

Exploring Physical Stigma in Sharon M. Draper's Novel 'Out of My Mind'

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Abstract

The purpose of this is to provide an in-depth analysis of physical stigma and its impact on the main character portrayed in the novel "Out of My Mind" by Sharon M. Draper (2010). By adopting a qualitative approach, the researchers intend to explore the concept of physical stigma and present their findings and analysis through narrative texts. To comprehend the phenomenon of physical stigma, the study draws upon Erving Goffman's stigma theory (1963). This theory offers valuable insights into the social construction of stigma and how individuals with physical differences are labeled and marginalized in society. The results of the study reveal that individuals who bear physical stigma face stigmatization from society. They are often subjected to negative prejudice, discrimination, terrible words and cold stares. However, the main character in the novel exemplifies remarkable resilience and determination in the face of physical stigma. By shedding light on the experiences of individuals with physical stigma and the potential for empowerment, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the complexities of stigma and the possibilities for positive change in society.

Keywords: *stigmatization, stigma, physical stigma*

A. Introduction

A person or a group that is outside of society will frequently find themselves labeled as such and excluded from society. It might be characterized as an issue that remains over time. It can be noticed through one's actions toward others. It has to do with stigma, which develops when society assigns labels and stereotypes to people who are physically different to establish divisions like "us" and "them" (Link & Phelan, 2001, p.333). Since they are a minority group, the stigmatized individuals will be rejected by the community because of the boundaries. Their existence is not accepted by society, and as a result, they are degraded because their value has decreased. Due to their acts, a person is no longer qualified because of the stigma. The concept of stigma describes a situation in which an individual or group is rejected by society due to similar characteristics. Thus, stigmatized individuals are viewed

negatively by society. According to Dudley (2000), stigma is defined as stereotypes or negative opinions attached to a person or group of individuals when their traits or actions are seen to be out of the ordinary or inferior according to social norms. It implies that a person with unusual characteristics, such a disability, would be disqualified and regarded in low esteem by society. An individual or group with a characteristic that is different from what society accepts as a normal person would be rejected and disqualified by society.

Physical stigma manifests itself in real-life situations, as evidenced by the unfortunate undervaluation of blind individuals in Indonesia, as highlighted by The Disability Justice Project (2022). Due to limited education and employment opportunities, Indonesian who are blind and low vision are being stigmatized as a sighted massage parlors and cracker sellers. They must face the stigma and experience uncomfortable moments because of their condition.

Another example of an individual with physical stigma is Nick Vujicic. Vujicic was stigmatized when he was child. Vujicic is often a target of bullying because Vujicic has tetra-amelia syndrome, a rare medical phenomenon where an individual is born without arms or legs. Vujicic often considered and even attempted suicide as a child. Vujicic felt treated differently because he was born without arms or legs. Vujicic's mother eventually showed him a newspaper article of a man with a disability when he was 17 years old. This motivated Vujicic to start his charitable work by sharing his faith, speaking to his prayer group, and accepting an invitation from his high school guidance counselor to discuss his beliefs and how the difficulties he has encountered have shaped him. Nick Vujicic proves that he succeeded by becoming a motivational speaker (Popa, 2022).

The physical stigma also experienced by a musician; she is Putri Ariani. Despite experiencing physical stigma as a musician, Putri Ariani, who has been blind since she was three months old, hails from Yogyakarta and has consistently embraced the challenges that come her way. Notwithstanding her physical limitations, she has acquired the skill of playing the piano, captivating the attention of numerous individuals with her remarkable talent. With her unwavering determination, she unequivocally demonstrates that she is capable of achieving greatness, defying all odds.

The issue of physical stigma exists in daily life. It is also reflected in one of literary works, novel. One of the literary works is the novel entitled *Out of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper. The novel shows a case about the issue of stigmatization of Melody Brooks, an eleven-year-old girl with cerebral palsy. Being a girl with a physical disability, she is unable to perform her human rights in her society. Disability is viewed as a misfortune and people with disability as a burden in every society, according to the stigmatization issue. As a result of her physical disability, Melody is stigmatized in her society.

The exciting novel *Out of My Mind*, written by Sharon M. Draper, was established in 2010. *Out of My Mind* has won many awards and spent more than three years as a New York Times bestseller. *Out of My Mind* has achieved recognition and reward for its ability to raise awareness and cultivate empathy for individuals with physical disabilities. By sparking conversations and breaking down barriers, the

novel has contributed significantly to promoting inclusivity and understanding, benefiting both its author, Sharon M. Draper, and society at large. Despite these incredible honors, the story maintains moral values regarding the stigma related to physical disabilities, which are also seen in daily situations.

Based on the explanation above, the writer is interested in examining the stigma associated with physical disability. The concept of stigma, including the behaviors of persons with disabilities and the reactions to that behavior, may be better understood by readers and the public as a result. This can improve and raise people's awareness of their attitudes toward those who face stigma in society. Furthermore, the title of the thesis is "The Stigma of Physical Disability in Sharon M. Draper's 2010 novel *Out of My Mind*."

There are several related studies conducted on Stigma issues related to this study. The first previous research was written by Zaussinger and Terzieva (2018) entitled "Fear of Stigmatization among Students with Disabilities in Austria." The research article was published in *Social Inclusion* Vol. 6. The purpose of this research is to describe the factors which role in finding help and support regarding fear of stigmatization felt by students with disability. The writer of this study qualitative approach which primary data taken from Austrian Students Social Survey. The Goffman (1963) theory of stigma collaborated with Kimball, Well et al. (2016) theory of disability stigma. The result of this study explained in table and numbers that age, gender, noticeably of disability, and social environment.

The second study was conducted by Azizah (2019) from Universitas Negeri Semarang. This study is entitled "Social Discrimination as a Result of Stereotyping as Reflected in the *Palacio's Wonder*". This study focuses on stereotyping of physical appearance. It happens to the main character in the novel *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio who suffered complicated health. A structuralism approach was employed to complete this study. The author used the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure in this study to analyze the stereotyping of physical appearance as reflected in the novel. The result of this study showed that stereotyping is unfair to the people we judge because stereotypes are based on our preconceptions and negative emotions about other people. Many people will judge and form an impression of other people based on their appearance. So, not infrequently, people will do physical abuse, which we usually call bullying, to people who have a physical disability.

The third study was conducted by Estefania Alvarez (2019) entitled "The Stigmatization of *Frankenstein's Monster*." It was published in *Dawson English Journal* Issue No. 10 Winter 2019. A qualitative method is preferred as the study is heavily permeated with textual analysis. The main objective of this study is center on Goffman's labelling theory to explain the process of *Monster's* stigmatization that leads to the internalization of *Frankenstein's* monstrous label and deviance. The result of this study shows that unfortunate downfall of an innocent individual because of prejudice can highlight how societal norms affect what is considered normal and acceptable, as well as the effects they can have on those who are stigmatized.

There are some similarities and differences between this study and related studies. This study shares similarities with the first and third studies, as they both utilized qualitative methods and applied the theory of Erving Goffman (1963). The

second and third studies are similar in that they used a novel as their object of study. However, the second study differed in that it used the structuralism method to enhance the study.

This current study is distinct from the aforementioned studies, but it shares the same focus on stigma. Specifically, this study examines the stigma experienced by the main character in the novel "Out of My Mind." The analysis explores how the author portrays Melody Brooks' experience of stigma due to her disability. Melody's disability makes her a target for others, who view people with disabilities as burdensome, unfortunate, and sources of shame, not only for their families, but also for society as a whole. In this study, the author employs the Erving Goffman (1963) theory to examine and address the issue at hand. By delving into the topic, exploring the relevant theory, and analyzing the issue, the study sheds light on the pervasive societal stigma that persists in contemporary society. The following explanation provides a comprehensive understanding of how Goffman's theory illuminates the existence and impact of this stigma : Stigma is a quality that disrespects a person as being not totally equal to other people and likely results in undesirable things. According to Goffman (1963) is a physical and social attribute that weakens the social individuality of the individual and prevents that person from being recognized as an individual. The conclusion of Goffman's concept is that the personality has degraded because it is no longer physically equivalent to the other people.

A stigmatized person may experience discrimination and being excluded from many things that most society takes for granted, which marginalizes them. According to Goffman (1963, pp. 5–7), society will disqualify persons with unusual individual looks as people with abnormal or unusual individual looks from society; there are mainly three types of stigmas that society has constructed; First, those who are born with a blemish on their body. These physical attributes can lead to stigmatization and discrimination, which can have a significant impact on an individual's social and psychological well-being. It is essential to recognize that people with physical disabilities are often stigmatized and face social barriers, even though they have no control over their condition. Physical disorder is regarded as a form of disgrace in this condition. Individuals are undervalued as a result, and society does not accept them.

The second type of stigma is mental stigma, which refers to the blemishes on an individual's character that are viewed as mental disorders, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts, and radical political activity. In this situation, the individual will be stigmatized and rejected by society.

The tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion is the third. This is a common occurrence in society. Individuals with a different background will be excluded from a group and society. While discussing stigma, people understand about stigma actions in society and the impact of stigma actions on individuals.

Goffman divided stigma into 2 namely stigma actions and stigma response. Stigma actions can be described as when ordinary people meet persons who have different appearances than them. Normal people's actions would be to treat the individual negatively because they are considered inadequate. Individual appearances

have meant a group with comparable backgrounds. According to Goffman (1963, p.7), society does negative behaviors and discriminates against those with stigma because they have labeled the individuals as inadequate people whom society should avoid. Individuals usually become aware that they are being discriminated against, disqualified for, and mistreated. Goffman also describes negative acts taken by normal toward substandard individuals, namely a negative prejudice, discriminations, terrible words, and cold stare.

Negative prejudice is another type of stigma action carried out by society or a group of people. People frequently begin negative prejudice when they meet people with diverse appearances, and the people are labeled as the worst. According to Goffman (1963, p.31), normal people will stigmatize those with different appearance or people with disabilities, and they will manage their negative prejudice with the individuals. Based on this perspective, if a society or group of people finds it difficult to accept people from the out-group, they will think that people from the out-group are not better than them. As a result, individuals will constantly face negative prejudice from society. People with disabilities, for example, frequently face negative prejudice since they are portrayed as a burden, misfortune, and the source of the shame, within the family and throughout society.

Discrimination action is also stigmatized by society by giving individuals special treatment because the individual has different looks. This conduct is common in society, and because each individual has a different look, it must be stigmatized and ignored. Goffman (1963, p.84) states that the individual who volunteers to reveal that they are different in appearance from the majority of society will be cut off from society's normalcy. As a result, the minority will always face disparaging treatment from the majority. It also depicted in our daily life. As a minority, the people with disabilities are treated as inhuman which leads to alienation. The discriminatory society does not behave humanly to people with disabilities. As a result, normal people will subject them to stereotypes and discrimination actions.

Terrible words are acts that stigmatize a culture or a group of individuals. Typically, society dislikes people who are perceived to be different from them. According to Goffman (1963, p. 96), members from the out-group would be perceived as handicapped, stiff, defensive, and with weak inner resources. Individuals in groups tend to use terrible words to separate and condescend to them. It is possible to conclude that people with stigma are experiencing sorrow in their lives. Meanwhile, they should be treated as normal, with no regard for their differences. Every person has the human right to be happy and to be treated well by their environment.

A cold stare is one of the stigmatized actions that society has taken towards people who have unusual appearances. Typically, society would set a cold stare on the individual since they are perceived to be different from others. According to Goffman (1963, p. 112), presenting a cold stare makes society curious about the persons. The person will then be perceived as different by society. Giving a cold stare is one of the stigmatizing actions taken by society toward an individual because of something different about their appearance. In this case, the individual will feel threatened and uneasy in society.

The response of stigmatized people is the condition in which the people with stigma show the reaction toward the normal or society. They would respond to each other when the people with stigma encounter society or the normal. It is impossible to deny that stigma causes suffering to those who are subjected to it. As a result, stigmatized persons must fight stigma to find relief from their pain. According to Goffman (1963, pp. 28-29), stigmatized persons work against the stigma and attempt to break free from pain and the negative perspective of society, in which society or normal assume that people with stigma are weak and powerless. It can be concluded that stigmatized persons must make an effort, such as avoiding interaction with others and improving their self-quality.

Avoiding interaction with others is one-way stigmatized persons struggle against stigma. Goffman (1963, p. 91) depicts the condition of a person who disguises oneself in order to avoid negative public attention and contact with other people because they feel themselves to be different from normal. It suggests that stigmatized persons prefer not to interact with normal since they are uncomfortable in society. It is also done so that society does not have the opportunity to continue to harm persons who are different from the normal people.

The second type of work against stigma is to improve one's own self-quality. People that are stigmatized strive to better themselves in order to be accepted and liked by society. According to Goffman (1963, p. 34), stigmatized people show to society that they are capable of improving self-quality by becoming better people to be proud of, they do not want to classify minorities or people with disabilities as lazy people. It is possible to argue that people with disabilities, like normal people, enjoy the same life, are equal, and are valued in society.

The novel is a book-length story in prose, whose author tries to create the sense that while we read, we experience actual life (Kennedy, 1991). This statement leads us to believe that the late arrival of the novel on the literary scene tell us something important about the genre. Most novels are concerned with ordinary people and their problems in the societies in which they find themselves. Understanding the basic elements of a novel is crucial, Intrinsic elements in literature include character, plot, theme and. These elements are considered the building blocks of a literary work and form its foundation (Semi, 1988). They are essential components that contribute to the overall structure, meaning, and artistic quality of a literary piece. By analyzing and understanding these intrinsic elements, one can gain deeper insights into the work and appreciate its artistic merit.

The first element in the novel is character. Characters become important in the novel because the character is always present and involved in the story. Typically, the novel's characters are human beings. Characters in the novel are portrayals of real-life people. A character is still an individual who participates in the story. Characters are the persons presented in dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with morals and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say the dialogue and by what they do the action (Abrams, 1981)

The second element in the novel is plot, according to (Klarer, 2013), the plot is the logical interaction of the various thematic elements of a text which leads to a

change of the original situation as presented at the outset of the narrative. It reveals that the plot is a literary term used to describe the events that make up a story interaction with some novel elements. As a result, the effective plot includes the incident sequence, which produces a significant causal relationship with each other. The plot includes exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement. It makes it more obvious for the reader to understand the story.

The third element is theme. The theme is the main idea of the story. It must represent the whole part of the story as it is a basic development of the whole story (Abdi, 2013) indicates that the theme remains a big idea of the story that convey the writer's thoughts. The theme can be asserted directly or implied by the events and actions of the story. Furthermore, the common themes are reflected in the novel, such as love, friendship, and death.

The next element is point of view. The term point of view, or narrative perspective, characterizes how a text presents persons, events, and settings (Klarer, 2013). It indicates that a point of view is the narrator's position concerning the story being told. The point of view includes the first person, second person, and third person. In the first person, the narrator tells the story using "I". The second person uses you, and the third person uses him or her. The function of the point of view aids the reader in comprehending the character's feelings and actions.

The last one is setting. The term setting indicates the location, historical period, and social surroundings in which the action of a text develops (Klarer, 2013). It alludes to the setting in which the story takes place, Time, place, and social circumstance are all part of the setting. The setting of the place is the location where the story takes place. Meanwhile, the time setting refers to a historical period that includes the past, present, and future. Furthermore, the social circumstance setting implies a cultural condition in which the character exists.

This study employs Erving Goffman's (1963) theory in analyzing problem statements. This study focuses on framing the stigma action taken by society against individuals with various appearances. A person with a different appearance is usually regarded as inferior. The individual will then be labeled, criticized, and discriminated against by society. Society will stigmatize actions such as cold stare, terrible words, discriminations, and negative prejudice. Furthermore, the one who is subjected to stigma action will work against stigma by avoiding interactions and improving self-quality. This study employs Goffman's theory because it can answer the question and comprehend the issue raised by the writer.

B. Method

In conducting this study, the writer employed the qualitative approach by reading books or library studies and pre-reviewed articles written by relevant scholars on pertinent issues for research problem formulation. According to Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, & Ajay Bailey (2020), "qualitative research is a broad umbrella term that covers a wide range of techniques and philosophies; thus, it was not easy to define. In broad terms, qualitative research was an approach that allowed the examination of people's experiences in detail by using a specific act of research

methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories or biographies. They also said that researchers who used this method should study things in their natural setting, try to understand, interpret, and identify problems." The data sources of this study were taken from Sharon M. Draper's *Out of My Mind* novel. This novel consisted of 295 pages and was published by Atheneum Books for young readers in 2010. The data in the novel could be in the form of words, phrases, or sentences. However, the writer only focused on the data that indicated the stigmatization of the main character.

The writer collected the data for this study in various steps. In the first step, the writer read Sharon M. Draper's *Out of My Mind* novel as the main source. The second step taken were to identify what the issue of physical stigma from the novel. The next step was marking and highlighting the important information such as quotations or sentences. Then, the writer categorized the data into one unity. The collected data were then analyzed by using stigma theory to answer the questions in the background. In analyzing the data, the writer began by reading Sharon M. Draper's *Out of My Mind* novel to gather the identified data related to the Stigma theory. The next step involved the writer marking the problems faced by the main character and gathering some related theories, studies, and other references to assist in the research process and examine the results. Then, the writer wrote several details relating to the stigma theory from Sharon M. Draper's *Out of My Mind* novel. Finally, the textual interpretation were done by using the theory of stigma.

C. Findings and Discussion

The writer presents the research's findings and analyses in this chapter. The writer would like to share what was discovered in the book "Out of My Mind" by Sharon M. Draper. The analysis of physical stigma is supported by the dialogue and narrative from its novel.

1. The Action of stigma reflected in "Out of My Mind"

Because it is viewed as substandard, normal people commonly respond with a stigmatizing action toward individuals with different appearances. According to Goffman (1963), society stigmatizes and engages in negative behavior because these people have been labeled as substandard people who should be avoided by society. In "Out of My Mind", stigma comes in four different forms of action experienced by the protagonist such as negative prejudice, discriminations, and terrible words.

1.1. Negative Prejudice

The first form of stigma is negative prejudice, which is characterized by the negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes that people hold towards individuals who belong to a particular group or category, such as those with disabilities. It happens when her father gives a statement to Melody about her life not being easy and his desire to switch places with her. It can be seen from the quotation below.

"Your life is not going to be easy, little Melody," he'd say quietly. "If I could switch places with you, I'd do it in a heartbeat. You know that don't you?" (Draper, 2010, p.15)

The quotation above could be seen as an expression of negative prejudice towards Melody because she has disabilities. The statement implies that people with disabilities are inherently disadvantaged and face significant challenges, which can perpetuate stereotypes and contribute to the stigmatization of the people with disability. From the quotation, her father indicates that Melody's life will be difficult. This pessimistic outlook implies a negative prejudice against her, assuming that her life will be filled with challenges and hardships. The phrase "If I could switch places with you, I'd do it in a heartbeat" reveals that her father feels sorry for Melody and believes that his life is preferable to hers. This sentiment suggests a negative prejudice that Melody's life is undesirable and implies that her experiences will be worse compared to him. The closing question "You know that don't you?" implies that her father expects Melody to be aware of the difficulties she will face in life. This statement reinforces the negative prejudice by emphasizing her father belief that Melody's life will be challenging due to her physical disability.

Another evidence of negative prejudice is when Melody is considered a retarded person by the doctors who examine her, as it can be seen from the quotation below.

"I've seen dozens of doctors in my life, who all try to analyze me and figure me out. None of them can fix me, so I usually ignore them and act like the retarded person they think I am. I paste on a blank look, focus on one wall, and pretend their questions are too hard for me to understand. It's sort of what they expect anyway." (Draper, 2010, p.21)

The quotation above shows that throughout her life, Melody has encountered numerous doctors who have attempted to examine her. Despite their efforts, none has been able to remedy her situation. As a result, she tends to disregard them and assume the persona of a mentally disabled individual, by putting on a vacant expression, concentrating on a single wall, and feigning confusion towards their inquiries. This behavior aligns with their expectations in any case. Normal people tend to assume or give negative prejudice by her appearance. Another situation that Melody faces in reality also can be seen by the quotation below.

"The man produced a collection of worn wooden blocks, which he hoped were not contaminated with lead. He then approached me so closely that I could discern the pores on his face, which was repulsive to me. He spoke in a loud and slow manner, as if I had hearing difficulties and lacked intelligence, asking if I could arrange the blocks in ascending order of size." (Draper, 2010, p.22)

The quotation above takes place in Hospital when doctor wants to examine Melody, the doctor communicates with Melody in a manner that suggests he believes Melody may have hearing difficulties or a lack of intelligence. He speaks loudly and slowly, as Melody had hearing difficulties and lacked intelligence. In his conversation, the man asks Melody if she can arrange the blocks in ascending order of size. Melody, due to her physical disability, consistently faces negative prejudice from both people in general and specifically from the way doctors address her.

The next evidence of negative prejudice shows when Melody is considered as a burden when the doctor examines her, then it makes them described as retard children because she has different appearance in society. It can be seen from the quotation below.

“Let’s see,” the doctor said, “Melody is, ah, five now. That’s a perfect age for her to learn to adjust to a new environment. You and your husband can get on with your lives per her as a burden. In time, her memories of you will fade.” (Draper, 2010, p.26)

From the quotations above, Melody experience negative prejudice. The doctor disparages her. Melody's physical disability portrays her as mentally retarded, which discourages her and her mother from pursuing an education. This is the terrible truth of our culture, where people with disabilities are constantly thought of as blunt, foolish, and out of mind.

Another evidence of negative prejudice also can be seen from the words “I’ve had the communication tools of a little kid on my board. It’s no wonder everybody thinks I’m retarded.” (Draper, 2010, p.35). It explains that Melody is struggling with the perceptions and assumptions made by others.

She turned to Mrs. Billups. “What were you working on before all the screaming started?” Mrs. Billups replied, in that superior tone that teachers dressed in nice red business suits use when they’re talking to mothers with dirty shirts on, “We were reviewing the alphabet, of course. The sound of the letter ‘B,’ if I recall. I always start with the basics. These children need constant review because they don’t retain information like the rest of us.” (Draper, 2010, p.47)

The quotation above describes the situation of Melody in her special class get angry because the teacher always teaches the same topic, it make her and her friend screaming and the teacher cannot calmed her down. Then her mom asking to Mrs. Billups about what happens, so Mrs. Billups states that they were reviewing the alphabet, specifically focusing on the sound associated with the letter 'B.' Mrs. Billups expresses a biased viewpoint, suggesting that children with physical disabilities require continuous repetition and review because, according to her belief, they struggle with retaining information unlike "the rest of us." From Mrs. Billups statement we know that she shown the negative prejudice to Melody.

“I thought you were exaggerating,” the teacher said. “Parents are not always realistic when it comes to these children.” (Draper, 2010, p.49)

Negative prejudice is illustrated in the narrative when Melody does not want to study because her teacher always teaches the same topic for three months, then the teacher argues with Melody’s mother, and she says Melody has mental and physical limitation. Even though Melody has a physical disability, she is smart. The teacher disparages her because she is different from normal children.

“Melody participated?” Mr. Dimming asked as he took the printout. He glanced from me to the paper in his hand. “How nice.” I didn’t like the sound of his voice. (Draper, 2010, p.116)

His response to hearing that Melody participated is a dismissive statement: "How nice." Melody, however, expresses her disapproval of Mr. Dimming's tone, suggesting a negative perception of his voice or attitude. Negative prejudice also can be seen from the quotation. "Hey, Claire!" Molly said, twisting her arms above her head and bending her body so it looked crooked. "Look at me! I'm a retard!". (p 135) In this quote, her friend gives negative prejudice to her. Children with physical disability are always ignoring by their surroundings. Their appearance was not attractive to others, so they were unappreciated in their society.

Mr. Dimming taps the stack of papers for a moment, clears his throat, and addresses Catherine. "You know, I don't think it's appropriate for Melody to be here. This is not a recreational activity just for fun. The purpose of this meeting is to choose our official team." (Draper, 2010, p.136)

The quotation above explains that Mr. Dimming displays negative prejudice towards Melody. As he taps the stack of papers and clears his throat, he singles out Catherine and asserts his opinion that it is not suitable for Melody to be present. By emphasizing that the meeting has a serious purpose of selecting the official team, Mr. Dimming implies that Melody's presence is somehow incongruous or inappropriate. This expression of negative prejudice suggests that Mr. Dimming holds a biased view regarding Melody's ability to contribute or be involved in a meaningful way, disregarding her potential contributions or skills due

1.2. Discriminations

The second term of stigma action is discrimination, it happens when nobody ever asks Melody's name. It can be seen from the quotation below.

Sometimes people never even ask my name, like it's not important or something. It is. My name is Melody. (Draper, 2010, p.10)

The quote above shows an experience of Melody, who feels that people sometimes overlook or dismiss her, as if her name is unimportant. This suggests a form of discrimination or prejudice that Melody faces, where her identity and individuality are not given due to her physical disability. Melody expresses her frustration at being disregarded or overlooked by others, emphasizing the significance of her name and her desire to be acknowledged as a unique person. This excerpt sheds light on discrimination and the importance of recognizing and respecting individuality. It invites us to consider the impact of our words and actions on others and to be mindful of treating everyone with dignity and respect, regardless of any preconceived notions or prejudices.

I have been at Spaulding Street Elementary School for five years. It's very ordinary, filled with kids, just like the schools I see on television shows. Kids who sing in the choir learn to play the violin and take gymnastics or ballet or swimming lessons after school. Kids who shoot baskets in the gym. Their conversation fills the halls as they make plans, make jokes, make friends. Kids who, for the most part, ignore kids like me. (Draper, 2010, p.28)

The quote above portrays a sense of discrimination or exclusion experienced by Melody, who feels ignored by her peers at her School. Despite the school being described as ordinary and filled with various activities and conversations among students, Melody is implied to be different in some way, feels isolated from the social interactions and connections that other kids enjoy. The mention of "kids who ignore kids like me" suggests a form of social exclusion or marginalization based on her physical disability, which Melody feels keenly. This excerpt from the passage conveys a poignant reflection on the impact of social dynamics and the challenges faced by individuals with physical disability who may feel overlooked or left out.

When the weather is bright and sunny, we sit outside the school. I like to watch the "regular" kids as they play four-square while they wait for the bell to ring. They look like they're having so much fun. They ask one another to play, but no one's ever asked any of us. Not that we could, anyway, but it would be nice if somebody would say "Hi." I guess the four-square players must think we're all so backward that we don't care that we get treated like we're invisible. (Draper, 2010, p.29)

The quote above highlights the discrimination and exclusion experienced by Melody, who is a part of the special class with disabilities. Melody observes the "regular" kids playing four-square and enjoying themselves while waiting for the bell to ring. However, nobody from their special class is ever asked to join the game or even greeted with a simple "Hi." This quote reveals the feeling of being invisible and disregarded by the other students. Melody expresses a desire for inclusion and a recognition of their presence, indicating that the lack of acknowledgment from their peers reinforces the perception that individuals with physical disability are considered backward or different in some way. The passage sheds light on the social isolation and discrimination faced by individuals with disabilities. It highlights the importance of inclusion, empathy, and treating everyone with respect and dignity. It brings attention to the need for creating an environment where all individuals, regardless of their condition, are valued and included in social interactions.

It's even hard to keep good teachers for us. I guess I don't blame them for leaving, because, like I said, we're a tough bunch to handle sometimes. (Draper, 2010, p.44)

The quote above illustrates a form of discrimination based on the physical disabilities of the students in the special class. Discrimination can manifest in various ways, including unequal treatment, marginalization, or exclusion based on certain characteristics or conditions. In this case, the discrimination occurs in the difficulty of retaining qualified teachers for the special class due to the students' physical disabilities. This quote suggests that the challenges and complexities associated with teaching students with physical disabilities make it difficult to find and retain teachers who are willing or equipped to handle those specific needs. This indicates a systemic bias or prejudice that can result in a lack of resources, support, or opportunities for students with disabilities. Furthermore, the statement that the students are a "tough bunch to handle sometimes" could imply an underlying stereotype or misconception

that individuals with disabilities are inherently more difficult or burdensome to work with. This perpetuates a negative perception of people with physical disabilities, reinforcing discriminatory attitudes and barriers. Thus, this quote highlights the discrimination faced by students with physical disabilities in terms of access to quality education and appropriate support.

Mrs. Billups started every morning by playing her favorite CD. I hated it. “Old MacDonald Had a Farm,” “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider”—all sung by children who could not sing, the type of music grown-ups think is all kinds of cute, but it’s awful! Mrs. Billups put it on—at full volume—every single morning. Over and over and over. No wonder we were always in a bad mood. (Draper, 2010, p.45)

This quote above describes discrimination because Melody, who is in a special class with another student who has a physical disability, feels frustrated or uneasy with the music Mrs. Billups plays in class. Melody expresses dislike for the kid-friendly tunes performed by voices that aren't particularly appealing to them. The fact that students in special classes or those with physical disabilities always receive the same lesson that is unsuitable for their growth is an example of discrimination. While the regular class can receive the lesson better than them.

“Buh!” she said loudly, spitting a little as she did. “‘Buh’ is the sound of the letter ‘B.’ Let’s all say ‘buh’ together, children.” Then Maria, who is always in a good mood, started throwing crayons. Willy began to babble. And I bellowed. I may not be able to make clear sounds, but I can make a lot of noise. I screamed because I hated stuff that was just plain stupid. I screeched because I couldn’t talk and tell her to shut up! And that made me cry because I’d never be able to tell anybody what I was really thinking. (Draper, 2010, p.46)

The quote above depicts a situation where Melody, due to her physical disability, experiences frustration and expresses her emotions in response to the teacher's instruction. Although the passage does not explicitly mention discrimination, it highlights a potential lack of understanding or consideration for the needs and communication abilities of students in the special class. Mrs. Billups' approach of instructing the students to make the sound of the letter "B" and encouraging their participation can be seen as discriminatory because it disregards the unique challenges faced by Melody and others in the class with physical disabilities. The students' reactions, such as throwing crayons, babbling, and Melody making noise, can be interpreted as expressions of frustration and the inability to communicate effectively in response to a teaching method that does not accommodate their specific needs.

Fifth grade started a few weeks ago, and a couple of cool things have happened. Well, I didn’t get a gadget that makes Garfield-like speech bubbles over my head, but I did get an electric wheelchair, and our school began something called “inclusion classes.” I thought that was funny. I’ve never been included in anything. But these classes are supposed to give kids like me a chance to interact with what everybody else calls the “normal” students. What’s normal? Duh! (Draper, 2010, p.26)

The discrimination in this situation lies in Melody's previous experiences of exclusion and feeling different from others. Melody mentions never having been included in anything before, which implies a history of being left out and not given the same opportunities as the other kids. This exclusion based on her physical disability is a form of discrimination. The inclusion classes are seen as a positive step toward providing students like her with an opportunity to interact with their peers who are considered "normal." However, skepticism and the question, "What's normal?", indicate her questioning of societal standards and the exclusionary nature of labeling certain individuals as "normal" or "abnormal." The passage highlights the discrimination experienced by individuals with physical disabilities who have been excluded from typical activities and social interactions.

Rose finally figured it out and said, "Oh! You don't like jazz? Me neither!" We both laughed so hard, Mrs. Lovelace had to put her finger to her lips to tell us to hush. Never in my life have I had a teacher tell me to be quiet because I was talking to somebody in class! It was the best feeling in the world! I felt like the rest of the kids. (Draper, 2010, p.79-80)

In the quote above, which discusses discrimination, Melody expresses her happiness at feeling welcomed and a part of the group. Melody expresses happiness at being able to talk to a student and having a relatable interaction. It seems like Melody experienced a sense of equality and acceptance at that time when she mentioned that they had never had a teacher order them to remain quiet because they were speaking to someone in class. Due to her physical disability, she was treated differently than other children, which demonstrated discrimination.

Sometimes kids wave or say, "What's up?" Every once in a while someone will even walk with me to the next class. Cool. But "inclusion" doesn't mean I'm included in everything. I usually sit in the back of the room, going crazy because I know answers to things and can't tell anybody. (Draper, 2010, p.81)

The quote above highlights a form of discrimination experienced by Melody, who expresses her frustration with the concept of "inclusion." While they appreciate occasional gestures like waves, greetings, or someone walking with them to the next class, Melody still feels excluded in certain situations, feeling unable to participate fully in discussions or share her knowledge and answers with others. This suggests a lack of opportunities for her to actively engage and contribute in the classroom environment, potentially due to her physical disability. This excerpt sheds light on the discrimination of being overlooked or limited in participation and communication due to her physical condition.

1.3. Terrible Words

The third form of stigma action is terrible words, this experience happens when Melody is considered as a burden when the doctor examines her, then it makes them described as retard children because she has different appearance in society. It can be seen from the quotation below.

He began by clearing his throat. "Mrs. Brooks," he then said, "it is my opinion that Melody is severely brain-damaged and profoundly retarded." (Draper, 2010, p.24)

This quote describes the terrible word that is happening to Melody in school. Her friend uses the word retard to mock Melody because she has a physical disability. It depicts terrible words and derogatory terms such as "brain-damaged" and "retarded," which reflect a disrespectful and dehumanizing attitude towards Melody and her physical disabilities. This statement reflects the discrimination and prejudice often faced by individuals with physical disabilities. It perpetuates harmful stereotypes and contributes to the marginalization and exclusion of people with physical disabilities from society.

Dr. Hugely looked from her to me. He shook his head, then said, "You're lucky she has the ability to smile and laugh. But Melody will never be able to walk on her own or speak a single sentence. She will never be able to feed herself, take care of her own personal needs, or understand anything more than simple instructions. Once you accept that reality, you can deal with the future." That was just plain mean. (Draper, 2010, p.25)

The quotation above contains terrible words spoken by Dr. Hugely towards Melody. His statements reflect a dismissive and dehumanizing attitude towards her physical disabilities and potential. The use of such language perpetuates harmful stereotypes and reinforces the marginalization and discrimination faced by individuals with physical disabilities. Dr. Hugely's words not only disregard Melody's abilities but also undermine her self-worth.

"Let's see," the doctor said, "Melody is, ah, five now. That's a perfect age for her to learn to adjust to a new environment. You and your husband can get on with your lives without her as a burden. In time, her memories of you will fade." (Draper, 2010, p.26)

From the quotations above, Melody experience terrible words. She got terrible words from the doctor because of her physical disability. It explains the terrible words spoken by the doctor towards Melody and her family. The doctor's remarks reflect a callous and dehumanizing attitude, suggesting that Melody is a burden and implying that her presence should be minimized or disregarded. Such language and attitudes are highly inappropriate and unacceptable. Individuals with physical disabilities, like Melody, have inherent worth and should be treated with dignity and respect. Another evidence for terrible words can be seen from the quotation below.

"Hey, Claire!" Molly said, twisting her arms above her head and bending her body so it looked crooked. "Look at me! I'm a retard!" She laughed so hard, she snorted snot. (Draper, 2010, p.74)

The quotation above uses the term "retard" as a terrible word; it is highly inappropriate and disrespectful towards individuals with physical disabilities. It is important to treat all individuals with respect, empathy, and sensitivity and to refrain from using derogatory language or engaging in mocking behavior. Such derogatory language perpetuates stigma and discrimination against people with physical disabilities, further marginalizing them and reinforcing negative stereotypes.

Claire raises her hand. “Yes, Claire,” Miss Gordon says, a look of warning in her eyes. “I’m not trying to be mean—honest—but it just never occurred to me that Melody had thoughts in her head.” (Draper, 2010, p.110)

The statement made by Claire in the quote is kind of terrible words and reflects a lack of understanding and empathy towards individuals with physical disabilities. It is hurtful to assume that someone with a physical disability is incapable of having thoughts or intelligence. It is essential to recognize that people with physical disabilities have diverse thoughts, feelings, and capabilities, just like anyone else.

Mr. Dimming was silent for a moment. He scratched his head. Finally, he cleared his throat and said, “The winner of today’s competition, and the winner of the Butterfinger candy bar, with a perfect score, is . . .” He paused again, gave his head a shake, and started again. “The only person in the class who got every single question correct is . . . Melody Brooks.” Dead silence. No cheers. Just looks of disbelief. “No fair!” Molly blurted out angrily. “Melody’s got a helper who whispers the answers to her!” “She must cheated!” Claire added loudly. (Draper, 2010, p.117)

The comments made by Molly and Claire in the given quote are derogatory and reflect their terrible words towards Melody's achievement. Accusing Melody of cheating and dismissing her accomplishments undermines her abilities and reinforces the discriminatory belief that individuals with physical disabilities are incapable or dependent on others. These remarks demonstrate a lack of understanding and empathy towards Melody's condition and the efforts she puts into her academic achievements.

“Look at it this way,” Mr. Dimming told Connor. “If Melody Brooks can win the first round, then my questions must not be difficult enough! We’re all going to rally to win the competition!” Everybody cheered. Except me. (Draper, 2010, p.119)

From the quotation above explains Mr. Dimming's remark to Melody suggests that her success is only because the questions were easy, those terrible words is disregarding her abilities and hard work. This undermines her achievements and reinforces discriminatory beliefs about people with disabilities being less competent. It fails to recognize her challenges and diminishes her accomplishments by attributing them to external factors rather than her own skills. Such a comment can be demoralizing and perpetuates discrimination against Melody.

“Hi, Melody,” Rose says. “What are you doing here?” Her voice doesn’t sound as friendly as usual. “Quiz team,” I type. “She can’t be on the team,” I hear Claire whisper to Jessica, wrinkling up her nose. “She’s from the retard room!” Molly thinks that’s really funny. She screeches like a blue jay when she laughs. (Draper, 2010, p.135)

The quotation above is evidence of terrible words from Claire's to Melody, referring to her as being from the "retard room," which is derogatory and offensive. It demonstrates a disrespectful attitude towards individuals with disabilities and uses derogatory language to belittle Melody. This type of language and behavior contribute to the discrimination and exclusion that Melody face from her peers due to her physical disability.

“When Melody Brooks took that little practice quiz with us last week, I thought it was a lucky accident that she did so well. But yesterday Melody blew us all away. She got every single question right.” He pauses, making sure everyone is taking this in, and then he says, “All of them.” Earthquake report: Walls are tumbling everywhere! “So, she’s on the team?” Rose asks, disbelief in her voice. “Yes, she’s on the team.” “But . . . but . . . we’ll look weird!” Claire counters. “Everybody will stare at us.”. (Draper, 2010, p.144)

From the quotation above there is a terrible words from Mr. Dimming statement that said "I thought it was a lucky accident that she did so well, “it reflects a negative and dismissive attitude towards Melody's achievements. It seems that Mr. Dimming initially underestimated Melody's abilities due to her physical disabilities and attributed her success to luck rather than recognizing her intelligence or hard work. Such a statement can be hurtful and diminishes the value of Melody's achievements. It perpetuates a negative stereotype and undermines her credibility. It is important to acknowledge and appreciate the effort and skill that Melody demonstrated in excelling on the quiz. Each individual's achievements should be celebrated and recognized without diminishing their abilities or attributing them to chance.

“Good job, Melody!” Elena said. “How does she know all this stuff?” Claire whispered to Rose. “She’s smart!” Rose said, flipping through more cards. “But she’ll look odd on TV, don’t you think?” Claire continued, as if I couldn’t hear her. (Draper, 2010, p.148)

The quotation above reflects a conversation between Elena, Claire, and Rose regarding Melody's abilities and potential appearance on TV. Elena congratulates Melody for her impressive performance, acknowledging her intelligence and knowledge. However, Claire expresses her curiosity about how Melody acquired such knowledge, indicating a sense of surprise or disbelief. However, Claire continues to voice her concerns about Melody's potential appearance on television, she said terrible words that Melody may look odd because Melody has a physical disability. Claire's comment raises the issue of physical appearance and the perception of what is considered "normal" or socially accepted. By questioning Melody's suitability for TV based on her appearance, Claire highlights societal biases and the tendency to judge people based on superficial factors rather than their abilities.

“Do I look okay?” Claire asks, smoothing her dress. “You look great,” Molly assures her. “You know, it really ought to be you up there instead of Melody,” Claire says loud enough for me to hear. “Well, I’m ready if she messes up,” Molly whispers back. (Draper, 2010, p.155)

The quotation above reflects the terrible words in which Claire makes a derogatory comment about Melody's physical disability. Claire questions her own appearance and suggests that she should be the one on stage instead of Melody, indicating a preference based on physical appearance rather than abilities. Claire's comment implies that Melody's physical disability makes her less suitable for the situation. Molly attempts to reassure Claire about her appearance, but Claire continues with her derogatory remarks about Melody, making sure that Melody can hear her. This kind of statement is disrespectful and hurtful, as it not only undermines Melody's abilities but also reinforces discriminatory attitudes towards individuals with physical disabilities. Molly's response, whispering that she is ready to step in if Melody messes up, further perpetuates the negative attitude towards Melody and implies a lack of confidence in her abilities due to her physical disability.

Individuals who possess a distinct appearance often become targets of hurtful remarks, aimed at insulting and demeaning them. Melody, in her story, frequently encounters such terrible words from those around her. Consequently, she faces a lack of respect and is consistently underestimated in society. This aligns with Goffman's (1963) theory, which suggests that individuals belonging to external groups are often perceived as disabled, inflexible, defensive, and lacking sufficient inner resources. In conclusion, it can be inferred that individuals within certain groups tend to employ derogatory language as a means to isolate and belittle those who are different.

D. Conclusion

After analyzing the data using stigma theory proposed by Erving Goffman, the writer proceeds to the final chapter of the study, which comprises a conclusion and suggestions. In this section, the writer provides a concise summary of the analysis conducted in Chapter Four and also offers recommendations for future researchers interested in exploring the novel or delving into the same stigma theory. In the initial discussion, various forms of physical stigmatization were directed at Melody were depicted in the novel. These forms encompassed negative actions exhibited by individuals in the dominant group towards her, as they perceived her as substandard. These actions included displaying negative prejudices and doubting Melody due to her physical disability. Additionally, derogatory terms such as "weird" and "retard" were used as stigmatizing labels directed at Melody because of her physical differences. Shockingly, these hurtful words came from her own friend. Furthermore, other behaviors stemmed from the judgment of "normal people" regarding her unusual condition, manifested through demeaning body language like dismissive gazes. These gestures were observed among people who were not close to her, such as her classmates from the regular class, reflecting their lack of understanding about Melody's unique circumstances.

Another form of physical stigmatization directed at Melody, which was depicted in the novel, is discrimination. Melody, who has a physical disability, faces discrimination from the people around her. She is often ignored and overlooked due to her physical condition. This discrimination stems from the differences in her abilities and appearance.

The main character of this study's discussion of the main character's responses who has a physical disability is an example of how responses to a person with stigma are described. Melody demonstrates her academic success by reacting to her environment. By taking the team quiz, she can demonstrate to her surrounds that she can be a good student. Melody makes the conscious decision to avoid direct or in-person interaction with her surroundings in order to avoid interacting with society. Melody feels comfortable staying at home and isolating himself in a room to avoid any contact or interaction with the outside world or her surroundings. She simply wants to be left alone in her room without running into anyone else.

In conclusion, the various forms of physical stigma experienced by Melody in the novel have significantly affected her social life. The negative prejudices, discriminations, terrible words, and cold stares directed at her have contributed to her isolation and struggles in engaging with others. These experiences have shaped Melody's response, including her avoidance of social interactions and her personal growth to improve her self-esteem and sense of worth. The impact of physical stigma on individuals like Melody highlights the need for greater understanding, acceptance, and inclusivity in society. There are still many aspects of the novel "Out of Mind" that have not been discussed yet. These aspects can be explored by other researchers in future studies. One of the key aspects worth investigating is the language use in the novel. Analyzing the linguistic aspect of the novel can provide valuable insights for general readers, enhancing their understanding of the psychological aspects of the characters, particularly the main character. Additionally, this research can serve as a reference for incoming researchers who wish to analyze the novel from other linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives.

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