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A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES ON DEAF IDENTITY

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In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education by dissertation, in Deaf Education, School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Supervisor: Dr Claudine Storbeck

September 2008

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education (M Ed) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

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Guy William Mcilroy

September, 2008

Abstract

This study explores from the perspective of deaf persons, how the identity of deaf persons is shaped by their educational experiences. Previous studies on identity by Erickson (1984) and Leigh (2001) on deaf persons have located identity within either the medical model, as a discourse of assimilation, or within the reactive social model, as a discourse of human rights. It is argued that the 'first wave of deaf identity politics' (Wrigley, 1996) of the medical and social model binary are sites of oppression and resistance. This binary provides both an insufficient and a static explanation of deaf identity as a victim is increasingly at odds with the lives of deaf persons in a post-modern ontology. Subsequently, this study engages in exploring the post-modern driven 'second wave of identity politics' and proposes a bi-cultural Dialogue model that recognises and explores, through cross-cultural exploration, the complexity and fluid construction of a DeaF identity. Later, the contributions of Bat-Chava (2000); Glickman (1993) and Ohna (2006) towards deaf identity are discussed within the post-modern educational framework.

This ethnographic study explores the identity development of nine deaf participants through their narratives. The inclusion of the researcher as a DeaF participant in this study provides an auto-ethnographic gateway into exploring the lives of deaf/Deaf/bi-bi DeaF persons. The themes of 'significant moments'; 'connections at home and school' and 'deaf identity development' were investigated. This study investigated the educational experiences of both deaf learners who attended regular mainstream schools and also deaf learners who attended schools for the Deaf. The findings suggest that deaf identity is not a static concept, but a complex ongoing quest for belonging and acceptance of being deaf through 'finding ones voice' in a hearing dominant society. This study challenges educators, parents and researchers through using dialogue and narrative tools to broaden their understanding of deaf identity and the dignity associated with being a deaf person.

Keywords

DeaF	Dignity	Oral deaf
Dialogue model	Post-modern	Fluid identities
Identity	Narratives	Ethnography

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Chapter 1 Introduction and Context

"A deaf person's attainment of humanity depends on education" (Ladd, 2002:103)

This research explores the fundamental existential question of what it means to be a deaf person and the subsequent question of the impact of education on the identity development of deaf persons.

The concept of identity, according to Baumeister (1997) 'is the representation of the self', which means that the perception a person has of himself is a reflection of how others perceive this person. Therefore, as Grotevant (2000) states:

> 'The development of a person's identity is a socially constructed process, which emerges through their past and present interactions between themselves and their social context.'

This research focuses on understanding the impact of the school as a powerful social context particularly in the lives of deaf persons. Furthermore, this anthropological study claims that deafness, both as a disability and its cultural-linguistic implications within the Deaf[1] community, can exert a profound impact on identity development of deaf persons Thus the complex and interdependent links between deafness and disability, identity and education, especially in the field of deaf education, will be critically explored.

The contentious and long-lasting methodology debates within deaf education concerning the language of instruction around how best to educate deaf learners, has had a significant educational impact on deaf learners. The research by Bienvenue and Colonomos (1992) has shown that more than ninety percent of deaf children are born into hearing families

[1] The use of the capital 'd' in Deaf shows the distinction made by social model theorists and Deaf activists (Ladd, 2003) between a person who is audiologically deaf and is culturally 'hearing' from a person who identifies strongly with the Deaf community (Higgins: 1980:101, Padden & Humphries, 1988) as a linguistic and cultural minority group.

who have limited or no prior knowledge or experience of deafness. Subsequently, as McDonnell (1993) noted that the identity of the majority (90%) of deaf children follows and develops through the language that is used at home; this means that many deaf children are exposed at an early age to the spoken language of their parents such as English or Zulu at home instead of the more accessible South African Sign Language (SASL)[2]. It is at this critical early stage of the deaf child's life that the parents have an important decision to make on whether to communicate with their deaf child orally or visually or both. This decision hallmarks the subsequent decision concerning school placement of their deaf child either in a (mainstream) school that endorses the use of spoken language for deaf children with a view to improving social integration; or to select a school for the Deaf that supports the use of SASL and affirms the identity of the learner as a Deaf person. Historically, Deaf learners who use Sign Language have tended to be labeled by oral-centric teachers, as inferior; while the 'oral pupils' were granted a superior elitist status (McDonnell 1993:258). Consequently, it is possible to see the difficulties and low value of self-esteem that Deaf learners who use SASL experienced at school. In line with the devaluing education of deaf learners, Johnson (et al, 1990:13) proposes that 'a key to unlocking the curriculum of Deaf Education is the recognition and a refutation of the oralist approach to Deaf Education'.

Conversely, it was customary at that time, for parents to send their deaf child to regular, oral based, mainstream schools in order 'to acquire the skills and knowledge to function as competent self-assured deaf adults in the workplace with hearing people' (Moores, 1990: 76). As a moral imperative towards providing the best educational opportunities and prospects for deaf learners, this argument carries considerable weight. However, as the following investigation into the discourses that underlie this premise, a significant anomaly in the identity of deaf learners (Marschark 2002:138) has emerged. Instead, of the expected self-assured sense of identity of mainstreamed deaf adults, this research

[2] The use of the term 'South African Sign Language' (SASL) is written with capitals to show the status of SASL as a recognized language which is in use at schools for the Deaf in South Africa. The use of Sign Language by Deaf persons emphasizes the link between language and culture in that by choosing to use SASL, Deaf persons are making a strong statement of their cultural affiliation and identity as members of the Deaf community.

investigates the ambiguous insecure 'helpless victim' identity of several deaf adults from mainstream schools along with the researcher's auto-ethnographic contribution towards understanding mainstream experiences.

Another area of interest of this study is the transition of identity that many deaf people make from a culturally hearing identity to a culturally Deaf identity.

Until recently, research on the identity of deaf persons has been conducted from the traditional theoretical foundation using Erickson's model of personal development in psychology. This is usually an attempt by hearing researchers to understand deaf persons as 'outsiders' (Mykelbust, 1960; Higgins, 1980) instead of exploring the complex structures of meaning that deaf individuals use to make sense of their world (Corker 1996: 202). As a result, Corker contends that Erickson's model lacks an adequate account of the impact of discrimination and oppression on the identity construction of deaf persons (Corker, 1996: 43). In addition, a critically exploration of the 'politics of identity' (Wrigley, 1998: 48, 230) that is an inherent feature of deaf identity has been omitted from deaf discourses. Similarly, and more recently, Breivik (2006: 13) observed that 'it is insufficient to understand deaf people as disabled'. Typically, groups such as marginalised deaf learners cannot be easily understood or adequately incorporated into the traditional linear developmental psychology model of Erickson (Corker, 1996: 44) without an understanding of the significant contribution that Deaf culture and (Sign) language have on their identity, or the impact of that a lack of exposure to other Deaf persons and Sign Language. Since Deaf and hearing cultures exist in relation to each other (Preston, 2001: 9) this research explores how various deaf participants resolve the conflicts and tensions between the two disparate world views through their educational narratives and how this in turn impacts on identity development.

However, with the emergence of disability studies as an academic discipline, of which deafness constitutes a majority category, there is growing response to the need for authentic disability research. Hence the ethnographic approach (Spragley 1979) is used in this study to describe and analyze the experiences of deaf persons from their own

perspectives. Furthermore, this research study is motivated by Ahrbeck's challenge that there is a paucity of research into identity development of deaf persons by deaf researchers (Ahrbeck 1995: 456). In addition to the investigation, an auto-ethnographic account of the researcher's struggles around identity development as a deaf person forms part of the narratives in this study.

In this vein, this study seeks to explore the educational practices that may lead to oppression of identity created in part by a Deaf learner's experience (Van Cleve, 1993: 344; Foster, 2001: 108) within educational institutions, including mainstream schools and schools for the Deaf. More specifically, the narratives of the participants in this research are located from within the South African educational context of the period of exclusionary 'special education' practices that occurred between 1960 and 1996. These practices focused on policy of 'mainstreaming' prior to the current inclusive educational policy.

This policy of 'mainstreaming' of deaf children into regular, hearing schools lies at the heart of the educational discourse that seeks to include (integrate) deaf children into the hearing world through an oral-centric education. However, the reality became evident later as Marschark; (2002: 138) observed that mainstreamed deaf children did not receive the expected equal opportunities in these classrooms. Instead, there remain barriers of exclusion where deaf are perceived as 'disabled' and different and subsequently the barriers against full inclusion and learning remained. More significantly, deaf learners in the mainstream classroom have found themselves in an identity dilemma: where they cannot claim to belong with the hearing because they cannot hear, and always made aware of their difference as a deaf person in a predominantly hearing classroom. In addition, they discover the irony that despite being deaf this does not automatically mandate their inclusion into the Deaf community. Without the necessary awareness and contact with the Deaf community and respect for the unique ways that the Deaf community operates, these deaf learners are often ill-equipped to function in the Deaf world, yet they exist in opposition to the hearing community into which they were raised. Facing a Deaf community that expects fluency in Sign Language, a language that that the

mainstreamed individual has not yet embraced as his/her language, nor yet mastered, and a hearing world where they do not feel fully accepted creates a dilemma of identity. It is this dilemma of identity which mirrors the researcher's educational experiences as a mainstreamed deaf learner that gave impetus to include the educational experiences of mainstreamed deaf learners in this study.

Thus, this research explores the impact that either oral or signing schools had on the identity development of deaf learners between 1960 and 1996) and how these participants made sense of their educational experiences.

In order to understand the powerful role that education has had on the lives of deaf persons, this research has undertaken a critical review of the two dominant models of disability, namely: the medical model and the social model which underpin the educational discourses of exclusionary 'special' education and inclusive education respectively. From this discussion, this research has proposed an alternative theoretical perspective on understanding the construction of deaf identity namely: 'the embodied ontology/dialogue model'. This research study proposes that the 'dialogue model' would make a valuable contribution towards supporting the inclusive education framework through the post-modern perspective on the construction of identity. The strength of this proposed dialogue model is that the identity of deaf persons is redefined and broadened beyond the narrow essentialist binary of 'either deaf or Deaf" towards an embodied narrative interpretation that recognizes the intersection and tensions of deaf persons living between deaf and hearing worlds. This discussion will continue in Chapter 3 in the Theoretical Framework and Literature Review.

This research picks up on Ladd's (2003:14) critical observation of the serious inequality and lack of research into the understanding of identity development of deaf persons from the perspective of Deaf persons. At present, the only other similar studies exploring the role of educational experiences on deaf identity were the studies conducted by Israelite, *et al* (2002), and Nikolaraizl & Hadjakhou (2006) in Greece. As far as the researcher is aware, from reviewing the available literature, similar ethnographic and auto-

ethnographic research studies on deaf identities in South Africa by a deaf researcher have not been conducted.

Since this research is an auto-ethnography, a personal note about the researcher would be appropriate here. The researcher grew up as an oral deaf persons: born into a deaf world and a hearing family and world into which he was socialized and educated. The researcher's personal experience and insight into the struggles of a deaf learner in a mainstream class are, where appropriate, explored in terms of understanding the significant communication and social barriers, and attendant social stigma and frustration of being a deaf person in mainstream class. As a result of the researcher's belated post-school exposure to Deaf culture, Deaf community and SASL, lead to a paradigm shift in identity occurred permitting acceptance of himself as a Deaf person within the Deaf community. Therefore, this research is a distillation of the author's experiences and journey in reclaiming an identity that 'I am DeaF' without making apologies for being deaf, which we will see later mirrors the 'Deaf in my own way' identity that Ohna (2003) describes.

In conclusion, the primary focus of this research is concerned with exploring the concept of deaf identity and what it means to be a deaf person and explores the uncharted terrain of DeaF[3] person. The secondary focus is an exploration of the impact of education, on the development of Deaf identity.

[3] The term 'DeaF' serves as a linguistic marker of a deaf persons duality of identity in which the person is situated within both the Deaf and hearing worlds. The thesis proposes later that a capital 'F' is used to symbolize the fluid identity of bicultural Deaf persons, hence the emphasis of the F in DeaF.

Chapter 2. Aims and Objectives

There are three inter-related objectives to be undertaken in this research project that are driven by the central existential question of how the identity of deaf persons is shaped by their school experiences.

1.1 The first objective is to critically examine the theoretical foundations of disability studies in relation to deaf persons and educational practices. A critical exploration of the still powerful and dominant medical model and the liberal human rights social model, will be undertaken.

1.2 In response to this communication debate, this research explores Shakespeare's (2003) emerging 'embodied ontological' model as a way forward in theorising disability studies. In particular, the goal of this research is to further our understanding of the complexity and fluid nature of post-modern deaf identities.

1.3 From here, the aim of this study is to explore the contribution of the proposed 'dialogue model' as a theoretical framework towards understanding how the identity of deaf persons is constructed and fits with the multiple layers of identity of deaf persons.

2.1 With the inclusion of the auto-ethnographic narrative of the researcher's personal journey into Deaf culture and the development of his identity as a bicultural/bilingual DeaF person, the goal of this research becomes therapeutic (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 745) instead of a purely analytic research study for the researcher and the participants.

2.2 The objective of this research is to use the researcher's narrative as an evocative entry point into understanding deaf identities and 'to illuminate the struggle for coherence' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000:737) of himself and others.

2.3 By using the researcher's life experiences to connect and generalize to a larger group or culture (Ellis & Bochner,2000:748) , in this case, with other deaf persons, as a means for exploring the multiple layers of meaning .

2.4 The purpose for including the researcher's auto-ethnographic narrative is to shift away from the orthodox detached description of deaf identity towards generating communication (Bochner: 744) with reader as co-participant. The objective is to encourage compassion and promote dialogue with the reader by inviting the reader into the place of deaf persons.

3.1 In line with ethnographic research, this study expands to allow a range of eight deaf persons the opportunity to tell their identity narrative framed within their educational experiences. The objective is to explore how (deaf) participants make sense of their lives in their quest for 'coherence and continuity of identity' (Carr, 1986: 97) through the telling and retelling of their stories. The aim is to use the interview sessions as an interactive dialogue between the researcher and participants to discuss the shared journey and educational experiences of deaf identity.

3.2 The objective is to balance the auto-ethnographic narratives with the narratives of the eight participants to enable the narratives to speak across each other without the researcher's story overshadowing the participants towards an ethnographic consciousness (Ellis & Bochner: 760) of tolerance of each others experiences and identities.

3.3 The goal is to reduce stigma and marginalization of deaf persons through critical social analysis as 'most narratives are told by people who do not want to

surrender to the victimization and marginal identities of the canonical (medical and social) discourses' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 749) that is embedded in deaf identity politics.

3.4 The last objective has an broader educational focus on raising the awareness and expectations of teachers of deaf learners. The goal is to assist teachers to support the identity quest for their deaf learners in becoming confident and successful cross-cultural explorers in mainstream schools and schools for the Deaf through communication and respecting deaf ontologies

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

The disability studies debate of the last thirty years has centred on the clash between the monopoly position held by the medical model and the social model's redefinition of disability as a human–rights issue. In response to the medical model's hegemony, Rioux and Bach (1994) observed that the political mobilisation of disabled people is a worldwide modernist and post-modernist phenomenon against institutional control which has brought about changes to the way in which disability is perceived by society. By regarding disability as a 'socially created' concept (Barnes, 1999: 2), focus is placed on the tolerance of difference which is a core value of inclusion (Powers 2002) (and respect of diversity) of all citizens (Foster, 2001:115). In this way, the social model of disability has positioned itself in critical opposition to the medical model's exclusion of people with disability. Recent studies on disabilities suggest that people with a disability find that the choice between the medical or the social model is insufficient to meet their multicultural needs (Barnes: 1993, Davis: 1995, 2002, French: 1993, Shakespeare: 1996, Foster, 2001: 115). Hence, a new way forward is proposed by Shakespeare (2002: 19) in which an 'embodied ontological' model of disability is introduced as a theoretical framework to explain and conceptualise the experiences and identity of being disabled. Furthermore, it is from this emerging foundation that this study proposes that the 'embodied ontological/dialogue model' be considered as a valid alternative framework for understanding how deaf identity is constructed in a post-modern social cultural paradigm. Foster (2001:114) suggests that this model will allow the researcher to negotiate the ambivalence between the marginal disabled identity and the collective advocacy of the social model.

In the following section the opposing schools of thought will be presented after which this study will introduce and discuss the proposed model of deaf identity.

3.2. The Medical Model: Rise of the Institutions

In response to the cultural transformation of enlightenment in Britain, as with other developing counties such as France and Germany, and later, America (Branson & Miller 2002: 104), the solution to the social problem of what to do with people with disabilities lead to the rise of the 'Therapeutic State' (Oliver, 1990; 19; Barnes, 2000: 70), with its focus on welfare of 'invalids' in the form of diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. This meant that medical experts where acknowledged as knowing what was best for the patient from their scientific discourse of rationality that distinguished between normal and 'disabled' (Branson 2000: 87). From this position of increasing professionalism, Oliver (1996: 36) argues that the medical enterprise as a unifying 'ideology of normality' became entrenched which led to the well-meaning but paternalistic medical experts such as doctors, psychologists, and audiologists defining how a person with disabilities' should be managed as well as their position in society as an excluded minority (Andrews, Leigh & Weiner, 2004: 229). There are two ways in which the medical model can be interpreted. The first way of interpreting the medical model is well articulated by Penn, Reagan & Ogilvy who suggest that:

> 'if one accepts the pathological view of deafness, and the myriad assumptions which undergird it, then the only reasonable approach to dealing with deafness is indeed to attempt to remediate the problem – which is, of course, precisely what is done when one focuses on the teaching of speech and lip-reading in education, utilises technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implantation to maximise whatever residual hearing a deaf individual may possess, and otherwise seeks to develop medical solutions to hearing impairment. In other words, the pathological view of deafness inevitably leads to efforts to try to help the deaf person become as like a hearing person as possible (2006: 183-4).

It is at this critical point that the researcher has an obligation to reveal and discuss the implications of his oral background with the reader. The researcher fits into the above description in the following ways: the early fitment with hearing aids, involvement in speech therapy, with a focus on lip-reading skills, and placement in a mainstream school have all contributed to the researcher's literacy and academic success in 'becoming as much like a hearing person as possible'. The researcher is grateful for the opportunity to acquire essential educational skills to cope. Nevertheless, the researcher has come to the realisation that during and after school that the acquisition of these skills and the 'hearing' identity came at a price in terms of identity. This personal awareness of the 'struggle and challenge' (Moorehead, 1995:85) as an oral deaf person introduces the discussion to the converse side of the medical model as a discourse that can contribute to identity confusion due to a lack of acceptance among other things at school (Corker, 1996: 59).

From a medical perspective, since deafness is largely an invisible disability, in addition to the audiological and communicative use of hearing-aids and the wearing of hearing aids is constructed as socially accepted markers of deafness, while the use of SASL is perceived as a less socially accepted disability marker. The use of hearing-aids indicates that the person is attempting to fit into society. On the other hand, Sign Language is rejected by medical model practitioners as a 'deviant' counter-culture (Widell, 1993: 464) by virtue of being 'different'. It was at the 1880 Milan Congress for teachers of the deaf that the international commitment to Oralism[4] was declared, which lead to the cultural disenfranchisement of deaf persons (Branson *et al:* 43). Consequently, the use of Sign Language met considerable skepticism as a serious language for education of Deaf learners which has continued over the decades. Moreover, Widell (1993) observed that a serious consequence of the Oralism in Denmark is that deaf children internalize their deafness as a negative construction of identity with the perception that 'I cannot, I am no good, and to be a hearing person is good, to be deaf is bad' (Widell; 1993: 464).

[4] The term 'Oralism' comes from the Latin word that means "mouth". The intention of Oralist teachers of the deaf is to teach deaf people to speak orally to enable the deaf learner to fit into the majority hearing society. Skutt-Nabb (2000) points out that oralist teaching is done in a 'subtractive way' resulting in the exclusion of Sign Language from the classroom.

By the 1970's the impact of the medical model on the life of deaf persons had centred on the desegregation of deaf persons back into mainstream life through hearing-aids, and oral education which in turn is seen as belittling Sign Language with the attitude of medical practitioners, teachers that 'Sign language as mere gestures, it is not a proper language' (Lane, 1999; 43; Ladd 2003: 142; Oliva, 2007: 219). However, this is an extremist view of oral deaf education that focuses on the 'normal' life and community in which deaf persons need to assimilate to the ideology of normality (Branson *ibid*: 217) thus creating a sense of being 'alone in the mainstream, and also not a member of the Deaf community' (Oliva, 2007: 219) at the expense of a secure identity in either cultural domain.

A concern is raised by Corker that the medical model with its philosophical roots in positivist thinking (Corker, 1995: 15) summarily reduces human experience to the binary opposites of 'normal vs. abnormal', and fuels an 'us versus them' mentality. Taking this point further, as Barnes (1991) and Oliver (1990) suggest, those who are 'different' and 'inferior' are expected to fit into a 'superior' hearing and speaking world. In effect, the usage of language concerning disabled people (the 'blind', 'paraplegic', 'deaf and dumb') within the medical model is a process by which people are reified into one-dimensional stereotypes or objects devoid of their humanity (Oliver, 1996: 77). This is symptomatic of the oppression experienced by many people with disabilities, including deaf persons (Woolly, 1987; 82; Oliver, 1996: 76). This institutionalized exclusion of people with disabilities, such as the establishment of the educational asylums for deaf (Wrigley, 1998: 29, 55) resulted in a distorted and under-developed identity in deaf learners (Marshark, 2002: 60). This is evident in the language of paternalism that has evolved into labeling persons with disabilities as 'abnormal'; 'disabled'; 'deficient'; and in particular interest for this study is the use of the terms,' deaf"'; 'hearing-impaired' (Corker 1998:16; Watermeyer, 2001: 45). These terms contribute towards the construction of a marginalised deaf identity based on what Nover and Ruiz call the 'politics of fear' (Andrews et al: 229). Branson explains that the medical enterprise substantively devalues the concept of deaf identity through:

> ‘Defining ‘deaf identity’ as a pathological condition to be denied and overcome. Deafness was seen as a symptom to be treated, ameliorated and denied (2001:170).

In effect this means that the medicalisation of deaf persons seeks to separate and alienate deaf persons from each other Also, deaf persons are perceived as the ‘other’ under the assumption that ‘they do not belong here’ (Corker, 1998:130). Furthermore, by clustering deaf anonymously with other disabled persons, teachers of the Deaf have been allowed to perpetuate ‘a cycle of low expectations’ of Deaf persons through labeling the deaf learner as ‘disabled’ (Johnson, Liddell & Erting, 1994: 41). It becomes apparent that an oppressive sub-text is embedded in the medical discourse that creates and re-creates a relationship of a dependency dyad between the paternalistic teacher as helper and the deaf learner as victim (Corker, 1998).

Hence, there is a denial of deaf as competent persons, unless the deaf person becomes hearing or will suffer the oppressive domination as a marginal community (Skutt-nabb 2000: 4). Furthermore, as Schein asserts:

> Deaf children may find themselves cast adrift without much of a self-identity because they are compelled to settle for half a life in a hearing community that is only partially accessible to them. When they finally reach their late teens and leave school as young adults they are forced to confront these realities, and they will seek out the deaf community (for sanctity). But the process of enculturation and adaptation to a new language is not easy. All too frequently they end not fully accepted by either the Deaf or hearing community’ (1989: 143)

This quote highlights the seriousness of threat to a healthy identity development of deaf persons, as well as the survival of the Deaf community and Sign Language.

In response to this overly individualist approach in the 1980s in Britain and later in South Africa (White Paper 6, 2001:17) the international educational trends of integration constituted a move towards the strategic dispersal of deaf learners into the mainstream by 'watering down of group identity'(Wrigley, 1998: 55). Although it appears that this move to de-segregate the education of deaf learners was done primarily to provide a 'pathway for the assimilation of deaf persons into normal society' (Branson *ibid:* 277) it covertly denied the development of Deaf culture and community. This led to two unintended results. The first consequence was that instead of achieving the intended goal of assimilation of deaf persons into the majority hearing society, mainstreaming often resulted in isolation and alienation of deaf learners. This was due in part to hearing teachers not regarding deaf learners as part of the class (Branson *ibid:* 218). This exclusion of mainstreamed deaf learners is the primary focus of this study.

The second consequence was that 'special schools' often ironically provided a valuable sanctuary for Deaf culture and the Deaf community to develop (Wrigley 1998:52). The growth of a strong Deaf culture and Deaf communities was a direct result of the oppressive social structures and attitudes established through mainstreaming. The impact of this oppression on identity of Deaf learners whose identity was branded as 'subordinate' (Jankowski 1997:161) and marginalised has prompted and gave impetus to this study.

It needs to be emphasized that the purpose of this dissertation is not to unilaterally dismantle the medical model, but to further explore and understand the interplay between the medical and social models and the newly proposed embryonic embodied ontological/dialogic constructions of deaf identity within the South African deaf learners' inclusive post-modern frame of reference. Moreover, as will be seen later, that while the social model occupies the favoured position at policy level as a 'new social movement' of transformation away from previously pathologised identities towards Deaf empowerment (Jankowski, 1997; Breivik, 2005:199) there needs to be caution against holding onto the assumption that the medical model and associated institutions have been completely dis-empowered. This assumption would be incorrect: with the advances

in medical science and hearing technology (such as powerful digital hearing-aids and cochlear implants) more families are provided with a greater range of options for their deaf child and more deaf adults are given opportunity to access sound more readily than was possible with previous technology.

Concurrently, the rapid progress in the last four decades on Sign Language research (Stokoe, 1960; Bellugi & Klima 1979; Vernon & Andrews, 1990; Emmorey, 1998; Newort & Supalla 2000) has fostered a growing social acceptance of Sign Language as a language that can meet the language and communication needs of Deaf learners which will be discussed in the next section.

3.3 The Social Model: Politics of Recognition

It was during the 1960's and 1970s in Britain and America that marked shift from the 'faceless rationality of the bureaucratically organised education system' (Branson *ibid:* 216) towards recognition of rights and respect of individuality took place. The social model was developed in the late 1960 to 1970 in America and United Kingdom by many people with disabilities, and a number of factors contributed to the origin of the social model. Primarily, during this period both America and United Kingdom experienced an increasing 'rejection of the army of 'medical experts' (Barnes 1993) and how society was organized to exclude people with disabilities (Hasler, 1993). This shift in social perception of disability was influenced by Goffman's classic work; 'Stigma' (1963) that focused on describing the role of stigma as a central concept in the systematic exclusion and oppression of people with disabilities.

Fundamentally, the social model is a 'human-rights-based discourse' (Bourk, 2002) that challenges the inequalities and discrimination of the medical discourse. The attraction of the social model of disability is that people with disabilities are provided with an opportunity to speak out about personal experiences of discrimination as well as having an opportunity to express their needs (Zola, 1994; 14). For Deaf persons in particular, Schein (1974) observed a strong centripedal affiliation as well as identification around

shared language and cultural norms and experiences. This is in line with the social model's core vision of advocating for the restoration of full and equal rights of all participants in society, as stressed in the 1975 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1975) and the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, UPIAS (1976) that linked disability with oppression thus establishing the social model as collective political movement against the discriminatory social barriers erected by the medical model professionals (Oliver, 1996; Corker, 1998). Adopted from the manifesto of Independent Living, an umbrella body for rights of people with disabilities in Britain, Preston (2000:200) highlights that a key value of the social model is the recognition of cultural rights of minority groups. No longer can disabled members of society be excluded from society because of their impairment, nor can disabled persons be discriminated against or marginalized as a minority group (Finkelstein & French, 1996:32). By raising the public's awareness of the discriminatory attitudes towards people with disabilities, especially in education and employment, as Barnes (2000; 88) states, social model theorists have occupied a powerful position to make collective demands for the legislative protection of human rights of persons with disabilities. as a consequence of the 1988 Deaf President Now campaign at Gallaudet University.

The French philosopher and educationist, Foucault (1998: 14) noticed how domination and oppression of a culture or system of values, such as in the medical model of disability is sustained through hegemonic control. With regard to the educational discourse of deaf persons McDonell and Saunders (1993: 258) concluded that an oralist perspective maintains an elistist position that deaf persons must learn to use speech and read lips, and Sign Language is considered inferior to spoken languages. It is from this premise that Skutnabb-Kangas (2003) constructs a forceful pro-social model argument that deaf communities are being colonized by an oralist agenda resulting in the systematic erosion of the culture (Lane, 1999: 40) and identity of the Deaf community and its members as a consequence of this cultural domination.

Therefore, Jankowski (1997: 7) boldly states that the social model is a useful political vehicle for understanding the struggle for linguistic rights. For the Deaf community, this

struggle is centred on the recognition of Sign Language as a visually mediated language of the Deaf community and of a minority culture of Deaf persons that needs to be both recognized and protected against the cultural colonialist discourse of the medical model. It also follows that the Deaf community's struggle for the recognition of its own distinct language (Sign Language) provides a foundation for a distinct cultural identity (Ladd, 2003: 403).

It has been argued by Jankowski (1997: 99-135) that the 1988 Deaf President Now (DPN) campaign at Gallaudet University in America marked a significant shift in public perception towards deaf persons as a cultural-linguistic minority rather than a 'rhetoric of inequality' (1997: 152). This successful rejection of a hearing nomination in favour of a deaf person to run Gallaudet University was symbolic of the larger movement within the Deaf community for self-determination of deaf persons came about at the DPN campaign as the result of three complimentary factors (Harris, 2005:118). Firstly, the pioneering research of William Stokoe at Gallaudet University and later study by Laura Pettito, Ursula Bellugi and Edward Klima at the Salk Institute during the 1960 and 1970s contributed enormously to growing academic recognition of Sign Language as a formal language. Once the legitimization of Sign Language had taken hold, the Deaf community was able to make claim conclusively at the DPN campaign to an existence of a distinct Deaf culture that rejected the label of Deaf persons being 'disabled'. The Deaf community began to support and voice the belief that deaf individuals who were without Sign Language and placed in mainstreamed or inclusive environments were victims of as 'cultural and linguistic genocide' (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003: 4). Hence, there was a push for a Deaf president at Gallaudet in recognition of Deaf community's desire for independence. Thirdly, the rhetoric of the DPN was characterized by liberation from the paternalistic oppression of the deaf and subsequent internalised oppression that the deaf had experienced in the past towards an affirmation of themselves as proud Deaf persons who are able to make decisions about their own lives. This held in concurrent emergence of a Deaf identity (1997:166) as revealed in the empowering slogan: 'Deaf can do anything but hear'. It is through these three basic tenets that Jankowski (1997: 167)

argues the Deaf community has been empowered to spread globally to wherever deaf people share their experiences of being deaf in a hearing world.

It is against this background of Deaf empowerment that the Deaf community in South Africa, through the official representative channels of DEAFSA (Deaf Federation of South Africa) and PANSALB (Pan South African Language Board) have placed Sign Language and rights of deaf persons on the educational (*cf* DEAFSA Position Paper on Education 2006) and political agenda in line with the social model's advocacy of human rights. In defense of the social model, Naicker noticed that the social model avoids the assumption that Deaf Culture is a homogeneous entity (Naicker, 2001; 17) and acknowledges the complex dynamics and diversity of the South African deaf community. This further endorses the call for more empirical and systematic research into the narrative richness of the diverse identities of deaf persons. In turn, the narratives presented here reflect the life stories of a range of deaf participants. Preston accurately describes the deaf narratives by describing that, 'deaf storytelling does not come down to a punch line, but it is in the telling' (2001: 10). Consequently, the focus of this research is to capture the essence of the various deaf people's lives and experiences by telling their life stories through their narratives in the interview session.

Ironically, according to Shakespeare (2003:9), the social model may have outlived its usefulness as an effective opposition to the medical hegemony since the medical model is essentially a conservative political discourse that seeks integration (Corker, 1994). The social model has positioned itself as a discourse of opposition to oppression and the transformation of social attitudes and structures (Finkelstein, 2001) inherent in the medical institution. Therefore the social model exists in critical opposition to the medical model. Shakespeare (2003: 10) argues that when a liberal activist movement such as the social model of disability becomes the orthodox social theory, then it runs out of steam as there are increasingly less structures and systems to reform, as Breivik (2005:189) noted ironically the social model itself becomes an ideology of normalization. Similarly, as inclusive education, by virtue of adopting the social model as its theoretical (contemporary) foundation (Corker, 1998: 31; Mittler, 2003; White Paper 6, 2001: 13)

becomes increasingly orthodox (Oliver, 1990: 93) as the dominant, established educational framework it loses its critical cutting edge of social equity and is likely to become increasingly intolerant of change and become embedded in a struggle to maintain power.

The social model of disability is currently accepted by academics and social activists as the primary contemporary theoretical foundation of disability studies (Germon, 2000:252) due to its focus on the struggle for human rights. However, Shakespeare (2003: 29) comments that the social model is essentially a modernist, functionalist paradigm which is being challenged as a post-modernist post-structuralist perspective (Corker, 2000: 224) as contemporary disability studies shifts towards 'celebrating marginal discourses' (Corker, 2000:231). This raises again the question of the relevance of the social model as a suitable and sustainable foundation for an inclusive educational praxis in contemporary South African society.

A further criticism of the social model is that it dismisses the importance of impairment (Shakespeare, 2002; 9) in favour of foregrounding the role and impact of society in disabling people with a physical impairment, such as deafness. Ultimately, persons with disabilities encounter reminders of their inabilities, such as to hear, and this will be addressed in the emerging 'embodied ontological' model's broader understanding of disability and the complex politics of identity of post-modern citizens.

3.4 An Embodied Ontology Model: the power of dialogue

The post-modern frame of reference of multiple ways of knowing and meanings[5] has contributed to a paradigm shift in disability studies where the dividing line between 'able

4 As a result, post-modernism is a revolt against the Cartesian rationalism and the tightly organized bureaucratically controlled society characterized by the imperialist 'might is right' and 'my view is more useful than yours' egocentric view of modern Western society. Essentially, post-modernism is a rupture with the past that confronts the oppressive aspects and political overtones of modernism (notice that the medical model is rooted in the modernist structure of society) and seeks social change (aka the social model). But the focus of the social model seems to be more on criticism rather than evaluation of social structures (deconstruction) rather than exploring the depths of post-modernist philosophy. Post-modernism as Sontag (1972), Hassan (1971) argue goes beyond the nihilistic deconstruction of society to

and disabled' is being questioned. If, as post-modernism contends there is no single best way to understand the world, or thought or to communicate (Hylnka & Yeama, 1992), this has great significance to education of deaf children. This view implies the world we live in be structured rationally and scientifically which has been the underlying meta-narrative of 20th century modernism. From a post-modernist perspective of multiple meanings and often competing discourses, the post-modern perspective challenges communities to re-define identity as fluidly constructed, multiple identities that coexist in the rich multi-cultural post-modern landscape. Thus, this research explores the construction and complexity of deaf identity from within this fluid post-modern perspective through the personal narratives of a range of deaf participants.

This discussion of deaf identity begins with the disability theorist, Shakespeare's radical but somewhat obvious claim that:

> 'There is no qualitative difference between disabled and non-disabled people because we are all impaired in some form, some more than others' (2002; 27).

This position redefines people with disabilities more inclusively within society beyond the social model's structuralist (Corker, 2000:231) advocacy for human rights.

The term 'ontology' refers to the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality and refers to the status of being (Oxford Dictionary) in which a person exists whether they are able-bodied or disabled. This definition refutes the social exclusion of people with disabilities. May (1983:105) goes further by describing ontology as a position of 'to be or not to be' of an essentialist position that includes one status while excluding the opposite.

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an expansionist view of society that values pluralism and diversity These are important values in an inclusive society that respects cultural differences, such as bicultural deaf persons

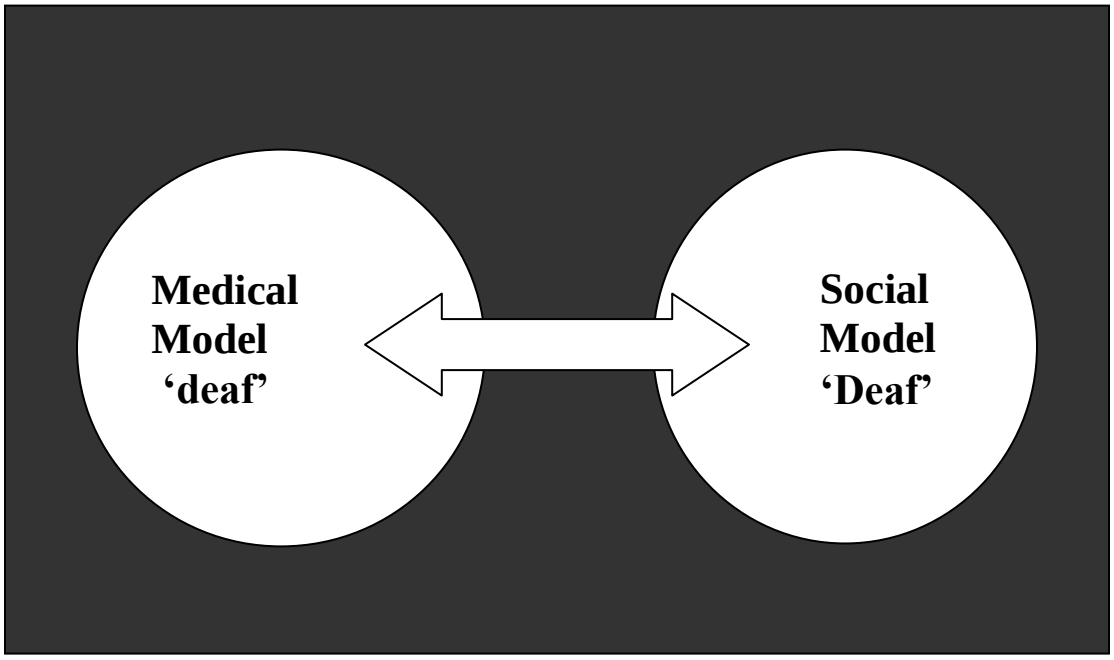
In contrast, May (1983: 105) proposes that this statement be rewritten as: 'to be **and** not to be' in which persons embrace the fullness of their humanity. In line with May's argument, therefore, the central position of the embodied ontology model as a social theory is that rather than having two separate and distinct ontological statuses of being: 'able' or 'disabled', there is a holistic integration of embody-ing ourselves within our ability and disability. Similarly, Breivik (2005:202) frames identity in terms of 'hybridity' based on diversity and heterogeneity as a quest for belonging instead of narrowly based on ethnicity and difference as either deaf or Deaf.

For the most part, social rights movements in Britain, America, Sweden and South Africa have been effective in raising awareness of barriers and discrimination, but as Morris (1991:37) and more recently, Shakespeare (1996:104) argues not all people with disabilities are willing to 'come out of the closet' and be identified as ardent political activists. Liggett (1988:271) highlighted the dilemma that even amongst the politically active there is a powerful stigma attached to the label of 'disabled' which limits people with disabilities from seeking access to a mainstream identity, according to Shakespeare (2002:20). For a person with disabilities, as defined by the medical and social models, there is a cost to ones identity of developing a 'false consciousness' or 'internalized oppression' (French, 1994: 80; Corker, 1996: 194, Wrigley, 1996: 225-230) as the marginal 'Other'.

On the whole, Deaf persons and the Deaf community have been disempowered and considered by the majority hearing community as an insignificant minority resulting in passive acceptance of an inferior and marginal status and contributed towards an internalised sense of inadequacy (Mercer, 1996:103). Subsequently, the quest of Deaf persons of being normal and ordinary is more important than constructing their identity around their impairment (medical model) or defining themselves primarily in terms of their participation in a political movement (social model) (Shakespeare, 1996:101) for the creating awareness and recognition of Deaf rights. Figure 1 below shows the clear dichotomy and long-standing antagonistic relationship between the medical and social models. The maintenance of these rigid cultural boundaries is characteristic of the

essentialist/binary interaction of 'first wave deaf identity politics' as observed by Wrigley (1996). Also noticeable is the void of a free-floating identity exists as identified by Klima & Bellugi (1979) between the conservative medical model, and the liberal-minded social model in which some deaf persons do not fit into either the medical construction of 'deaf' identity or the social model of 'Deaf' identity.

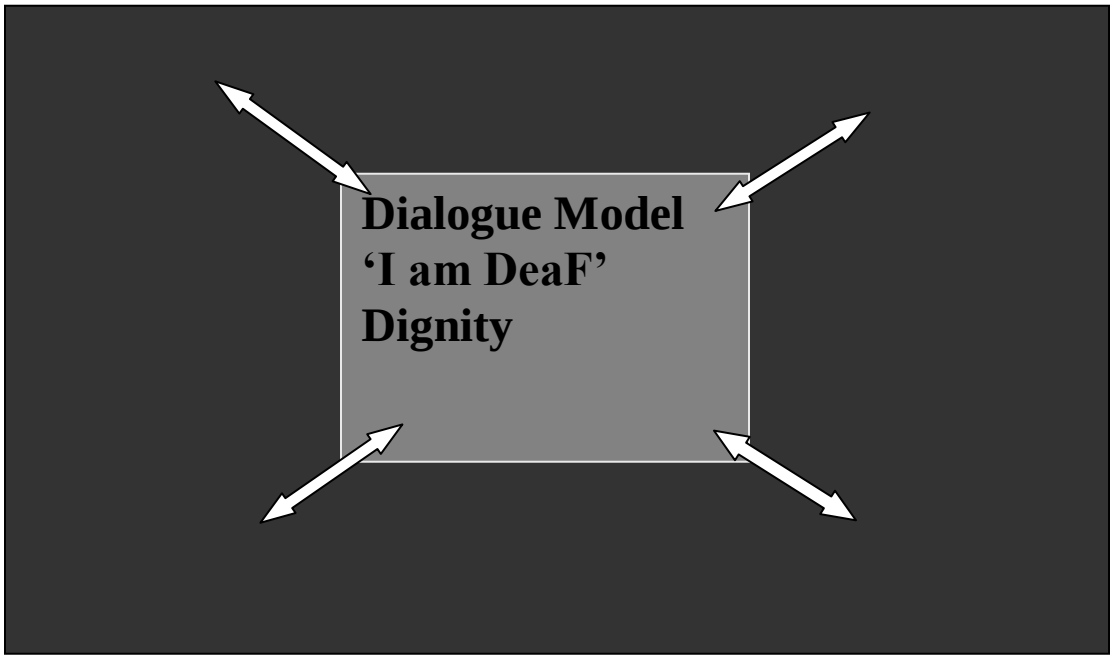
Figure 1: Conventional binary between medical and social models and surrounding identity void.



Post-modernist thought brought significant changes in the way in which identity is defined. Instead of the fixed state of identity, the post-modern concept offers people a multiplicity of identities in which a range of identities about how they see themselves in terms of their nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, languages, social status and other identities becomes available. Thus, disability is an integral part of their identity (Shakespeare, 2002: 22) and in the case of deaf persons, being deaf is a core element of their identity. In other words, a person is not defined essentially and rigidly by their disability, which tended to occur within the medical model, nor ironically within the social model with its ardent pursuit for emancipation, but as Foster (2001: 118) concludes

the recognition that their disability remains an important part in the fluid construction of their deaf identity. This is an important departure from the medical and social models' insistence on defining identity fundamentally in terms of disability. Hence this square in figure 2 increases or decreases in size according to the presence of dignity and tolerance of themselves as a deaf person as the identity crisis, using Erickson's terms (1977), between trust (dignity) and distrust (void) is negotiated.

Figure 2 The Dialogue Model and the identity void



A proposal is made by the researcher to rename this embodied ontological model with a more appropriate and user-friendly title of the 'Dialogue Model. The core value of this model is reconciliation through critical self-reflective dialogue based on embracing the post-modern tensions between often competing or contradictory identities. For it is from within this vacant middle ground (grey box) that Ladd (2003: 254) argues that deaf persons who have achieved a clear sense of accepting themselves as deaf persons are enabled to state their claim to be deaf with dignity and without apologies: 'I am DeaF'. Thus, 'being' (Wrigley 1996: 258-266, Breivik, 2005: 203) DeaF is a life-long quest of a deaf person.

Figure 3 The fluid connections between the Dialogue model the medical and social models

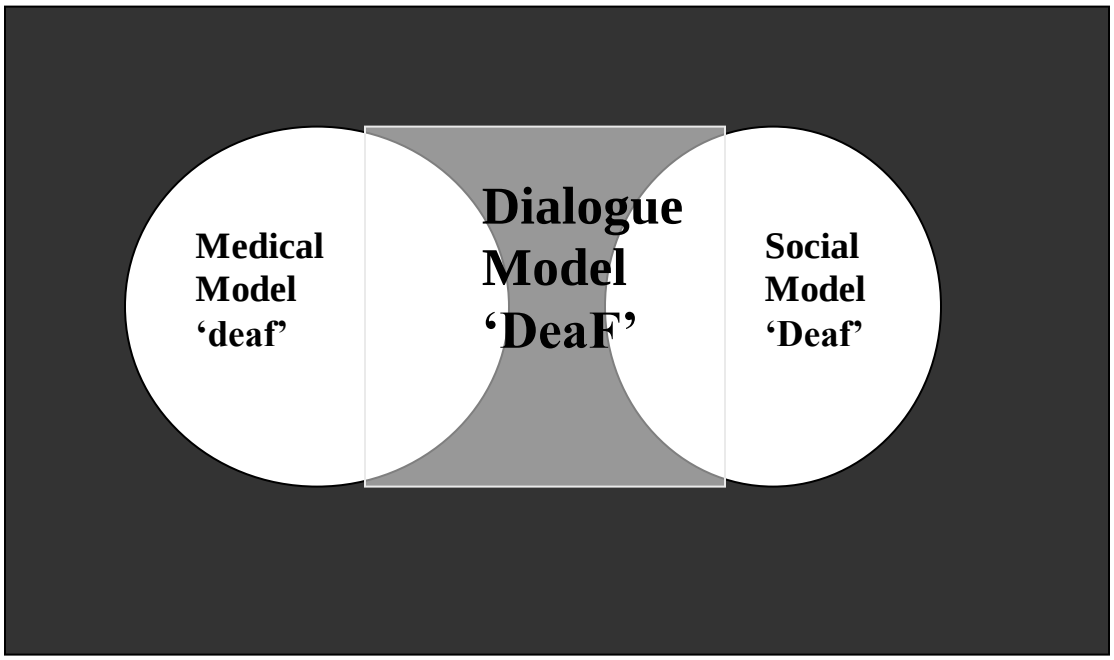


Figure 3 demonstrates the fluid nature of DeaF persons who make connections and engage in critical self reflective dialogue across the cultural divide between the medical and social cultural constructions of identity. A feature of the DeaF identity is the fluid boundaries and multiplicity of links and connections between themselves and other 'culturally hearing' and 'culturally Deaf' persons. This model recognises that the majority of deaf persons have a cultural history, most often of growing up in a hearing family, which is part of their identity into which they born or socialised or the type of school that they attended. To illustrate this point; a person who is a young, unmarried, black, female, Deaf South African will have different identities in different social contexts (such as at work, or at family gatherings, or as a mother in which she switches freely from using only voice to an amalgam of voice and signs to SASL to match with communication needs and culture of persons she meets). This dexterous use of language modalities, as Foster (2001:118) concludes, between the visual modality of Sign language and the auditory modality of verbal language, allows a Deaf person to be simultaneously situated in a range of positions and move fluidly between identities to fit in with the

various social contexts, resulting in an increasing sense of self empowerment and emancipation from cultural constraints to conform exclusively to either Deaf or hearing cultural norms and locates themselves within confident but tolerant DeaF identity.

Thus, this study acknowledges that other possible identities, such as gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, other disabilities, social status have not been explicitly discussed in this study, but further research on how these identities impact on the narratives of deaf persons is warranted. Moreover, each of these various identities engage a DeaF person in the critical dialogical process of negotiating their way through the post-modern multi-cultural landscape without losing their DeaF identity.

It needs to be emphasized that the Dialogue model is not positioning itself as a meta-theory to explain disability or deaf identity in its entirety, but rather serves as an interpretative model for theorising how the world is experienced by people who are deaf. This model is particularly useful in understanding the struggles of minorities groups, such as deaf persons, who fall through the gap between medical and social models as well as a useful research tool for understanding how deaf persons make sense of the 'disconnections and displacements' (Breivik 2005:203) in their lives through their narratives.

Despite the frustration with a lack of equal access and ignorance of society towards people with disabilities, many deaf people do not want to be political activists. Meanwhile, other deaf people choose not to accept their disability and would prefer to find a cure and be reintegrated into mainstream society rather than to join the world of the Deaf. In between these two choices are deaf persons who seek an ordinary life, but not 'normal' which condones an alignment with the medical model, without centre-ing/grounding their identity on their disability as a deaf person, but rather perceive themselves as mothers, wives, business owners in their daily lives. Consequently, this embodied ontology/Dialogue model positions itself as a 'rediscovery and affirmation of the ordinary' (Ndebele, 1992; 434; Taylor, 1992) as evidenced in the life stories and rhetoric of DeaF persons as they construct new knowledge and an alternative way of

living (Jankowski, 1997) to the medical and social discourses. There is an increasing awareness and understanding of what it means to be deaf beyond the out-dated medical/social binary into a more mature understanding of the complexities and range of deaf ontologies. Therefore, the Dialogue model is in alignment with current shift into the 'second wave of deaf identity politics.'(Wrigley, 1996)

At the core of the embodied ontological/reconciliation model is the understanding that:

> 'Each person has value and worth which should be accepted in a mature society that supports everyone on the basis of the needs they have, not on the work they have done' (Shakespeare, 2002; 18)

It is this perspective that fits well with the post-colonialist perspective of reconciliation and dialogue between former oppressor and victim. Significantly, Shakespeare (2000:244) suggests that a feature of oppression is the loss of voice, including persons with disabilities. In this way, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa provided a symbolic and public platform. The TRC serves as a public platform for the previously voiceless victims to retell their story in their own words of their shame, oppression and human right abuses and experiences (Allen, 2006: 396) The retelling of their stories in their own words as Thornton (2005:7) suggests are often provides evocative narratives of dissent against authority and 'un-freedom' that provides the rich data for ethnographic research. Taking this point further, Taylor (1991: 51) argues that:

> 'If Deaf persons were to believe that they are disabled, it is because they experience contempt and shame before others (hearing) in the public space especially at school, and therefore their dignity is compromised.'

This example foregrounds the theme of the embodied ontological model's stance of reconciliation through constructive dialogue through tolerance of difference in reclaiming the dignity of minorities like the Deaf community. Furthermore, Freire (2005) has argued that it is through dialogue (through asking questions and discussions) that 'the passive

banking education' (Freire, 2005: 73) that systematically annulled and stifled the creative power of students, could be abolished. Taking this point further from the perspective of Deaf persons, Jankowski (1997) noticed that conversations in Sign Language were spaces of dialogue that paved the way for liberation and activism. Hence, the Dialogue model is a reminder of the powerful impact that a language-rich environment, regardless of whether it is SASL or a spoken language, has on identity development of deaf learners.

A third perspective on understanding disability, and by extension inclusion, emerges from the relinquishing of personal vulnerabilities, limitations, and fears. This then requires the locating of oneself in relation to others upon a disabled/able-bodied continuum. For example, the dominant majority hearing community has a role in accepting responsibility for the discrimination of the Deaf persons through de-valuing attitudes towards Deaf persons. Equally so, as Bellin, (2000: 150) observed that young Deaf persons have a difficult transition through adolescence as well as a lack of positive identity in a dominant hearing community but need to take responsibility for their attitudes towards the hearing community.

3.5 Background to Deaf Education

As the belief that deaf people were in-educable faded with the move towards compulsory public schooling in the early nineteenth century (Branson 2001:126), the education of deaf people has struggled with the continual controversies around the various approaches and pedagogies with limited success in the last 150 years (Wrigley, 1998: 134). Underlying both the oralist and manualist[6] methodologies is a lack of understanding of the needs and world of Deaf learners but also of language development (Marshark, 1999: 104). Marshark concludes his argument that neither spoken nor Sign Language are

5 'Manualists' derives from the Latin for 'hand'(Skutt-Knabb, 2000). So, by extention, manualists refer to people who see the use of manual signs as normal or preferable to speech, but these manual signs can be either Sign languages or, more often, manual sign codes. In the more restricted positive sense as used here, Skutt-Knabb (2000) argues that manualists are "those who consider sign languages normal or most appropriate for deaf people (Senghas 1998:542)". As a result, manualist teachers seek to favour the use of Sign Language in the classroom leading to the exclusion of oral skills. There is a irony in this position in that Sign Language not having a written form, the oral teachers have an advantage in bringing literacy to deaf learners through teaching correct English structure.

inherently better than the other (1999: 105) but that the bilingual/ bicultural approach that brings together the need to be literate in the dominant written language is complimented with the accessible communication provided by the use of Sign Language in the classroom (Maxwell McGraw, Leigh & Marcus 2000: 4; Grosjean, 2001: 111). Similarly, as Wrigley (1998:134) and Moores (1992:145) have observed, much ignorance in the education of Deaf learners has prevailed and contributed to the low expectations evident in learners and the expectations that teachers have of deaf learners as being inferior to hearing learners. Subsequently, the contemporary global human-rights based inclusive movement in education (Brennan, 1999) has been instrumental in addressing the social apathy towards persons with disabilities. Yet, Giroux reminds us how important schools are as 'social sites constituted by a complex of dominant and subordinate cultures' in the construction of our identities and our society (1988: 7-9) which leads this study to critically review the power relations inherent in the current inclusive education system in South Africa.

3.6 Inclusive Education in South Africa

Instead of isolating and discriminating learners with disabilities, the South African White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education (2001: 10) aims to redress the past injustices by promoting 'Education for All' by fostering inclusive and supportive centres of learning. The key values of the South African inclusive education framework are: equality of all learners in education and social justice (and human rights) which shows the alignment of inclusive education with the social model of disability and equal access to the implementation of an inclusive education system through Sign Language. In the case of schools for the Deaf, the curriculum has been identified as one of the barriers to learning due to the lack of classroom instruction in Sign Language. This has resulted in the curriculum being inaccessible to deaf learners. Most significantly, the essence of inclusive education is the tolerance of all learners through the recognition and respect of difference.

It is against this backdrop that Naicker (2001) argues that by making explicit how the past intolerant educational practices have contributed to the 'construction of the disabling identity'. This is applicable to Deaf learners on account of the barriers to learning through linguistic and cultural discrimination and deprivation that inclusive education policy marked a significant shift to the current South African educational context. However, while examining deaf identity, there are a few points of contention with inclusion that this dissertation seeks to address. Firstly: the dichotomy between disabled and able-bodied persons remains unbroken since the social model, underpinning the educational policy, continues to identify people rigidly in terms of their disability for the sake of social change. Despite the social model's demand for anti-discrimination and barrier removal, the social model is materialist/Marxist in orientation (Shakespeare, 2002:29) which means it is class-based and separates people into 'disabled' and 'able-bodied' categories. Shakespeare raises a concern that the inclusive education structure is built on an outdated social model (2002:10). Developing on from this point, the social model lags behind in terms of current academic research (Breivik 2005: 200-203), namely the development of the embodied ontology/Dialogue model's position that views the disabled/able barrier to be a false division. The focus of this study is on the effects of the social model and the post-modern Dialogue model of identity development of d/Deaf learners within the progressive inclusive education framework.

This raises the question as to what extent the inclusive education framework in South Africa will contribute towards valuing the personal and cultural-linguistic identity of deaf learners. Or will the South African inclusive education system continue to disenfranchise deaf learners and Deaf community through what Fakier and Waghid (2004: 58) term as the 'technicist language of the medical model'. Despite appearances, inclusive education, in the view of Van Rooyen (*et al* 2002: 4), is a medical discourse operating within the framework of the social model. From this perspective, the medical procedure of assessment, labeling and intervention is evidence of the manifestation of the medical model within the inclusive education paradigm.

In taking the post-modernist de-construction of inclusive education further, Van Rooyen (*et al* 2002: 10) reduce their argument to the point that there can be no inclusion without exclusion, which leads to learners whose needs will not be met by inclusive education and these learners will subsequently be excluded from education. Specific reference is made to Deaf and hard-of hearing learners (Van Rooyen: *et al*, 2002: 6) who experience inclusion as isolated individuals in a mainstream class and who remain excluded from the active learning process. This is an essential binary; of inclusion versus exclusion, that sustains the inclusive education framework. Thus the critical review of White Paper 6 by Van Rooyen (*et al*, 2002) revealed the persistence of unequal power relations that are inherently constructed around the medical discourse of control of education despite the overtly social model construction of disability rights.

On a deeper level, Crow (1996: 230) presents a caveat that the central concept of diversity within inclusive education is in danger of becoming 'trivialised' through overuse and thwarts the self-development of disabled learners. Subsequently, learners with a disability remain foreclosed (Corker, 1996: 185) in their identity as a person with disabilities on account of their difference within an inclusive classroom. In essence, the growth of identity and preservation of language and minority rights need to be recognized as fundamental needs of deaf learners. This means inclusive education needs to move in the direction of equipping learners for multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-task environments of a modern information-rich post-modern society (Van Dijk, 2003:27) that is not threatened by diversity and differences amongst people.

3.7 Identity Theory and Politics of Identity

> 'The function of education is to help you from childhood not to imitate anybody- but be yourself all of the time.' (J Krishnamurti)

With the rise of post-modernist thought in philosophy, psychology and education, particularly through the work of Foucault and Derrida the concepts of self and identity have re-emerged as central themes in social theory (Watson, 1996: 147). The debates and

questions about identity currently revolve around the post-modernist constructions and deconstructions of identity. Although disability is generally assumed to be a fundamental constituent of a person's identity (Storbeck, & Magongwa; 2006), identity needs to be understood as a personal narrative (Grotevant, 1994: 14) that operates within a wider socio-political framework of modern globalised societies. It is insufficient to understand deaf people as 'disabled', for most deaf people do not see themselves as incomplete and disabled (Breivik 2005:13). In addition, Plummer (1995: 174) noticed that an audience and by extension, language and literacy are essential components in healthy identity construction.

Returning to Erickson, as a founder of developmental psychology, Erickson (1977:371) argued that the central indicator of successful identity development is a person's sense of unity and continuity and establishment of trust within themselves and with their primary caregivers. It is significant that the formative 'crisis of identity' emerges during the school years. The crisis of 'identity vs. identity diffusion or ambiguity' is identified by Erickson. For it is at this stage of a person's life that identity develops as an outgrowth of the previous stages and life experiences as the adolescent seeks freedom from childhood and reaches out towards the independence of adulthood. As Corker states, this is a critical and vulnerable period of transition in the development of identity (Corker, 1996: 27). In this light, an oppressive educational discourse, in particular the medical model can inflict considerable damage on a person during this vulnerable search for self. Accordingly, Corker (1995; 1995:202) reframes Erickson's dichotomy of 'trust versus mistrust' as 'trust versus oppression' as this is a critical and vulnerable period of transition in the development of identity of Deaf persons (Corker, 1996: 27). Moreover, it is through language, whether it is in an oral, written or signed mode, that a person attempts to understand their experiences, themselves and their social milieu. This confirms the value of an accessible language in the development of an identity of deaf persons.

Prior to the 1980's, research on Sign Language as a deliberate study, and the recognition of the impact of disability on identity, were almost absent from academic literature.

Wrigley (1998: 221) noticed that this constituted the 'first wave of deaf identity politics' which is characterized by the reaction of the social model against the oppressive social practices and institutions of the medical enterprise.

The 'second wave of deaf identity politics' according to Krentz (2006) and Ladd (2003) refers to the greater tolerance and acceptance of diversity within the community with a more nuanced and complex understanding of identity driven by the critical self-reflective examination of self and understanding the discourses (structured power relations) between deaf and hearing persons.

The next section discusses deaf identity as an oppressed identity with particular focus on the three important deaf identity research studies by Bat-Chava, Glickman and Ohna.

3.8 Deaf Identity

3.8.1 Background

The notion of 'Deaf identity' has been recognized by Ladd (1988) as providing the Deaf community with characteristic ways that are separate from the hearing community and have given rise to a separate cultural and linguistic identity of Deaf persons. In addition, Reagan (2002) who takes this notion of Deaf identity further in drawing attention to the inherent tension of Deaf identity as 'primarily an emic (medicalised) construction in conflict with etic (social-cultural) construction.' One of the prime sites of this conflict is the struggle over communication and in particular, the use of Sign Language at school in the formation of Deaf culture. Research by Cohen (1998) also established that Sign Language has a powerful role in sustaining and promoting Deaf culture and Deaf identity. Expanding on this, Lane, an advocate for Deaf rights, asserts that the concept of 'Deaf identity' is highly valued (Lane, 1999:17) by members of the Deaf community. It is in the last three decades that significant progress has been made in many countries in recognizing the human rights of deaf persons to equal and accessible education and

employment. However, in South Africa, considerable barriers and oppression of deaf persons remain despite the legislative protection[7].

In research on Deaf culture, Maxwell-McCraw (2000) and Corker (1999) found that the concept of 'Deaf identity' exists, although along with Deaf culture it cannot be assumed to be a homogenous or static developmental concept as previously thought. Against this background, this study explores how the concept of 'Deaf identity' fits into the post-modernist, multiple and flexible understanding of identity as a quest for meaning in an often frustratingly diverse and contradictory world (Maxwell-McCraw, 2000, Corker, 1996: 41).

The debate over disabled identity vs. deaf identity is largely considered to be over (Ladd, 2002:35), in favour of recognising Deaf identity. It should, however be remembered that deafness is primarily 'a communication disability' and needs to be recognized and theorised as such (Power & Leigh, 2003: 40). Whereas people with other forms of disabilities, such as blindness, place little value on forming a group except for support, both Ladd (2002) and Lane (1999) reported on the unique culture of Deaf people meeting to share their experiences of being disabled on account of being a marginalised cultural-linguistic group. For the Deaf community, Sign Language serves a significant role in unifying the group around a collective identity of shared Deaf cultural values and experiences, especially related to educational background and marginalised status, as well as breaking down the communication barrier that effectively disables Deaf persons. Furthermore, Colman (1994) elaborates that it is through the shared narratives, usually of school experiences expressed in Sign Language, that a community of Deaf learners is empowered to resist the cultural deprivation and oppression that affects them.

[6] The South African Constitution enshrines the basic rights of all citizens in the Bill of Rights, Chapter 2, and expressedly guarantees:' everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in educational institutions where that is reasonably possible' (29 section 2). The next piece of legislative protection is found in the far-reaching Employment Equity Act of and the Labour Relations Act. Of particular interest to this study is the Schools Act no.84 of 1996 that takes the guarantee of the Constitution further by noting that 'a recognised Sign Language has the status of an official language for educational purposes' Chapter 2, section 6). Reagan, Penn & Ogilvy point out that the Department of Education's Language in Education Policy document is 'remarkably sympathetic to the issues of Sign Language and the deaf community' (2006: 199) in which Sign Language is expressedly included as a language of instruction.

3.8.2 Linguistic terms: Who am I and where do I belong?

As a reaction to what deaf persons perceive as oppressive attitudes conveyed by hearing society, members of the Deaf community have preferred to write 'Deaf' with a capital D instead of a lower-case letter. This practice refers to a person who places pride in themselves being identified as a 'Deaf person' and aligns themselves with Deaf Culture and Sign Language and is accepted by the Deaf community as a Deaf person (Padden & Humphries, 1988: 121) which is similar to the esteem that any individual place on their home language.

On the other hand (sic), the use of the term 'deaf' refers to the audiological dimension of the physical loss of a person's hearing. An individual who identifies his or herself as 'deaf' is considered by the Deaf community to be an 'outsider' as they do not share the same language or culture as Deaf persons. In reality, the majority of deaf children are born into hearing families who would naturally want their deaf child to be socially included in the hearing world (Storbeck, 2000:57; Engelbrecht, 2005; 6) which results in placement in a mainstream classroom setting. With the increasing reliance on oral language skills of deaf persons at school, there is usually a corresponding diminishing of their need for interaction with the Deaf community and rejection of SASL as primary mode of communication either through ignorance or a lack of awareness or lack of contact with Deaf community. From this perspective, the linguistic labels of 'Hard of Hearing' or 'Hearing-Impaired' are worn by deaf persons who are culturally hearing in preference to the stigma of being labeled as a 'deaf' person.

Ladd reminds us that Deaf culture is created from the 'inside-out', not with an 'outside-in' approach. (Ladd, 1994) Thus the stronger the deaf person feels about being different to hearing people, the greater their affiliation with Deaf culture. In the same way, Sign Language needs to be developed from within the Deaf community in order to empower Deaf people with a language discourse of their own. Gertz (2000) takes this point further

with a call to dismantle the Audist hegemony in education that denies the equality of Sign Language in classrooms at schools for the Deaf. In the same vein, Hall argues that: 'words are the language of ideas' (Hall, 1994: 33) and it is through language that cultural rules and values are transmitted to the next generation. For as Geertz (1973) suggests, culture consists of:

> 'The stories we tell to ourselves about ourselves, our place in the world…'
> (In Ladd 2003:255).

Therefore, it is imperative for Deaf persons to take ownership and the responsibility of managing their own language and education and culture leading ultimately to the construction of their identity on their own terms.

3.8.3 'Deaf': an Oppressed Identity?

Earlier, in the discussion on the medical model, the point was made by Oliver (1996) that the disabilist use of linguistic terms to marginalise disabled persons extends to deaf persons in for instance: 'deaf and dumb'. Yet, a significant finding on deaf identity emerged from the study conducted by Padden & Humphries. Instead of the anticipated commonality within the deaf community, this study reveals the 'essentially negative stereotypes of the 'deaf self' that deaf people have of themselves as a distorted sense of identity from their own experiences of oppression' (1988: 43).

This struggle for a sense of identity and sense of belonging to a community presents three choices to a deaf person. Firstly, a person could hold onto ones disability but deny the cultural aspect and attempt to pass as a hearing person; or join the Deaf community wholeheartedly; or alternately become a bicultural-bilingual DeaF person, which encourages fitting into both communities and which will be explored as an emerging possibility of identity. Instead of a tolerance between communities, Preston observed that 'ambiguity was rarely allowed; a person was either Deaf or hearing', but the post-modern reality is more complicated (1994:17). To this end, Shakespeare (2002: 21) provides a

caveat that the choices of identity can either become a safe haven or a prison. Therefore it is important to choose ones identity (deaf/Deaf/bi-bi DeaF) wisely. Sometimes, however, it needs to be remembered that there may be no identity options available for a deaf person in their situation until a key change-agent or event occurs later, such as meeting a Deaf adult. Similarly, Corker (1996) noticed that the more a person is exposed to the values of Deaf culture either at school, or at home or socially, the more the person is likely to develop an awareness and appreciation of Deaf culture and Deaf identity. Likewise, Scheetz (2004) also noticed the impact that significant people, events and social settings contribute to the complex process of how a sense of deaf identity emerges.

In minorities, such as the deaf population, Van Dijk (2003:70) noticed that the negative social attitudes, expressed through stereotypes that society imposes upon them often became internalized in deaf children as indisputable facts leading to problematic psycho-social development. Furthermore, Van Dijk (2003:70) argues that:

> 'The main consequence of this problematic psycho-social development is that deaf learners are less likely to benefit from educational endeavors than those who are well-adjusted, have confidence, positive self esteem and are socially well integrated'

The researcher's educational experiences concur with Van Dijk's findings that deaf learners have a proclivity towards passivity in the classroom where communication with teachers is incomplete or inaccessible.

Consequently, Mason (1990) argues that a person who feels that he/she is a victim with negative feelings about him/herself and the group he/she belongs to; turns to seek out a group that is superior, in the hope that his/her difference (deafness) will become invisible. This is particularly applicable to deaf persons through the lack of access in educational and economic structures. Similarly, Gertz (2000) expresses a concern that without instruction at school in Sign Language a Deaf person is likely to construct an incomplete, distorted and inferior sense of identity which may extend into adult life. Subsequently the

question of how an oppressed identity can be restored needs to be addressed. Furthermore, the question of whether the acquisition and use of Sign Language will be sufficient to restore an oppressed identity also needs to be critically explored.

3.8.4 Theories of Deaf Identity

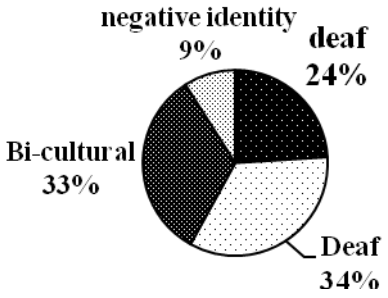
3.8.4.1 Introduction

This research draws on and highlights the seminal work on Deaf identity by Bat-Chava (2000), Glickman (1993) and Ohna (2004) which will be presented and discussed in this section.

3.8.4.2 Bat-Chava's clusters of deaf identities

In essence, the impact of Bat-Chava's (2000) study on how Deaf persons identify themselves reveals the diversity of identity positions. Figure 1 (below) shows a summary of the four distinct categories of deaf identity from Bat-Chava's model on a deaf person's self-perception. Her questions explored the perception participants have of themselves as well how they perceive society feels about them as a deaf person. Bat-Chava found that deaf persons could be clustered into four categories.

Figure 3 Bat-Chava (2000) Deaf Identities



The pie-chart above (Figure 3) shows graphically the diversity of identities across the population of deaf persons. Bat-Chava (2000) presents three positions to a deaf/ Deaf/ bicultural deaf person based on her observations with an unresolved cluster of 9% of deaf persons who display a negative identity. The first cluster consists of culturally hearing people who believe that speech is more important than signing. They do not feel part of the Deaf community and have negative attitudes towards Deaf people. This cluster shows a strong alignment with hearing cultural values of culturally hearing persons who invest considerable effort to pass as a hearing person. Bat-Chava's study seems to have omitted the significance of the family on this group. This raises the question to which identity cluster do the 90% of deaf children with hearing parents belong. If the family is the central cultural authority in the lives of deaf children, it would mean that the culturally hearing cluster should be considerably larger than 24%, with a figure closer to 90% of the deaf population claiming a culturally hearing identity. However, this is not the case and an interesting topic for discussion later.

The second cluster represents people who are culturally Deaf and have wholeheartedly joined the Deaf community (33%) and value signing over speech. People with a bi-cultural identity (34%) feel that both signing and speech are important and have positive attitudes towards deaf people, which encourages fitting into both communities and will be explored as a significant emerging possibility of identity. In addition, Bat-Chava's study provided support for the prediction that culturally Deaf people and bicultural identities would have higher level of self-esteem. The final cluster of 9% consists of deaf people with an ambivalent sense of identity in which they feel they do not fit into any of the above clusters, with a below average sense of self-esteem.

This study proposes re-labeling Bat-Chava's group of bicultural (34%) Deaf persons who identify with Deaf community, but who operate fluidly between the hearing community and Deaf communities with the term 'DeaF', which will be discussed later under Ohna's study.

3.8.4.3 Glickman's model of Deaf Identity

Briefly, Glickman (1993) proposed four categories of the process of identity development: the first category refers to persons who identify themselves as **'culturally hearing,**' in that they align themselves primarily with hearing norms with a reliance on speech and hearing-aids and lip-reading in order to fit in to the majority hearing society. Despite their hearing loss, culturally-hearing persons, tend to distance themselves from the Deaf community, and are educated in mainstream schools, without using Sign Language or interpreters. The culturally-hearing person's position shows a strong alignment with the medical model and oral approach. In addition, as Andrews and Leigh (2004: 185) noticed that Glickman raises a concern of the psychological impact of denial of deafness on culturally-hearing persons who attempt to pass as a hearing person (Breivik 2005:23).

The second category is the **'culturally marginal'** person, who does not fit into either the hearing culture or into Deaf culture. This is generally an ambiguous state of identity, of cultural marginality. This stage is not necessarily a transition to a third category, and consists of deaf persons on the 'fringe' (Andrews *et al* 2004:185) without being fully accepted by either deaf or hearing cultures. A possible explanation for remaining in this ambivalent state is that a person may internalize the alienation from others (Corker, 1996: 47) which results in a state of moratorium (Marcia 1980) or ambivalence.

The third category is the '**immersion identity'** with increasing alignment and participation in Deaf community. Cohen (2000) observes that there is usually an uncritical acceptance of Deaf culture by Deaf persons and a tendency to condemn hearing values. With its activist stance, the immersion identity has strong ideological links to the social model of disability in its struggle against the oppression of Sign Language and Deaf culture.

The last category is the **'bi-cultural Deaf'** person who embraces both hearing and Deaf cultures with dexterity (Cohen, 2000: 5). This category represents the post-modern paradox of moving between cultures without contradiction. There is not an 'either/or' choice to be made by a person, but a reflection of a dialogue model's (McIlroy, 2005) stance of co-existing between two cultures. Being culturally dexterous has considerable value to deaf persons, which means that they encounter a limited choice about adopting hearing values. For many deaf persons, it is case of ensuring survival in social settings with hearing family members even though deaf persons usually prefer to socialize with other Deaf persons.

3.8.4.4 Ohna's model of Deaf Identity

Similarly, Ohna (2004) conceptualized four phases of Deaf identity development. The first phase is the **'taken for granted'** phase (Ohna, 2004: 33) in which, usually a young, deaf person naively thinks that he/she is like other people. Being a deaf person is not an issue or a serious barrier.

The second phase coincides with school-going age of many young Deaf people. The breakdown of communication with hearing challenges the comfortable 'taken for granted' phase which results in a feeling of '**alienation'** (Ohna, 2004: 33). A sense of being different becomes evident in this phase.

The third phase is the '**affiliation'** phase (Ohna, 2004: 33). This phase is characterized by a compelling attraction to form affiliations with Deaf communities that effectively numbs the pain of alienation as the deaf person affiliates with other deaf persons. In this phase, persons find shelter within the culture and collectively affirm that they are Deaf people. Both of these phases, Alienation and Affiliation are utilized in Schein's (1989) model of identity development and are active in many Deaf people during their school-going age and have a significant influence on a person's roles and ways of seeing the world. Coincidentally, this is the phase wherein many Deaf people locate themselves in their search for identity, and defend themselves against alien cultures, either as hearing or Deaf

citizens. This position mirrors the antagonism between proponents of the medical and social models in which neither side is willing to compromise and is recognized by Wrigley (1998) as the first wave of (deaf) identity politics. The second wave is evidenced in the post-modern construction of fluid identities which correlates with Ohna's fourth phase of 'Deaf in my own way'.

This fourth phase is a self-reflective construction of the ambivalent and paradoxical experiences of a deaf person as they push beyond the 'normal' cultural boundaries and interact with both Deaf and hearing people on their terms. For example: a Deaf mother with hearing children has difficult choices to make about which cultural values to uphold, which are often misunderstood by both cultures and often is summarily rejected as a sell-out (Ohna, 2004). There seems to be a general misunderstanding among Deaf community that the person just described has achieved a superior status and identity, and the person has reneged on their Deaf culture and community. However, Ohna (2004; 33), contends that by embracing the fourth phase, **'Deaf in my own way'**, a person has constructed a 'repertory of phases' from which to use in different contexts. This means that Ohna's model is not necessarily developmental in scope, with the fourth phase being the climax of personal growth but presents a range of positions from which a Deaf person chooses their identity to fit the specific context yet is secure within themselves as a 'DeaF' person.

3.8.8 Discussion of Bat-Chava, Glickman and Ohna's models of Deaf Identity

The study by Bat-chava (2000) provides sufficient evidence to support her hypothesis that deaf identity is not a 'one-dimensional construct of deaf identity', but consists of clusters of deaf identities (2000: 426). Bat-Chava's study has established a theoretical foundation from which to explore deaf identity, which is particularly useful in describing clusters of identity. It is significant that Bat-Chava observes that most people in the culturally hearing or culturally deaf cluster do not change once this identity has been acquired (2000: 426). This is interesting because Bat-Chava's study reveals that people in

the bicultural cluster exhibited the most changes in identity, either towards a culturally hearing or a culturally deaf identity while trying to retain aspects some of the valuable features of the other community. This suggests that the bicultural/ bilingual identity is not a stable, or recognised by either hearing or deaf as a "*bono fide"* identity cluster. This conclusion is at odds with the high level of self-esteem recorded in the bilingual/bicultural cluster. Therefore, it would be strange for people to make an identity transition towards an identity cluster that generates a lower level of self-esteem. Unless, as this study proposes, the bicultural cluster could be an alternative DeaF ontology that does not seek to choose between either opposing identities, but co-exists within the bicultural space between being culturally hearing and culturally deaf.

The focus of Ohna's model is on how a Deaf person dialogues both with themselves and their worlds. This insight connects with what Padden (1988) explored in 'Voices From a Culture' as Deaf and hearing cultures develop their own distinct language, rules, values, traditions and expectations. From the perspective of the hearing world, which is polemically different to the Deaf perspective of the world, being deaf is a tragedy. Meanwhile, for a Deaf person being 'hearing' is considered a tragedy on account that one is outside Deaf culture and community. Against this background, the 'Deaf in my own way' is a key post-modern position that seeks to expose and resolve/bridge the cultural divide between the two opposing worlds. Part of what this means is that the 'deaf in my own way' person seeks to communicate with others (deaf and hearing) through whatever means possible such as using speech, lip-reading, while in other situations the use of Sign Language predominates. In practical terms this may mean using speech and lip-reading at home as many hearing parents are not fluent signers. This need to communicate and connect authentically with people takes precedence over the making a statement of belonging as a d/Deaf person.

However, with this phase comes the considerable risk of being misunderstood as a cultural sell-out or a liar or an 'Oralist' (Ohna 2004:29) for compromising ones cultural values. Despite this danger, 'Deaf in my own way' phase is an important post-cultural construction of identity that displays a strong sense of maturity and sense-of-self. Instead

of being selfish, the 'Deaf in my own way' person centers identity in both hearing and Deaf worlds without denial of disability or self or of others ways of dealing with the world. This is a presentation of authentic identity as a bi-lingual, bi-cultural person who fits into both worlds as necessary and handles the interface/tension between both. A reasonable assumption is that the goal of every Deaf person should thus be the development of a bilingual-bicultural identity, or the "Deaf in my own way" and it is proposed to make of use the term 'DeaF' to denote the bi-lingual, bi-cultural identity of culturally fluent deaf persons.

Lastly, '**Deaf in my own way'** is a self-reflection on the ambivalent experiences as a person pushes beyond the 'normal' cultural boundaries and interacts with both Deaf and hearing people.

This has lead to the researcher proposing that deaf persons who align themselves with Glickman's 4th stage of a **bi-lingual identity** and similarly with Ohna's 4th phase of being **'Deaf in my own way'** are linguistically denoted with the term **'DeaF'**. In this newly proposed deaf ontology, emphasis is placed on respecting the primacy of being deaf, having a deaf identity and life experiences whilst simultaneously recognising and strengthening their interactions with the hearing world usually through voice, lip-reading, and hearing-aids or cochlear implants and other technology. However, a feature of this identity is that does not prevent the DeaF person from capably choosing to move amongst and between both Deaf and hearing cultures with dignity.

The insights from Bat-Chava, Glickman and Ohna's model of deaf identity breaks from the traditional developmental psychology perspective to show how the four identity stages mesh with the unique experiences of deaf persons across a lifespan in which biculturalism becomes more desirable in contemporary society (Padden 1998). However, Bat-Chava expresses a concern that the shift in deaf education over the last twenty years in America has resulted in more deaf learners attending regular hearing schools than in the past (2000: 426). This means that opportunities for deaf to interact with deaf peers may be reduced and subsequently based on the theory self-esteem is likely to be lower.

This trend towards inclusion of deaf learners into mainstream schools is also a feature of the South African education system that warrants attention to assess the impact of mainstreaming on deaf learners.

Lastly, Andrews (2004:186) cautions that because not every deaf person starts at the first stage, progression through the various stages is not necessarily automatic nor are choices concerning identity always available. Moreover, Deaf parents with deaf offspring usually adopt a bicultural identity in response to exposure to both social worlds. The focus of this research is to use these stages as a theoretical foundation in order to understand how deaf learners interpret identity from their experiences in the South African (inclusive) educational setting.

3.9 Conclusion

Despite the legacy of exclusion of deaf persons there is currently a growing interest in the field of disability studies in general and in deaf education in particular. This expansion of knowledge in disability research as seen in the literature is fueled by the human rights movement that recognizes our diversity and dignity. By taking a step back, a larger issue becomes apparent; how accurate are Bat-Chava, Glickman and Ohna's models in describing the realities and ontologies of real deaf people from their educational experiences? For unless we know and understand what it means to be deaf amidst the political and ideological power struggles for control of deaf identity, there can be only superficial social and educational changes.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1.1 Research Design and Qualitative Research Methodology: six assumptions

There are six assumptions outlined by Merriam (1988) which delineate a study as being qualitative in nature, that match clearly with this research. Firstly; the focus of this research is on the process instead of products, in particular the process of identity development in Deaf learners.

Following on from the process, qualitative research is particularly interested in understanding the meanings that people attribute to their lives. This research is directed towards capturing the personal experiences and narratives of participants, which is particularly suited for revealing both the explicit and the invisible/tacit scripts of deaf persons. The value of narratives in qualitative research is succinctly captured by Madan Sarup in Preston (2001:10) in that: 'We construct our identity at the same time as we tell our life-stories/narratives'.

Furthermore, the narratives of identity and difference offer the 'possibility of revealing the inequities' (Moss 2003: 14) of how the lives of deaf people are constructed. Ladd (2003:80) also argues that these 'counter-narratives' exist in opposition to the contemporary orthodox hearing narratives of identity. And these counter-narratives offer valuable cultural and academic space in understanding deaf discourses. In this way, the researcher is aware of and has made explicit his personal bias of conducting research as an oral deaf person as well as functioning as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Instead of invalidating the research, the researcher's deafness and associated experiences can function as a 'gateway' (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) for eliciting deeper responses and empathetic reflection from the transcripts of the participants due to the auto-ethnographic frame of reference.

On the other hand, it is vital for the validity and trustworthiness of the research that the researcher, especially in qualitative research of this nature, maintains sufficient objective and impersonal distance from the study and participants as possible to avoid contaminating the data. A characteristic tool of ethnographic research is the use of interviews and the associated reflective fieldnotes of the data collected (Appendix F) in which the researcher conducts the study in the natural setting of the participants.

Lastly, the process of this research is inductive as opposed to deductive (Merriam, 1988; 19-20) in that the details from the interview texts/narratives are used to develop critical understanding of concepts as well as aid to the critical de-constructive analysis of models, such as the medical and social models of disability.

4.1.2 Ethnography

Thus, the core issues of this research are about exploring and understanding what it means to be a deaf person and the impact of education on deaf identity. Bearing this goal in mind, Kinget reflects critically on the role of the researcher in that:

> 'A researcher owes allegiance, first and foremost, to the integrity of the phenomenon, not the methodology' (Kinget, 1975; 88).

Consequently, this research seeks to distance itself from a positivist explanation of facts/data and aligns with the interpretative phenomenological paradigm of investigation. Thus, this study is a qualitative analysis that employs a 'sociological imagination', as coined by C. Wright Mills (1959:2), in a wider search for meaning in social research which in turn led to the use of the ethnographic interviews of participants.

The pioneering ethnographer, Spragley (1979) holds that the goal of ethnographic research is to understand another way of life, in this case a deeper understanding of the lives of deaf/Deaf/DeaF participants through their experiences of (*inter alia*) education. The intention of qualitative research is to discover, as Goodenough (1957) holds, the

dimensions/categories of meaning as close to how the participants define themselves in and through their native language, whether spoken English or signed English or South African Sign Language (SASL). In other words, participants have the opportunity to speak/Sign for themselves through their narratives in the interview session. Thus, this ethnographic study explores how the lives of deaf participants were shaped by their school experiences from their childhood memories and the stories they tell others now about who they are as deaf adults.

As Holliday (1996: 236) reminds us:

> 'Ethnography became a justification for colonialism in the nineteenth century by emphasizing the 'primitive' natures of 'others''

This study avoids the trap of describing deaf persons as 'primitive others' wherein the researcher/ethnographer is describing and analyzing Deaf identity as an insider, and where appropriate from within an auto-ethnographic frame of reference as a DeaF person.

4.1.3 Auto-ethnography

According to Foster; McAllister & O'Brien (2006), auto-ethnography:

> 'is a qualitative research method that connects the researcher's personal self to the broader social context. The evocative writing of auto-ethnography, where the writer shares their personal stories on their experiences is used here to extend understanding of a particular social issue'

From this quote it is clear that the focus of auto-ethnography is on extending the boundaries of understanding through the reflexive narratives of the researcher as an insider.

Hence, the deliberate inclusion of the researcher as a full and active participant (S-1) in this study provides both an additional source of data in triangulation of data (Appendix F) and an insider's point of view into understanding deaf identity development. The fieldnotes (Appendix G) are entered as reflexive data that provide an analysis of the interviews of all participants from an auto-ethnographic frame of reference. Furthermore, as an auto-ethnography, this study offered the researcher a valuable therapeutic opportunity for understanding and exploring the identity as a DeaF person through his own narratives. In this way, this study addresses the important social issue of the struggle of deaf persons against the hegemonic oppression of deaf identity in the educational context. In line with the therapeutic and communication objectives of this research, the researcher kept five reflexive, narrative journals, in addition to fieldnotes, for recording significant events and issues intrinsically connected to his transition to a DeaF identity.

The issue of trustworthiness of auto-ethnographic research needs to be addressed. Bogner (2000:749) offers several criteria:

> 'To what extent is the narrative of the researcher honest, and sufficiently self-reflexive? Does the researcher take sufficient measure of himself and his feelings and limitations and confusions? Is there a sense of emotional reliability with the reader? And is there a passage through an epiphany event and transformation from an old identity to a new identity?'

For this reason, the narrative of the researcher begins with the events that had a profound impact on his sense of self at school and reflexively traces the shift of identity from 'deaf' to 'oral DeaF' person. To assist in creating trustworthy data, which is 'lifelike, believable, possible and therefore has a strong measure of verisimilitude' (Ellis & Bochner,2000: 751) through humanizing the research endeavour. To this end, the researcher used the following approach, as recommended by Ellis (2000: 752) of writing down all the information in line with the interview questions while this was still emotionally intense from the moment of epiphany, such as growing up in a hearing family and recalling the hearing with hearing aids, the audiologists loud sound of banging

a glass ashtray for the first time. After each of the interviews were completed, the researcher returned to analyze his narrative from the perspective of a researcher in order to explore the meanings attached to the experiences. At the same time, the narratives of each of the participants was added to the thematic analysis process to explore the layers of meaning of the narratives.

4.1.4 Ethnographic Interviews

By selecting semi-structured ethnographic interviews as the primary research tool, plus the researcher's auto-ethnographic narrative as a deaf participant-observer, this study has therefore adopted an emic strategy (Pelto 1982: 62) in line with respecting the qualitative nature of the data from this select sample of participants.

The interview format provides a more equal opportunity as identified by (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 97) for participants to respond to the interview questions freely about their points of view. Furthermore, the interview is an appropriate ethnographic research tool in complex and sensitive fields of research (Kumar 1999: 115) with regard to collecting participant's personal narratives and their responses to deaf identity related issues.

In order to facilitate effective data collection, in-depth semi-structured interviews have been selected. The intention of the interview schedule is provide comparative data across participants who are interviewed according to the same list and order of questions. In addition, as Kumar (1999:109) suggests the possible effects of interviewer bias and inconsistency can be minimised also, the interview questions are designed as open-ended questions in order to elicit in-depth responses.

<u>The Interview Schedule:</u>

1 Tell me about a few of the significant things about being deaf.

2 When you were young, how did you communicate with your family, and friends? And how did you feel about this communication?

3 Tell me about the school experiences that had a significant impact on your development as a deaf person.

4 From your perspective as a deaf learner, tell me more about the positive contribution that the schools you attended made on your life.

5 Tell me about how you communicated with your teachers and classmates and how you felt in your classes.

6 Tell me about your social life at school and now.

7 How would you describe yourself now?

8 How do you feel about your identity as a deaf person?

9 Is there anything more that you would like to discuss on this topic?

Despite the strengths of the interview format, there are several limitations that need to be discussed. Kumar (1999) has identified several potential weaknesses of interviews. Interviews can be expensive and time-consuming when the researcher has to go to each participant spread out over a wide area. To avoid complications of this nature, this study limits participation to the greater Johannesburg metropolitan area, which significantly included ten schools for the Deaf.

The quality of the interaction during the interview session determines the quality of the data (Kumar 1999: 115) as each interview remains a uniquely human encounter between interviewer and participant, thus the data collected can vary significantly. This potential flaw can be tightly controlled through the use of a set of semi-structured but open-ended questions to allow for internal consistency of data from a range of deaf participants.

The goal of research has been to learn about the experiences of deaf persons from their perspectives and to reflect on these experiences through analysis of transcripts from interview and field notes in which participants describe and interpret their identity and how their school experiences impacted their lives.

Despite the growing academic interest in disability studies, French (1994) argues that insufficient research on disability is conducted by researchers who are disabled, including

the field of deaf education. She also challenges the perception of non-disabled researchers as the 'experts' in disability research which means that people with disabilities are rarely involved in research (French, 1994: 141). Instead, people with disabilities need to be acknowledged as 'experts' and involved in the research process as partners and indeed as 'co-researchers'. For this reason, this research which is conducted by a deaf researcher on deaf participants is more likely to be attuned to the critical deaf issues, of which identity development in the educational context has been highlighted here.

4.1.5 Selection of sample

Due to the limited size of possible deaf participants, as a minority group, a mixed convenient sample of deaf adults (between 23-55 years) is used to provide the core group of participants. Participants were randomly selected and invited to participate in the study through a letter of invitation to participate in an in-depth interview. Due to the sensitive and personal nature of this research, considerable emphasis was made by the researcher in explicit statements that participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time.

4.1.6 Snowball Sampling

'Snowball' sampling (Bogden & Biklen, 1992: 70) is a an effective qualitative research strategy in which:

> 'initial contact with a small sample of people who are relevant to the research topic is made and these contacts are used to establish contact with other participants' (Bryman, 2008:184).

By using the snowball sampling selection of participants recommending another deaf participant who could be possible candidate for this research enabled the scope of the researcher's network of deaf contacts to be extended and enriched These participants were drawn from an initial sample of twenty potential deaf adults in the Gauteng metropolis area across gender; age; social status; income; race; language ability and

choice; hearing ability; family history and educational background. By limiting the participant's educational background to schools in the Gauteng metropolitan area, this study was able to make more accurate inferences on the impact of education on identity development of a particular area (names of schools have been omitted). It is not a criteria of participants to have achieved a specified identity, such as deaf or Deaf in order to qualify for this study. Instead, this study defines 'deaf' persons in broad terms since this is a descriptive and exploratory study of how deaf adults define themselves and how their school experiences gave meaning to which they are as a deaf person. However, eleven of twenty potential participants, who had expressed their interest in being involved in this study, withdrew before the interview session. On reflection, it was noticed that nine of these eleven potential participants were actively involved in the Deaf community. It is interesting to note that all of the Deaf participants had extensive work and family commitments and despite their willingness to participate, the most common barrier seemed to have been the lack of time available for the interview. This resulted in a sample of nine participants which included the researcher as a full participant. Two of the nine participants (S-5 and S-9) came from families with a deaf parent in order to demographically represent the input from deaf parents with deaf child, thus eliminating a potential bias of this study in selecting oral deaf participants only. The remaining seven participants adequately reflect the profile of the larger deaf community in which the majority of deaf persons have a hearing family background.

With the use of the snowball method of selection, it became more of imperative of this qualitative research study that the identity of participants remains protected, and confidential. This is an important research related concern to consider when conducting research on the small deaf community where many deaf persons know each other. Hence, each of the participants were assigned a letter (S for Subject) with a non-declarative, arbitrary numerical code such as S-1; S-2 to S-9 to ensure that their identity remains anonymous.

4.1.7 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of this ethnographic study, Bogden & Biklen (1992; 40) suggest three steps in the process of triangulation of the research. The first step in triangulation involves a critical examination of theories and discourses which have been undertaken in the literature review in the previous chapter. The literature explored the impact of the medical and social models of disability and in particular deafness, from a post-modernist perspective. Emerging from this discussion, an alternative theoretical perspective of understanding deaf, and the dialogue model was proposed. The second part of the literature review discusses the contributions of the studies conducted by Bat-Chava, Glickman, and Ohna in understanding identity development of deaf persons.

The second step consists of collection of data from filmed interview sessions. For the purpose of reliability, prior to the analysis of data, each participant had the opportunity to check the transcript of their interview with the researcher for inaccuracies (Ellis & Bochner: 2008: 751). After the verification of data, a preliminary clustering of data into themes and applying thematic content analysis (TCA) followed (Kumar 1999: 118, 138) as well as connecting to any relevant themes from the literature and theoretical framework from the previous chapter.

The third step of the process involves interpretation of text leading to a further deconstructive analysis through the use of discourse analysis (DA) as a method of 'to unpack the ideological underpinnings of discourse' (Fairclough, 1995; Teo, 2000) in order to attain a deeper understanding of the complexity of deaf identities within the South African education context.

4.1.8 Ethical Considerations

As with all qualitative research, the anonymity, trust, dignity and confidentiality of participants will continue to be safe-guarded at all times through a non-disclosure of names and identity form. Clearance from the Ethics Committee (Protocol number:

2007ECE17) for this research on participants has been obtained prior to the data collection phase. Both the Gauteng Department of Education and Principals of schools for the Deaf in Gauteng were informed of the study by letter (Appendix D). Similarly, in the interests of academic rigor and accountability, the results and final report will be made publicly available through University of the Witwatersrand library and at conference presentations and relevant Deaf Education related journal articles.

Additional written consent of participant's participation in this study expressedly granting their permission to record the interview session on video-tape, including permission from participants for the use of this research data (video-tape) at research-related conferences was sought prior to the interview session.

4.1.9 Limitations of Research

The main limitation of this research was the amount of time available for this ethnographic study. Arising from this limitation, caution needs to be exercised in making broad generalizing statements about Deaf identity from this sample of nine deaf persons. Also, it needs to be emphasized that identity is a life-long process of self discovery and at times an elusive concept for participants to define, therefore the narratives that participants revealed in the interview are authentic at that moment in time, but their identity may not be definitive. It also needs to be stated that in addition to education, there are other significant factors that exert an impact on identity, such as family and workplace.

Throughout this study I was aware of myself as an auto-ethnographic researcher and the dialogic effect (Ellis & Bochner, 2008:748) I could have on the interviews as a deaf insider. Thus the researcher made the entry into this research, from the perspective of an 'oral deaf' person with a mainstream educational and oral family background, explicit from the beginning of the study. As a narrative researcher, my bias towards favouring Sign Language as a marker of the Deaf identity mimics my own discovery of identity as a deaf person. In view of this latent bias, my perspective and personal journey into an 'oral

DeaF identity' was constantly monitored by myself in reflexive writings and my supervisor through regular critical exploratory sessions and discussion of reflexive auto-ethnographic fieldnotes to avoid losing perspective by a total immersion into Deaf culture and the danger of 'going native' (Reuter, 2006: 84). In addition, the objective of auto-ethnographic research is to connect the person to the cultural (Ellis & Bochner, 2000:739) and use the more broader ethnographic perspective of the participants and the discourses to develop an understanding of identities development of deaf researcher and deaf participants.

A concern could be raised about the effect of 'distortions of memory' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000:745) and the incomplete, tentative recall of the facts and details of the participant's narrative during the interview session. Instead of invalidating narrative research, Ellis and Bochner make the distinction clear that narratives are 'always a story about the past and not the past itself' (Ellis & Bochner 2000:745). Therefore, stories are not neutral attempts to mirror the facts of one's life, but 'a desire to make sense of our lives' (2000: 746) and ultimately, as Rich (1978:34) concludes: 'the story of our lives becomes our lives'.

4.2 Data Collection

This section will discuss the various tools and procedures used in data collection.

4.2.1 Pilot study

A pilot questionnaire was conducted at an early stage of preparing this proposal. A Deaf school-leaver and a Deaf Masters student willingly completed the questionnaire and provided valuable insight into conducting research with Deaf participants who prefer face-to-face contact (which is more respectful of Deaf cultural practices) to elicit clear, in-depth and authentic responses. This revealed that the written format of the questionnaire produced a limited repertoire of responses and depth of data for interpretative analysis on the identity development. As a result, the use of the questionnaire was withdrawn as a tool of data collection and replaced with interviews.

4.2.2 Interviews

In the process of refining this study, the use of focus groups was carefully considered then later rejected. Due to the personal and sensitive nature of the topic in terms of exploring identity, it was reasoned that the focus group discussion format, would be unlikely to yield consistent and unbiased data since some participants would dominate the group and other participants would possibly withdraw from the session or contribute with argumentative or ill-considered flippant and 'out of character' comments. After careful deliberation, the use of individual filmed interviews was selected

The researcher conducted all the interviews in which nine participants were asked in the filmed interview session to reflect on the significant moments in their lives concerning their education and their identity as a deaf person. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher from either oral form or Sign Language into printed English. If there was a discrepancy, on the videotape between what the participant said and what the interpreter signed, the benefit of the doubt lay with the participant's original words or signs as uncontaminated data. Once the transcripts were ready, each participant had the opportunity to read through the transcript of their interview and discuss any discrepancies with the researcher, and approve the accuracy of the transcript from their perspective. This step of data validation contributed to the triangulation of the data prior to analysis and discussion of literature already discussed in chapter 3.

4.2.3 Procedure

In terms of procedure of collecting data, the eight participants met individually with the researcher at a mutually convenient time in the researcher's office at the Centre for Deaf studies, located on the Education campus of the University of the Witwatersrand. Prior to the commencement of the interview, participants received a letter requesting their participation. The letter explained the purpose and scope of the research. During this time, the issues of confidentiality; consent and filming of the interview session were

discussed with each participant either orally or in SASL to ensure full access to information. Participants completed the consent form and their confidential personal information on the attached forms.

Given the unique nature of an oral DeaF researcher conducting interviews on deaf participants, it was recognized at an early stage as an imperative that the researcher and all participants had full linguistic access either orally or using SASL to important information. The interview sessions lasted between 22 minutes and 42 minutes, excluding time for explaining the issue of consent and time taken for participants to complete to confidential personal information form. All interviews were videotaped onto digital video (DV) format. The use of a Sign Language Interpreter was utilized to provide an accurate communication platform for the research question on deaf identity between (deaf) researcher and participants to be established and maintained. The interpreter either used SASL or added an English voice-over of the participant's responses to ensure consistent and accessible communication across the interviews.

4.3 Data Analysis

Due to the nature of narrative and discursive data generated from the interview session, three broad steps of data analysis are envisaged once the raw video data was transcribed onto the computer from Apple QuickTime 7 format. The reduction of data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989: 114) into meaningful patterns is the first step of analysis. During this stage, the transcription of the data was checked with the interpreter and the finished transcript was verified individually with the participant for accuracy.

The next step is the display of data in categories through the use of the discourse-neutral thematic content analysis method (TCA) (Wilbraham, 1995: 5) involves the coding of texts into clusters of 'content-based themes' (Wilbraham, 1995) that lead to tentative generalizations or hypotheses (Miles & Habermas 1994; Stebbin 2001; Leedy & Ormond 2003) to uncover the meaning underneath. Wilbraham (1995:4) also states that TCA is a useful theory-free research tool. It was this neutrality of TCA that contributed to the

selection of TCA as a data analysis tool. An additional strength of thematic content analysis is that it allows the participants to speak or sign for themselves on particular issues from which the researcher clusters the texts into broad emergent themes, in this way TCA contributes a constructivist analysis of this study. The interview schedule was designed in a circular format[8] around three broad preliminary themes:

- Theme 1: Personal significance of being deaf
- Theme 2: Communication at home and school
- Theme 3: Deaf identity

The third step involves applying a de-constructive (Derrrida, 1972) critical discourse analysis reading (Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 1997) of the texts. The purpose of this final step is to interrogate the ideology and power-relations inherent in the texts of the participants. This phase of analysis involves a deeper analysis through the use of discourse analysis which is a useful interpretative template for understanding participants in their context. Although discourse analysis is neither a qualitative nor a quantitative method of conducting research (Palmquis, 2004; 1) it is useful as a deconstructive reading of texts as it focuses on the talk, although this research is specifically conducted in Sign Language, and goes beyond the fairly superficial analysis of semi-structured conversations, towards an intensive interpretative analysis of the Foucaultian notion of discourses that operate beneath the surface (Potter, 1996: 3).

A feature of discourse analysis is that it takes a position above and away from the participants, which enables the hidden meanings and assumptions and ideology to be revealed by de-constructive reading of the texts by focusing on collective interpretations of the group rather than concentrating on individual responses usually confined to interviews (Potter, 1996:5). Therefore, discourse analysis has considerable merit as a research tool for narratives that explore the discourses that underlie the construction of

8 As a deaf person, I am familiar with the circular nature of Deaf discourse (Storbeck, 2000:57) which begins with the topic, an elaboration section and returns to the topic at the end. Although the questions at the beginning and end are similar, the ending is not merely a short summary of the opening statement, but an essential focus area for discussion on deaf identity, even if some prompting was necessary to elucidate the deeper, self-reflexive answers.

Deaf identity. In this research, the discourses encoded in the medical (therapeutic discourse), social (human rights discourse) and embodied ontological (dialogue/mediation discourse) models are open to critical interpretation of the responses of various participants.

In this way, thematic content analysis and discourse analysis are positioned as complimentary research methods of data reduction and elaboration. Thereafter, interpretations and synthesis of the narrative discourses of the participants were made, leading to presentation and discussion of the findings in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the data collection was to conduct a systematic analysis of the content of participant's transcripts to allow themes related to identity to emerge. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a letter (for instance: Participant A) as agreed to prior to the filming of the interview

This research will present the findings by displaying processed data from the personal information form and field notes in a table form, with subsequent discussion of the profile of each participants. Then the summary of the data collected from each participant's transcript will be presented. Following on from this preliminary analysis of individual transcripts will be a deeper discussion of themes that have emerged from both within individual participants and across other participants and discussion with relevant literature. After that, a discourse analysis reading of relevant transcription texts will be presented to complete the data analysis.

Figure 5 Summary of information about participants (Ranked according to age)

No	2	1
Participant	S-5	S-8
Age	23	23
Gender	Female	Male
Interview date	31 July	11 Aug
Length of interview	22 mins	27 mins.
Year s attended school	1990-2001	1990-2001
Type of school	3 Mainstream schools	Special school with Hard of hearing unit
Hearing status	Deaf, wears two in-the-ear hearing aids, speech is fairly clear, 'her hearing-aids make life easier'	Deaf, wears hearing aids, desires cochlear implant, speech is preferred mode of communication, but difficult to follow at times, does not rely on lipreading or Sign Language
Family	Hearing parents and family	Hearing parents; hearing brother; deaf sister. Family wanted him to be as oral as possible.
Proclaimed identity	Hard-of-hearing, her hearing loss 'does not bother me'	deaf, proud, confident, lonely, sometimes frustrated, 'one foot in each culture' an ambivalent identity

No	4	3
Participant	S-7	S-4
Age	25	24
Gender	Female	Female
Interview date	2 August	20 July
Length of interview	25 mins	23 mins
Year s attended school	1988-1999	1989-2000
Type of school	Mainstream school, after going to school for the Deaf.	Went to a mainstream school, then requested to attend a school for the Deaf
Hearing status	Wears hearing-aids, prefers oral, learning about deaf culture now.	Deaf, wears hearing-aids but prefers to use SASL
Family	All of her immediate family are hearing.	Father and aunt are deaf, rest of family are hearing
Proclaimed identity	deaf, hearing impaired, but confident, in between identity at the moment.	Deaf, Bi-cultural, proud and confident, prefers Deaf world.

No	7	6	5
Participant	S-6	S-3	S-9
Age	42	36	28
Gender	Female	Female	Male
Interview date	24 July	13 September	5 October
Length of interview	36 mins	29 mins	27 mins
Year s attended school	1970-1982	1977-1988	1985-1996
Type of school	Special school with a HOH unit	Went to a special school with HI unit, moved to school for the Deaf	Attended 2 schools for the Deaf
Hearing status	Deaf, wears hearing-aids to help discriminate words, prefers to talk, and acknowledged that she is not a Signer.	Deaf, wears hearing-aid occasionally, prefers to Sign	Deaf , does not wear hearing-aids, prefers to Sign
Family	All family members are oral	Sister Deaf, all other family are hearing	Parents are hearing, deaf sister, and 2 years older.
Proclaimed identity	Oral deaf, secure, isolated, frustrated	Strongly Deaf, proud, confident and secure	Deaf , proud , confident,

Average	9	8
Participants:9	S-2	S-1
Average age::33 years	55	43
Female: 6 **Male: 3**	Female	Male
	13 August	2 November
Average Length of interview: 27 mins.	30 mins	42 mins
School Start: 1958-1990 **School finished: 1970-2001**	1958-1969	1971-1983
Mainstream : 6 **School for the Deaf: 3**	Mainstream schools	Mainstream school
Uses Hearing Aids **Always: 5** **Sometimes: 3** **Never/no hearing aids: 1**	Deaf, wears hearing aid, oral, learning SASL,	Deaf, wears hearing-aids occasionally, oral, and Signs
Hearing Family:7 **Deaf Parent: 2**	Family are hearing	Family are hearing
Deaf: 3 **DeaF: 2** **Deaf : 4**	Hearing impaired, oral deaf, secure, proud, confident.	Oral DeaF, confident, proud.

5.2 Discussion of participant's personal information

Figure 4 displays the personal information of the participants interviewed. Of the 9 participants interviewed, 6 were female and 3 male. The youngest participant was 24 years old and eldest was 55 years of age, with the average age of 33 years. The racial distribution consisted of 7 white and 2 black participants. With the exception of one participant, all the participants came from hearing parents who raised them orally. Two participants grew up in a Deaf cultural setting through exposure from either a Deaf parent or sibling (S-4 and S-9). S-3, S-4 and S-8 attended a school for the Deaf, Participant S-3 changed from a mainstream primary school to a school for the deaf where she remained until matric. The remaining 6 participants attended mainstream schools, with 3 (S-6, S-5 and S- 8) placed in a separate 'hard-of-hearing' unit. The other 3 participants, including the researcher, (S-1, S-2 and S-7) went to classes with hearing learners without interpreters or access to Sign Language as a language of learning and teaching (LOLT).

There were a few exceptions that need to be discussed: participant S-7 provides an interesting and unexpected transition from a nursery school for the Deaf with the support of her mother who used signed English, she requested the transition to a mainstream school with the help of an FM loop system in classes where she remained until she matriculated. This is the opposite of the transition made by participant S-7 who made a more orthodox move for a deaf person. The realisation for participant S-7 that she was not comfortable in a mainstream school provided an opportunity to explore the possibility of moving to a school for the deaf, which many deaf do not regret in terms of developing a Deaf identity. In a similar situation to participant S-7, Participant S-4 also started at a mainstream school then requested a change to a school for the Deaf, and is grateful for making this shift. However, the difference was having a deaf parent which does not automatically mean that the deaf child would be placed in a school for the Deaf as would have been expected. This participant remembers that her placement in a hearing school was justified to her on the grounds of providing a strong oral foundation. Having a Deaf

parent seems to have contributed to motivating participant D with the shift from mainstream to school for the Deaf.

In terms of hearing status, all of the participants categorized themselves as 'severe to profoundly deaf'. It is significant that participant (S-9) has chosen not wear hearing-aids, while participant S-1, S-3 and S-4 wear hearing aids sporadically. A possible reason for this is decision is that as Deaf participants, there is a preference towards using SASL to communicate thus reducing their reliance on speech and hearing-aids. The other 6 participants use oral means to communicate if necessary. Presently, there are 4 participants (S-1, S-3, S-4 and S-9) who are fluent and competent signers who regularly use SASL in their daily routines. Five participants (S-2, S-5, S-6, S-7 and S- 8) classified themselves as newcomers to Sign Language and indicated a strong interest in or are actively learning SASL, but have limited exposure to SASL through meeting members of the Deaf community on a regular basis.

In terms of identity, 3 participants (S-3, S-4 and S-9) indicated that they identify with Deaf culture, and it was also noticed by the researcher that they are fluent Signers. Each of these (Deaf) participants selected the terms: 'secure; proud; confident' from the personal information form to describe how they feel about their identity as Deaf persons. One participant chose the term 'oral Deaf' (S-1) to describe his bi-cultural identity, and used the terms: 'secure, proud, sometimes frustrated, and isolated' which suggests some ambivalence in working through identity issues. The researcher (S-1) did add that the feelings of security and pride as an oral DeaF person were replacing the earlier feelings of frustration and isolation of a bluffing as a 'culturally hearing person'. Participants S-2, S-6 and S-5 used the terms 'hard-of-hearing/hearing-impaired' or 'deaf' to describe themselves. The terms that these participants chose to identify themselves were: 'secure; isolated, and frustrated' which seem contradictory and were noted as a significant issue to raise in the interview session for clarity. Participant S-7 chose 'hearing-impaired/deaf' and chose the term 'confident' but expressed a strong ambivalence towards being in classified as a member of either culture, she is currently discovering more about Sign Language and coming into contact with more Deaf people. Participant S-8 used the terms

'deaf and oral deaf' and has a strong inclination to continue in the hearing community and is considering a cochlear implant to facilitate his ability 'to fit into the hearing world'. He chose the terms; 'secure, confident, lonely, frustrated and ambivalent' to describe his feelings about his identity.

The data collected from the personal information forms has given a valuable overview of the participant's background prior to the in depth interview session. In summary, the nine participants are a reflection of the diverse nature of deaf persons in South Africa, with participants from schools for the deaf and from mainstream schools involved in this study.

5.3 Data from interviews

5.3.1 Introduction

In order to facilitate the analysis of data from the interviews, the transcripts of each participant was clustered by the researcher into three broad semi-structured themes of plausibility (Miles & Habermas 1994: 246) to enable significant sub-themes to emerge from the content.

The first theme: '**Significant Moments of being deaf'** explores the participant's significant moments and what they have to tell others about what it means for them to be a deaf person, usually from their key early childhood experiences. Information for this theme is drawn from the following interview questions:

- Question 1:Tell me about a few of the significant things for you about being deaf.'
- Question 2: When you were young, how did you communicate with your family, friends, and how did you feel about this communication?

The second theme**: 'Connections at school'** pulls together the following interview questions:

- Question 3: 'Tell me about the school experiences that had a significant impact on your development as a deaf person.'
- Question 4: 'From your perspective as a deaf learner, tell me about the positive contribution that the schools you attended have made on your life.'
- Question 5: 'Tell me about how you communicated with your teachers and classmates and how you felt in your classes.'
- Question 6: 'Tell me about your social life at school and now.'

The third thematic cluster: '**Deaf Identity'** focuses on the last two questions of the interview in which participants had an opportunity to describe and discuss how their understanding of their identity as a deaf person has evolved. The questions of used in this theme were:

- Question 7: 'How would you describe yourself now?'
- Question 8: 'How do you feel about your identity as a deaf person?'

After each participant is discussed, a consolidated discussion follows in which data from all participants will be discussed. The researcher's auto-ethnographic text was placed as the entry narrative (Thornton, 2005:1) to 'increase the voice of the "other"' (Sluka & Robben, 2007: 19). This establishes an ethnographic frame of reference to lead the following analysis.

5.3.2 Participant S-1

5.3.2.1 Theme 1: Significant Moments

The account of participant S-1 begins with the personal revelation that when he discovered that other deaf people were happy and proud to be Deaf his attitude and identity changed. Instead of receiving reminders of his difference as a deaf person living amongst hearing, he discovered that members of the Deaf community celebrate deafness as another way of life without a fear of silence.

Participant S-1 recalls two important hearing events: when he heard sounds with hearing aids for the first time and years later receiving a digital hearing aid from his wife when she had a cochlear implant fitted.

For him, a moment of epiphany or turning point occurred when he met with a Signing community of Deaf adults at church. He shares that his attitude changed towards deaf people, where previously he looked down on all deaf people as inferior. It was at this point that he noticed that the Deaf community had something that he was lacking as a deaf person: a sense of being proud of their language and especially of themselves as Deaf persons. From this platform, he began the inexorable process of merging with the Deaf community at church through accepting himself a Deaf person, by first releasing his grip on his hearing cultural identity. Here he uses the metaphor of **'coming-out'** as a Deaf person to describe his shift from a hard-of-hearing identity with affiliation to hearing cultural values to his inclusion with the visually-oriented Deaf culture and community. The intentional borrowing of the Gay community's term: 'coming-out' reflects the emotional magnitude of the identity transition of private and public proclamation: 'I am Deaf'.

Another significant event for participant S-1 was the admission to himself that the previous tactic of bluffing in meetings by pretending to be a hearing person was effectively hiding the reality of his deafness from himself and others. After adjusting to

this new discovery, he took the opportunity to make use of a Sign Language interpreter in lectures and meetings.

5.3.2.2 Theme 2: Connections at School

For participant S-1, there were a number of important features of growing up in an oral family environment with hearing aids that he chose to elaborate on. First of all, the main aims were to teach him to speak and read well. This point is emphasized in his summary of his school experience:

> 'The biggest thing that I got out of school was learning to read and speak well. In fact, this is an area that I am often complimented on; 'but you speak so well…' Looking back now, this is a double-edged sword that allowed me entry to the world of the hearing, but kept me at arms length from being fully accepted or successful in hearing terms.'

His narrative describes his paradox of hearing fairly well with hearing-aids, but often not well enough to follow everything like a person with normal hearing and the associated struggle to survive in family and class situations. Then he recalls the support of a small group of friends, whom he valued for their willingness to ensure that he understood what was going on, and often intervened to support him when he was lost in the conversation. He remembers being noticed as different at school with hearing-aids and teased and treated as an social 'outcast' for most his school years.

He felt that some of his teachers were more concerned about his hearing loss than him. Looking back, he remembers his grade 1 and Std 5 and Std 7 teachers with fondness for their understanding and encouraging attitude to achieve at the same level as his hearing peers. He adjusted to the fact that he was the only 'hard-of-hearing/hearing-impaired' learner in the school and he worked hard to achieve academically to such an extent that he believed that he was almost hearing.

In the following narrative about his teachers, he explains the personal struggle he experienced in which the teacher's lack of understanding lead to an avoidable incident:

> 'It was Grade 7 English class. The teacher was trying to get me to say a paragraph from a novel with great gusto and emotion just as he had read it out to the class. Since I was sitting at the front of the class, he chose me to start reading out aloud first, but he was furious that I was not doing it right. The problem was that he did not know and understand that even with hearing–aids I still could not hear the differences in tone so I did not understand what he was trying to get me to do. The more he shouted at me the more confused and lost I felt in front of the class. This was such a humiliating experience that could have been avoided if he knew more about being deaf (and I hated his class after that and sat in the back!).

In another story, participant S-1 reflects on the impact that a hearing impaired teacher had on him:

> 'There was a Science teacher who wore small hearing aids. Even though his hearing loss was less severe than mine was, this teacher did not encourage me in any way to be proud of my identity as a deaf person. In fact, he probably hindered me since he conducted himself as a person with a hearing-loss and told the class repeatedly that he is not deaf. At that time, it was not acceptable practice to meet deaf learners. After all, they are deaf. End of discussion. Consequently, I did not feel proud to be deaf and continued to see myself as hearing-impaired learner struggling to fit in. I saw him struggling in the class to be a 'hearing' person in similar ways to me but from point of view of a teacher and it was not a pretty sight. This explains why despite both of us having a similar hearing loss, I never connected with him as he portrayed for me the kind of false person I did not want to become. Looking back now, this is the moment in my life in which I could have gained so much from a deaf adult/teacher who was not terrified by his disability in the hearing world like this hard-of-hearing

> teacher. As a result, I did not meet Deaf persons and Deaf community until well after matric. Therefore, I wonder what would have happened if…

One of the turning points in his life came later in school occurred when:

> 'I was learning to accept my hearing loss and make a decision for myself to rather wear the aids that help me to hear better instead of worrying about what others see and think about me,'

This personal identity crisis connects clearly to how he perceived himself as a person with hearing-aids in the hearing world with a lack of wholeness and sense of belonging. Here he explains how he began to consider his hearing loss as not only his problem, but also confronting the attitudes of others towards his disability. In telling this part of his story, he also mentions the frustration of being misunderstood as a hearing-impaired learner:

> 'In primary school, I absolutely hated the listening tests, spelling tests, comprehension tests and orals. In particular, I hated it with a passion when teachers dictated notes for the class to copy down, because I always came last and came home in tears because I had been tactlessly reminded that I could not hear.'

This experience made him gradually aware of his status as a marginal citizen in the hearing learning context.

What matters for participant S-1 was finding a way to place the benefits of his school experiences into broader context. For him, he condenses his experiences of school into this narrative of **survival:**

> ‘Um…I looked and behaved like a hearing person to the extent that I believed that I was almost hearing, I always had to do more, this hearing problem was my problem and I must not dare not impose my awful problem and inadequacies on others. Therefore, I believed this illusion of ‘nearly-hearing’ and drowned my sorrows, frustration and lack of understanding in class in books and I read and read and read. The library became my best friend. Later, I found this quote by C.S. Lewis touched my heart: ‘To read is to know that you are not alone’.

5.3.2.3 Theme 3: **Deaf Identity Development**

In his quest for belonging, participant S-1 argues that he is in the process of coming to terms with his shift from a hard-of-hearing to Deaf identity. He is content with his oral deaf identity now. He confesses that:

> ‘It is somewhat inaccurate to describe myself as Deaf as Sign Language is not my first language. Now I am much more comfortable with using the term ‘oral DeaF’ and have taken the D and F to explain that I belong in Deaf community as an oral deaf person, who speaks well and Signs, which I prefer with our Deaf friends and I co-exists in hearing world as an oral DeaF who speaks. I am upfront about using an interpreter and hearing-aids. This is where I am right now.’

For participant S-1, even though this process of becoming is not yet complete, there is a sense of resolution from telling his story and subsequently discovering similar identity narratives of other deaf persons that he has meet.

5.3.3 Participant S-2

5.3.3.1 Theme 1: Significant Moments

Participant S-2 placed emphasis on not being different when she was younger, but realized that she was different later and recognized the scale of her achievements with hindsight. Considerable energy went into her stance of not being different from others and resulting in a denial of her deafness as much as possible. Participant S-2 acknowledged that her deafness contributed to the unique shaping of her personality through her struggles, but she admits:

> 'I do know that I have got to embrace it even though I have known that for many years that I did not embrace it'

Which could have assisted her to develop a sense of acceptance and pride towards her deafness instead being 'evasive about being deaf' and distancing herself from her deafness in referring to her deafness as 'it'.

5.3.3.2 Theme 2: Connections at School

Participant S-2 described her family background as primarily 'oral'. But She remembers her family as strongly supportive of her deafness while at the same time avoided the use of the term 'deaf'. According to her, if her family had acknowledged her deafness earlier, they could have changed their approach to her deafness. Again the issue of not drawing attention to herself as 'deaf' was apparent in family interactions and at (mainstream) school where she preferred not to be noticed by teachers as 'deaf' and in need of special treatment. She remembers that despite her teachers lack of experience in teaching a deaf learner, some teachers were 'fantastic' and other teachers simply demanded that she sat in front, regardless of how she felt. Participant S-2 explained that she wanted teachers to treat her as normal and different to her sister and not 'ignore her' because of her hearing

loss. As a result, these teachers and anyone else were ‘shut out’ by her in response to their disappointment in her as an academic achiever like her older sister.

In class, Participant S-2 relied on lip-reading and her friends to keep up. Somewhat humorously, she would use her hearing loss as an excuse if teachers asked her a question when she was inattentive. As a result, she recalls that she contributed to her parents and teachers anxiety for her academic performance that was no more than sufficient. Instead, for her, school was an extended social environment of being with people, rather than primarily an academic arena. A moment of crisis emerged prior to leaving school in which Participant S-2 became anxious of leaving the protective school environment and entering the world alone.

5.3.3.3 Theme 3: Deaf Identity Development

Participant S-2 describes herself now as an older and wiser person as:

> ‘Being in a happy place, I was never an unhappy person by nature’

By being exposed recently to new Deaf people, S-2 found that a new awareness of being deaf, and in particular the Deaf identity, was created. In addition, learning Sign Language as a means of communication has empowered her to move out of her previous comfort zone as a deaf person.

Prior to this, an important event for participant S-2 was attending a conference for hard-of-hearing delegates and realizing for herself that:

> ‘I was not fighting this battle alone, but I must have worked really hard to be so successful in the hearing world’.

It seems that this insight contributed a marked diminishing of her fear of losing her remaining hearing. Furthermore, despite going to an oral school and having an oral

family background, she sees her open-mindedness to who she is as an important factor in absorbing the new experiences of Sign Language and connecting with Deaf people.

At the moment, she describes herself as a person who finds Deaf culture and the ways of the Deaf community, and learning Sign Language to be new and exciting adventure. This awareness is fostering in her an increasing respect for Deaf persons as 'competent'. Although she acknowledges that she is deaf, she is unsure which term best describes her at the moment, as deaf or Deaf. However, she expressed a desire to continue exploring how to fit into both hearing and Deaf worlds for her.

5.3.4 Participant S-3

5.3.4.1 Theme 1: Significant Moments

The first thing that participant S-3 told me was that she describes herself as a Deaf person. It was when she was ten that she discovered for herself that she was deaf and about Deaf culture. Instead of being shocked and imprisoned by this awareness, she found that she was comfortable with this discovery.

5.3.4.2 Theme 2: Connections at School

What participant S-3 reveals here is that although she grew up deaf in an oral family background, her family made a choice to use oral and total communication to communicate with her. Until later, when she met other deaf persons, participant S-3 says that she only knew the oral way was available for deaf persons like her so she was not unhappy as she felt that she was equal to hearing learners. However, a major shift in her life happened with her parent's divorced leading to a shift in her school arrangements. She remembers entering the school for the Deaf as an outsider and feeling lost there without Sign Language skills. Consequently, she made a decision to learn SASL in order to cope there, which she acquired by the end of matric, as well as a Deaf identity. When

she finished her matric, she went to America to gain further training which she believed was not available to deaf persons in South Africa for the purpose of teaching and using Sign Language. It is at this point the participant is grateful for her parent's earlier decision to raise her orally so that later she says confidently:

> 'With Sign Language I was able to socialize with the Deaf community and fit into both worlds'.

This is a theme to which she elaborates upon in describing her role as facilitator between hearing and deaf persons as an antidote to the ignorance that hearing persons often have of deaf people and Sign Language. Her experiences at school seem to have fueled her drive to avoid being an under-stimulating teacher of Deaf learners who treated deaf learners as little children. From her experience, this educational neglect was due to the teacher not being able to communicate with learners in Sign Language. In response to this perceived need, participant S-3, discovered gradually that she enjoyed teaching Deaf learners in South Africa, where she sees a strong need for her to stay here and help deaf learners to be proud of themselves and their Deaf heritage and Sign Language.

5.3.4.3 Theme 3: Deaf Identity Development

Participant S-3 states boldly and proudly that her identity is aligned with the 'Deaf'. Along with this realization, came a confidence in herself. Looking back at her identity development, she recalls not knowing about little and big D since she was not exposed to the Deaf community through her parents, until she arrived at the school for the deaf. She stated:

> 'I thought I was the only one who was deaf because amongst the hearing community I was treated as 'the special one'.

For her, the big moment (an epiphany) happened when she connected with other deaf people at school through Sign Language and found her own space within herself who is willing and capable of fitting into both worlds.

5.3.5 Participant S-4

5.3.5.1 Theme 1: Significant Moments

Participant S-4 tells her story of a young Deaf teacher who made a shift from an oral school background to a school for the Deaf. A significant thread to her narrative is her strong affiliation with Deaf culture through Deaf friends, attending school for the Deaf and regular meeting with Deaf adults, which is fostered through a shared language of Sign Language. Although participant S-4 outlined that she was born deaf, and has a deaf parent, it should not automatically be assumed that she could Sign at home. Instead, she reflects on the shared experiences of life with other Deaf people through Sign Language that she acquired later as an entry into Deaf life as an insider. Her narrative begins with the clear proclamation of her Deaf identity:

> 'I went to a Deaf school, (I) had Deaf friends… because we are the same'

For her, the focus of being deaf is not primarily on her disability. Although she recognizes the reality of living with a hearing loss, she places emphasis on the (Deaf) attitude that collectively, to use the Deaf empowerment slogan: 'Deaf can do anything except hear'. Her journey of self discovery into a Deaf identity may seem self-evident and foregone conclusion based on participant S-4 meeting the criteria for inclusion into the Deaf community as already mentioned: being born deaf and attending a school for the Deaf and a fluent Sign Language user and having a deaf parent. However, looking back at her early years, she tells a different story of how she grew up in an oral home and school environment.

5.3.5.2 Theme 2: Connections at School

Participant S-4 explains that her deaf parent went to an oral school and sought integration into the hearing world. As a result, her deaf parent endorsed her placement in a mainstream school to facilitate S-4's integration into hearing world through speech skills. She recalls the shock of her parent when she told her parent that she often could not understand her siblings, in other words, speech and lip-reading was not enough for her to follow conversations. It was this revelation of being deaf that allowed her to venture into the world of the Deaf through learning Sign Language, with the support of her parents. She remembers initially not being popular at the school for the Deaf on account of coming from a 'hearing family' background without Sign Language skills. Thereafter, she decided to learn SASL for herself, and became more aware of her identity as a deaf person.

Prior to moving to the school for the Deaf, she came to admit to herself that she was not coping in a mainstream/regular school. This personal insight precipitated an important discussion with her parents and culminated in the shift to the school for the Deaf. Despite the initial vehement disapproval from one of her teachers, and the assumption that her speech would deteriorate were proven later to be unfounded as she co-inhabits both hearing and Deaf worlds through speech and SASL, thus she expressed her satisfaction with the decision to change schools and her pride in being a Deaf person.

In contrast, her recollections of the teachers at the school for the Deaf were markedly different to her experiences in a 'hearing school'. She focused here on the impact of two of her teachers. When she arrived she found that her speech and lipreading skills tended to mark her out as 'a teacher's pet', which she recognized and gradually moved away from this teacher as her Sign Language skills improved. Although most of the teachers at this school were hearing, she noticed that many did not adequately understand the needs of deaf or hard-of-hearing learners like her. In her view, she believed that her teachers needed to connect with learners through matching their Sign Language and oral skills with learners instead of using a 'one size fits all' approach. Similarly, she found that

hearing teachers tended to forget how the deaf learn visually. Her tactic was to ask many questions at the end of the lesson which helped her with her English skills in particular. At the same time, as her knowledge of the world improved, so did her confidence increase as she discovered from her teacher 'that it is normal to be deaf'.

The theme of loneliness runs through her experience not being able to communicate and socialize well with hearing peers at the hearing school. Once she had made the change to the school for the deaf, she found that she made and kept contact with two groups of friends. Significantly, she states honestly that even though she has hearing friends, she has found that she prefers her Deaf friends with whom she communicates in Sign Language. It is at this point that participant S-4 makes a clear statement of her identity as a Deaf person through claiming Sign Language as her first language, despite her earlier oral upbringing.

5.3.5.3 Theme 3: Deaf Identity Development

In terms of her identity, participant S-4 describes the transition as:

> 'Before I was like a hearing person and people used to treat me as a hearing person, but now, it was hard to accept that this is who I am. The problem is that I was a bit confused here. I believe that inside I am a Deaf person. I am comparable with other Deaf people, I mean I can use Sign (Language) fluently.'

This quote captures her difficulties of shifting identity, even if participant S-4 has the perceived 'correct credentials' for acceptance as a Deaf person. Although the change of identity happened suddenly with the decision to attend a school for the Deaf, it seems to have taken her considerable time for the far-reaching implications (of new friendships) and sense of confusion to be processed. Implied in her text is the assumption that she will not return to the hearing world after discovering her space as a deaf person through Sign Language. Despite her confident statement of Deaf identity, there is the potential for

more discoveries of what it means for her to be a successful Deaf person, who has viable oral skills and an open mind towards Deaf and hearing cultures.

5.3.6 Participant S-5

5.3.6.1 Theme 1: Significant Moments

Participant S-5 highlights several points of importance about being a deaf person. First of all, she reveals that:

> 'It never really bothered me that I was hard of hearing'

which applied to her (hearing) family context as everyone made an effort to include her. This is the term that her parents and siblings used to describe her and she adopted this term for herself. However, she recalls that things were significantly different when she went to high school where she picked up that her peers were not as accepting of her hearing loss. Consequently, she felt excluded because of her difference.

5.3.6.2 Theme 2: Connections at School

In telling her story about her school experiences, she begins with the impact of the teachers on her. After she attended primary school, she enrolled at a school with a unit for deaf learners. She found that the teachers there were not trained to deal with hard-of-hearing learners like her. According to her, the teachers tended to be overly strict with her and her class, preferring to focus on work tasks and quick to impose punishment and shouting at her instead of encouraging and guiding her through tasks that she did not understand. She remembers a teacher giving her and other hard-of-hearing learner's menial tasks to do. As a result she found out later that she could not catch up with the class and had to drop this subject. Unlike her peers, participant S-5 states that the teachers did not deliberately attempt to exclude her. However, the impression she got from some

teachers was that she was inferior because of her disability and difference, and victimized as a group and as a lonely individual, thus she claims, fair and equal treatment was not given. By way of comparison, she remembers the positive impact one of her mathematics teachers had by encouraging her to do the problems with her. This resulted in a strong relationship and improvement in her self-esteem, and better marks. She summarized the issue with teachers as:

> 'I felt that they really did not try hard enough with me, you know'

In contrast, she remembers her sessions with her speech therapists with fondness because of their concern for her and fair treatment. Looking back, she concludes that:

> 'I wish that I left in Std. 8 because when you are surrounded by people (class mates) that just won't help you develop properly you get to lose out.'

She saw the problem with her classmates as similar to the problem that she experienced with her teachers, but in a more intensive and destructive manner. Again, the key issue for her was that:

> 'My class mates refused to even try and get to know me. They enjoyed making me miserable…what is the use of hanging around such scums?

Her feelings of unhappiness and loneliness from Std 8 onwards were strong. Participant S-5 argues that her classmates did not like her for several reasons. From her narrative, the central reason for her exclusion by her peers was:

> 'I think they felt that I couldn't possibly be Deaf and better than them at something.'

To demonstrate this point, she tells the story where she had to re-draw her artwork in front of her peers to prove to them that she actually did produce the drawing. However,

instead of admitting that she was more talented than them, she found that they looked for any opportunity to cruelly undermine her. She gives an instance of the teacher getting a student to hand out marked test papers in which she failed and the girl handing out then took her paper to her friends and publicly embarrassed her. Later on she tells a similar story of the teacher accusing her of breaking a flower vase because the teacher ignored her alibi instead of finding out the real culprit. Again she felt that her classmates had found a way to discriminate and incriminated her for something she had not done, knowing that the teacher was more open to believing their story instead of hers. She gives another example of her **academic exclusion** in which:

> 'The other students did not really want me to be a part of the group. They did not listen to me in group discussions when I had an idea. It was not important to them what my idea was, um… also like at school I was strong in spelling so when I did something on the board that was wrong, I would correct them but they would not accept my help. The teacher would then get someone else to correct the word'.

From these humiliating experiences, she concludes that:

> 'My classmates were mean to me and I eventually stopped communicating with them altogether.'

Therefore, as a way of **coping,** she used Art to fill her 'lonely hours', which also improved her visual awareness even though she admits she is not 'completely deaf'. It was during these high school years that she became stubborn and had limited communication with her teachers and a 'non-existent' relationship with her peers. In addition to Art, she remembers excelling at sport, much to the chagrin of her classmates who resented her success.

At this point, she reveals that because she was deaf, her parents suggested that her social problem may be a result of the social stigma that her classmates associated with hearing-

aids. Therefore, being excluded from her peers meant that her teenage years were missing since:

> 'I was never invited to parties and stuff like that. I was a loner.

Even now, she found looking back at her social life at school to be painful episode. For her, leaving school meant a removal of the restrictions that had impeded on her social development. In contrast, participant S-5 discovered the university context to be less restrictive and non-discriminatory, and has 'caught up with partying now'.

5.3.6.3 Theme 3: Deaf Identity Development

Participant S-5 describes herself now as a 'very happy hard-of-hearing person' who is 'coming out of her shell' which she attributes this status to the less restrictive environment of university. Although she is aware of Deaf culture and community, she has held back from subscribing to any group based on her experience at school of discrimination. She has expressed a desire to be:

> 'An individual and (I) prefer being a temporary visitor of some of my groups of friends'.

From her experiences at school, her identity as a deaf person did not undergo a cultural transition from a hearing to Deaf identity. Yet, her identity as a hard-of-hearing/deaf person was strongly shaped by her experiences of exclusion that is a feature of hard-of-hearing/deaf learners in mainstream educational settings. Her narrative shows the impact of exclusion on her sense of self. Recently, her identity has become more secure and anchored as a deaf person after experiencing the ugly side of discrimination that is endemic to deaf persons as a disabled minority in the mainstream educational context.

5.3.7 Participant S-6

5.3.7.1 Theme 1: Significant Moments

The first thing that participant S-6 told me that she thinks this is a difficult question to answer on account that she perceived herself more as a hearing person than as a deaf. She points out that she was exposed at an early age to the hearing community in order to provide her with opportunities later in life which her family considered were not available to deaf learners. Therefore, from the beginning, she had no exposure to Deaf people and SASL. Indeed she emphasises that her parents were concerned that SASL would not help her in life. As a result, in speech was chosen over Sign Language. Later, she points out:

> 'that it was only in her twenties that she started to discover deaf people and it took her considerable time to realize that she is not like hearing people and began to explore her deafness'

In the meantime, she had hearing-aids fitted and went for intensive speech therapy to assist her in adapting to a mainstream school setting.

5.3.7.2 Theme 2: Connections at School

Participant S-6 reinforced in her narrative that although speech was her preferred means of communicating at home and with teachers and friends, learning to speak was 'hard work'. Despite this hard work, she experienced frustration and loneliness from the realisation that she was different to others due to her hearing loss. At the same time, she is appreciative of 'her fuller education' she received in mainstream classes, which she claims assisted her to achieve more academically as a 'bright learner'. She does not regret that choice of her parents. Indeed, she expressed considerable anger towards schools that do not give bright learners an opportunity to achieve as she did, as a doctor. She returns to the theme of it being 'an easy ride' to become a doctor. She is proud of her

achievement against the enormous odds faced by a deaf person's in order to become a doctor, but stressed that she had to work harder than most people. She conceded that she believed that she would not have been able to go to university if she had attended a school for the Deaf. With the benefit of hindsight, she recognizes that there was a penalty attached to working so hard:

> 'I am not angry, there is no point in being angry because I have learned to recognize what my parents did was best for me. And it is never too late to catch up socially. So I missed out, and I see my niece and nephew playing around and they make songs and play games and they are creative. I missed out on all that. That makes me sad at times… we just need to make peace with what happened. There is no point in being angry, it is in the past.'

From this quote, it is possible to see how participant S-6 has make peace with the consequences of this decision to focus on oral skills.

Looking back at her experiences at school, she is appreciative of the efforts her school made to support hard-of-hearing learners, like as herself, in mainstream school. She felt that she had made the correct decision to stay at this school, while some of her deaf friends transferred later to a school for the Deaf. To illustrate the impact of her school experiences, she tells the story of a teacher who separated her from her friend in order for both deaf learners to work hard and mix with other (hearing) children in class. She remembers being furious at this teacher's action, but admits that this experience forced her to learn important social skills.

Participant S-6 returned to describing her teachers and remembers only the good or bad teachers. In particular, she retells the story of the teacher who ironically came from a school for the Deaf and treated her unfairly by playing tricks on her and demanding that she wear her hearing-aid all the time. The experiences from this school have reinforced

her commitment to academic achievement by make full use of the opportunity to studying hard at the school she was at so that she could study further.

5.3.7.3 Theme 3: Deaf Identity Development

She uses the term 'hearing problem' instead of 'deaf' in a strictly medical sense, and states that she is well established within the hearing world as a 'hearing-impaired' person. Furthermore, participant S-6 outlines that her contact with Deaf people and Deaf culture has been limited. To the extent that she states:

> 'But I have never belonged to that culture. So that is why I have never seen myself as, um, 'Deaf'.

This honest description links back to her earlier concern that to grow up Deaf is associated with an inferior education, to have limited opportunities in life and treatment as an inferior person. At the moment, she feels more comfortable with hearing people than with the Deaf for the reason that she has been exposed to hearing culture all her life. Leading on from this point, she admits that she did not go to the 'right school' to be accepted into the Deaf community. Consequently, she has felt isolated from 'them' and 'that culture' despite being deaf herself. She concludes on a note of sadness, that although she has done a Sign Language course, she has found the hearing community to be more accepting of her than the Deaf community.

5.3.8 Participant S-7

5.3.8.1 Theme 1: Significant Moments

When the researcher asked participant S-7 to tell us about the significant events in her life as a deaf person, she answers that she has not reflected critically on her identity as a deaf person until now. She focuses on becoming aware of herself as a deaf person when she

was three years old. She remembers then that she noticed that she was not following the conversations or enjoying the music like the people around her.

5.3.8.2 Theme 2: Connections at School

When she was growing up, she communicated orally with her mother and her friends, even to her hard-of-hearing friends. A later experience of using Sign Language with a neighbour reminded her of her desire to use Sign Language more frequently. She ends this section with the statement that:

> 'I haven't had an experience of going to school with deaf people'

Ironically, her first school experience was at a school for the Deaf. She remembers her argument that she had with her mother and teachers. She knew that she did not want to learn Sign Language and she refused because:

> 'I knew that other people could talk so I spent my breaks with those kids who could talk.'

As a result, she refused to learn Sign Language and moved to a mainstream (oral) school as she was well established in the hearing world. At school she made use of various adaptations to cope successfully in the classroom. One of these factors was the support of her mother in ensuring that the teachers understood her needs as a hard-of-hearing learner. Later on in her narrative, participant S-7 recognizes the significance of her mother in modeling how to confidently communicate her needs as a hard-of-hearing person with others.

Coming back to her teachers, she explains that her teachers were 'good', but a few of the teachers were initially 'uncomfortable' with wearing the FM system in class for her to follow what was said. Once the teachers had adapted to the FM system, she found that she coped well in class.

Participant S-7 tells the story of an episode of a school experience in which she did not cope:

> 'When I was at high school and I decided that I did not need my transmitter any more. I thought I could be more independent of it a bit, I told my mom that I wouldn't need it for university, so I would leave it at home and go school and I would spend about twelve hours there from my mom and I realized that I didn't cope, and I realized that it was a bit difficult and my mom had to send it to me. And also the time when it broke, when the transmitter broke it was very difficult, I felt very frustrated, very frustrated, because I was not as independent as I wanted to be. So, I had to rely heavily on copying notes from friends or take it home and copy.'

From this story, it is clear that being independent is important to her, but she has realized that she still needs the support of people around her in order to follow conversations.

5.3.8.3 Theme 3: Deaf Identity Development

As she came to terms with herself as a deaf person, she says that:

> 'The only thing I cannot do is, I do not Sign everyday, um, you know, I do not know this language. So I am in-between.'

Participant S-7 describes herself as an 'in-between' person because of her ability to communicate with both hearing and deaf people. She declares:

> 'For me, umm, I am part of two worlds at the same time, I talk more than I Sign, but sometimes I know that when I have to, I can cross that line.'

And to consolidate this point, she uses the example of being able to enjoy socializing with many Deaf at the performance of Gumbo. Although she stresses that she is in-between, she admits that she is more comfortable talking in the hearing world. This alignment of her identity with hearing world is reinforced in her comment that:

> 'Being a deaf person is not always on the front of my mind'

She concludes that she prefers not to see herself as different from other people. However, she explains briefly that being deaf is acceptable in the sense that she sees that deaf persons are committed and competent people which mirrors her perception of herself. Participant S-7 ends the session by raising a relevant rhetorical question that reveals her position concerning the appropriateness of Deaf identity for her:

> 'One thing I never understand is, why do people make such a big deal about Deaf, and Deaf identity, that's something I always never understand. You know, like if you are deaf, you are suppose to have like a Deaf identity, um, I don't have that, I didn't have that kind of like, deep Deaf attitude, it surprises me.'

This element of surprise suggests that participant S-7 has grown up largely unaware of the cultural side to Deaf identity, which she learned more about if she continued in a school for the Deaf. She ends the interview by withholding judgment of Deaf identity and Deaf culture until she has acquired further information, but she states that she will remain a hard-of-hearing person.

5.3.9 Participant S-8

5.3.9.1 Theme 1: Significant Moments

In participant S-8's story, there are references to critical events and experiences as he struggles to make sense of his identity as a deaf person. For him, the last year marked a shift in his understanding of his deafness which was fueled by his growing realization that a cochlear implant is an unexplored and exciting option for him. Up till now, participant S-8 reveals that since he was a 'mainstreamed' learner with hearing parents he was focused on communication survival. Up to now, he had not considered his deafness as a significant part of his identity even though he acknowledges that he has a hearing loss.

Although he remembers his mother regularly informing him of the possibility of the cochlear implant for him. He recalls that the shift towards seriously considering the cochlear implant began with his awareness of the extent that he was struggling to follow conversations. It was difficult for him to accept the disappointment that the cochlear implant would not benefit him any more than he is experiencing with his current hearing aids. Despite this setback, the participant S-8 responds positively that:

> 'I am comfortable with that, I cannot change it, so I'm not rushing in about cochlear implant, but it's like if it can help me, then I will get it (later).

This positive shift in his attitude appears to be a reflection of his deeper awareness of himself as a deaf person.

5.3.9.2 Theme 2: Connections at School

Looking back at his early childhood, participant S-8 points out that his mother picked up that he was deaf at around 5 months and he was fitted with 'massive hearing-aids' and went to a nursery school catering for deaf children. When the researcher asked participant

S-8 about his school experiences, he focused on several points. First of all, he was alone in his class, although there were several other deaf/hard-of-hearing learners in the classes above him. He also remembers the frustration of not following conversations in class and adds that the work was often 'boring'. For him, coping in a mainstream school was not too difficult for him. He states:

> 'I think it was easier for me than most deaf people, I mean, I don't really have any other experience I can compare it to. However, in fact I don't know what I missed at all. It's just something I got used to.

Moving onto his friendships at school, participant S-8 mentions that he was an outsider due to his difference and difficulty that others had communicating with him. He insightfully links his exclusion to the lack of acceptance of himself as a deaf person. Here he switches to telling about the difference in his friendships between school and at university. Where previously he was socially excluded, now he proudly tells of his growth in confidence from his experiences, for one year, as an exchange student.

Coming back to Sign Language, participant S-8 suggests without bitterness that it was easier for his parents to mainstream him:

> 'I understand that, and I think I am very happy with being able to fit into a mainstream world because it gives you so many opportunities and generally more possibilities.'

For this reason, he concluded that his parents did not specifically forbid or encourage him from learning Sign Language when he was younger. He demonstrated that he could cope (orally) in the hearing world, thus he argues that Sign Language was not considered essential for them to learn. Currently, he is excited with acquiring SASL now as a means of communication with other Deaf persons.

5.3.9.3 Theme 3:Deaf Identity Development

Here he elaborates on how he sees himself as a deaf person:

> 'I think am starting to explore it, like understanding how a lot of my personality traits are deafness related. It makes it easier to accept. I think, um, as I read more about deafness and Deaf culture I start to learn to accept myself more and become more whole and a more confident human being._ I think I am happy with myself, um, as I went through a very difficult period last year. But then I' m starting to, um, how do I put this, um… I'm starting to come to grips with whom I am. Just basically I have been accepting myself more, trying to understand myself better and learning about Deaf Culture has helped me a lot with that.'

In summary, he acknowledges that although he did not grow up in the Deaf culture, he has found that as a deaf person, he understands and shares many of the features of Deaf people. He adds that he gradually became interested in learning Sign Language as a means of communicating with Deaf people. He ponders that if he had met Deaf people earlier he would have accepted himself as a deaf person earlier.

This brings him back to issue of identity where participant S-8 describes himself as:

> 'I see myself as more hard-of-hearing but I sometimes feel I am part of both worlds, not really completely a part of either.'

This state of ambivalence between two worlds is an accurate description of his current flux between identities and his current quest for resolution of this tension.

5.3.10 Participant S-9

5.3.10.1 Theme 1: Significant Moments

The narrative from Participant S-9 begins with the somewhat unusual statement of declaring that:

> 'I am fortunate that when I was born, I was born deaf,'

From his point of view, not knowing anything else proved to be an advantage rather than a personal calamity. It is important to note that he stresses that he has a deaf sister. In telling his story this way he highlights an essential difference between himself and his sister is that he was born deaf as opposed to becoming deaf later. This factor allows him to make a stronger claim to a Deaf identity as an insider.

Continuing with this story, the next significant factor for him was attending two schools for the Deaf, which through Sign Language, consolidated his personal and social place within the Deaf community as a strong Deaf person. Furthermore, he explains that he deliberately chose to enroll at schools for the Deaf where Sign Language is used to allow him to continue Signing in an accessible environment.

5.3.10.2 Theme 2: Connections at School

When participant S-9 was asked about how he communicated with his family, he recounts that since his father is deaf it was easy to communicate through Sign Language. Despite this, participant S-9 rejected his father's call for him to be like a hearing person by talking in order to fit into the hearing world. He argues that he is already established in his identity as a proud Deaf person. He remembers that the communication with his deaf sister, who learned some Sign Language later, was less fluent and easy, but he stressed that they would find a way to ensure that the message was communicated; using notes and fingerspelling if necessary.

Going back to his teachers, participant S-9 touches on a memory of a 'bad primary school experience'. He remembers that some of the teachers did not know what to do with him, as a result of not being able to communicate with him adequately. Subsequently, these teachers ignored him. His narrative moves onto his high school experiences. Although he was satisfied that Sign Language was the means of communication in these high schools, in reality he discovered that many teachers confused signed English with SASL. He mentions that once he understood the difference between the languages, then he was able to understand the written and oral/Signed classroom discourses. He returns to this point later in which he lambasts teachers for holding onto their misconception that: 'deaf equals stupid'.

Furthermore he remembers that his teachers told him directly that because he is deaf he is useless and will never do well for himself. This theme of **abusive** treatment from the teachers is told in this chilling report:

> 'It was just a fact of life then. So, it was not easy to feel good and strong about yourself and break free simply because you were deaf. But also, teachers did not know any better about how to deal with deaf learners and how to include them at high school'.

After adjusting to this fact, he remembers how as a learner he had chosen to cope as he reveals in this quote:

> 'So, you just respected the teachers to avoid confrontation. And also kept your heart open for **reconciliation** (emphasis added) with the teacher later if and when they realized what they were doing was wrong.'

Looking beyond how the teachers communicated, he identified two areas in which he gained from his teachers. He recognized that English and Life Skills are essential for Deaf learners to broaden their understanding of the world.

5.3.10.3 Theme 3: Deaf Identity Development

In terms of his identity, participant S-9 describes himself as:

> 'For me personally, I choose 'Deaf" because I am at ease with who I am as Deaf person. I mean that I can communicate (using SASL) and although I am Deaf I am not a poor Deaf person. For me it is normal to be Deaf, this is who I am, I am not ashamed of being Deaf because as I see it if I have access then I can do anything.'

All of which suggests that he is content and well established in his identity. When he was younger, he experienced some identity confusion as a Xhosa man and Deaf man concerning which culture is central in his life. Now, he sees both identities as important to him, but places more emphasis on being a Deaf person first. He concludes with an explanation of his role:

> 'By explaining what Deaf culture is all about and meeting the Deaf community and making friends. That is where you can begin to accept yourself. Also, teachers need to try and encourage learners to see the links between their language and Sign Language, and their culture and Deaf culture respectfully and so they can see that being Deaf and Signing is quite normal. So I think teachers need to be able to explain deeply how the cultures operate and encourage learners to build friendships across cultures and support Deaf clubs. I know that it is difficult but the time invested is worth it.'

At which point he maps out his role as an agent of reconciliation between (hearing) teachers and Deaf learners to avoid future Deaf learners from experiencing the struggles that he faced at school.

5.4 Discussion of Themes

5.4.1 Introduction

The data collected was analysed according to questions was then clustered into three central themes and will now be discussed.

5.4.2 Theme 1: Significant Moments of being deaf

The first theme of **Significant Moments** addresses the focus of this study by exploring how deaf participants made sense of their lives from important events. Prevalent in all of these interviews was the evolution of a narrative of personal awareness of being deaf.

Some of the narratives were already well prepared texts describing the key moments and served to clearly anchor their identity as a deaf person.

> 'I describe myself as a deaf person with a big D because I was born deaf and grew up deaf.' (S-3)
> 'I am fortunate that when I was born, I was born deaf' (S-9)
> 'I went to a Deaf school, had Deaf friends and met Deaf adults so we have the same identity from those around us, because we are the same' (S-4)

Other participants were unprepared in their presentation of significant moments relating to their discovery as a deaf person and reflected on this topic 'on the spot', which in turn may not necessarily be an accurate description of their experiences or constitute a complete narrative that adequately describes their significant memories. However, this may be the first time that these participants have reflected on this theme which is significant in itself.

> 'This is a difficult question, I have never really thought about it' (S-6)

> ‘Wow, this is something I never really thought about it, because um, I think when I was growing up; I did not know what it meant to be deaf.’ (S-7)

This theme of a prepared **personal narrative** emerged from some participants who commented on initially being unaware of themselves as different and deaf until later.

> ‘The interesting thing is I don’t really see myself as being different at all, so I think the significance of being ‘deaf’ has come as I got older’ (S-2)

> ‘It never really bothered me that I was hard-of-hearing.’ (S-5 & S-8)

For some participants, their earliest significant memory consisted of a traumatic event that marked the limitations of their hearing and social acceptance.

> ‘When I was younger I often felt that being deaf was bad and that I stood out of the crowd like a sore thumb’ (S-1).

Several of the participants highlighted the importance of a shift they have made or are in the process of making in their lives. Underlying this shift are the emerging themes of **discovering** that they are deaf and different and their **struggle** for inclusion versus exclusion which is discussed in more detail in Theme 2: Connections.

> ‘Discovering for myself that I am not alone and being deaf is not the end of the world since I found Deaf people who proudly affirmed themselves to be Deaf. (It was this) revelation (that) blew my mind’. (S-1)

> ‘There was a sense of denial that I was different, which I didn’t think I was (different) - I still don’t think I am. I am embracing the deafness much more now than I ever did while growing up. So the significance of being deaf now is for me is coming now.’ (S-2)

> ‘I moved to high school over there because there were no schools in my area catering for Deaf learners at high school level. That is why I am strongly in favour of Deaf community at school because this allows us to sign extensively. And I fitted into the Deaf community and that is where I learned about being a strong Deaf person.’ (S-9)

The transition of participant S-1’s previously unchallenged hearing cultural centre to the adoption of a Deaf identity is recorded in his increasingly public process of ‘coming-out’ as a confident DeaF person. Following this theme of **‘coming-out’,** several other participants (S-3, S-4 and S-9) noted in their narrative the significance of learning Sign Language in their cultural transformation as they overtly embraced a Deaf identity. More significantly, the transition into Deaf culture occurred during their school years, as they moved from a mainstream hearing school to a school for the Deaf. In contrast, participants S-1, S-2 and S-6 remained in a mainstream school and began learning Sign Language after their school years when they were exposed to the unexplored territory of Deaf culture and their identity as a deaf person. Although participant S-8 comments on his increasing awareness of Deaf culture and Sign Language, in his narrative he places more emphasis on the cochlear implant. This seems to indicate a possible direction that he may continue to explore in the near future. For S-5, the acquisition of Sign Language was not prioritised in her narrative. Instead of describing the difficulties associated with identity transition, her account focused more on her negative school experiences as a cathartic narrative.

> ‘I usually knew that my peers had a problem with my hearing loss. My class mates made me feel like I was a mistake.’

Consequently, participant S-5 later explains how she devoted considerable energy to sustaining/maintaining her hard-of–hearing identity in the face of the onslaught of exclusion and discrimination. This theme of **exclusion** also occurs in participant S-6 whose narrative defends the early decision to grow up orally:

> ‘(My parents) wanted me to have a good education at school and they felt there were speech benefits… I did not do Sign Language, as they felt Sign Language held (deaf) people back,’

Subsequently, this lead to participant S-6’s commitment to maintaining a hearing cultural identity to maximize her educational opportunities in a mainstream setting.

It became apparent that none of the participants, even the two participants who were born into family with at least one Deaf parent (S-4 and S-9), were automatically Deaf persons. Both participant S-3 and participant S-9 begin their narrative with the declarative statement of their conclusive Deaf identity as a platform for describing their Deaf school experiences.

There was a noticeable difference in the structure of the narratives between Deaf and oral participants. The Deaf participants answered these questions with a structured, prepared narrative more in line with the expected pro-Deaf culture, SASL and Deaf identity rhetoric in contrast to the unprepared responses from culturally hearing participants. A possible reason for this may be the extent of the transition into Deaf culture facilitated a narrative to support the shift. On the other hand, participants with an oral background may not have reflected on their experiences of growing up as a deaf person. Alternatively, as several oral deaf participants (S-1, S-2, S-5, S-6 and S-8) mentioned their early awareness of their limitations in hearing and contradictory messages from family and condoned by oral schooling that they are ‘normal’ and expected to fit into hearing society by being as ‘as hearing as possible’ may have contributed to an unresolved state of identity conflict during school years.

5.4.3 Theme 2: Connections at School

Following on from the first theme, most participants discussed from the outset the early impact of their family as supportive of integration into hearing culture through

acquisition of oral skills. Some participants (S-1; S-5; S-6; S-7 and S-9) added that they defended their mainstream education in that they perceived superior academic expectations and future opportunities would be available to them if they adapted to with hearing world with a hearing-impaired/ hard-of-hearing or almost hearing identity:

> 'My parents wanted me to know that I could have a full(er) education and the possibility of, qualifying in some area.' (S-6)

In order for this theme of **academic advancement** to be realized, participants from mainstream schools commented on their needs such as hearing-aids, speech therapy; special classes and FM systems. They also described how supportive teachers and friends made it possible to cope. But, as participant S-6 summarized one point succinctly that all of this effort and support towards integration into a hearing classroom came at a price:

> 'I spent all my years in Speech therapy and (in class it was) work, work, work. There was no time for play. And I realized I was not one of them. I had to work much harder; I had to read up to catch up. And (I had) very little time to socialize then. It was only much later on in my life that I understood what I had missed out (and) I never really thought about it too much about what it meant to be a deaf person, at that time.'

Other participants (S-1; S-3; S-5; and S-6) picked up this thread of their **frustration** with teachers who did not understand their needs as a deaf learner:

> 'It was terrible: the isolation, frustration and having to realize that I was not like the others, it took me a while to realize that I am just as competent as others with stuff, if not more.' (S-6)

This theme of **exclusion** is pushed back by a counter-theme of **inclusion t**hrough equality as participant S-6 discovered for herself. Similarly, participant S-5 expressed a need for learners like herself to be treated 'fairly and equally' with other learners. Many of the

Participants (S-1, S-2, S-5, and S-7) explain through their experiences that without an accurate understanding of what it is like to be deaf and how they were often excluded by their peers. Moreover, they expressed their lack of connection with teachers who were unaware of the frustration and loneliness that accompany deaf learners in the mainstream class. As a result, these participants describe their school experience in the following way

> 'I absolutely hated the listening tests, spelling tests, comprehension tests and orals. In particular, I hated it with a passion when teachers dictated notes for the class to copy down, because I always came last and came home in tears because I had been tactlessly reminded that I could not hear.' (S-1)
>
> 'They never asked me to do reading in class, they never asked me to answer questions. You know, they never kind of put pressure on me to perform. Like a 'feeling sorry for you' kind of ignoring rather than acknowledging it at all. And I just thought 'Fine'. I seriously did not do any work for them' (S-2)
>
> 'The teachers just did not really try hard enough with me' (S-5)
>
> 'Not being able to hear meant that I found quite a bit of the work boring.' (S-7)

It can be interpreted from the above experiences that the narratives of participants in the mainstream focused on the theme of **survival**.

> ' I looked and behaved like a hearing person to the extent that I believed that I was almost hearing, I always had to do more, this hearing problem was my problem and I must not dare not impose my awful problem and inadequacies on others.' (S-1)
>
> 'But I did have some awkward moments when I was not paying attention and suddenly the teacher asks me a question. I took my hearing loss as an opportunity to get out of trouble. (Smiles) "Sorry, my hearing aid is not working" or something like that,' (S-2)

While the theme of **exclusion** is evident in the academic sphere as a possible reaction between tolerating difference, participants noticed the effects of social exclusion by their peers

> 'I was excluded; the other students did not really want me to be a part of the group. They did not listen to me in group discussions when I had an idea. It was not important to them what my idea was,' (S-5)
> 'My family helped me cope, cause most of the time I felt like an outsider, like I didn't really have good friends until, until maybe the third year of high school' (S-8).

Alternately, as participant S-2 and S-8 argue,

> 'I think that they excluded me because of my lack of acceptance of myself'.
> 'Let's look beyond acceptance, let's talk about acknowledging it', this could have given me a sense of pride of my deafness, not the sense of trying to be evasive about it.'

Here the theme of the **exclusion** is fuelled by the participant's lack of acceptance of themselves as deaf. This line of argument suggests that the lack of understanding of oneself as a deaf person and lack of truthful self-evaluation (pretending to be hearing/bluffing) are seen by peers and to some extent teachers too, as an inauthentic representation of self to others on the class as a 'hearing' person. This lack of, or latent unresolved, acceptance supports the peers group attitude of exclusion that is based less on the difference (deaf) that a person has, but more on their not fully honest attempt at inclusion by mimicking them. This is exclusion is expressed by the group as 'you are not one of us'. Participant S-1 reflects here on this critical self-discovery as a:

> ‘This was a turning point in my life. Now I was learning to accept my hearing loss and make a decision for myself to rather wear these larger hearing-aids that help me instead of worrying about what others see and think about me. After all, I reasoned at the time, the fact that I cannot hear is my problem, if you cannot accept what these aids look like and what they do for me, is their problem.’

Before moving to the thematic discussion of participants who attended a school for the Deaf, participant S-7 introduces a different perspective. She presents an interesting and unusual situation of starting with an oral family background who used some signed English, then attended a school for the Deaf. Instead of staying at this school, participant S-7 moved to a mainstream hearing school because she recognised that:

> ‘It was a sign language nursery school and everybody had to use sign language, but I did not want to learn sign language and I refused because I knew that other people could talk so I spent my breaks with those kids who could talk. I told my mom because I didn’t want to learn how to sign, the school would expelled me, and so my mom took me out of that school and put me in a mainstream school.

After this move, participant S-7 reports that she coped well in the mainstream environment. Central to her successful adaptation to the mainstream classroom was the support of her mother in ensuring that teachers integrated her as a hearing-impaired learner with all the available resources, in particular the use of the FM loop system by teachers. Consequently, this narrative of participant S-7 illustrates that it is possible to cope in a mainstream without suffering the ill effects of exclusion at school. However, when participant S-7 explored her identity and relationship to the Deaf community, a different and more complex picture emerged. This will be investigated further in the analysis of Theme 3: Deaf Identity.

Lastly, theme of **pride** is evident in the narratives of the participants (S-3; S-4 and S-9) who moved to and stayed at a school for the Deaf.

> 'Then we found a school for the Deaf (name deleted) that is where I started learning Signing. I was shocked at first and I felt I was the only one, and they see me as an outsider. That was when I realized that I had to learn to Sign to fit in. And they taught me Sign Language.' (S-3)

> 'I felt strong since I noticed that I was a deaf person before, so it was not new to me to be proud of being Deaf. Although some Deaf learners said that I was trying to show off and they would tease me. When I discovered for myself that Sign Language is a real language and (that) I was in a strong Sign Language environment, I needed to think about why I needed to accept that I have a Deaf culture and questioned why I needed to be so strongly oral all the time and trying to fit into the hearing culture when I have my own Deaf culture? I saw this move as an opportunity for me to have confidence in which I am as Deaf person.' (S-4)

> 'I found at this poor rural (primary) school they did not really know what to do with me. It was bad experience there. When I went to high school it was so much better as Sign Language was used, but I had to learn English structure to understand the world, it was not easy but I managed.' (S-9)

After the participants had acquired sufficient Sign Language skills and settled into their new school context, the following clips from the narratives reflect the growth of an associated theme of **empowerment**

> 'I feel grateful to my parents for teaching me to be oral when I grew up. So now with Sign Language I was able to socialize with the Deaf community and fit into both worlds.' (S-3)

> ‘One of the negatives was when they gave me more work, but then there was little enjoyment and very little explanation and encouragement to succeed with this task. Because often the teacher would be busy with answering other learners problems so those challenges taught me to be more independent and try on my own.’ (S-3)

> ‘I had mostly hearing teachers but they had some understanding of Sign Language. Often at the end of the lesson I would ask the teachers more questions and we would spend time together. In particular, I remember my English teacher and we were very close because she opened my world and helped me realize that it is normal to be deaf. It was from that experience that I became the strong Deaf person that I am now.’ (S-4)

> ‘(I realized that) my teachers did not communicate with me at all well because they thought that English structure was the same as Sign Structure so there was frequent misunderstanding. But some teachers at this school for the Deaf understood the difference and I understood them well.’ (S-9)

> Looking at schools now; I am not happy. There is still not enough done at schools that prepares deaf learners when they leave school to go to colleges or university, because they are learning information in the structure that is accessible to them because teachers still believe that when deaf do not understand that ‘deaf =stupid’ (assumption applies) so their ability to acquire the necessary knowledge is sadly limited.’ (S-9)

From these quotes, it can be seen that with the increasing communication competence and access, a coherent theme of **academic advancement and empowerment** is emerging. Instead of languishing in an inferior (S-9 used the term: ‘abusive’) educational setting, these Deaf participants are advocating an improvement of academic expectations of teachers at schools for the Deaf. Two of the participants offer practical and

philosophical suggestions to reverse the educational neglect and apathy that they experienced.

> 'We only have a few Deaf teachers, um…but I have to say that it would be wrong for me to be involved with deaf teachers and not with hearing teachers there. So I try to encourage both to come together and so I socialize with all people.' (S-3)

> 'I remember at school when I was small that was what teacher did, and you remember that so it is difficult to oppose that which you were brought up with since you do not know anything better. So you just respected the teachers to avoid confrontation. And also kept your heart open for reconciliation with the teacher later, if and when they realized what they were doing was wrong.' (S-9)

Both participants focus on the theme of **empowerment** through actively facilitating reconciliation between hearing and deaf communities at school.

In summary, the broad theme of connection touches on a variety of related themes linked to the school lives of these participants. Central to the educational experiences of deaf participants who attended mainstream schools is their reflexive narrative themes of **disconnection**. This is particularly noticeable in their stories of exclusion and the associated emotions and feelings of frustration and loneliness in the class. To counterbalance their narratives, participants included educational advancement and opportunities as a major benefit of their mainstream oral based education despite the struggle to connect with teachers and peers.

However, there were at least two participants (S-2; S-5 S-6 and S-7) who had a sense of being proud to be deaf in the hearing world and clearly stated their identity as 'deaf'. This theme of **pride** also emerged in the Deaf participant's narratives. This sense of pride appears to emerge directly from the Deaf participant's connectedness with other Deaf

people around them through SASL. Therefore, with supportive teachers and Deaf peers, school became an extended family and source of support for them as they became more aware and included in Deaf culture However, the Deaf participants expressed a concern that the quality of education was erratic. Having teachers who could sign was not necessarily sufficient for them. Instead, there is a corresponding need for more education to satisfy their intellectual curiosity, thus more is expected from the teachers. At the same time, their narratives expressed the struggle of Deaf learners to acquire the necessary proficiency in reading and writing when oral language is the language of instruction and general knowledge. Along with this competency came an increasing sense of Deaf empowerment that is fueled by their frustration that their previous communication was not sufficient. More important is the need for increasing the connections to be made with teachers, peers and family to empower them as Deaf learners. The researcher ventures to highlight that at this point there is a significant departure from perceiving the Deaf as a complete and insular culture that is separate from hearing society. Instead, these participants have stressed the need for improving communication to develop an authentic understanding of deaf needs and invites teachers and family to assist deaf learners with building links. Here, again the theme of connections emerges in emphasising the value of collaborative, and fluid links between Deaf and hearing worlds.

5.4.4 Theme 3: Deaf Identity Development

The last theme on identity continues the discussion that began in the first theme of how the participants understand themselves. Several of the participants (S-2; S-5; S-6; S-7; and S-8) described themselves now as ‘deaf/hard-of-hearing or hearing impaired

> ‘I consider myself very much a deaf person but I don’t know which deaf: deaf/ Deaf or DeaF. I am loving it but I need to find which (fits for me)’ (S-2)

> ‘Well, it is a term that I have been brought up with. My parents would speak to somebody about their hard-of-hearing daughter, which is the term

that they would use. So I am used to that word. It does not bother me, even the word 'hearing-impairment'. I know that some Deaf people don't like that, but I don't mind. It means that I have got some hearing loss so it is true. That is what it says in the dictionary. I know that some people think that I am Deaf because they think I am part of the Deaf culture. I don't mind that either. Why should it bother me?' (S-5)

'For me, because I have realized that my experience of deaf is people who have not had contact with Deaf people. What you are saying about Deaf culture and about identifying with others with a hearing problem, but that comes in with it, the culture, and identity. Yes, but I have never belonged to that culture. So that is why I have never seen myself as: 'Deaf'. (S-6)

'I think, being a deaf person is not always a front of my mind cause sometimes I assimilated it, so it's just natural, it's just, I mean like I know who I am as a whole person. I didn't separate between 'deaf' and '**that** person,' I don't differentiate at all,' (S-7)

'I think I am starting to explore my deaf identity, like understanding how a lot of my personality traits are deafness related, it makes it easier to accept, I think, as I read more about deafness and deaf culture I start to learn to accept myself more and become more whole and a more confident human being' (S-8)

Although each of these participants has a common hard-of-hearing/deaf identity, there are differences in their narratives that contribute to understanding their worlds better. Participant S-2 emphasised the contribution that meeting other deaf people had in changing her perception of herself of being alone in the hearing world. In addition, for her fear of losing her remaining hearing has diminished, in which she emotionally expresses"

> ‘I am (now) more comfortable with that. It is comfortable, yes. I don’t have to fight this fear, to… difficult to describe, I don’t have to (pensive pause) worry about what would happen to me in that case. ‘Would I crawl into a hole and die?’ Yet I am surrounded by people who have no hearing who are happier than most hearing people I have met.’ (S-2)

It was in this moment of epiphany in which she discovered that there are many other competent and content deaf people out there, thus allowing her to explore the cultural domain of Deaf persons with new empathy. She admits that her identity as a deaf person is currently in an process of transition in which the goal is not necessarily to become a Deaf person, since she acknowledges that she did not go to the ‘right Deaf’’ school or grow up using Sign Language.

> ‘I am not quite there yet because I am not fluent in Sign Language yet. I think that when I am comfortable now and I aspire to be bilingual-bicultural. Remember, that I did not grow up in Deaf culture so I am very much part of the hearing culture.’ (S-2)

Also picking up on this theme of the ‘right school’, Participant S-6 stresses the importance of attending ‘the right school’ for a deaf person to develop a Deaf identity through shared experiences and Sign Language. For her, ‘the right school’ has a different meaning in that it meant providing her with opportunities for educational advancement which she believed were not available to her if she attended a school for the deaf. Thus, her choice of school contributed significantly to her choice of identity. Despite learning Sign Language later on, she realised that she remained isolated instead of finding acceptance from the Deaf community. In the following extract, she realises that being deaf and learning Sign Language were not enough to gain entry to a Deaf identity that she was curious to acquire:

> ‘Isolated, because ‘I am sitting on the fence’, but I am more comfortable with hearing, because that is what I have been exposed to all my life. I wanted to be part of it (the identity that he had). But, because I did not Sign and I did not go to the right school they never really made me feel a part of them, so I kind of felt isolated at the same time. I am not one of them. And that’s how they made me feel. And, although I have done a Sign Language course, and it is so difficult when I don’t have the opportunity to practice what comes naturally to them. So, I found that hearing people in my experience to be more accepting of who I am, as opposed to the Deaf community, strangely enough.’(S-6)

From her experiences of exploring Deaf identity for herself, she has returned to the hearing community disheartened that the Deaf community was less accommodating of her than the hearing community. For her, she argues that it was better to return to a familiar ‘hearing’ community than not belong to either community and continue to ‘sit on the fence’ between (for her) two disparate and irreconcilable identities.

Three of the participants described themselves as a Deaf person in the following way:

> ‘As a person, I am proud of who I am. I am not ashamed of my deafness I am very proud of being Deaf. So I don’t see it as life is unfair. I have a strong belief in myself as a capable person. So I am proud. Deaf with a big D, absolutely!’ (S-3)

> ‘Yes, I am a strong and proud Deaf person, but before (paraphrase: going to school for the Deaf and my English teacher broadening my view of myself) I was embarrassed and I withdrew within myself. I thought that I could fit into the hearing world if I spoke like a hearing person. Consequently I was against Sign Language; I was not one of them (Deaf)’. When I meet a Deaf person, I discovered that I was happy to share the

same experiences and language. That is when I became much happier with myself as a deaf person.' (S-4)

'When I was at (name deleted) school for the Deaf, an American person introduced me to the concept of Deaf identity and culture, because up to that time I did not know about this concept because I thought having my own black (Xhosa) culture was enough. So I was confused. When I got here I realized that I had learned to respect myself and this was clear to me now that there is a separate Deaf way and culture and community which exists through Signing and I realized that is also exactly who I am, I am Deaf too.' (S-9)

It can be seen from these narratives, a theme of **dignity** runs through the identity of Deaf persons. This sense of pride in oneself and open declaration as a Deaf person and the public affirmation of Deaf culture and Sign Language is a different 'voice' to their earlier narratives as a marginalised deaf person. In addition, two of the participants (S-3 and S-4), recorded that their transition from deaf to Deaf at school was difficult and lengthy, but concludes that:

'Sign Language allowed me to reflect on who I am and I became more at ease because I was able to connect with deaf persons easily. So yes, I was happy within myself. At the age of nine I made new deaf friends who introduced me the world of the Deaf and Deaf community.' (S-3)

'Because I came from a hearing family background, I was criticized for this and I was not popular there. So, I decided that I had to learn Sign Language fast there. I realized that how important Sign Language is and Sign Language made me aware of whom I am.' (S-4)

For these participants, once fluency in Sign Language had been established, their identity within Deaf community became promulgated as a permanent and active identity. Participant S-4 elaborates on impact of this transition:

> 'I feel confident, I always try to promote Deaf Rights and with the deaf children that I teach to be proud of themselves for being Deaf because I have similar experiences to them and I want them to learn from my experiences and challenges of being deaf.' (S-4)

A similar narrative sentiment is expressed by participant S-9:

> 'Before, I did not really feel anything about being deaf. But a few years later I can say that I feel confident to be a Deaf person. Because I know that I can communicate well, I feel good about myself as deaf person. So wherever there is an opportunity to communicate in sign, I use it because it helps me a lot to understand and be part of the world but I am proud to be Deaf and SASL is my language' (S-9)

It is from this confidence in himself and in Deaf culture and Sign Language that he proposes in detail that teachers focus on:

> 'Explaining what Deaf culture is all about and meeting the Deaf community and making friends, that is where you can begin to accept yourself. Also, teachers need to try and encourage learners to see the links between their language and Sign Language and their culture and Deaf culture respectfully and so they can see that being deaf and Signing is quite normal. So I think teachers need to explain deeply how the cultures operate and encourage learners to build friendships across cultures and support deaf clubs and I know that it is difficult but the time invested is worth it.' (S- 4)

Two other significant threads emerged from two different narratives, since it is often the case that it is the exceptions and unusual case studies that provide the interesting and complex data that enriches our understanding of people's lives. Although participant S-5 described herself as hard-of-hearing, her experiences of exclusion at school strongly mirror the mainstream experiences of marked by loneliness and frustration of many deaf learners. Although Participant S-5 describes herself as 'I am not bothered by it', there appears to be the theme of **loneliness** through exclusion (and victim) emerges from her narratives of school.

> 'My mother said 'You know what, I think it is because they have a problem with your hearing-aids' I was like, "you think so, OK!" That was something that never occurred to me, it never really did even when people pointed at me I never saw it as a problem. At varsity people don't have a problem, one or two maybe, but otherwise the majority of people are open-minded.' (S-5)

> 'Since I left school and went to varsity, (name deleted), and then I started to come out of my shell because I was quite shy so I felt that I was opening up more and my social life started happening and I started partying, so I was very happy, very happy. Having good friends who, you know, don't exclude you or judge you or fight with you or label you or you are not good enough because you are not funny enough or think, 'wow, what is wrong with you?' stuff like that. I'm no longer shy…yay! And I've also got a different perception of groups now. I completely hate them. I prefer being an individual and being a temporary visitor of some of my friend (ship) groups.' (S-5)

As a result, the identity of S-5 remained foreclosed and static as a 'deaf /hard-of-hearing' person until she entered a less restrictive post-school social environment that enabled her to reflect on her school experiences in the interview.

Finally, participant S-1 illustrates the theme of a **quest** that involves taking a different journey and reaching a different destination in his identity development of an oral DeaF person:

> 'I am oral DeaF person and this is an adventure to self-discovery. For me, the metaphor of a book captures this identity process well with many different chapters. I can see a big difference in which I am. Yet I realized that it is somewhat inaccurate to describe myself as Deaf as Sign Language is not my first language. Although I was born deaf and for the first 5 years I grew up deaf, I was enculturated as a hearing person. I mean, isn't it ironic that I chose a hi-fi as a 21 st present, so I could not be more hearing-centric than that. But at that stage, I was always striving to fit into the hearing world that I knew, and scorned the Deaf world as weak; inferior and populated by untouchables. (Sigh) I was ignorant, and I did not know it. Now I am much more comfortable with using the term 'oral DeaF' and have taken the D and F to explain that I belong in Deaf community as an oral deaf person, who speaks well and signs, which I prefer with our Deaf friends, and I co-exists in a hearing world as an oral DeaF person who speaks, and is upfront about using an interpreter and hearing-aids. This is where I am right now.'

For participant S-1, the discovery of the Deaf community and Deaf culture through Sign Language resulted in significant changes to his identity. The central feature is the gradual acceptance of himself as a deaf person, without steadfastly claiming to be Deaf. Earlier in the narrative, participant A describes his state of anxiety of not really belonging to Deaf since:

> 'I also discovered painfully (after the interviews for TV) that I am not really 'Deaf'. In addition, this precipitated a crisis of belonging. I was devastated to find that I was lost between the two worlds, and felt adrift

> and alone in terms of whom I was. I did not feel I belonged in either world and was stuck in this place-a doldrums of no-identity. This was a terrifying period of desolation of about a year and a half. Only once I confronted the reality of where and who I was, as well as who I was not, only then was there new opportunity for growth into the oral DeaF identity.' (S-1)

Thus, instead of continuing the quest to achieve a Deaf identity, which the participant acknowledged as unobtainable, participant S-1 has discovered by increasing his understanding of Deaf culture, and acquiring Sign Language and critical self-reflection the sense of Deaf pride and confidence (dignity) endemic to Deaf persons began to develop in his life. From this platform, where his awareness of Deaf issues and the private and public embracing and disclosure of his deaf experiences were acknowledged, he began to negotiate a new set of connections between his hearing family and associates, Deaf friends, peers and community on the other hand towards a settlement that recognizes his identity as an oral DeaF person. In turn this means that the identity he has adopted is situated, paradoxically it may seem, beyond both Deaf and hearing communities, and also reaches within both as the social context dictates without unilaterally cutting off links relationships with people in either community, thus there is a state of flux of between identities in which for him, being 'oral' and 'Deaf' are equally and constantly recognized and respected. Thus, the oral DeaF identity is an ontology separate to deaf and Deaf identities.

To conclude, it would be presumptuous of the researcher, especially as a participant in this study to claim that any of the identities is superior to the others. Each of the narratives displays both the uniqueness of the participant's lives and reveals some similarities in terms of their identity. As the narratives have made clear, there are common themes from a range of stories. Looking at the deaf identity first, the narratives picked up that participant tended not to be conscious of being 'a deaf person' at an early age. As a result, they did not make an issue of it until they experienced increasing alienation at school. Along with this increasing exclusion, deaf participants included their

feelings of frustration and loneliness in trying to survive in classes. Thus, being 'deaf' meant that school in particular was a struggle to communicate and the lack of connection contributed, not surprisingly, to the search for identity beyond hearing cultural values. This transition into the Deaf identity was usually catalysed by the participants 'discovery' of Sign Language and contact with Deaf persons.

On the other hand, (sic), the participants who were exposed to SASL and Deaf culture at an early age exhibited a strong sense of Deaf pride. Being content with themselves as a Deaf person within a culture that affirms their deafness and their struggles to communicate with the dominant hearing society is also evident in the narratives. Inherent in these narratives were some strong emotions related to the struggle against being oppressed by the perceived ignorance of hearing society through expressing the collective Deaf rhetoric of Deaf pride as widely as possible.

Another theme that emerges from a few of the narratives is that the **transition** to a Deaf identity is not simple nor quick since a complete transformation to a distinctly different culture is required, and not all participants were willing or able to make such a dramatic and profound shift in identity.

The bicultural identity, and in particular the oral DeaF identity, began to emerge as an identity with its own narratives to tell. The themes of struggling with the tension of living between two different cultures through dialogue and dignity of co-existing between hearing and Deaf cultures became apparent.

The next section will discuss the findings in more detail with regard to the theories and literature that have been covered in chapter 3.

Chapter 6 Discussion of Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the research in relation to the focus that motivated this study. This research explores how the identities of d/Deaf/DeaF persons are constructed through their narratives relating to their school experiences. This discussion pulls together the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 and considers the impact that the various discourses exert on these research findings. The implications of the findings will be discussed in the light of building a critical awareness of the needs of deaf learners in South Africa.

6.2 Findings: The First Wave of Deaf Identity Politics

This research study set out to investigate the relationship between identity and deaf learner's experiences of school. In order to explore this aim, in-depth semi-structured filmed interviews were used to gain insight into the attitudes and influences on the participant's identity during the formative period and educational context. Each participant completed a personal information form and participated in a filmed interview session where they were invited and guided to share relevant stories and explanations related to their identity and school experiences.

It was noted that the rhetoric of the medical discourse is apparent in several participants' early background and parental support in acquiring oral skills to provide children with opportunities later in life amongst the hearing world. In addition, participants followed a similar pattern of describing themselves in their early years as 'taking their deafness for granted'. This personal insight correlates strongly with Ohna's first phase of deaf identity. Since participants did not see themselves as different at this point of their lives, it is a noticeable trend present here in which all of participants attended a mainstream (hearing) school at some stage of their educational career. Meanwhile, the small number of participants who later moved to a school for the Deaf showed a profound change in

their identity in becoming, to use Glickman's term, 'culturally Deaf'. This group unanimously endorsed Sign Language as their means of communication socially and in the classroom. It was from this linguistic-cultural basis that the confidence of Deaf participants became apparent in their disclosures of finding a place of belonging within the Deaf community as valued learners. Central to this shift is the improved communication between participant and teachers which bolsters their confidence and ability to learn. In addition, Deaf participants showed an interest in improving and consolidating relationships primarily with hearing teachers and family leading to a bilingual-bicultural focus to their identity. Yet, despite their slant towards a bilingual-bicultural identity, the Deaf participants emphasized their affiliation to a Deaf identity to avoid falling out of favour with Deaf community for divided loyalties. The evidence from the Deaf participant's narratives suggests an alignment with the Ohna's last phase of entering the 'Deaf in my own way'. However, an alternative and stronger explanation to this phenomenon is offered; this reluctance of Deaf participants can be traced back to the underlying discourse of social justice and equality and activism and more specifically, of syncretising function of Sign Language that draws deaf individuals into an empowering, shared culture for the political purpose of establishing and maintaining the rights of Deaf persons as a distinctive cultural entity. The social model employs a collective rhetorical discourse of 'us, and we' (Jankowski, Janks, 1992) to reinforce Deaf identity as separate from the medical model discourse of individual tragedy of being disabled. Evidence of the medical model discourse is noticeable from the narratives when participants met other deaf people and realised that they are not alone or they deduce erroneously that they are 'the only deaf person in the world', as is often the perception of a deaf learner in a mainstream class.

These findings are typical of the interactions of first wave of identity politics (Wrigley, 1996) in which identity is defined in essentialist terms of being either 'deaf/hard-of-hearing/hearing-impaired' or 'Deaf'. Most of the participants fall into either of these predefined categories. As was observed in this study, the shift from one category or cultural group is difficult and exacts a high cost on the person making this transition of identity. Hence, some participants (S-5, S-8) showed a reluctance to invest the

considerable energy required to change from their pre-existing lifestyle and culture, even if there is dissatisfaction. Several participants highlighted their struggle of trying to follow conversations and their experiences of loneliness and alienation (Ohna, 2006) within their family or classroom when they were excluded from the social interactions. The instance of participant S-6 showed that despite being deaf; learning Sign Language, and meeting Deaf people, she remained on the perimeter of Deaf culture as an outsider which indicates that acceptance into the Deaf community cannot be taken for granted (sic). Participant S-1 and S-2 retold in their narratives of the crucial event that gave them the impetus to make the switch of identity and the magnitude of the shift from one culture to another affiliation.

Inherent in the narratives of mainstreamed hard-of-hearing/hearing-impaired/deaf participants is the thread of loneliness. These experiences of loneliness are also echoes the 'alienation phase' of Ohna's (2006) study, and is also observed in participants with a 'marginal cultural identity' (Glickman, 1996), when they experience a deep sense of insecurity that supports the study on 'negative identity' in Bat-Chava's, 2000 study. Three participants explored their ambivalent state of identity in which they drew attention to their experiences of exclusion. This evidence supports the theme of exclusion and explains the participants focus on narratives describing their survival in an oppressive 'inclusive' school environment. These participants recorded considerable identity distress in class and agreed that attempting to pass as a hearing person usually proved later to be an insincere strategy of coping. One of the participants expressed this lucidly in that the lack of personal acceptance of his deafness could be traced back directly to the lack of acceptance that the class held of him; hence he experienced exclusion until he acknowledged his deaf identity to himself and to others. The researcher added his experiences of metaphorical 'coming-out' declaration that 'I am oral Deaf person' to validate this point.

6.3 Findings: The Second Wave of Deaf Identity Politics

The findings of this narrative study support the current post-modern 'second wave of identity politics' (Wrigley, Shakespeare) in 'celebrating marginal discourses' (Corker, 2000:231) through a fluid network of identities. In addition, this research study proposed a paradigm shift from the medical and social model binary to understanding identity of deaf persons as a fluid DeaF identity through critical self reflection and cross cultural dialogue. This premise is echoed in Ohna's (2006) fourth phase of 'Deaf in my own way'.

It was noticed that the Deaf participants usually began their narratives with an explicit collective (we) affirmation of their Deaf identity. This sense of collective pride emerged repeatedly in as a theme of Deaf pride as rhetoric of empowerment (Jankowski, 1996) 'We can do anything but hear'. However, each of the Deaf participants indicated their inclination towards building relations with hearing community, which is a finding at odds with their initial pro-Deaf stance. A possible reason for this their confidence in knowing that they belong in Deaf community and having a stable, empowering identity allows for their magnanimous attitude of reaching out to others to develop. Yet, there is a broad acknowledgement of their personal difficulties and barriers to learning that they expressedly do not want the next generation of deaf learners to experience similar marginalisation. Moreover, there is a tacit recognition of the reality of Deaf community as a minority within an oral-centric majority. Traditionally, the Deaf community rejected dialogue with hearing or deaf persons, citing possible contamination from other cultures and their discourses, especially the medical model practitioners with its colonialist agenda of paternalistic treatment (Branson, 1996).

Significantly, and without any exceptions, all the participants those that did report an identity as a part of the Deaf community reported, often without prompting that they do not regret their choice to join the Deaf community. Nor did the Deaf participants of this study impose a moratorium on dialogue with hearing society. On the contrary, the Deaf participants displayed a clear willingness towards building stable communication with

hearing society, with particular focus placed on strengthening bonds with close family members and teachers.

Somewhat surprisingly, the participants in this study refrained from using this interview to condemn educators for their role in shaping their identity. Instead of this anticipated vehement attack against teachers, there was a broad acknowledgement from the participants that each participant had key teachers who exerted either a positive or negative impact on their sense of self as a deaf person. This diversity of experiences that participants have of their teachers reflects a need for further teacher awareness and training of deaf learners. With regard to their negative experiences with teachers, participants emphasized a fundamental lack of understanding of the needs and the world of deaf learners. Again, the issue of deafness as an invisible disability came to the fore in these classes and contributed to the negative framing of deaf learners as 'little children'. This resulted in abusive and unequal power relations. In contrast, the participant's memories of their good teachers reflect a common theme of personalized understanding and support through mutual communication. These findings are independent of the school of the participant (mainstream or school for the Deaf). However, it needs to be stressed that the narratives tended to reflect on memories of negative or positive experiences of selected teachers rather than at an entire school. A reason for this may have been that the lasting impression of specific identifiable people from ones school years is easier to process into a personal narrative than condensing the entire school career and institution into a brief but impersonal statement.

6.4 Implications

From the discussion of the data, the following implications have emerged:

6.4.1. The recognition of education as an essential contributor in identity development, and more so with deaf learners who struggle to find themselves within education that constructs deaf persons as deficient (medical model) or different (social model).

6.4.2 This study endorses a call to theorise and define deaf identity as a fluid, complex DeaF identity, particularly in the fields of psychology and education is necessary to address the apathy and academic and social neglect of deaf learners.

6.4.3 There is a need for parents and teachers to recognise that deaf identity as a static concept no longer provides an adequate understanding of deaf identities in a complex post-modern cultural paradigm.

6.4.4 Furthermore, the medical/social perspectives embedded in educational discourses are insufficient to understanding the contemporary, confident Deaf identities that have emerged. The educational policies and teaching practices based on this narrow perspective need to be re-assessed in order to become a tolerant and inclusive educational paradigm.

6.4.5 There is not a singular, universal deaf narrative, but a multiplicity of personal, and often somehow-related stories that reflect the diversity and complexity of themes and struggles that deaf individuals experience in their search for identity. These struggles often result in authoritative links with their educational experiences. Thus, the narratives that deaf persons tell are often valuable first-hand resources for exploring the identity process of becoming a deaf adult.

6.4.6 Thus, there is considerable scope for further research in uncovering deaf epistemologies (Ladd, 2003:19) through ethnographic research and through unraveling the narratives of deaf persons.

6.4.7 That an oral DeaF identity is no longer a paradox, but represents a valid bilingual-bicultural deaf ontology.

6.4.8 This study reaffirms the positive value of a bicultural-bicultural deaf identity in negotiating the identity territory between medical/hearing identity and social /Deaf identity.

6.4.9 This research recognises that there are many deaf persons whose narratives have not yet been 'voiced'. Additional research in this area is warranted. Thus the mandate of education is to affirm the dignity of deaf learners, regardless of their cultural affiliation or school setting, through dialogue.

6.4.10 The Deaf participants of this study showed strong desire for increasing tolerance across hearing and deaf cultures through developing dialogue. Schools need to actively engage in building bridges for cross-cultural dialogue, which in turn places responsibility on teachers to be skillful and knowledgeable facilitators of hearing, Deaf and DeaF identities.

6.4.11 There was a significant trend amongst culturally hearing/deaf participants towards greater acceptance of themselves as a deaf person through contact with Deaf persons. In addition, their gradual understanding of Sign Language mirrors their growing understanding of Deaf culture. This awareness of Deaf identity assisted their acceptance of their own deaf identity, but did not necessarily lead to a dramatic shift from hearing to Deaf community. It was noticed that where a transition of identity occurred early, with a corresponding shift from a mainstream school to a school for the Deaf, participants remained content with their Deaf identity. Therefore this distribution of this information to educators and parents is essential to healthy deaf identity development.

6.4.12 There is a need for parents and teachers to be educated in order to recognise and support the deaf person without prejudice in the transition

from one identity to another, especially from culturally hearing to culturally deaf or Deaf.

6.4.13 More importantly, by proposing the groundbreaking Dialogue model and offered supportive evidence of fluid bicultural-bilingual DeaF identities this means a paradigm shift in understanding and theorizing of Deaf Identities is necessary. As a result, both an intensive and extensive re-assessment of teacher training and deaf education modules is needed to shift educators understanding deaf identities beyond the current medical/social model hegemonic domain.

6.4.14 In addition, it is an educational imperative that the expectations that teachers have of deaf learners be raised to support deaf learners in their quest of becoming confident and successful cross-cultural explorers in mainstream schools and schools for the Deaf.

6.4.15 This research affirms the important role that the narratives that deaf persons have constructed from their earlier educational experiences in shaping their identity later in their lives.

6.4.16 Although the shift required in moving from a culturally hearing identity to a Deaf identity remains vast, there is evidence from this study that there is less intolerance of deaf persons changing their identity.

In challenging the orthodox medical-social model binary perspective of defining deaf as rigid construct, this research has confirmed the reality of fluid identities of DeaF lives. This implies that the discipline of psychology should broaden its understanding of the complexity of identity development of deaf persons beyond the narrow, linear positivist definition of deaf identity as a static conceit. Instead, this research validates the multiplicity of deaf identities, such as hard-of-hearing; deaf; oral Deaf; Deaf and DeaF that goes beyond simply placing deaf persons into convenient, manageable categories.

What this study has shown is that the lives of deaf persons are rich and meaningful and display an understanding of themselves that is not limited by their disability, family background, educational placement and educational experiences. Thus, there is opportunity for more research on understanding the cultural landscape of diversity and dignity of deaf identities through the stories of the lives of deaf persons in a fluid, and complex post-modern society.

This, in turn requires that educators relinquish the false, intolerant perception of deaf learners as inadequate or inferior. From this research, it is not acceptable classroom practice to treat deaf learners as 'passengers' (Van Dijk, 2003: 70) where teachers enforce a culture of 'passivity' (Freiere) based on the teachers lack of understanding of deaf learner's needs and a communication barrier. These narratives have confirmed the extent of the struggle of deaf learners against social prejudices towards difference through tolerant dialogue of the needs of the deaf. Thus, despite the foregrounding of 'inclusion' in the educational praxis, there remain significant barriers of exclusion resulting in deaf learner's identity being constructed as a marginal discourse. Consequently, this study challenges educational policy to reassess how the existing policy of inclusion impacts on the identity of deaf learners through its reliance on increasingly out of date medical–social model discourses.

The findings support the need to broaden the understanding of parents and educators in particular in recognising the inherent dignity of deaf identity through deaf ontologies and epistemologies that are not necessarily the same as hearing ways of belonging or knowing the world. Significantly, the theme of 'voice' in this research has emphasized the need to discover the voice of deaf persons and in particular of DeaF persons, through their narratives both as an individual and as a community to be expressed. These voices need to be respectfully heard by other communities, in particular, their teachers and their families. This study recommends that the perception and understanding that parents and educators have of deaf children needs to be re-evaluated and broadened where appropriate. The current perception that parents hold of deaf children needs to repudiate the 'false division between hearing/deaf and Deaf identities (May, 1987; Shakespeare,

2004). Instead of maintaining this outdated and oppressive and often antagonistic binary, a paradigm shift is required by parents and teachers in which a fluid construction of DeaF identities is recognised through cross-cultural dialogue (Ohna; Preston; Glickman; Mcilroy) between hearing and Deaf communities. It is imperative that parents have a deeper understanding of the needs and choices available to their deaf child to fit into both worlds.

Finally, this research offers deaf persons a template for critical self-reflection concerning their quest in mastering identity related struggles. There is support from this study for Ohna's 'Deaf in my own way' phase that has considerable explanatory power of the reality of Deaf lives as narratives situated in the separate cultural space between deaf and Deaf identity. Furthermore, the researcher concurs with Ohna in offering a post-modern de-constructive reading of identity of deaf persons as a vehicle of negotiating meaning in an often ambiguous world of diverse identities.

6.5 Reflections

It is important to note that this study has several limitations. The findings of this study are based on the narrative accounts of these selected participants with regard to their identity as a deaf person. Up to now, research on Deaf identities in South Africa, with a population of approximately 46 million hearing of which at least 4 million are deaf persons (SA Census 2001), has not been conducted. Although this study deliberately drew participants from a wide range of age, gender, socio-economic, cultural and educational and linguistic backgrounds, it is not the intention of this study to make generalizations to the larger hearing and deaf populations. Therefore, any generalizations made by the researcher or reader need to made with caution. In light of this, conducting a longitudinal research study could be of considerable value to increasing our understanding of deaf identities through the developmental changes of their lifetime. Also, the researcher is aware that most of the participants who volunteered to participant

could be traced through various schools, and Deaf related social networks and organizations.

In addition, since this study explored the educational experiences through their narratives, there is a risk that the information that participants had to recall may have changed over time (Leigh, 1999). In the same way, caution needs to be taken to avoid taking the narratives out of the context of the interview. Hence, the narratives from the interview should be seen a snapshot into the lives of each participant (Genus, 2003), from which some of the key moments have been selected for elaboration in the interview session.

An unusual and prominent feature of this study has been the role of the researcher in the researcher as a participant (S-1). Being a subject in this study provided an auto-ethnographic point of view in which the experiences of the ethnographer were framed as a narrative for analysis against the narratives of other deaf participants. This is not saying that the researcher had chosen to validate his 'voice' above the narratives of others. But rather, this auto-ethnography aims to introduce a complimentary voice or point of reference as a deaf researcher to the collection and analysis of a variety of deaf participants. While some of the educational and identity related experiences are familiar to the researcher, there were some participants whose experiences extended beyond the researcher's scope, but remain within the broad deaf ontology. Using the auto-ethnographer's educational experiences, and the 'coming-out-of the-closet' metaphor of identity transition, an assumption was made that the process, in particular, of the struggle to establishing/ constructing a deaf identity has largely been unexplored in research studies by researchers as an interrogative insider. At the same time, the researcher as auto-ethnographer is aware of the danger of projecting a biased Self and subjectivity onto the texts of others by 'going native' (Currie, 1998) and losing perspective as an researcher. To protect this study from slipping into the rhetoric of subjectivity, MacLure (2003: 132) positions the life-history interview as a managed occasion for those involved to 'unmask themself' and even for some participants to apply a mask that fits their current perception of themselves. Thus, these narratives are an analysis of the personalized accounts of the process of 'unmasking/masking of oneself in the context of

being deaf from the perspective of a deaf researcher. Although the ethnographer intentionally avoided applying themes to the unanalyzed data, there exists a possibility that the themes that the researcher selected later during the second stage of data analysis may be lacking in accuracy. To counter the possibility of this bias being introduced by the researcher, the interpretation of data into thematic clusters was conducted after the analysis of each participant's narratives in order to allow the data to emerge as plausible clusters of meaning (Miles &Habermas 1994: 248) and thus 'to speak for itself'. Thereafter, the researcher was in the position as participant to contribute complimentary or supplementary data to enrich the discussion.

6.6 Final comments/ Conclusion

The findings of this study have endorsed the critical role of education on deaf identity on this generation and the next generation of deaf learners. Yet it is imperative that within the education context that the dignity of deaf learners is recognized for their unique deaf identity and cultural spaces that they can occupy. This study has established that a static and rigid definition of deaf identity is no longer tenable. Instead, a more nuanced and complex landscape of identities than previously defined has emerged. Essentially, it taken an insider's (oral DeaF) point of view to explore and authenticate the quest for identity. This is not to say that the researcher has reached/ achieved an permanent identity or that the quest of identity is complete, nor is this the only way that identity can be constructed, but rather, this is illustrates how the concept of deaf identity has changed and moved beyond the 'victim-hood' (Russell, 1999) of earlier oppressive discourses into the dialogue with self and other Deaf and with others, that validates ones identity as a deaf person.

The overall purpose of this study is the focus on understanding how the identity of deaf persons is constructed through their formative educational experiences. This journey of discovery of the identity as deaf persons, is an interactive process between a (deaf) person and their social context, which is in line with Breivik's (2006) understanding that 'deaf identity is always in the making' and reinforces the assertion that deaf identity is

not a quest for settlement, but an elaborate and often complex quest for belonging. From this study it is clear that this quest for belonging of deaf persons has important implications of teachers and parents in providing bases of supportive dialogue to facilitate 'healthy' (Hadjikakou & Nikolaraizi 2007) bilingual-bicultural DeaF identities.

To conclude, a characteristic feature of deaf narratives is the precedence placed on the person telling the story, over the delivery of an entertaining punchline at the end. In this way, the complexity, ambiguities and richness of deaf/Deaf/DeaF lives are revealed as the narrator tells their story. Similarly, Isak Dinesen thoughtfully sums up the connection between identity and narratives as:

> 'To be a person, you have to have a story to tell'

Thus, it is through these stories that the identity of deaf persons are voiced and researchers, parents and teachers have much to discover about what it means to be deaf through exploring these narratives. For as Pascal (1662) reminds us that:

> 'Oppression can only survive through silence'

When we push back the oppressive forces of ignorance, miscommunication and disconnectedness, we empower deaf people to construct their identity with dignity. The challenge now is not to keep quiet, but find our voice and tell our stories.

6.7 Postscript

A frequent question I was asked by friends, peers, family and deaf friends was ‘How it your Masters going? Yet, as an ethnographic study into the lives of a range of deaf persons, I found it difficult to maintain distance as a researcher. This topic of deaf identity invited me as an anthropologist to lose my identity in becoming as close to Deaf identity as possible. At the beginning, this seemed a possible outcome of this reflective engagement with Deaf participants, initially, I was terrified of letting go of the identity I had as an ‘oral deaf’ person. It was at that time I felt certain that a Deaf identity was the identity that would fit me and perceived it as an ideal identity that I needed to attain as a deaf person. However, I found out during this study that my identity does not fit neatly into this category. Thus, this research charts the difficult process of the researcher’s transition from a culturally hearing identity through a Deaf identity, and into finding a sense of belonging within the oral bi-bi DeaF identity. This is not to say that all deaf persons should be required to follow the same process of identity, but rather, I discovered through the interviews that each deaf participant has their own story to tell of themselves as a deaf person. Therefore, I learned later to answer the question with the response that this research has changed how I see myself and other deaf people and our stories are essential to understanding our identity. As I shared and reflected on my narrative, I found that a reciprocal exchange of information often happened during the interview sessions and intensified the exploration into my own DeaF identity and enrich the data. I have realised that although it would have been easier for me to maintain distance from participants by conducting myself as a hard-of hearing researcher. It is unlikely that this strategy would have generated the connection and respect from participants and the subsequent rich data from being a reflective insider with the participants in co-exploring the paradoxes and struggles and joys of deaf identities together. Looking back at the beginning of this study, I could not have anticipated describing myself now as an oral DeaF person. Being an oral DeaF researcher has allowed me to be comfortable with the dialogue with myself and open to the diversity of narratives from deaf persons, regardless of whether they are told by hard-of-hearing/deaf/Deaf or DeaF persons.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix A Invitation to Participate

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Dear potential participant 20 June 2007

A study of the impact of education on Deaf Identity.

I am doing research on deaf identity. This research explores the relationship of educational experiences on the development of identity of deaf persons. In order to explore how this expression of deaf identity occurs, I will be making use of narratives (life stories). This study is conducted as fulfillment of the M Ed degree in Deaf Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

As a d/Deaf person, I am inviting you to participate in this pioneering research study on deaf identity. Your participation will involve:

- Completing a personal information form. This will take about 10 to 20 minutes to fill out.
- A filmed interview session that will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes.
- And a filmed group session (of about 8-10 deaf people) focusing on the shared issues of identity.

I would like you to know that your participation in this research study is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the study at any time. All data from this study are confidential and will only be used for research purposes. We will endeavour at all times to ensure that your privacy is respected.

Although there are no foreseeable risks to you as a participant, the interview and focus group session will include questions regarding identity development. If you feel that questions of this type would upset you, please feel free to decline from participation in this study at any time.

Thank you for your assistance
Researcher: Guy Mcilroy
Contact number: 082 264 2798 (sms) (011) 717-3746(work)
Supervisor Dr Claudine Storbeck 083 324-1588

7.2 Appendix B <u>Informed Consent for Participation in Research Study</u>

This study explores the relationship between educational experiences and identity development of deaf persons. It is conducted as fulfillment of the requirements for the researcher's Masters in Education degree (M Ed) by dissertation in Deaf Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

There are no foreseeable risks with this research. The main potential benefit is in contributing to greater understanding of this topic. No costs or payment are associated with participating in this study. Should any discomfort arise regarding questions addressed in the interview session, participants can contact the number on the letterhead to ask questions or discuss their concerns with the researcher and/or supervisor of this research project.

I (name of Participant, please print) _____agree to participate in this research study and I understand that:

1 The nature of my participation includes a background questionnaire and a filmed interview session and a filmed group session.
2 The time expected for this study is about 60 minutes.
3 My participation is entirely voluntary. I may terminate my participation At any time without penalty.
4 I give my consent for the interview and group session to be filmed.
5 I give my consent for a SA Sign Language Interpreter to interpret during the filming of the interview and group session.
6 All my data are confidential. All research data and instruments and analyses will be stored in Deaf Education (locked storeroom) and primary data will be destroyed (5) five years after completion of the study.
7 All data are for research purposes only.
8 Data may be used confidentially presented in research related conferences.
9 If I have any questions about this research, or if I would like to receive a copy of the findings of the completed study, I can contact the researcher using the address on this letterhead.

Name of Researcher: Guy Mcilroy
Address of Researcher: WL3 Williams Block Deaf Education Wits School of Education, Parktown, Johannesburg.

<u>Signature of Participant:</u> _____
<u>Date:</u> **<u>Place</u>**: _____

<u>Signature of Researcher:</u> _____
<u>Date</u> **<u>Place:</u>**_____

7.3 Appendix C Letter to Principals

Dear Principal 17 September 2007

Notice of research on the impact of education on deaf identities.

This letter is to inform you that a pioneering research study is being conducted on deaf identity. This research explores how the identity of deaf persons is constructed through their educational experiences.

This study is conducted as fulfillment of the M Ed degree in Deaf Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

The participants are selected according the these criteria:

- Participants are between 18-55 years old,
- Participants are deaf,
- Participants may have attended a school for the Deaf at some stage,
- Participants who live in the greater Gauteng metropolitan area,
- Participants are willing to share their experiences in terms identity development,
- Participants consent to filming of the interview.

Since the participants being selected are post-school participants, there is no need for the researcher to visit to schools for the Deaf. This letter is to inform you that a research study on deaf identity is being conducted on a sample of about 10 deaf participants.

As a deaf person and researcher, I aware of the need to handle information from participants sensitively and confidentially. Therefore, the names of participants and schools will be omitted. In addition, it needs to stressed that this study is not a comparative study between different schools for the Deaf nor a comparison with regular schools.

If you have any queries, please contact me

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Guy Mcilroy
Contact number: 082 264 2798 (sms) (011) 717-3750/1 (work/fax)
Supervisor Dr Claudine Storbeck 083 324-1588

7.4 Appendix D: Schedule of Interview Questions

1 Tell us a few of the significant things for you about being deaf

2 When you were young, how did you communicate with your family, and friends? And how did you feel about this communication?

3 Tell us about the school experiences that had a significant impact on your development as a deaf person.

4 From your perspective as a deaf learner tell us about the positive contribution that the school/s you attended have made on your life.

5 Tell us about how you communicated with teachers and classmates and how you felt in your classes.

6 Tell us about your social life at school and now.

7 How would you describe yourself now?

8 How do you feel about your identity as a deaf person?

9 Is there anything else that you would like discuss on this topic?

7.5 Appendix E: **Personal Information form**

Confidential

PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM

A Research Study on Deaf Identity

Please complete the following personal information:

1 Your full name: _____

2 Your Gender Please circle: Male/ Female

3 Date of Birth___/___/_____Place of Birth: _____

4 Are you? (Please Circle which is applicable: Single/Engaged/Married/Widowed)

5 Home Address: _____

_____

6 Postal Address: _____

_____

7 Cell phone: _____ E-mail:_____

8 Schools you have attended

1._____ (from_____to_____)
2._____ (from_____to_____)
3._____ (from_____to_____)

9 Further education/courses you have completed

1._____ (where_____date_____)
2._____ (where_____date_____)
3._____ (where_____date_____)

10 What is your current occupation? Student/mother/work full-time/working

Part-time/ unemployed/ other (please specify) _____

11 Do you know the cause of your deafness? If yes, please specify

12 Is your hearing loss stable or progressive in one or both ears? _____

---

13 Do you wear hearing aid(s)/ cochlear implant(s) yes ☐ no ☐

Why /why not? _____

_____

14 Are your friends mainly (please tick a box):

a. Hearing friends ☐

b. Deaf friends ☐

c. A mixture of hearing and deaf friends ☐

15 History of deafness in your family

	Language used at home	Hearing / deaf
Mother		
Father		
Brother/s		
Sister/s		
Grandmother		
Grandmother		
Grandfather		
Grandfather		

16 Tick as many of the following words that best describe you as a deaf person:
(You may add word(s) that are not in this table in the space provided)

	Male		Deaf		Proud
	Female		Hard of Hearing		Lonely
	Disabled		Deaf		Frustrated
	Mother		Hearing Impaired		Confused
	Father		Oral deaf		Secure
	Child		Undecided		Isolated
			Bilingual/Bicultural		Confident
					Angry

Thank you for helping us to find out more about you.
Researcher: Guy Mcilroy Supervisor: Dr Claudine Storbeck

7.6 Appendix F: **Fieldnotes Template for interviews**

Checklist for interview and Fieldnotes on Deaf Identity

1 How comfortable were you and the participant during the interview?
1 2 3 4 5

2 How well did the participant interact/bond with the interviewer?
1 2 3 4 5

3 How well did the participant answer the questions?
1 2 3 4 5

4 How well did the Participant stay on the topic?
1 2 3 4 5

5 What barriers were there during the interview session?

6 What where some of the most significant words/concepts/signs that the Participant used?

7 Did you notice anything that the participant avoiding discussing
Why?

8 Which of the questions did the participant have difficulty answering?

9 What did you notice about the participant's body language?

10 Comment on the pauses and rate of speech/signing

11 What else was significant to remember about this interview session?

7.7 Appendix G Participant S-1 Auto-ethnographic interview

1. Tell us a few of the significant things for you about being a deaf person.

You know, I often felt that being deaf was bad, and that I stood out of the crowd like a sore thumb, but as I grew up, actually, it was not a case of simply growing up but rather of discovering for myself that I am not alone and being deaf is not the end of the world since I found Deaf people who proudly affirmed themselves to be Deaf. This revelation blew my mind. I wondered how anyone could choose to be deaf and happy. I mean I was rarely happy being deaf, sure I could turn off my hearing aids during exams or sleep in car without all the noise, but rather than feeling content, this somehow highlighted my difference to others who did not know what I couldn't hear.

I remember the first sound I hear with hearing aids when I was 6 years old in the audiologist's room. It was the harsh sound of him hitting on the green glass ashtray on his desk with pen, it was agony and wonderful as it was a step into the world of the hearing.

I remember getting the digital power hearing aid from my wife and hearing much more sounds clearly.

I remember meeting Deaf people at church for the first time and slowly, weekly (sic) changing in my heart towards them as I saw for myself something that had been absent from my life despite having received a really good education and opportunities in life beyond school. I saw the power of their Sign Language to transform their experiences of being deaf and silence into a language of the heart and soul of the community of Deaf persons. I saw for myself the pride in signing as it belonged to the community.

I remember beginning to learn to Sign in the workshops and meeting Deaf people. I joined them in painting the room for the Deaf at church; it was at this moment, I started becoming a deaf person rather than a hearing-impaired person. This was a hugely significant moment in my life. I mean, I grew up as a hard-of-hearing person and had never met Deaf people before and was terrified of 'them' in case I was also one of them.

But when I meet them I found they were far more accepting of me that I thought possible because they allowed me to see myself as they saw me and I was so attracted by the bond of shared silence that it blew my mind and misconceptions away. It was a small core group of deafies that invited me to sit with them. Having hearing aids helped to break the ice. After that moment, I felt privileged to be seen as one of them and sit in front row with them from then on and we sat together after church for coffee and socialised, while I slowly learned more about Deaf and Signing. I realised that I was not a hearing person trying to be deaf, but a hoh person discovering that I am deaf and it is ok. These two years at church with the Deaf group, it was both a tight group in terms of using Sign and a loose group that eventually fell apart was profoundly influential in my 'coming-out' as a deaf person.

A major consequence of finding and joining this group was discovery of my wife at church. Up to then, I had not been successful in the dating game with hearing girls. While I with the Deaf group, I wondered if I was looking in the wrong place (hearing community) while I understand what it is like to be deaf. Subsequently, I found a deaf girl and we started dating. We got married and she had cochlear implant recently and doing so well. Our twin girls are a blessing to us and their hearing and speech is normal, but they know that daddy and mommy are oral deaf and they fit in well with deaf and hearing friends and family.

More recently, I remember requesting and using an interpreter at Wits in a lecture and at a meeting for first time and feeling both conscious of myself as a deaf person but also pleased that I made the effort to understand much more.

The DTV interview on Sign Language was an opportunity to try out both my Sign Language skills and declare that I am Deaf on TV. This was doubly stressful, but a useful part of the journey. I back at the episodes shown weekly for a few months and I cringe now at the ineptitude of my signs and narrowness and lack of depth to the questions. Nevertheless, this was all part of the growing-up and try-ing out. I was delighted to have done this. However, I also discovered painfully that I am not really 'Deaf'. In addition,

this precipitated a crisis. I was devastated that I was lost between the two worlds, and adrift and alone in terms of who I was. I did not feel I belonged in either world and was stuck in this place of no-identity. This was terrifying. Once I confronted the reality of where and who I was, as well as who I was not then there was new opportunity for growth into the oral DeaF identity.

The conferences in Scotland (ISEC 2004, Worcester (MHD2005) and in particular Emperor's Palace (EDHI 2007) played a powerful role in defining myself as a deaf person. The EDHI presentation was a public affirmation of my identity as an oral deaf person. This was a scary moment, but also a moment for which I am especially proud of who I am because the agonies and ecstasies of being an oral DeaF person needed to openly, publicly and powerfully declared.

2. *When you were young, how did you communicate with your family, teachers, and friends? In addition, how did you feel about this communication?*

Before I had hearing-aids, I don't really remember, except that a lot loud talking/shouting from my mom and dad. I have to ask them about this.

I know that without aids I cannot hear them and struggle to lipread them, you know, 'just wait a moment while I plug it…' and they would patiently wait for me. However, I sometimes would not put in or would fool them that I can follow, not hear, or was too tired/it was too much effort to pause them and put in hearing-aids. On the whole with hearing-aids I hear both my parents well enough to have conversations, but I know that I would tire quickly of trying to hear and lipread to supplement, no one taught me this, A lot of backchanelling or reframing of the message, since I often misunderstood the point or instruction which needed correction. I suppose that at times, this is annoying and makes me feel like a child, but with maturity, I have learned that it is essential to be accurate and in synchrony with the other person, especially parents.
Therefore, sometimes conversations would be slower or faster than I would like.

I remember that I could usually follow struggled with family friends, whom we met weekly. Actually, it would be truer to say that I heard only half (HOH), especially if they talked too quickly, or not looking at me while talking, or someone else talking at the same time. I remember watching films as a family with other friends and just having to it quietly through the movie unless it was an action film, and the same experience of loneliness occurred at drive-ins, as the speakers never helped me to follow the plot, the sound was too soft and distorted.

When I was young, I had only a few close friends who seemed to understand and make an extra effort to help, and especially when I looked lost, because I would not know exactly what I missed, and how important it was.

With teachers, I remember that overall, the teachers I had, particularly in Prep school been deliberately particular about how they talked to me. Just like the wide range of people, there were also teachers who were through no fault of their own really who were difficult to hear or lip read, or were simply poor speakers, I remember a handful of such teachers and also learned that although it is not fair to judge a book by its cover, so too with some poor speakers, as their sharp mind would shine through in some other way. However, it was always easier for me to connect with the strong and clear speakers, as friends and teachers. Unfortunately, with some of the poor teachers, I remember simply switching off in order to keep the status quo, since there was no hope of training them to adapt their voice and way of speaking to my needs, so little of no connection happened with these teachers. Tough…

I found it funny that teachers were so worried about my hearing loss getting worse, this never seemed to worry me, I mean , I could not hear, end of story, I did not feel sorry for myself until teachers made me aware of my loss. But I know that I hated not following the chatter in class and that I was somehow different, Why?

3. *Tell us about how your school experiences significantly impacted on your development as a deaf person.*

I suppose the best place to start is the first day: not that I really remember, but it was important for me nonetheless. I cried the first day, I guess that I did not really understand why I was there nor why my mom was abandoning me there, or why I had did hearing aids and others not. I was not ready for this day, but it could not be delayed indefinitely.

I remember being teased at school; I was called dumbo because of my big ears, made bigger and more distinctive with bulky behind-the-ear hearing-aids. I ignored them, but was lonely inside. I only had 1 strong friend who understood and stood up for me when I could not hear or was left out. Sadly, he died twelve years ago. Because of these hearing-aids, I was terrified of being bog washed.

I remember a pleasant experience of Chapel on Fridays in which the Head Master specifically made allowance for me to always sit on the side pew 3 metres from him. This was great for me because I knew exactly what he was talking about, and a grade 5 this was an honour too. Fridays was always his opportunity to preach about moral issues like leadership. I felt so privileged to be spoken to directly by the headmaster because he always looked at me. I did not care about others around me, in fact, I reveled in simply staring and getting every word from him until I was exhausted from watching, that's my little story.

Let me talk about what hearing aids did to me at school: at that time I wore two large behind the ear Danavox hearing-aids and I wished that I were a girl so that I could grow my hair long over them. Consequently, I was always conscious of these hearing aids as well as dependence on sound through them. I was paranoid of them getting wet in the pool or someone simply sitting/standing on them in my clothes as I learned that I could not trust teachers to look after them, as they generally did not remember to care for my hearing aids well. These aids run on old style mercury batteries that went flat in about 3 days, if you squish the batteries the mercury came out, cool. However, this meant that I

was often reminded of my hearing loss at the most inopportune times in class or on sports field. I look back now and I see the fear of silence I had back then, I had to hear, because it was a hearing world and I had to make the adjustment to fit in. Therefore, I never really felt that I belonged and tried so hard to find friends and socialise. I was an outsider watching others. That hurt me a lot and often. So when I had to stop and change batteries I was reminded of my status of being an outsider, disabled. So to when the moulds were blocked with ear wax. This was often insidious because slowly the sound died out, but the battery was not flat. Therefore, I would be noticeable in class fiddling with batteries. Then it would become obvious that the problem was not the battery, and I needed a pin or small sharp thin object to clear, and had to excuse myself to find something. In addition, I hated new moulds as these hurt and the old moulds whistled. No one else had to do this so I felt awful and deaf.

Later, in Std 7 I got new hearing aids. Now I had the latest in-the-ear hearing aids. With hindsight, this was a case of 2 steps forward and 3 steps backwards. Why? Well, from an aesthetic point of view the greatest benefit was that these smaller in the ear hearing-aids were far less noticeable. It was wonderful for people not to notice that I needed hearing aids hearing impaired. I did not look deaf, at first. But. I thought for ten years that I wore these aids that I could hear enough/adequately. Therefore, it was a shock to discover at an audiological test by another Audiologist that these aids were more than 20 dB too weak for me. It was not a case of my ears having deteriorated, but an incorrect fitment. So in light of this, I became aware of the real extent of how much I was missing at school and decided courageously to have the next set of hearing aids that fit my hearing loss regardless of how deaf these make me look This was a turning point. Now I was learning to accept my hearing loss and make a decision for myself to rather wear the aids that help me instead of worrying about what others see and think about me, after all, I reasoned at the time, the fact that I cannot hear is my problem if you cannot accept what these aids look like and what they do for me is now your problem.

In prep/primary school, I absolutely hated listening tests, spelling tests, comprehension tests and orals. In particular, I hated it with a passion when teachers dictated notes for the

class to copy down, because I always came last and came home in tears because I had been tactlessly reminded that I could not hear.

I remember my grade 1 teacher and grade standard 2 and 5 teachers with fond memories. Looking back at their reports is always brings back pleasant memories. A comment that each wrote extensively was: 'Guy is trying hard' I liked that. Really I was trying my best and working hard to please others and be noticed for what I can do rather than drawing attention to my handicap. However, 'Trying hard' is not always the best or most effective or even the only strategy available. I have found that more effort does not necessarily solve the problem but often leads to frustration and self-loathing. The Std 7 Prize for Industry was a highlight and reward for trying hard. I remember being so proud, as if I had won the top student prize. I thought 'Phew, I can do it'. Cynically, it could be argued that this prize is for weak students or second –best who try so hard so, 'Ag shame, let's give him something for effort'. No. I was so proud of being amongst the top students that day that this cloud of doubt was blown away by the triumph of achievement. This was a constant reminder to me to persevere, regardless of what others say. Although I was at a top private school, my goal was to get into university. Therefore, it was with great relief when I saw my matric results and passed my weakest subjects Maths and Afrikaans to attain a university exemption pass. At that time, it was ironic that I wanted to be a psychologist, which demanded good hearing. That is another story

4. *From your perspective as a deaf learner, tell us about the positive contribution the school/s you attended have made to your life.*

The biggest thing that I got out of school was learning to read and speech well. In fact, this is an area that I am often complimented on; 'but you speak so well…' Now looking back now, this is a double-edged sword that also kept me a prisoner to the world of the hearing, but at arms length from being fully accepted or successful in hearing terms.

What other benefits did this school experience provide? Um…I looked and behaved like a hearing person to the extent that I believed that I was almost hearing, I always had to do

more, the hearing problem was my problem and I must not dare not impose my awful problem and inadequacies on others. Therefore, I believed this illusion of 'nearly-hearing' and drowned my sorrows, frustration and lack of understanding in class in books and I read and read. The library became my best friend. Later, I found this quote by CS Lewis touched my heart: 'To read is to know that you are not alone'.

5. *Tell us about how you communicated with teachers and classmates and how you felt in your classes.*

I remember a particularly bad experience in a Grade 7 English class. The teacher was trying to get me to say a paragraph from a novel with great gusto and emotion just as he had read it out to the class. Since I was sitting at the front of the class, he chose me to start reading out aloud first, but he was furious that I was not doing it right. The problem was that he did not know and understand that even with hearing–aids I still could not hear the differences in tone so I did not understand what he was trying to get me to do. The more he shouted at me the more confused and lost I felt in front of the class. This was such a humiliating experience that could have been avoided if he knew more about being deaf (and I hated his class after that and sat in the back!).

I can recall another experience: in Grade 10 Life Orientation class. I remember being inquisitive about the topics in class, such as relationships, (in an all-boys school, who would not) etc. However, within a few minutes of the lesson, I would often be lost because the topic would veer off into an open-ended discussion in the classroom, and I would be left behind even though I sat at the front while the interesting discussions of incidental learning bounced around the classroom behind me. If it was not in the textbook for me to follow the lesson, I found that missed out unless I asked the teacher questions directly, and received a direct answer from him. As a result, these lessons drove me to read extensively as a survival strategy to build an in-depth knowledge that did not rely on my partial hearing. It was at about this time that I became an avid reader since books do not mumble or contain a cacophony of 30 voices talking all at once.

However, a team of teachers who inspired me. For my Biology teachers, I think it was their teaching methodology that connected well with my needs. What they did was give us extensive notes on the board/OHP/notes which they explained carefully afterwards. An extensive discussion session followed from this foundation, and I was able to keep up with the class and ask questions based on what I learning about. In addition, for learning the teachers made the effort to repeat the questions from around the class for all of us. This meant that I was not excluded from learning in these classes and was motivated to do well in this subject.

In addition, at my school there was a science teacher who wore small hearing aids. Even though his hearing loss was less severe than mine was, this teacher did not encourage me in any way to be proud of my identity as a deaf person. In fact, he probably hindered me since he conducted himself as a person with a hearing-loss and told the class repeatedly that he is not deaf. At that time, it was not acceptable practice to meet deaf learners. After all, they are deaf. End of discussion. Consequently, I did not feel proud to be deaf and continued to see myself as hearing-impaired learner struggling to fit in. I saw him struggling in the class to be a 'hearing' person in similar ways to me but from point of view of a teacher and it was not a pretty sight. This explains why despite both of us having a similar hearing loss, I never connected with him as he portrayed for me the kind of false person I did not want to become. Looking back now, this is the moment in my life in which I could have gained so much from a deaf adult/teacher who was not terrified by his disability in the hearing world like this HoH teacher. As a result, I did not meet Deaf persons and Deaf community until well after matric. Therefore, I wonder what would have happened if…

'But you speak so well!'

True. I have noticed that the clause 'for a deaf person' has been left out. The proficiency I have in speech is the result of many years of intensive and repetitive speech therapy from an early age, supplemented later with more speech work later to iron out bad speaking habits. But I am Deaf. I began to acquire Sign Language after my school years and it is

through Sign Language that I have discovered that being Deaf is a core dimension of my identity.

Yet, as an oral Deaf person, I have realised that teachers need to be aware of how easy and common practice it is to pretend/bluff that I was following everything in class (otherwise known as the 'nod of incomprehension'). Ultimately, I knew that I did not really understand the classroom discourse; consequently, I lived in fear of teachers who could ask me a question at any moment since learning comes from extended conversational interactions through persistent and meaningful questions and answers. From past experience, I know that this 'bluffing' strategy would often sink me with an incorrect answer given based solely on the patchy information that I have as well as the fact that I would often be several steps behind them in thinking things through while I was desperately struggling to put the pieces together into a cohesive meaningful unit. Even with lip-reading, often used as a back-up skill because it can pull me through by filling in some of the gaps, I will not accurately know what is going on. By bluffing/pretending (by politely nodding and smiling) I am adrift in silence and an unintelligible flood of sounds then encounter the teacher and class laughing at my ridiculous answer. With my discovery of my identity as an oral Deaf person, there is other option to bluffing. When I stand up, literally or figuratively, and say 'I missed that, please repeat for me, I cannot hear you' I have found that I am proudly reclaimed my identity as a Deaf person. I have different communicative needs to other learners that teachers need to know about and work around together.

6. *Tell us about your social life at school.*

I think that I have already covered this. I did not fit in.

7. *How would you describe yourself now?*

Now. I am oral DeaF person this is an adventure to self discovery and the metaphor of a book captures this identity process well.

Looking back at the journey now, I can see a big difference in who I am. It is somewhat in accurate to describe myself as Deaf as Sign Language is not my first language, although I was born deaf and for the first 5 years I grew up deaf. I was enculturated as a hearing person. I mean, I chose a hi-fi as a 21 st present, so I could not be more hearing-centric than that. But I was always striving to fit in.

Now I am much more comfortable with the term 'oral DeaF' and have taken the D and F to explain that I belong in Deaf community as an oral deaf person, who speaks well and Signs, which I prefer with our Deaf friends and co-exists in hearing world as oral DeaF who speaks, and upfront about using an interpreter and hearing-aids. This is where I am right now.

8. How do you feel about your identity as a deaf person?

At the moment, I feel good. Being an oral deaf person fits with me. This is the cultural space between and amongst two different worlds, Deaf and hearing to which I am a citizen and hold a passport to each. Although dual nationality is useful but it also has its perils from perceived divided loyalty. My parents have followed my progress and this transition has happened smoothly. I am pleased that by choosing to be DeaF I have not alienated them by being extremist in my stance. I understand where they are coming from, and that the choices they made were appropriate for that time. Moreover, they know the joy that I have found in discovery of my (deaf) self, which has enlightened them about Deaf culture, and people, which has been aided by my (deaf) wife.

I think it would be presumptuous of me to claim that I have arrived and that my identity is now resolved and settled. It will be interesting to see what happens next, but I feel now that there is a lot of adventure left in this book called oral DeaF.

Looking back, I can see a lot of progress in 'coming-out' as a deaf person which I would never have dream about or seen in positive terms. When I realised what and how much I was missing by living this lie of being a hearing person as well as the enormous emotional energy required to sustain this illusion of self. It has not been an easy journey,

but like many journeys, I am so pleased to have ‘taken the road less travell’d, because it made all the difference’.

I am pleased that I visited the school that I taught at for 10 years. When I spent time in one of the teacher’s grade ten class, I realised how far along this adventure I have come now. So much so that I do not want to go back there. It would be foolish. I saw how much I miss when learners asked questions; I am always on the back foot. No, this is not an option anymore. This is where and who I want to be.

Finding and choosing my identity as a deaf person has been wonderful. Now I feel much more content with myself and less stressed because I have found a cultural (Deaf) and linguistic (SASL) space where I belong. I enjoy being deaf with Deaf and deaf with hearing, it is a paradox but I am being true to self.

9 Is there anything else you would like to add to the above?

No.

7.8 Appendix H Summary of Interviews and Fieldnotes

Participant A

The researcher found that conducting an auto-ethnographic interview raised the following issue. Standing in front of a camera alone and working through each of the interview questions resulted in a extensive but less rigorous, stream of consciousness, akin to the genre of blogging, but difficult to synthesize video data. As a result, this data was scrapped and the researcher transcribed his responses directly into a written format. This activity was more successful in capturing the ethnographer's narratives in a more focused manner as the writing process involved writing to an audience. It could be argued that this format is unfair, as the ethnographer avoided the possible distortion of data from the effect of standing in front of a camera and giving their story. Despite the careful consideration, sometimes the way a story is told is different to what the person was attempting to convey due to anxiety of being 'on-camera'. That may be a valid point to mention, but the interview sessions were always conducted with the interviewer present, thus eliminating the potential flaw of the participant simply saying anything which is likely to occur if there was nobody else present to guide and edit the session.

Participant B

As the first filmed interview of this study, the researcher chose to remain close to the 8 interview questions. In hindsight the semi-structured questions were there to serve the interviewer in guiding the participant through the interview so that the interview continued in a conversational and structured manner around the topic of deaf identity.

Participant S-2 was helpful in the sense that she gave a lot of information, and being in similar place as me in terms of identity, which helped us to talk easily about the struggles of our identity.

I found that it took a while to settle into the role of interviewer with her and I found that by working closely with the preset interview questions I was able to conduct the

interview professionally to steer the interview from becoming an extended informal conversation. Then it became easier to ask her questions that guided her answers on the questions I was had already set about asking her.

Having an interpreter present also made the interview both more formal and added some stress to the proceedings. But once the camera was rolling both of us settled into the interview and focused on giving good responses.

Participant S-2 spoke throughout interview as this was most comfortable language format for her. Although I could hear her well, I found having interpreter present to be a safe guard against me as researcher still missing information and having recourse to Sign Language I can verify the information and repair gaps more easily.

I asked her who she would recommend for this study for interview (snowball sampling). Participant S-2 suggested that I contact Participant S-3.

Length of interview: 28 minutes
19 October 2007 Friday 12 pm- 12:30

Prior to meeting with Participant S-2 again to verify transcript, I watched the video to refresh me on what she said and how the interview went and possible themes or areas to ask about. I scheduled a meeting with participant S-2 again since access to her was easy at arrange. Participant S-2 agreed to meet and we also discussed her experience of the interview, the weaknesses of interviews for this issue, and anything she would like to add.

Although this session was conducted off-camera, participant S-2 contributed meaningfully to this session with helpful comments in which she stressed the importance of survival at school (the Swiss Army knife is a good metaphor to describe her practical no-nonsense approach to life. She stressed that her strength is problem-solving, simply because she had to solve problems by herself and not rely on others, whom she may not

understand). And that she did not focus on working hard to impress teachers, but that many teachers had failed to understand her needs and although she said she was 'lazy at school, she found that she had to work hard just to pass as most of the information had gaps and she was exhausted form trying to figure out what happened in class, she stressed that she could not write and watch teachers. She was more interested in the social side of school. The teachers who expected nothing from her got nothing if they had low expectations of her. School provided her with good oral skills and found some were accepting of her and others not at all.

This was a useful session to consolidate what was covered in filmed interview.

Participant: S-3

A professional and polished interview. She knows what her own story was and had obviously told her story many times to many people. I wondered at the time to whom and where and how the story has changed a long the way, this is a point I can probe more when I see her in post-interview session.

Significantly, this was the researcher's first interview conducted in SASL, which marked an important moment for me as a deaf researcher who now identified with Deaf persons on their terms through their language of SASL which I now share with participants where possible and appropriate. Although this interview could have been done in spoken English, in which I know that she would have tried to work around. Instead, by allowing her to sign her answers and using interpreter as voice-over I felt strongly in control of the interview on our terms as two deaf people in conversation on the equal linguistic basis. Consequently, the interview was characterized by a relaxed and natural flow of communication, and resulted in a less rigid following of the questions.

I found that participant S-3 answered the questions willingly and she would reframe the question to understand what she was being asked and gain some valuable time to think before answering. As a result, her answers were well considered and she was in control and composed in what she signed. Due to her experience possibly as a teacher, and

having been in front of a camera, she avoided rushing through the questions which helped her responses to develop naturally.

Looking back at her responses in the filmed interview, I see that it is a testament to her strong sense of Deaf identity that she is both proud of her identity as Deaf person as well as her choice to be a deaf teacher back in a school for the deaf in which she serves a strong role model of a Deaf person, without bearing grudges against both the hearing world or school system for her past experiences of ignorance towards deaf people. She did not dwell on the negatives of school, but despite her fragmented school experiences (between SA and USA) she handled the integration of her school experiences well and articulated who she is now from these experiences and is proudly Deaf.

Participant S-4

Participant S-4 chose to sign instead of talking, as SASL is her first language. At first participant S-4 seemed shy and took about 5 minutes to relax during the session. It seemed that she was trying to give a good answer and therefore concentrated on giving substantial information in her answers.

However, participant S-4, possibly due to her young age or personal style, she preferred not to tap into her experiences at school directly. When prompted with what she remembers she would give a brief answer. Instead of undue concern on my part as researcher with her style of answer, it was preferable to allow her to continue with her answer with the aim of allowing her own stories to emerge in her own time and manner. I was aware of a need not to push her to answer the way that I would want from her. As a result, the interview was more naturally a conversation in form and provided global answers to the questions which required more frequent prompting that was anticipated. She seemed to prefer a more interactive interview style and waited for the next prompt or question from the interviewer/researcher.

Participant S-4 went to three different schools so had a various educational background which was also probed. Having deaf father added a distinctive bicultural/bilingual

characteristic to her family background and upbringing, and she stated that she can fit into hearing world if necessary, but make it clear that she prefers the Deaf world and being deaf, although she misses music, but loves Sign Language and feels empowered by her signing skills.

Participant S-5

Participant S-5 wears two in-the-ear hearing-aids and defined herself as Oral by choice. Thus, she chose to do the interview orally. My supervisor, Claudine Storbeck recommended her for this study. At the end the interview, in view of conducting a snowball sampling approach of data collection, participant S-5 recommended participant S-7 as a possible participant. She has a moderate to severe hearing loss and her speech is fairly clear and she heard questions well enough to conduct the interview.

Participant S-5's background is predominantly oral with no contact with deaf community or any deaf family members during school years. Her education was completed at 3 mainstream schools.

She described herself in personal background form as hard-of-hearing and claimed that she is 'not bothered' by her hearing loss, but finds that her hearing-aids 'make her life easier'.

During the interview, participant S-5 made a conscious effort to hear well and often requested repetition or clarity. Her strategy (and background) of being pleasant and gently approachable/likeable allowed the interview to exhibit a more relaxed and transparent style akin to a conversation. Consequently, she was willing to provide personal responses to the interview questions.

Participant S-6

Participant S-6 is an expert in medicine and was recommended by participant S-2 to participant in this study. The first question was answered broadly and then the interview proceeded and broadly covered the research topic. Although participant S-6 is deaf, she

prefers to talk and had an oral educational environment and history. Consequently, she preferred to talk, and acknowledged that she is not a signer. Since she spoke throughout, the researcher found the communication more deliberate and slower than usual, but clarity was achieved, except for one question in which she misheard and mis-understood. She answers were detailed and covered a lot of ground about herself as deaf person both growing up and how she became a doctor, against the odds and obstacles.

Participant S-7

Participant S-7 is a journalist who wears hearing aids and claims on the Personal Information form that she is a confident deaf/hearing-impaired person.

Participant S-7's speech was at characterized by the distinctive 'deaf voice' that was sometimes difficult to follow, and the use of the Sign Language interpreter was essential to repair the gaps in the video.

Participant S-7 preferred to do the interview orally, but was intrigued by the interpreter and the use of Sign Language.

As a result of being a journalist, the researcher found it easy to interview participant S-7 as she provided in depth and elaborate responses. She made a deliberate effort to understand the question before responding, which meant that there was considerable amount of time in clarifying the question. After that participant S-7 gave her answer in detail.

The researcher was aware that since both himself, as interviewer, and participant S-7 wear hearing-aids which provided a common ground. Once the best way of communicating between us been tried and established, then there was a platform for open discussion to occur. This took about 10 mins to establish and use and then the interview became noticeably more at ease and open.

Participant S-7 did not accept the 'oral deaf'' identity as appropriate for her. Instead, she defined herself more in line with deaf / hearing-impaired and now more in-between deaf and hearing as she works in both worlds and is daily reminded of her disability.

Although participant S-7 said during the interview that 'being deaf is ok', this discussion continued off-camera for another 15 minutes. She commented that she found these interview questions 'challenging', and mentioned that there were issues here that she had not really considered in depth. She stated that she is currently becoming more aware of the Deaf community and is interested in Deaf Culture.

Participant S-8

Participant S-8 was recommended by participant S-5 for this study. Participant S-8's hearing loss is in the severe to profound range. He wears hearing-aids and said that he 'tries to integrate with hearing as much as possible' and socializes predominantly with hearing friends. Participant S-8 has a deaf sister with whom he speaks and lip reads. He labeled himself as 'deaf and oral deaf' and went to a special school for hearing-impaired at nursery school and a private mainstream school, then a high school with a special class/unit for hearing impaired learners. He wrote that he is sometimes frustrated and at other times feels secure being deaf. (Participant S-8 is left-handed and his writing is difficult to read)

At the beginning of the interview, participant S-8 was tentative and reserved in his responses to questions. Having an interpreter with him was imperative for the researcher to understand. His voice was both fast and he spoke with high pitched tone without pronouncing words clearly, thus the interviewer/researcher experienced considerable difficulty in following what he said. The researcher wondered if this speech like this must have added to his handicap of being hearing impaired at school, and made him even more different to other children and frustrated. It is therefore plausible and unsurprising that surprising that participant S-8 was a victim of bullying at schools where deaf children were in the minority. Indeed this topic came up and Participant S-8 acknowledged that he was bullied and also found that there was a lack of support from some teachers. These

were the two areas that he explicitly did not want to discuss further in the interview session, as it was uncomfortable for him.

With a severe-profound hearing loss, his hearing aids did not appear to providing him with sufficient assistance in hearing speech. This was noticed in his poor reception of questions. In addition, it became clear that participant S-8 was not a strong lip-reader nor comfortable and skilled in SASL. This deficit put him at a disadvantage in conversations like this. Considerable time and effort on the part of both interviewer and interviewee in conversational repair and simply trying to understand each other. The interviewer could see participant S-8's frustration of not understanding the question or incomplete or misunderstood statements. The use of Sign Language and by extension, the use of an interpreter was not considered an option by him as he stressed that he had wanted to be grow up as integrated with hearing world as possible, although he commented on his growing interest in Sign Language, he emphasized that Sign Language is not essential for him at the present time. The interviewer had to rely on lip reading which was marginally successful and on the interpreter to complete the gaps in the conversation, which inevitably required that the interviewer had to break eye-contact with participant to watch interpreter for a moment to catch up with missed information, otherwise the interviewer would have missed information that could be valuable and worthwhile in probing later.

Participant S-8 preferred to talk around and about the topics rather than engage in deeper self-reflection and narration of significant personal experiences at school. His responses were short, descriptive and lacked detail and personal depth. He preferred to give global answers that answered the question with limited explanation and self reflection. Asking further probing questions to elicit deeper responses was largely ineffectual was participant S-8 made it clear that he had answered the question adequately and was now awaiting the next question on a different topic, for which he seemed to be gathering his energy to listen to the question.

In terms of identity, participant S-8 acknowledged that he has 'one foot in each culture' deaf and hearing, having a deaf sister may help remind him of himself and the

experiences of other deaf persons. There is a marked sense of ambivalence in his identity as a deaf person that alternates between being 'secure' and 'frustrated' of being a deaf person in a unsympathetic hearing-centred world. Being in the mainstream is an important concept and has considerable value to him, and was emphasized frequently in the interview.

A brief interview in terms of eliciting content on school experiences and identity then and now, but rich in the struggle for understanding and the frustration of being deaf in an uncaring world. The struggle to communicate dominates this session, but also allowed insight to the daily reality of participant S-8 to emerge. Thus, two oral deaf people trying to have a conversation is often an exercise in patience as each person is struggling to sort out all the pieces of the spoken, often broken discourse together in an intelligible form is slow and deliberate and fraught with inaccuracies.

Participant S-9

Participant S-9 used Sign Language throughout the interview which contributed to an ease of conversation between the interviewer and interviewee with a satisfying level of interaction and discussion on the topics. Although an interpreter was not present at interview, the transcript was proofread by the interviewer prior to verification with the participant.

Participant S-9 made a strong and early statement of his identity as a Deaf person which he attributed to attending two schools for the Deaf and acquiring Sign Language from his peers. He does not wear hearing-aids and his primary language of communication is SASL which he uses fluently. He recorded on the Personal Information form that he is both 'proud and confident' to be Deaf and has mainly Deaf friends. Participant I has a deaf sister two years older than him.

The interview went smoothly. The answers were generally a bit brief. This may be a characteristic of the male gender of not engaging in unduly lengthy self-reflection. Participant S-9 was both comfortable and confident in his manner of giving answers

when prompted. This suggests that he is comfortable with his identity as a deaf person. Furthermore, he displayed a strong, often activist, stance in his answers, using the Signs to discuss Deaf Culture, Sign Language and identity with vigour and pride. At the end of interview, the interviewer hypothesised that although participant S-9 is settled and content with his Deaf identity, it may be unwise to suggest another identity construction of Deaf as DeaF until he shows strong interest in this area for himself.

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