

# Having a sense of being different makes it difficult to belong essay sample

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Human beings are all quite different from each other, but are the same species. Our main difference with other animals is our higher innate intelligence and the ensuing advanced social structure. Human society is built around commerce and other such material concepts, but the strongest thread binding us together is having similarities which allow us to form communities. Since having similarities is the bedrock of our existence, being different can affect our ability to belong to communities and therefore affect a fundamental need akin to food, shelter and clothing. It is important to analyse how being different, or thinking that you are different, affects your ability to belong. Recently, Australian Rules footballer Dermott Brereton 'tweeted' (posted on twitter) ever tried being blond in downtown Seng Xeng?' Although it is a superficial example it illustrates the effects that presumably small differences can have on people. Appearance is the first thing that makes an impression, and therefore plays a large role in determining whether you 'fit in' or not. A 'different' appearance affects a person's social standing and indeed his own perception of himself. Recent migrants to Australia can be traumatised as a result of this phenomenon.

'Being different was like a free ticket for all the playground bullies to indulge'/ the proverb goes 'beauty is skin deep'. But the effects of being judged purely on your appearance are profound and lasting and make it quite difficult to belong to a group. Further differences may encompass language, culture and prejudices. Language is the single most important factor in communication, and being unable to speak the major language of the country can cripple a person's social life. This can prompt abandonment of your original language in order to embrace the new, but this leads to

further problems. Ivy Tseng in 'Growing Up Asian in Australia' shuns Chinese in favour of English. She succeeds in belonging at her school community and the wider social strata, but her disfluent Chinese acts as a barrier between Ivy and her father. Therefore it is clear that belonging to one group can adversely affect belonging to another. Speaking about cultured, John book in 'Witness' presents an ideal case study. Thrust into a conservative Amish community in Philadelphia, his perception as an 'English' authority figure by the Amish hinders his attempts to blend in. Culture and prejudices are large factors in formation of ghetto areas.

A ghetto is inhabited by a vocal minority, who establish a sort of 'home away from home' location and 'vibe'. The Jewish and African-American ghettos in 19th and early 20th century United States are an example. A sense of being different from the majority of inhabitants in a country makes it difficult to blend in and belong, prompting a form of 'us vs. them' mentality and banding together in search of a community that they can belong to. Such 'cultural hotspots' can also be found in Australia; Lygon Street, Victoria Street and Springvale are a few examples. To draw on a more personal example, as well as some observation, I too found it difficult to belong to a new group of people when I first arrived in Australia. When I first arrived in Australia I had heard 'horror stories' of South Asian migrants being bullied and targeted in violent crimes. This knowledge... made me quite reticent. As a result I was essentially on my own for the first three or four weeks. As time passed however, my anxiety levels dropped and I was successful in belonging to my new school community and making friends.

Here too, a sense of being different in both appearance and language, hindered my initial attempts at belonging. This effect can also work in reverse. It is important to differentiate between 'being different' and 'having a sense of being different'. Your mental status and pre-conclusions may harm your sense of belonging. The aforementioned John Book did not differ drastically from the Amish in appearance. His own mental status affects his interactions with members of the community. When he speaks to Rachel Lapp, at whose house he is staying for the course of the investigation, after they were close to being intimate, he says to her 'If I had slept with you last night, either I would have to stay or you would have to go.' This example illustrates how he feels that he is 'different' from the Amish, and how it affects his belonging to the community.

A similar experience occurred to me and some of my cousins who were born in Australia. When we went back to ... for a holiday, they were unsure of the events occurring around them and were reluctant to talk to other people. Despite 'blending in' perfectly regarding appearance, their sense of 'being different' made it difficult for them to fully belong. In conclusion, it is indeed true that having a sense of being different makes it difficult to belong. Since belonging is an integral part of a healthy life and mind, this issue is especially important. Differences such as appearance, language and cultural aspects of our lives can cause this. It is important that we properly manage all these factors, and succeed in living happy, well-adjusted lives.