to Frank Kenny in his article *Homosexuals as a Minority Group* he states that if a homosexual was given another Categorization such as “black” skin then, “there would be close to 1 unemployed homosexuals in this country” (Kenny, 54). This then implies that if these homosexuals were born with a physical difference on the outside then they would be judged on their skin and not their sexuality which in return makes it a puzzling decision on coming out or not. I could just imagine how difficult it is for an individual that is African American and a homosexual.

By having these two stigmas that people are basing their treatment of you on, which one worse than the other? Trying to think of an answer is just sickening and fearful because this will affect his/hers professional outlook and also their outlook on themselves. It is known that minorities and stigmatize individuals in society today are unequally and looked down upon as though they are not human beings. However, believe that minorities will soon be treated equally because although, “We live within walls of our own making staring out at life through bars thrown up by culture and annealed by our fears”, we will break these chains through open minds and gained knowledge Of those that are different from us in order to make the world a better place for all (Murphy 230).