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A critical (auto) ethnographic study of Deaf people's experience of education and culture in Ireland

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ABSTRACT

At the heart of this thesis is the methodological and theoretical framework in which to conduct a study of deaf people's experience of education and culture in Ireland. Methodologically, the research design is critical auto-ethnography which allows this researcher to self-reflexively engage in the research process to explore key issues and themes in deaf education arising from the narratives of the research participants' educational experiences. The postmodern theoretical framework is located in the study to portray a diversity of perspectives including that of the researched and the researcher.

Since the 1950s many deaf people in Ireland faced barriers to education. They also faced internal and external pressure to change their ways of knowing and understanding of the world to become 'normal' and more acceptable to non-deaf people. To date, the majority of the literature devoted to deaf education has been written from the dominant non-deaf perspective detailing the education system and discussing teaching methodology. While understanding these issues is important, it does not closely reflect the experiences of deaf people with the way they define their own culture. Traditionally, they have not been adequately included as subjects in educational research. In particular, it has been charged that deaf people are frequently excluded from studies concerning education and where they are included in such studies they tend to be under-represented.

To begin filling that void, twenty deaf people and the auto-ethnographic researcher participated in a qualitative study of the experience of education and culture. Engaging in critical auto-ethnography is a postmodern construct and a useful form of inquiry in which I study and write about lived experience. In the process I become the observer and observed, the narrator and narrated, insider and outsider. The study sought to answer questions articulated in the literature on deaf education: what are the key issues that remain a bone of contention to deaf people? What have deaf people to say about their educational experiences? In presenting their narratives, this research represents an epistemological shift in the way deaf people are commonly understood by society and educators. It is a shift that calls into question the dominant notions about them that engender marginalisation and exclusion. The study offers a space for reconsidering the views of deaf people differently and therefore re-thinking deaf education. Its purpose is three-fold: (1) to confront common assumptions about deaf people and their culture; (2) to locate a counter-narrative that provides a framework for sociological and cultural understanding of deaf people; and (3) to offer alternative perspectives of deaf education that have historically been excluded.

Deaf education in Ireland has become an increasingly polarized field: one where a divide exists between the diverse perspectives on how deaf children should be taught in school. Recent research has intensified the importance of Irish Sign Language in education and school curriculum drawing attention to the educational shortfall in deaf school-leavers. This cultural polarization in the Cabra schools for deaf children provides a rich site for exploring pedagogical practices that might inform policy and improve educational achievement for all deaf children. Findings reveal that Irish Sign Language represents a key cultural resource for 'unlocking the curriculum' that created barriers to education.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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Declaration: I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. All sources that have been consulted have been identified and acknowledged in the appropriate way. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Deaf people in Ireland, to those who shared so freely their stories and, in particular, to those who *need* to share their story.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Linguistic Abbreviations

ASL: American Sign Language – the language of the American Deaf community.

BSL: British Sign Language – the official language of the British Deaf community.

ISL: Irish Sign Language- the official language of the Irish Deaf community. As with ASL and BSL, ISL has been substantiated by linguists as a complete and natural language independent of spoken languages. Contrary to common misconceptions, ISL is not like spoken Irish (or spoken English, as the case may be).

Conceptual Glossary

Deaf/deaf: The term 'Deaf' as signified by the use of a capital 'D' refers to deafness within the cultural and linguistic framework. 'Deaf' is linked to a social construction of identity, as belonging to a culture and unique language of a community. The lower case of the term 'deaf' defines an audiological condition.

Oralism: Oralism is an educational ideology emphasising the exclusive use of spoken language for communication and classroom instruction. The use of signed language is prohibited.

Organisational Glossary

IDS: Irish Deaf Society, an organisation run by Deaf people.

CIDP: The Catholic Institute for Deaf People.

Beech Park: Mary Immaculate School for Deaf Boys, Beech Park, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin. This school accommodated children between the age 3 and 10 years. The school closed in 1998 and the building is now occupied entirely as a convent.

The Cabra Schools: Two residential schools located in Cabra, Dublin- St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys and St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls

DeafHear.ie: Also known by its former name National Association for the Deaf (NAD), the organisation is run by non-deaf people

DVI: Deaf Village Ireland

WFD: World Federation of the Deaf.

EUD: European Union of the Deaf

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter

-Martin Luther King

FOREWORD

Globally, many Deaf citizens encounter the general population's perception of being Deaf as one of disability. This "disability mindset" contributes directly towards the exclusion and devaluation of all people who are considered "different" including those who are Deaf. As a result, many Deaf citizens in many countries are still hindered and excluded from participation in the larger society. Many are prevented from equal access to decision making, employment opportunities, and quality education. Despite this "disability mindset," Deaf citizens positively contribute to societies that embrace diversity and creativity. They enhance their nations in areas of education, economic activity, politics, arts and literature. For Deaf people it is an inalienable right to be acknowledged as a linguistic and cultural minority integral to every society. Therefore, all nations are urged to recognize and facilitate participation from all of its citizens, including those who are Deaf.

In 1880 an international congress was held in Milan to discuss education of the Deaf. At that time, the members passed several resolutions that affected the education and lives of Deaf people around the world. The resolutions:

Removed the use of sign languages from educational programs for the Deaf around the world;

Contributed detrimentally to the lives of Deaf citizens around the world;

Lead to the exclusion of Deaf citizens in educational policy and planning in most jurisdictions in the world;

Prevented Deaf citizens from participation in government planning, decision-making, and funding in areas of employment training, retraining and other aspects of career planning;

Hindered the abilities of Deaf citizens to succeed in various careers and have prevented many of them from following their own aspirations; and

Prevented the opportunity for many Deaf citizens to fully demonstrate their cultural and artistic contribution to the diversity of each Nation

Therefore we:

1. Reject all resolutions passed at the ICED Milan congress in 1880 that denied the inclusion of sign languages in educational programs for Deaf students;
2. Acknowledge and sincerely regret the detrimental effects on the Milan conference; and
3. Call upon all Nations of the world to remember history and ensure that educational programs accept and respect all languages

The above is a Statement of Principle that was delivered at the Opening Ceremony of International Congress of the Education of the Deaf (ICED) in Vancouver, Canada on Monday, 19th July, 2010.[1] It is presented not as the thesis itself but the preamble to it and the sequel. The purpose is to use it as a point of reference to be able to narrate some of the key issues addressed in the thesis. The narrative here is non-linear in that the end is the beginning and the beginning is also the end. To begin the story of how I got to this stage in the research

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[1] Henderson (2010) Cited in Moore (2020)

journey I will reflect on that historical event. It happened like this: I was amongst the small band of Deaf[2] delegates that attended the event. Over eight hundred people arrived from different parts of the world[3]. All of them were educators, researchers, policy-makers, government officials, professionals and practitioners with an interest in Deaf Education. They came in droves from diverse cultural backgrounds to share ideas with each other, to debate on current research and on best practice in teaching methodology. Of particular interest to me amid the broad range of ideas discussed was the denouncement of resolutions banning signed languages in education. The marginalization of signed languages has always been at the heart of oralism, an educational ideology that champions the 'superiority' of spoken languages over signed languages (Lane, 1992; Baynton, 1996; Branson and Miller, 2002).

The statement for me was public vindication of the many attempts at reform, of times when Deaf people's views about education were ignored. Taking this point into consideration the thought of returning to university or college to undertake a doctoral study of Deaf people's life experiences became the motivation for this project. I asked myself: what would it mean to educators, professionals and parents in Ireland if I presented their stories about education? How will they respond to this call for change in Vancouver? How will they fulfill the CIDP promise following a public apology made in 2009 to the victims of residential school abuse that change is necessary? The desire was there for change towards equal partnership in Deaf education. In the words of David Lam, former Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia (BC), Canada, "The world is changing whether we like it or not. So it's important that change becomes our friend and not our enemy" (Moore, 2010).

Time and experience allowed me to have sufficient distance from the events of the past. Since I graduated with a master's degree in Deaf Studies something in me had changed to allow me to be able to explain stories of the past, stories of trauma, discrimination and marginalization. For me the ordinary response to painful memories was to banish them from my consciousness. Equally as powerful was the desire to deny those memories. Remembering and truth-telling are prerequisites for change and for the healing of the self. The statement is an acknowledgement and validation of past wrongs. For me it seems empowering for Deaf people to have their stories told- they could find they are not alone in having painful memories. It was my intention to include them in the study. The rationale for their inclusion

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[2] The capitalised D is used throughout the writing to denote a cultural and political category of *Deaf*. Where appropriate the term 'deaf' will be used to denote an audiological definition of the word and refer to people who do not identify with the culture and language of a Deaf community.
[3] Hearing people were in the majority (Moore, 2010)

is the significant gap in the literature where their stories and worldviews are largely absent in research.

Oralism was a contentious issue for many Deaf people who have had experience and knowledge of the education system (Crean, 1997; Mathews, 2011). Their stories reveal incidents where punishment was meted out to language offenders as educators sought to change the students' way of communicating and to reject and eliminate all traces of Deaf culture (Lane, 1992; Ladd, 2003; McDonnell & Saunders, 1993 and 2004). Deaf people's experiences of education have often been linked with the concept of colonialism (Lane, 1992; Wrigley, 1996; Crean, 1997; Ladd, 2003; O'Connell, 2008). The goal of oralism is integration into society to become assimilated in the norms, values and beliefs of people who have natural hearing (Griffey, 1994). Coercion was used as a means of control to prevent Deaf children from communicating in sign language (McDonnell & Saunders, 1993 and 2004). The consequence of this approach to education has been poor literacy attainment and lost opportunities for optimum educational development (Conrad, 1979; Marschark & Harris, 1996). In Ireland the schools in Cabra, on the north side of Dublin, have been central to this process: St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys and St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls. Both schools are known colloquially as the 'Cabra schools' a term I use throughout this study for convenience. Another residential school at the heart of Deaf narratives is Mary Immaculate School, Beech Park, in Stillorgan County Dublin. The school catered for Deaf boys from the ages of three to ten years since 1955 until 1997 when it closed permanently. I was a student of St. Joseph's and Beech Park and have been badly affected by the experience of education in these institutions. One day as I was writing my personal narrative for an autobiography those pent up emotions of anger, resentment, and frustration of so many years poured out onto the pages. Until then I thought I had outlived the distress and trauma of my childhood. I was so unused to telling intimate details of my childhood. Every tiny admission had to be coaxed out and carefully examined. They say the pen is mightier than the sword but I find writing a therapeutic and cathartic exercise. It was an experience that changed me. I learned that silence and indifference to suffering or to the infringement of my right to access an education had perpetuated a whole range of negative emotions in me. I revealed intimate details of the past that I felt were essential to reach an understanding of my educational experiences and how I responded to those experiences. My experience of writing has always been to start again and again until my focus shifted to expressing a personal narrative using the auto-ethnographic method.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

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A SITUATED STORY

> Education has done many things for me. On the one hand it has changed the course of my life. I know what it is like to learn Irish Sign Language and to have it close to my heart. On the other it has left me feeling so powerless to change the cruel realities of prejudice and marginalisation that has impacted on my life. Although I always had the goal of getting an education to make up for what I missed out on in school, I faced many challenges namely barriers to access resources and information. With no recourse to an Irish Sign Language interpreter I just wanted to forget the whole idea of going to university. With little or no qualification I took what life threw at me. I didn't need to be Einstein to know I was robbed of a good future. When I began my studies at university as a mature student I availed of interpreters. Education then opened up a new world for me. I began to see myself in a new way, a way I never thought I could. I stopped seeing myself through the eyes of the oppressors and became liberated: seeing how education has the potential to create life-enhancing experiences, provided the conditions were right[4].

This thesis is a study of Deaf people's experience of education and culture. The study takes a critical auto-ethnographic approach to examine lived experiences of the researcher and researched, the observer and observed, the narrator and narrated, and the insider and outsider. It entails a critical and self-reflexive examination of my own narrative of experience alongside those of the participants involved in the research. My intention was to illuminate the ways in which lived experience could tell us how things were in education and help inform policy and best practice. A key assumption underpinning the study is that Deaf people offer valuable insights into education debates and policy discussions. To understand how things work in education and perhaps see how best to maximise the educational potential of Deaf children valuable insights can be gained by examining the memories and stories of the participants which is a source of information-rich descriptions about culture, language, teaching and learning.

The principal purpose of the study is to locate Deaf people's experience at the centre of analysis to investigate how their knowledge, understanding and views about culture and language could help inform policy and debate. The investigation raises a number of important questions about what it means to be Deaf and to experience marginalization, discrimination and prejudice. It also seeks to answer the research question: what are the underlying issues that cause controversy in Deaf education? The study examines these and other questions that

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[4] This is the first of a series of auto-ethnographic vignettes introduced in some of the chapters. The vignettes represent a variety of situations that emerged at different times throughout the researcher's life.

arise during the research process through a number of themes that emerged from the empirical data.

I engage in various types of auto-ethnography such as auto-ethnographic vignettes, introspection, self-reflective narrative, personal narratives and narrative ethnography. The methodology allows me to examine my own feelings, meanings and understandings of the social world of the community under investigation in order to "connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political" (Ellis, 2004: xix). What is it like to be a Deaf researcher? How do I see my role in the research process and my relationship with the people under study? Why do we – as a community of Deaf individuals – believe in Irish Sign Language and our own ways of living? How does this affect the research? All these questions and themes are discussed in the chapters that follow.

The research site selected for this study is that of the Cabra schools; partly because St. Joseph's is where my experience of education lies but also because I consider the place as the central axis for considering a range of ways in which Deaf people define themselves. The school continues to be an important nexus for debates on methodology. This critical auto-ethnographic exploration weaves together several layers of education and community perspectives to provide insight into a time of historical change.

1.1 Setting the Context

While the focus of this study is the lived experience of Deaf people, education is the central research topic. By general definition, 'Deaf education' represents a broad and diverse professional field that centres on the education of Deaf children. To better understand the history of this field one must have an understanding of significant historical events and the different approaches to teaching and learning and communication methods. Four types of methodological approaches have been on offer: the first approach is concerned with teaching and learning through a signed language; the second one is focused entirely on spoken languages communicated through the vehicle of the oral-aural faculties; the third method emerged out of discussion on a compromise between the different perspectives. The Total Communication (TC) approach entails the use of speech, residual hearing, signed language, lip reading, and facial expressions. Finally in recent times there is a growing body of research that argue in favour of the bilingual approach citing the education of Deaf children in Sweden, where bilingualism involving sign language was adopted.

A starting point in this investigation is the question: What are the key identifying issues that remain a cause of controversy? Historically, many Deaf people have faced barriers

to education because educators used a language that is inaccessible to them. However, this was not always the case in Ireland. In the first one hundred years of its existence, the Cabra schools taught Deaf children through the medium of Irish Sign Language (ISL). Within this timeframe schooling served as a critical element in the evolution of Irish Sign Language and development of Deaf culture. The aim of teaching through ISL was to teach Deaf children literacy in order for them to receive the sacrament of the Catholic Church. To achieve this aim the children had to be immersed in ISL for the entire period of their schooling. The schools employed graduates as teachers to ensure the language was brought to everyday use and passed on from generation to generation.

In the 1940s, the education system in the Cabra schools was altered as a consequence of the decisions of the ICED Milan 1880, paving the way for the introduction of oralism and effectively marginalising ISL. Ever since then Deaf education has been a source of controversy with heated debates as to the most appropriate methodology remaining unresolved (Griffey, 1997; Crean, 1997). Central to this debate are the Cabra schools: the largest and longest-running education institution for Deaf children in Ireland with a history stretching as far back as the nineteenth century. While recent research found low literacy levels and poor educational attainment in Deaf school leavers, nothing has been done to address this educational shortfall (Leeson & Matthews, 2002; Leeson, (2006); Mathews (2011). However, despite these findings, the intellectual climate in the field of Deaf education has rarely been conducive to the development of new ideas for reform (Crean, 1997).

Comparative studies with the bilingualism model adopted in the schools for Deaf children in Sweden highlight flaws in oralism. One hypothesis offered for the shortfall is the delay in language acquisition during the children's formative years (Conrad, 1979; Kyle, 2004). This is compounded by the fact that between 90 and 95 per cent of Deaf children are born to hearing parents which means they are at risk of receiving little or no support for early language acquisition (ibid; Baker, 2010). As a consequence these children may not have language foundation on the day they begin school for the first time. Kyle (1994) notes that without adequate access to language in the formative years, Deaf children's potential may not be fully realized by the time they finish school. Crean (1997) states that a key point in the discussion that educators tend to ignore is the important role of Irish Sign Language, an issue Deaf people often put forward as a solution to address educational problems. Instead of looking at the question of language, educators tend to look for a solution to inappropriate teaching methodology and communication methods (ibid). All these key issues are fully explored in the study.

Starting from the premise that Deaf people as a group constitute a cultural and linguistic minority community (Burns, 1995; Matthews, 1996), this study brings to the surface their lived experience of education. It is generally understood that Deaf people share a common interest and values based on a visual language - sign language (Ladd, 2003). Their views about language and culture are quite different according to contexts in which the Cabra schools have operated. In some cases the students experienced marginalisation, discrimination and prejudice as their stories increasingly indicate. At the very least, no matter what the educators say about oralism, many Deaf people experienced poor educational attainment and as adults their perspectives on education tended to be ignored. For the participants involved in this research there is a wide range of perspectives on education and culture and the Cabra schools continue to be a common factor defining the culture of the Deaf community in Ireland. Schooling was not just a matter of learning literacy or getting an education. It was seen as the location in which the future health and quality of life for Deaf children was dependent. For Deaf people the schools remain the central site for the evolution of Irish Sign Language and development of their culture. In these pages I seek to provide a sense of the diversity in perspectives by presenting the thoughts, feelings and opinions of Deaf people against the backdrop of dominant perspectives of education. I consider the Cabra schools from a contemporary as well as historical perspective since these institutions continue to be an important focal point in debates about methodology and communication methods. Given that Deaf people's views have been consistently ignored, the study aims to break new ground by incorporating their stories in this critical ethnographic investigation. The rationale for doing so is explored in the following section.

1.1.1 Rationale

Very few extensive studies on Deaf Education feature Deaf people's thoughts, opinions, and worldviews. With the exception of Matthews (1996), McDonnell & Saunders (1993 and 2005) much of the extant published literature on the subject is based on materials written by non-deaf researchers with little or no involvement of Deaf people of whom they write about. Ladd (2003) finds that Deaf people have traditionally been excluded from academic research. Writings that discuss Deaf Education in Ireland usually present information from the perspective of professionals, school authorities and institutions serving deaf-related needs (a prime example is Griffey, 1994). Accordingly this study is borne out of a concern for the scarcity of Deaf perspectives concerning education. My belief that these perspectives have

much to contribute to existing theories and debates about education forms the basis of the selection.

Helena Saunders' short narrative about "Growing Up Deaf in Ireland" provides a window to the realities of oralism (McDonnell & Saunders, 2005). More recently, Deaf people gave their stories to a Hidden History Project initiated by Deaf scholar Dr. John Bosco Conama from the Centre for Deaf Studies, Trinity College Dublin and a team of Deaf researchers. This study aims to add to the small number of Deaf-centred research studies in Ireland. It brings to the surface the life experiences of Deaf people at the centre of analysis and makes a valuable contribution to academic and educational research. My fascination for Deaf narratives became much more than an avocation. I sought ways for an understanding of my experience as well as that of my participants. In particular, I wanted to learn about the impact my personal and professional experience had had on the research process. Up till then I had not been able to ascertain or reveal what I was feeling or thinking about the stories that people shared with me and I shared with them. This study offered a way of examining my past history and my relationship with the cultural group under study. As I was to learn from the literature the field of Deaf education was critically assessed by non-deaf perspectives. In this project I see the benefits gained from doing critical auto-ethnographic research on the lived experiences of Deaf people, in that it makes an important contribution to future research on the topic. The project is a departure from the many studies previously undertaken in Ireland in the way it utilises the method of critical ethnography and auto-ethnography to document the stories and lived experiences of researcher and researched whilst also raising important questions concerning politics, culture, language and identity. While the stories may challenge existing assumptions about how Deaf children should be educated, the aim is to create new ways of viewing Deaf Education to draw on those aspects which enhance learning. By drawing on the experiences of the researcher and participants, this research aims to provide answers to the research question on controversial issues.

1.2   Theoretical Framework: Postmodernism

Chapter Four locates postmodernism as a theoretical framework for the study to critically examine hidden power systems in Deaf education. The ideas of Foucault (1984), Usher and Edwards (1994), and Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) are explored in the chapter. One of the most powerful effects of postmodernist intellectual work has been to open a space for marginalized groups in academic research. In framing the study in postmodernism I emphasise diversity, pluralism, multiculturalism and multilingualism and create space for a

critical dialogue of Deaf education. I seek to identify and uncover hidden meanings within power systems that perpetuate the oppression of Deaf people rather than liberate them. A core issue with postmodernism is looking at things from the perspective of the marginalised group. Thus the point of view of the oppressed group members takes centre stage in the research process. Postmodernism is said to bring optimism in a way that generates hope for change. Foucault's theories are utilised in a discussion on the practice of oralism in order to raise questions about power dynamics. In my view there may be implications in the modernist perspectives in oralism that places it at odds with the cultural and linguistic perspectives of Deaf people. Foucault's work in relation to his critique of power systems in institutions of control and suppression (Rabinow, 1984) provides this study with a postmodern lens to uncover and examine the structural biases of oralism. An emphasis on bilingual and multicultural education is grounded in the postmodern perspective.

1.3   Methodology

At this point I now address the question of methodology. Rather than ask how might I conduct the research, I ask: what is the most suitable method of conducting research on the experiences and worldviews of Deaf people? I am drawn to Creswell's (2007) recommendation that the researcher should reduce the entire study to a single, central question and several sub-questions. Accordingly, the main question needs to be as broad as possible with sub-questions to follow the central question addressing major concerns and complexities to be resolved. This idea resonates with my aims and objectives of doing this study where questions are "intractably wired to political, social, historical and especially personal contexts" (Stake, 1995: 17).

One key question specifically relates to Deaf people's experience of education: how has this impacted on their identity and their sense of belonging in the world? This question is then broken down into several sub-questions – all of which are outlined and discussed in Chapter Five (e.g. Creswell, 2007). While this project cannot answer all questions, I attempt to bring alternative views about teaching and learning and present them as empirical evidence in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. On the basis of these findings I present a recommendation for a discussion of sign bilingualism in Chapter Nine as a way forward for considering Irish Sign Language as a valuable cultural resource within the classroom and in Deaf education in general.

Critical ethnography is the most appropriate research method for the project due to the historical status of the Deaf community as a marginalised group in the context of education.

To conduct ethnographic research one must view the group under study as a cultural community (Matthews, 1996; Ladd, 2003). I consider the Cabra schools and Deaf Village Ireland (DVI) in terms of locations that reproduce and maintain culture.

This research differs to a previous ethnographic study I conducted for the Masters in Deaf Studies at University of Bristol. In that particular project I attempted to keep myself out of the research process as much as possible, positioning myself as passive observer. I worked on producing dispassionate research characteristic of modernism in that it aimed at generating a theory (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The interactions with my participants impacted on the research process. I became emotionally involved with my participants and our interactions became intricate in the way it triggered painful memories in me and caused me to have certain feelings about the past (Ellis, 2004). I did not make explicit these nuances and the experience doing research. Ellis (2004) maintains that the "I" of the researcher is about the relationship between the researcher and the participants which exist through interactions during interviewing and participant observations. The researcher and the research topic cannot be separated.

Discussions with my supervisors led me to consider doing auto-ethnography. At that point I had an accumulated amount of autobiographic writing done since May 2010. All summer I had been writing my story with no clear idea how I was going to use that as an independent project while working on this study. I was stubbornly resistant to suggestions of turning writing into auto-ethnography for the project. I was still fixated on the autobiography. My supervisors wisely suggested some reading material on auto-ethnography. I read as much as possible on the method and in time warmed to the idea of taking this route. I was now aware that even though auto-ethnography was a departure from previous studies I had undertaken, it is a legitimate method in academic research (Hughes, et al, 2012). Auto-ethnography draws on empirical data through writing about my life (self) and my relationship with Irish Sign Language and the deaf community (culture) (Reed-Danahay, 1997); Ellis, 2004).

The day I sat in front of my laptop to write a report on my experience of attending the ICED in Vancouver it occurred to me that I could actually write about my experience of doing research. Carolyn Ellis' (2004) *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography* discussions about the method reflects both my personal and academic interests in documenting lived experience. I combine autobiographical elements with my personal narratives in relation to culture, history and identity. I am drawn to Ellis (2004) for the elucidating narrative style she utilises to create and tell stories about teaching auto-

ethnography. Her stories are based on her experience teaching a group of students. The students are presented in her book as characters and it is through storytelling that Ellis discusses auto-ethnography. The book is filled with "thick descriptions" and dialogue and drama: all the elements that make ethnography. I felt a strong affinity with the author as if I was in her class discussing auto-ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Thereafter I developed a desire to model my writing on Ellis (2004) in order to engage the reader in my journey in doing auto-ethnography. So this is a part of my life that brought me to auto-ethnography.

The research methodology is fully explored in Chapter Five. It begins by discussing the rationale for pursuing a qualitative methods approach rather than quantitative methods. This is followed by a discussion about ethnography and auto-ethnography in relation to denotation, history, and different forms of ethnography and auto-ethnography. Auto-ethnography is said to be "a term of choice" in that it is wide-ranging and varied in genre (Ellis, 2004: 40). Chapter Five offers a definition of auto-ethnography as "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political" (ibid: xix). Rather than standing outside the research project, the researcher in auto-ethnography becomes the focus of the research inquiry. The chapter clarifies my position as 'indigenous researcher', someone who studies a research setting in which he or she is already connected through history, language and culture and studies a cultural group in which he or she is a member (Gonzales, 2000; Adler and Adler, 1994).

I locate my auto-ethnography in Chapter Two, whilst Chapter Five discusses the rationale for situating the "I" of the researcher and for using auto-ethnography. Denzin (1989) argues that in auto-ethnography the writer does not adopt the 'objective outsider' convention of writing common to traditional ethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997: 4). The research is structured in a way that reflects post-modern sensibilities and auto-ethnography is a post-modern paradigm. From a postmodern perspective my status as 'insider researcher' means I heed to the anti-positivists' claim that complete objectivity is impossible (Tedlock, 2000). I make this claim on grounds that my research project is in line with what Ellis (2004: 46) terms 'indigenous ethnography':

> Indigenous ethnographies are written by researchers who share a history of colonialism or economic subordination, including subjugation by ethnographers who have made them subjects of their work. You could write as a bicultural insider/outsider and construct your own cultural story to depict a way of life.

My role as indigenous researcher and my claim against objectivity frees me to write auto-ethnography and to reveal the extent of my relationship with my research subjects (Ellis, 2004). As Crotty (1998) suggests, personal views and beliefs guide the choices the researcher makes in methodology as well as in the selection of the research topic. They also influence the purpose of making these choices. In other words, how I select my research paradigm, methodology and method all reflect my personal values and beliefs and all these things need to be made explicit in the writing (Richardson, 1997; Etherington, 2004: 5).

The central component of Chapter Six, Seven and Eight is a collection of empirical data resulting from a series of ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and ethnographic field notes. In these chapters I write about interviews and include the context in which the interviews took place (Ellis, 2004). Writing "narrative ethnography" as a method of looking at the experiences of Deaf people represents a new departure from the studies I had previously undertaken in the field of Deaf Studies and Deaf education and reflects my personal and academic interest in documenting their lived experiences. A way to conduct "new ethnography" (Goodall, 2000) is to go through a process of self-reflexivity in which I include my thoughts, feelings and memories without taking over the narratives of the participants. Muncey (2010: 46) defines reflexivity as "the awareness of being aware". All through the research process from start to finish, I developed a conscious awareness of my role as researcher, writer, and member of the Deaf community and about how this would impact on the participants interviewed and observed. Awareness was acquired from the stories of the participants that prompted me to recall my own experience of education. After an interview I imagined the scenes they described and the people involved in the story. Awareness made me adjust the face and place in the scenes to an image I had seen in black and white photographs. I had seen photos of a younger version of the people in which they described. Knowing that stories presented by participants were so vivid because the scenes were familiar helped maintain a vision of myself as researcher, interviewer and auto-ethnographer.

Various methodological considerations outlined in Chapter Five include discussion of gatekeeper role, selection of and access to research sites, selection of research subjects, data collection techniques, data categorization and writing up and writing down ethnography[5]. In the process of doing and writing (auto) ethnography I had to keep in mind various ethical

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[5] Atkinson (1992:9) describes the process of writing up/writing down in the following three ways: (1) the field is constructed through the ethnographer's gaze; (2) the field is organised through writing down the texts of the field and (3) the field is constructed as "writing up" research and then contextualised through the work of interpretation.

concerns (Ellis, 2004; Richardson, L). Ethical issues described in the chapter are derived from the principles of non-maleficence (do no harm), munificence, justice, respect for autonomy and beneficence. The chapter outlines the steps taken to ensure that no harm comes to the participants, the people I describe in my story and to the researcher. The issue of self-disclosure is also addressed whereby revealing intimate and sensitive details in a story forces this researcher into a state of vulnerability (Ellis and Bochner, 2001: 752). Nevertheless, as Ellis (2004: 138), quoting a Ruth Behar (1996) line from *The Vulnerable Observer* states, "[social science] that doesn't break your heart just isn't worth doing anymore." That aside, the personal nature of interviews and story-telling means the researcher must be aware of his responsibilities to the research participants (Muncey, 2010). Ethical concerns are discussed, particularly in relation to the notion of confidentiality and the importance of the trust of participants. The purpose of ethics is to ensure they are afforded rights and to ensure the research process does not exploit those rights (Ellis, 2004).

1.4   Themes and structure of the study

Following on from the above, the central aim of this study is to identify the key areas that cause controversy in Deaf education, to place Deaf people's experiences and to offer suggestions and make recommendations. The focus of the study is on Deaf education because that is where my experience lies. My intention is to illuminate the ways in which memory of *our* experiences can shed light on a discussion of the various educational ideologies that have emerged in the literature. I have this study structured and written in a way that reflects my own journey in the research process. A significant component of this study is an engagement in self-reflexivity. Writings in each chapter are layered with auto-ethnographic vignettes, reflection, and introspection to "invoke" readers to enter into experiences of doing and writing research (Ellis, 1991 and 2004).

This thesis is composed of nine chapters. Chapter Two presents my personal narrative through the method of auto-ethnography, a series of auto-ethnographic vignettes derived from the longer stories I had originally written for the study. I situate and self-reflect lived experiences through these vignettes with an introspective analysis. Each chapter in the study is introduced with an auto-ethnographic vignette and concludes with my own reflections.

Chapter Three begins with an overview of the history of the Cabra schools, the circumstances surrounding the schools' foundation and the role of the Dominican Sisters and the Irish Christian Brothers in taking responsibility for the running of these schools. As the account shows, the history of Deaf Education in Ireland is typified by the presence of the

Catholic Church authorities: the chapter provides an account of the role of CIDP in shaping the lives of Deaf people. The chapter charts the various socio-political thinking and the significant events in history that have shaped Deaf education in Ireland, particularly the important role of the International Congress of the Education of the Deaf (ICED) in Milan in 1880. What the discussion reveals is the changing states and educational hierarchies and the imposed learning structures which were rife with serious challenges for Deaf people. A range of authors have documented the impact of those changes in the wake of enthusiasm for oralism and for the integration of Deaf people in society. It seems a paradox that so many Deaf people faced barriers to education and subsequently sought redress and reform and their opinions were discounted.

In Chapter Four I locate the study within a postmodern framework. This is in keeping with the many philosophical concerns of postmodern thinkers such as Foucault. It is a postmodern idea for researchers to tell their own story, to locate the story in the context of allowing a previously 'silenced' subject a 'voice'. The chapter begins with a definition of postmodernism. It is clear from the discussion that one has to define modernism or identify what is modern before one can discuss or know what is postmodernism. In the chapter I outline some of the concepts developed by Foucault to highlight hidden meanings and identify oppressive practices at play in oralism. It seeks to provide a portrait of power dynamic in Deaf education. In this chapter I do not seek to find a solution but merely illustrate features that would not have been possible to highlight in other ways of exploring the phenomenon.

The research methodology is discussed in Chapter Five. This section in the thesis carries the reader through a discussion on critical auto-ethnography beginning with the rationale behind the decision to conduct qualitative research. This is followed by a discussion of the various methodological considerations outlined including critical ethnography, auto-ethnography, research design, data collection stages and the writing up of the ethnography.

Chapters 3-5 provide the backdrop to the discussion on empirical data which follows. These chapters set the stage for Chapters 6-8 which contain discussion on empirical data obtained from interviews and observation. Here I make a case for why emotion and memory and story-telling are critical research tools that can provoke change in the education system. Through the stories presented here, I challenge the prevailing myth concerning Irish Sign Language: that it hinders speech development and discourages learning English, an apologue advanced as a case for oralism in Ireland from the 1940s (e.g. Griffey, 1994). Part of Chapter Eight contains an ethnographic work presented in theatrical form in which participants are

employed as characters with pseudonyms. Ellis and Bochner (1996 and 2001) and Ellis (2004) contend that ethnographers should experiment using artistic modes of research representation. The purpose is to present ethnographic performance in order to create "entertaining informative experience for an audience" (Saldana, 2003: 220). The final chapter presents my reflections on the thesis with a recommendation for a sign bilingual approach to education that locates Irish Sign Language as the primary language of instruction. The final chapter strings together these ideas and thoughts together as I reflect on the issues covered in the study. It concludes the project with a summary, discussion, recommendation and a postscript.

1.5   Concept of Deaf Culture

Education ethnographers and anthropologists maintain that the school represents a site of cultural transmission and potential area for cultural conflict and change (Sprindler, 1988; Walford, 2008). Ladd (2003) recognizes the residential school for Deaf children as a central 'breeding ground' for the acculturation of Deaf culture and the nurturing of identities. Chapter Three reveals two key issues concerning Irish Sign Language (ISL): one is that it was invented by Deaf people and the other is that it originated from the Cabra schools. ISL is currently studied and taught in academic institutions. Many scholars argue that ISL represents a powerful marker of identity and an accessible cultural resource for learning and communicating (LeMaster, 1990; Burns, 1995; Leeson, 1996 and 2002; McDonnell and Saunders, 1993 and 2005).

1.5.1   Iconic Identity: the capital D

"Deaf" is a term that is generally understood to refer to someone who cannot hear. In relation to education defining what is meant by the term is often a contested area for discussion where issues concerning language, culture and communication are concerned (Wrigley, 1996). "Deaf" is a word that raises political and cultural questions that can often influence education policies. In other words, different perspectives of what the term means can determine outcomes that profoundly affect Deaf people (Lane, 1992; Ladd, 2003). Perspectives vary depending on social and cultural factors and historical locations. Different views are often inextricably linked to categorizing processes (Lane, 1992). Historically, the most dominant category of deaf is a definition of disablement involving the view of biological inferiority and abnormality. The dominant view is that "deaf" equates with a lack, a deficiency and impairment, i.e. a 'problem' that needs to be repaired. Lane (1992) finds that notions of cure

and intervention revolve around identifying levels of hearing loss in the individual and learning to 'control' the 'problem' by attempting to alter its course by enhancing or expanding its function. Baynton (1996) points out that society often imposes its own perceptions of deaf associating the term with images of silence, tragic isolation, communication problems, loneliness and medical cures.

An alternative view of deaf is one held by Deaf people who do not share with the views of professionals and society at large. McKee (2001) and Ladd (2003) find that they have access to a culture and language distinct from the language and culture of the majority. McKee argues that "deaf" is not a description of a disability but rather constitutes a normal way of living. For culturally Deaf people the line between "deaf" and "Deaf" is delineated in part as a strategy for political motivation. The capital "D" is adopted to express an emerging 'cultural consciousness' that rejects dominant categorisations of Deaf people. The essence of the term "Deaf culture" assumes a political stance against marginalization and discrimination.

1.5.2 Deafhood, bricoleur, bricolage

In this study I adopt the cultural and linguistic perspective of the term Deaf and transcend this *Deaf*inition by embracing the concept of 'Deafhood.' I draw on all the personal and cultural experiences of being Deaf as a bricoleur. Ladd (2003 coined the term "Deafhood" to describe the ontological and epistemological Deaf experience. The term grew out of his pioneering work and a doctoral thesis as he sought to redress common assumptions of the culture of Deaf communities. As a bicultural researcher I am drawn towards Ladd's concept and heed to the notion of myself as bricoleur and extend this idea to the metaphor of bricolage. I resemble the bricoleur where circumstances work best if I employ what Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) terms 'bricolage' as a means to 'tinker' or be creative and resourceful (Kincheloe, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). I am certain that my position as researcher and subject of study enables me to gain several perspectives on the topic under investigation.

1.6   REFLECTIONS

Writing the auto-ethnography took me back to when I was a young boy starting in residential school. I started to relive the experience of leaving home, reliving the feeling of abandonment, the struggle to achieve a sense of selfhood and all the while not knowing why such things were happening to me. I write in the hope that my story will generate 'conversation' (Ellis, 2004) where it helps readers understand those feelings and understand how they impact on the research process. This is not a journey of projected blame but rather

one of searching for understanding and for finding self-awareness. The aim is to heal emotional wounds. To achieve this I go through my memories, even some painful ones. There are many internal battles with which I fought against in my quest to find a true niche, a longing to find the truth that would lead to self-acceptance. The metaphor I adopt in my writing is that of a journey (Muncey, 2005 and 2010), a path that is de-colonising in its process[6]. Sometimes thoughts emerge that say to me "you can't" – negative notions I had about my abilities that were internalized during childhood. The more times I received these messages the more easily I believed them. The challenge for me was to write but these words became stumbling blocks in my consciousness. In time, I started to push on. I wrote word for word; I progressed by doing it. I had to trust my ability to write (Ellis, 2004). Thinking back as I wrote the story, I found it easier to move forward and be authentic. Forward and backward I went and did what Ellis (2004) suggests about personal narratives. The writer becomes 'I', readers become 'you', and participants become 'we' (Ellis, 2004: 46). In turning back I write from memory about childhood. With each step back I write my thoughts and emotions from memory. I hope my participants will know that I do empathize and understand as I have been there before. I invite you readers now to come with me to the next chapter of this "self-questioning" journey (Ellis, 2004: xvii). It will probably not be a comfortable and easy path as there may be some difficult emotions for you along the way. You might experience some heart-break and some sadness but ultimately you might feel inspired by the stories I write. Indeed you will face honest reflections of my life patterns but I hope they will help towards a better understanding of the experience of culture and Deaf education. I welcome you to read further with me. Together we can travel through the past to deal with the things you probably did not know existed.

1.6.1 Turning Back

I think back to a time when I was a young boy. I am with my family. I see people whose identities do not match with mine. Instead of accepting *Deaf* they continually attempt to change me ever so slightly. Now I imagine myself in a classroom – pale yellow all round. In the dim autumn light the room is square and dull. Sitting in front of my desk, pen in hand, I think about *how to write*. Looking over my shoulder, I cast my eyes towards a window. A shadow: he hovers above me blocking the view. Reading my writing, my teacher moves his

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[6] To be mentally 'colonised' is to be 'programmed' to believe that spoken languages and hearing people's cultures are superior to ISL and Deaf culture. To de-colonise is to de-programme those beliefs and values. It represents a process or journey towards self-definition and self-acceptance.

lips, mouthing something about…oh, I don't know, I'm not sure. Reading his lips is hard. I find words dense, elusive and fragmentary like broken remnants. Hard as I tried, my eyes strained, but I catch on, or *not*.

"What…..doing?"

"I'm writing a story."

"No signing…hands down….speak."

"I want to write a story." I protest with my voice.

"You…no…can't write."

"I *need* to write my story."

"…can't….difficult…..."

"I'm in trouble."

"What……..about..."

"I *am* going to write about my life."

"…map….draw…"

"What? map?"

"Yes….help…your way…"

"I'm in trouble." I say again.

"Why?"

"The people in my story… I don't want to hurt them…"

"….careful….care about…"

"How do I begin?"

"No…begin…beginning…where…"

"Oh, school? I was in residential school."

"I know but…how…don't…"

"How did I get there?"

"Well no…."

"It was on a sunny day in September…."

CHAPTER TWO
LOST IN TRANSLATION: A LIFE IN SIGN LANGUAGE

CHAPTER TWO
LOST IN TRANSLATION: A LIFE IN SIGN LANGUAGE

> In this story, I use the moral imagination at the heart of narrative and storytelling to confront and deal with the contingencies of my past […] to remake a self- myself- that can live not against the past but with it
>
> Arthur P. Bochner[7] (2012:168)

With these words, Bochner (2012) writes a personal narrative, a survivor's story to confront the past concerning a difficult relationship with his father and the lost opportunity for a reconciliation before his father's death. In this personal narrative I turn to the past in an attempt to illuminate my cultural experiences growing up in the Deaf world, my association with residential schools, my relationship with my father, and finally my experiences of academic life, self-discovery and self-transformation. I write a story about 'lost' not just in relation to education, language, and communication, but more specifically to the sense of being 'lost' in trying to find a true sense of belonging in the world. The meaning of *lost* is embedded throughout the narrative to illuminate the experience of discrimination, exclusion, and marginalisation. It is not a tale of victimisation but rather a survivor's story rooted in the experience of resistance, epiphany and self-transformation. In essence I write about my struggle against "power, inequality, dominance, repression, hegemony and victimization." (Creswell, 2007: 70). My own sense of liberation comes from an experience of understanding the self and understanding the power of stories, the power of which resides in the experience of truth-telling (Ellis, 2004).

Creswell (2007: 123) suggest that researchers wishing to "study themselves and their own experiences should turn to auto-ethnography." Auto-ethnography can be defined as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 739). The narrative is grounded in lived experience which I present in an effort to communicate experience that has been marginalised. Auto-ethnography is a postmodern construct that represents a departure from the modernist tradition of qualitative research discourse and locates the researcher's self as a centre of inquiry (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Ellis, 2004).

Drawing on the self-reflective narrative tradition I write this personal narrative aware that in order to construct and reconstruct my cultural and educational experiences, I use data from personal journals, personal stories, official documents, informal and formal

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[7] Bochner (2012:168)

conversations with Deaf people and from my interactions with the participants. Furthermore I (re)construct the stories from memory through a process of "emotional recall" in that it is an "emotion story" revealing thoughts as well as feelings particularly where I write about crises in my life (Ellis, 2004: 113). I subscribe to Ellis (2004) concept of memory in that it does not work in a linear fashion but instead "thoughts and feelings circle around us, flash back [and] then forward" (2004: 118).

<p style="text-align:center">PART ONE</p>

2.1   **SIGNING IN THE DARK**

Events described in my personal narrative are interspersed and interpreted from my current perspective.

<p style="text-align:center">Becoming <i>deaf</i></p>

Sarah Wall (2008) states that auto-ethnography begins with a personal story. In my case it begins at residential school the point at which I entered the Deaf World for the first time and became immersed in the culture. However I could not do justice to the personal narrative without at least going back to the very beginning to a time when I actually became deaf, a pivotal moment that changed the course of my life. Whatever kind of future my parents had 'mapped out' for me this certainly wasn't 'it'. The following is an excerpt of my earliest memory of childhood something that always stayed with me, fuzzy, hazy scenes in my mind.

Vignette One

By my mother's account there were no incidences of deafness in the family history and no other reason for my parents to suspect their son might be deaf. I was responsive and had a marked ability to draw and follow instructions as she sat close to me. When my brother was a year and a half he was able to speak a full sentence. The contrast with me was marked: she started to notice things, that I did not answer her calls. Some mild form of speech defect was evident in me. Like most first time mothers unfamiliar with child rearing she relied on intuition and signs for anything troubling. I doubt any of us could possibly remember how we first acquired language during infancy. I have no memory of being able to speak or of realising I was deaf and that this might be permanent. But something in my memory prodded my mind like a projection, an image….

Vignette two

In my memory I am sitting on a floor surrounded by square-shaped things with colours and letters. A sudden change; the world seems subdued in stillness. I feel a part of me is taken cutting me off from everything else. It feels like a glass wall is built around me.

Vignette three

A man in a white coat peers at my ears and prods and probes. I feel the cold tingling sensations of metal inside. It seems the only thing that matters were my ears. I see solemn looks on my mother's face.

Vignette four

A woman dressed in white monastic dress and a black veil over her head leans towards me and pats my head. She playfully shook my hands moving closer to me. Her lips are moving and her mouth breaks into a smile. She raises her hand to her mouth and peers over it. Instinctively I use my hand to push it down. The woman leans back, her body shaking with laughter.

Later with headphones on ears, I raise my hand after each beeping sound. Then nothing…

Eyes are staring intently at me.

I itch to raise my hand again. Instead I inhale a strong smell of burning candles.

Eyes closed. I breathe in.

"Can you hear?"

I studied her lips and nod. My fingers rub against the earpiece fitted snugly in my left ear, and travel down feeling the tangled exterior of the lead connecting the earpiece and a small box-like instrument secured in a harness strapped around my body at chest level. The lady smiles and leans forward towards the box.

"Ba, ba, ba, hello!" Her lips stretch like elastic.

"Can you hear?"

I nod again. Then the view to her mouth is blocked. I hear sound, see her eyebrows raised. I look straight ahead, seeing only her hand and the staring eyes.

Extract from audiologist's letter

"[Noel] is a born lip-reader and responds well to acoustic stimulation […] little hope for his future unless he learns to speak and use his hearing aid. […] be prepared for the worse [..] speech makes him more normal […] avoid signing or his speech will be affected."

Introspection:

Was this a pivotal, life-changing moment? I cannot say for certain but I know something happened that day that moved me to a territory where I had never been before. I find it poignant not knowing whether that was the time I became deaf. I remember at some point I sensed a 'disconnection' from my parents and the confusion that followed. It was like as if suddenly a glass wall was built around me, cutting the communication cord that connected me and the rest of the family. I am sure that my parents treated me the same as they did with my siblings, talking to me in their usual way.

I am told maternal rubella was the cause. I tracked information on the disease and discovered large outbreaks of the congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) occurred in Ireland and other countries during 1950s and 1960s. Many children reported to be infected and lost their hearing as a consequence (Plotkin, 2006). It seems that in those days CRS could go unnoticed for a period of time. It presented itself as mild infection in adults and children but the consequences were serious especially during the first trimester. The virus is teratogeric in that it can cross the placenta causing fetal infection leading to deafness or impaired growth. Most of the stories about the early years came from a combination of anecdotes from my mother, photographs, letters, journals, documents and conversations with family.

From my father's account I learned the story about the visit to the audiologist and the advice they were given about my future. He was told I needed regular training in articulation and lip reading. In reading the letter I believe the most crucial information passed on to them concerned sign language. I have no doubt the news from the audiologist came as a complete shock to my parents. I wrote a chapter on the experience of meeting professionals and have extracted a few snippets of the story that stand out as significant in the way it impacted on my identity. Having come under the microscope of the medical gaze, I now had a physical condition with a medical term attached to it. Throughout my life I negotiated myself around the medical definition of 'deaf' as someone lacking in the sense of hearing. The sense of lacking something seeped into my consciousness and coloured my outlook on life while growing up. I became familiar with terms like 'abnormal', 'hearing impaired', 'hearing

problem', 'deaf' and 'handicap' to name a few. For years I negotiated my identity around those terms as people around me regarded me through the medical lens.

Trauma Stories

I begin here with three auto-ethnographic vignettes of trauma followed by introspections. The stories depict the theme of trauma to illustrate the experience of fear and anxiety, confusion and the eventual state of shock followed by intense sadness. I share these remembrances to understand the impact of trauma. The first vignette tells the story of my first day in residential school. I have no memory of the lead up to the first day apart from watching my mother organise my belongings and place them in a suit case. All my clothes had name tags stitched on them – three of everything: jumpers, pants, socks, shirts, pyjamas…

> My stomach turns into a knot as I write this now…
> …that sick feeling: anxiety, foreboding, fear
> In a heartbeat I'm there again... Five years old
> …bad... something bad is going to happen….

Vignette one

On a sunny day in September, I am sitting in the back seat of my father's Vauxhall Viva. I strain my neck to peer over his shoulder. We pass pillars at the gate as the drive takes us down an avenue bordered by iron white railings. My mother turns and smiles nervously.

"We are here now," she mouths.

Leaning forwards I spot the white convent walls in the distance. In my mind's eye I see fences and a long stretch of greenery in the surrounding area of Mary Immaculate School. A long white building stands on top of a slope of tarmac ground on my right. I see beautiful well-ordered gardens. Cows graze on grass. My father parks his car within a few feet from the foot of the concrete steps. Seeing a large black cross affixed against a wall, I start to feel frightened. With my mother by my side and father ahead of us, we climb the steps to the front door.

Wearing a knitted white cardigan and dark brown slacks with matching coloured shoes, I turn around and stare. A smattering of boys burst out from a door way. Curious they stop and stand a few feet from me. A lady dressed in dark blue slacks and white blouse and a black veil on her head follows them and waves at them to get back inside. Something catches my eyes. The boys, all dressed in casual clothes, start waving their hands in mid-air. With my eyes glued on the movement of their hands, I watch fascinated as their hands rove in great big waves.

The scene shifts and I am in a furnished room with several leather armchairs, pictures of religious figures hanging on yellow walls and a vase placed on a round mahogany table. I sense something strange is about to happen to me. The smell is there: of polish, disinfectants, and dry clothes. A man wearing black pants and a shirt with a white collar at the neck appears out of nowhere and stands before me. He leans forward as if to take my hand and then pats my head. I notice an ear piece and string dangling from his ear, like the one I was given. The machine seems exactly like mine – about the size of a deck of cards placed snugly inside a pouch strapped around the chest. With so many people around me wearing strange clothes it seems the world has turned cold. I clutch my mother's hand tightly.

In the next scene we are walking around corridors. In my vision doors open and close. The whole place becomes dim, shadowy, faint and subdued. Suddenly everything seems to stand still. Why have they stopped walking? Two nuns are standing one on each side of me. All eyes turn to me and already I feel frightened. Leaning towards me, my mother kisses my cheek and mouths.

"You will stay here. We will see you soon."

Anxiety grips me as I search for something to say. I look at the silver crucifix dangling, showing the tortured body of Christ.

"We are leaving now." My father is smiling.

I become agitated, terrified at the thought of being left with strangers. I begin to sob and muttered something in protest like "please don't leave me".

We walk some more down a long stretch of corridors. One door opens and another closes. Two nuns appear: one a large buxom lady, the other is tall and thin with a stern expression on her face. The silver crucifix dangles before my eyes. I sense a strange smell emanating from the two women. A little while later we stop and I look at my hands and see they are in the grip of the nuns. The gait and gesture of the two women start to change, a sudden determined movement. I find myself lifted up the air. Looking over my shoulder I feel a rising sense of panic as I stare down an empty hallway.

Where have they gone?

Powerful arms hoist me up off the ground. I struggle to break free, kicking and flailing my legs. Before me there is light and a yellow flash as I am lifted over broad shoulders. With a squirm from trying to turn around, I urge my body to break free. The grip tightens some more. Strong arms wrap themselves firmly around my body. Finding myself transported inside a large room with rows upon rows of single cast-iron beds, I stare at the boys all sitting up in their beds. Soon I am laid on an empty bed. I watch the nuns as they

proceed to undress me. All the while I continue to flail and kick. Somehow I grab on to a veil and pull with such force that I rip it off her head. The nun's face appears frightfully strange. The shock of the slap forces me to lay still.

Looking around the dorm I see staring faces of children. After all the chaos and confusion of the day I feel exhausted. Soon I am in bed and with the dorm lights switched off the nuns depart. In my bed I turn the cover over my head. Peering through a gap I look out at the curtains. Through the opening in the curtains I stare at the sky, seeing it change from orange to a red glow. The sky seems to be closing in on me. Shadows hover by the windows like dark phantoms making me shiver with longing for home.

Vignette two

I was at an age somewhere between eight and nine when I noticed that, despite all our interest in signing, the school did nothing to encourage it. I knew signing was outlawed but now I came to the realisation of how serious things seemed to be. A few nuns were 'licensed' to punish us if we broke rules. Our language was forbidden, and the Mother Superior was the law of the school. To punish sign language offenders she used a bunch of keys and lashed on to a child's hand, inflicting unmerciful pain on skin and bone. A fearsome nun, she was the iron lady of the school.

Hard as they tried, no one could shake us out of our obsession with signs. Secret hiding places for signing were found at the dormitories and playground. At night we sat together on a bed and used flashlights to shine on our hands and faces. With meagre beams of light we signed stories to each other. One boy stood as a look out.

It was pretty hard to sleep when we had to be in bed by 6pm every evening. Many of us with active minds jumped from bed to bed, climbed up on the window sill and hid behind curtains. Some crawled under beds and used their backside to push the bed upwards. There was fun to be had in those rooms but we took care to look out for snooping nuns. If we were lucky a wagging finger was all we got but some nuns were not so lenient. One night a young boy was caught. He ran under a bed and kept crawling under each bed until eventually two nuns grabbed him by the ankles and dragged him to the centre of the dorm. All eyes were on him as he received a beating.

The Mother Superior was fond of using her keys. One day she lashed on to a boy for signing. Staring at the nun, I watched in horror as the keys kept raining down on his hand. A terrifying sight it was, my hands shook with the fright. When it was all over, the poor boy collapsed onto the floor in a flood of tears. In a show of hostility the superior hovered over

him looking transfixed, eyes bulging with hatred. I noticed spittle forming on her mouth. The way she stared at us was enough to make our heart palpitate. Obedience and routine the order of things in our lives; survival meant staying out of trouble.

Vignette three

When I was eight years old I was transferred to another dorm where I came under the watchful eyes of Mother Superior. I heeded the forewarnings of the more senior boys, and braced myself for more trouble. Every morning after breakfast we visited the lavatory for 'toilet time'. Tears were already on our faces. The lavatory was 'policed' by the iron nun. It was compulsory to visit the cubicle. Sometimes we switched places to buy more time. Prayers were needed. I asked God to help relieve myself. I urged my body to obey my command. We were forbidden to flush the toilet without an inspection from her. When she looked inside after I had finished, I suffered jittery nerves. Sometimes it was hard to "do the business" when the mind and body were at odds with each other.

My stomach tightened at the sight of a boy dragged out by the ear, the nun's hand lashing down at his head. Standing in line, I prayed to God for help. The morning was the worse time of the day: anxieties, fears, sweat, tears, and shaking. I felt a sting across the face for spending too long in the cubicle and found myself dragged by the arm to the back of the queue. I stood and waited for more time and more of the same.

Inside the cubicle I sat and watched the door vibrate, knowing she was pounding the door. Tearful and frightened, I opened it slowly and suddenly felt myself being jerked forward. My cheeks burned with each blow. Back again I went behind the queue.

Morning terror began all over again. I watched keys attacking the hands of others. More tears, sweats and prayers. They came out clutching their hands under their armpit. I watched them with a sick feeling of horror and trepidation. Eyes red from crying, they stood at the back of the queue. Each morning was different to other mornings. You could never predict what would happen with your body. Sometimes your body gave in to your urges, sometimes not. More hands filled with sweat and nervous jitters.

"Are you able to go to the toilet?"

I signed "no".

Each morning I prayed with great fervour.

Then one morning I thought my prayers were answered.

Pleading with the nun to leave us alone, we told her we weren't ready. The look of bewilderment was on our faces but we saw a terrifying vision of the nun's rage. There

followed calmness in her demeanour as she told us to raise our hand. In each hand she placed a tablet, round and white like chalk. We swallowed it whole and waited unknowing. Soon our bowels loosened. A short time later, a boy was dragged out by the ear and beaten for soiling his pants.

Vignette four

Waking up in the middle of the night I felt the urge to go to the toilet was a nightmare. To go to the lavatory you had to go out the dorm and walk down the corridor, pass the superior nun's bedroom without making a sound and go inside a room on the right, and return the same way without getting caught. I saw how she beat a young boy around the head after he was found walking the corridor. I wondered how she could hear the tap of our bare feet on linen and realised later it was the noise from a flushing toilet that woke her up. The idea was to leave the toilet without flushing but that would only leave evidence that one of us had been out of the dorm.

That night I considered the risk and decided to stay in bed and fell asleep. Later I woke up in a half a daze. I couldn't see clearly in the dark. I realised then I had soiled myself in my pyjamas. With my mind in a slumber, I reached over to the radiator and grabbed a towel to clean myself. I cannot recall what I did with it but I know I slept deeply all through the night.

I remember being vigorously shaken. As my eyes adjusted to room light, I came to the realisation that I was surrounded by boys staring towards my right. Looking over my shoulder I discovered the towel laid on the radiator was covered in excrement. All eyes were turned to me as I struggled to explain myself. Some of them appeared to laugh behind their hand. In a state of panic I leaped out of my bed and stood before the radiator trying to figure out what to say next. A nun arrived from behind the boys. As she pulled me away from the radiator she recoiled in horror.

Wild-eyed with alarm, she motioned me with her hand to move quickly before the supervisor arrived. I took the towel with me to the bathroom and washed it in a large porcelain sink. The nun appeared behind me and took the towel away and told me to clean myself in the bath. My pyjamas were caked in dirt. When she returned she looked agitated at me. After I undressed she turned on the bath and scrubbed my legs and backside. As soon as I stepped outside the bath, the supervisor emerged from the door way and glared at me. I froze at the sight of her. Words were exchanged between the two nuns. To my heartfelt relief she disappeared out of the bathroom without a word.

Introspection:

The four vignettes present in this section capture the experience of trauma at different stages in early childhood. Writing the first vignette caused me some distress. In my heart I struggled to come to terms with the pain endured by the five-year-old boy in my story. As an adult I looked back and reflect on what it was like for him, the sense of bewilderment in his mind as nothing seemed to make sense to him. In my mind at least I understand why he had to go to residential school, but back then I had no idea that starting school meant separating from my family. I have a vague memory of helping my mother pack a suitcase with clothes that had my name tags stitched on them. For the young boy, packing clothes gave a sense of going somewhere exciting. But distance made no sense. Apart from the idea of going to a new school, he simply could not comprehend what was going on. Different visions come to mind now: the children's hands moving at great speed; the silver cross, and the large black cross affixed on a wall; the strange odour from the nun's clothes was unsettling. Even now when I look at photos of the nuns dressed in their habits I recall the familiar smell and touch of their clothes. I remember searching my father's face for clues of distress but found none. If he was upset, he never showed it. The smile remained fixed. I wondered what went through his mind that particular day. I imagined he went to some hotel lounge to drink and numb the pain that was probably festering inside him, something I would probably do as a way of forgetting.

Powerlessness is a word that comes to my mind as I replay the scene of my parents' disappearance. The strong sense of powerlessness was in remembering the young boy as he was transported from one place to another against his will. The powerlessness was in the fear of what was about to happen and the inability to control or change a situation.

Readers may wonder what kind of parent would send their son to a residential school. The choice of school was not only based on deafness but there were no other schools in the country that catered for deaf pupils outside Dublin. Given the lack of choices available to them, I think it is to their credit they found courage to do what they thought was the best option. As a father myself, I tried to understand how difficult it must have been for parents to leave their child in a residential school. I can only imagine how difficult it was for my mother to explain to a five-year-old about what was about to happen to him.

Memory can often be like a film screen, where scenes have a hazy dream-like quality (Muncey, 2005 and 2010). Certain things happened that day that I can only recall in patches. Each scene is played out with no real sequence to them but I know they all occurred on the one day. The standout memory was the sight of signs. In retrospect the children's hands

remind me of little starlings darting around their faces. As a young boy I was transfixed by their sway.

The second vignette conveys the memory of the threat of punishment for signing in school. Writing this story helped me recall the experience of feeling the oppressive atmosphere of the school, the constraints placed on children's freedom of self-expression. My upbringing in Beech Park and St. Joseph's was characterised by suppression of language and identity. Writing the next scene presented me with a different kind of challenge. It was difficult to make sense of the memories of abuse suffered by children during the toilet routine. Years later I learned the purpose of the 'toilet routine'[8] was the acquisition of toileting skills. Whether this was an essential educational objective of the school or part of the superior's own plan I don't know –
 but it was such a bizarre idea.

I am sure the fourth vignette raises many questions, but for me the issue is about the extent of 'control' over children's bodies. As children we were treated like robots. Under the Mother Superior's watch I found trouble without ever looking for it. It would just come to me, catching me unawares. I have no doubts the nun was sharp and aggressive, often storming inside the dormitory to catch a few boys out of their bed and giving them a severe beating. With her hearing ability she was often one step ahead. To me she was clearly a sick woman with crazy notions about raising children.

I cannot put a time sequence to all these vignettes except to piece together fragments of memories of the events. In one part of my memory the looks on the children's faces was something I will never forget.

My Father

The following vignettes are derived from memories of my father. When I was writing the auto-ethnography as a personal narrative I was faced with the auto-ethnographer's quagmire of writing about people close to me, whether or not I should write about things that are 'unflattering' (Ellis, 2004). Writing about my life invariably means I touch on experiences of residential school which involve my father. Part of his role in the story concerns the visits to the school. The other is his part in carpooling, driving a group of children from Dublin to Kilkenny and Waterford before heading home to Clonmel. My father's influence on my life story is important for the way our relationship was affected by the ideals and values of the

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[8] Residential Redress Report Chapter 16

education system. My aim was to adopt an ethical practice in writing about him without offending his good name, to be sensitive to a treatment of him without compromising the stories. Though unavoidable, it has been a worthwhile exercise in considering ethical concerns. One way to address these issues is to present a brief background of his childhood to help us understand his character and beliefs about language and communication. The first vignette contains a brief account of his family and some anecdotes about my mother's family.

Vignette one

The story of how my parents met can only be told in the briefest manner. My mother was introduced to my father at a nurses' dance in Collins Hall on Gladstone Street. At Collins Hall they were surrounded by people from the hospital where they worked and by people who knew them. Soon afterwards they began to see each other as a couple. Going to dances was a favourite night out for them.

One of the things that most interests me about my parents is the contrast in their family background. While my mother came from a large family my father was an only child. I have no uncle or aunt from my Dad's side. There was a wealth of stories coming from her about a childhood that seemed idyllic and filled with much happiness, even during times of sorrow and heartbreak. Music was an essential feature of family life in the household. The children developed a passion for music, learning by listening and observation, a passion that was to last for their lifetimes.

My father's childhood had the hallmark of a Charles Dickens story: bleak, remote and replete with stories of hardship. I am not sure if my father experienced happiness at any stage in his childhood because he rarely spoke about his past. Perhaps his upbringing instilled in him a reserve that he carried with him all his life. A man of few words in the family home, he sometimes had to be persuaded to talk about himself. When coaxed he described his past as harsh, with very little affection and empathy coming from his parents. With so little to go on, the prospect of writing about my father's past sent me on a journey into his ancestry to the records offices in Tipperary County Council, websites, and old documents stored in an empty shoe box in my mother's house. I know my father had his roots in Littleton, County Tipperary. I learned he was excellent at his studies and made a good impression on his teachers who encouraged him to attend college after graduating with a Leaving Certificate. I know his parents suffered poverty which meant their son worked on a neighbour's farm to pay for his secondary education. It seems that my father broke a lot of sweat cutting turf, lifting and placing them on wheel barrows. Energy was being sapped from his young body

but his determined mental strength saw him through his studies and he was able to successfully complete all the national examinations before he graduated. I have no idea why he decided to pursue a career in nursing but he ended up working in St. Luke's Hospital.

By the time she was sixteen, my mother left home to train as a nurse at St. Luke's. According to my mother, she started out at a time when patriarchy was strife in Irish society. Coming from a traditional, rural Irish background she knew it was uncommon for women to enter university and few women worked outside the home. The law dictated that married women had to give up their jobs. In those days women were regarded first and foremost as wives and mothers – and their primary place within society was in the family home.

After a courtship of about five years, my parents were in their twenties when they married in September 1961. My mother states that they married in a fashion typical for Irish Catholics of her generation. In wedding photographs they looked nonchalant and happy. The honeymoon was spent in Dublin. A strange story emerged about the priest that married them. On the day of the honeymoon he accompanied them on the train journey to Dublin and spent a night in the hotel where my parents stayed. A short time after the wedding they moved into a semi-detached bungalow in Ard na Greine. The house was a sturdy building full of boxes of living quarters: three bedrooms, a hallway, living room, kitchen, and bathroom. Hedges and railings separated us from the neighbour's house. Around the house were lawns covered in dandelions in summer and in the back stood two oak trees.

I was born in December 1962 at St. Anne's Home in Clonmel, County Tipperary. My birth coincided with one of the coldest winters ever recorded in Ireland. The story surrounding the time of birth is told by my mother. Etched in her memory is the big snow event which began late that year. On New Year's Eve 1963 the freeze began to set in and did not relent until early spring. A few days after I was born, I was baptised in a nearby Catholic Church while my mother recuperated.

Vignette two

"Why…you … speaking to them?"

I was sitting at the passenger seat of my father's car with the three boys behind me at the back seat. Quickly I turned around and looked ahead. Another nudge followed, this time more persistent.

"..can't you talk …?"

I looked at my father and shrugged, unable to find the words to explain that signing was easier for us. It was a cold dark Friday evening. We had just left Dublin and were heading for Kilkenny. Looking over my shoulder I eyed the lads and shook my head, showing a resigned look on my face. Each time he took us all home it was the same, only next time it irked my father some more. Eventually one Friday evening he pulled up on a side road outside Naas and turned on me, full of rage. I feared his temper and did not want to resist his demands. He proceeded to throw a barrage of words, many of which flew past me.

"What.....name of …..not stop?"

"I don't know," was all I said. I could see he was getting frustrated with me.

To calm him I mouthed 'sorry'. Quickly I turned around and faced the windscreen. I had no idea what my friends thought of my father's outburst. I dreaded seeing them on my return to school on Monday morning.

Vignette three

Wednesday afternoon was visiting time. I sat with my father in a smoke-filled barroom. He had taken time out from his studies. We were in an old-world charm of a hotel lounge, a room bathed in dimmed lights, and fitted with aged sofas against a backdrop of mismatched wallpapers. Adorning the walls were a random collection of oil paintings featuring dogs and horses.

"How is school?"

"It's fine. How is mam?"

"She is grand."

Sitting side by side we exchanged more pleasantries about home. I never shared all the stuff that went on in school.

"Who was the nun....waved…?"

I couldn't tell because I didn't know her name. All I knew was her sign-name. Knowing his attitude towards signing I was hardly going to demonstrate the sign-name to my father.

Sometimes we stayed sitting without a word between us. My father was not much of a conversationalist. I hardly shared what went on in school lest he reported to the nuns about me. The fizzy taste of lemonade was a real treat. I simply sat and ate crisps feeling the crunchiness inside my mouth. I sat fantasising in my own little world.

My father drifted off to talk to some stranger at the bar. I watched him from afar. I have an image of him standing in the bar light, leaning against the counter, face turned to the speaker.

The room was peopled with men, some with cigarettes dangling on their lips. Beer bottles, half empty glasses, cigarette butts and ashtrays lay on tables. The air polluted by cigarette smoke.

We were late leaving the hotel. It was gone well past bedtime and everyone in school had gone to bed. I worried the nuns might punish me for the late hour. I urged my father to take me back. We went out into the dark, cold night. A deep sense of grief enveloped me as we reached the car. I yearned for my mother. On the concrete steps, my father rang the doorbell. Within a few minutes the lights went on inside and the door opened. My father spoke to the nun to apologise. Seeing it was a kindly nun who smiled – I knew I was okay. Surprised at the ease in which I slipped into my bed without drawing attention from the fearsome nun, I felt relieved and happy. Shortly before I fell asleep my stomach rumbled reminding me I had missed my tea.

Vignette four

Shortly after my father graduated and secured work in Cork I discovered trains for the first time. It was spring 1972 when I first travelled home by train with the children from school. Growing up, trains and the railway tracks would become a major fixture of childhood. I saw lines of metal and machines standing alongside the platform. The carriages had a strange smell of burning metal and oil. A nun pointed at a train and said this was the train that would take us to our homes. A full carriage was reserved for us. Some days when we were unsupervised it was left to the older boys to tell us when to get off the train. The journey home was often bedlam. Some of us caused havoc jumping from seat to seat and climbing up onto the luggage compartment. It was all pretty harmless fun. We were railway children from the early 1970s until the day we left school.

Vignette five

"You must wear your hearing aid!"

My father was furious with me. I had decided to abandon the hearing aid when faced with the prospect of visiting my cousins in their house. It was a holiday period and the atmosphere in the family home was strained by my father's insistence on putting the hearing aid back on the harness strapped around my chest and concealed by a thick woollen jumper.

Standing with eyes glaring, he watched me assemble the machine together and plug the ear piece inside my left ear and turn the switch on. My hands shook with fear. Based on experience, I knew the hearing aid attracted stares from children. I did not want to draw attention to myself. To be 'normal' I focused on looking for ways to 'fit in' with children. The last thing I wanted was to stand out as a freak. I didn't mind being noticed for difference, so long as 'difference' was seen as normal. At the same time, I knew from experience that children would be curious about 'the thing in my ear'. Sitting together with family members in church during Sunday morning mass I drew the attention of several children on my left side. More and more turned their heads towards me. It was unavoidable since I was the only one with the device. For me the hearing aid represented a badge of shame, an emblem of feebleness, unhearing-like and strange.

As my father drove to the house, I put my hand under my jumper and turned a switch on the hearing aid. Walking behind everyone else to the front door, I discretely took the earpiece out of my left ear and placed it in the shirt pocket under my jumper. I was sure no one would notice I was without one since everyone would be deep in conversation.

Inside the living room my cousin greeted me and started to stare in my direction. All eyes turned to me. I searched my father's face for clues. He rushed over to me and pulled up my jumper revealing the strapped apparatus. My cheeks burned with humiliation and embarrassment. People around me looked irritated.

When my father put the ear piece back in my ear I suddenly realised I had turned the wrong switch. The hearing aid was still switched on. And with the ear piece out the machine released a piercing sound.

Introspection:

When I re-read these stories I experienced the same reactions now as I did back then. I can still remember the shame I felt about sign language and the hearing aid. While reading I could not help but feel I had lived life in another world, a forgotten world. The memory of my father, the visits and the journeys home and back, is characterised by an atmosphere of restraint due to his hostility towards sign language. In retrospect, shame was the dominant feeling of childhood, a powerful feeling that moved me to attempt to change a situation. Shameful feelings are with me now as I think back to the time I returned to the school after being out with my father. Some of the boys who had been out with their parents shared stories of funfairs and entertainment venues they had visited, none of which I experienced with my father. As I had no stories to tell them, I simply told them I had had a great time and

avoided discussing it further. To be fair to my father, he was not much of a conversationalist and probably had little idea that children needed to be entertained and have fun. Wednesday visits from him are happily lodged in my memory. When he arrived smiling in his fawn coat, I was proud of him and prouder still when the boys wanted to know who he was.

The story about the hearing aid is powerful from the point of view of the effect it had on my consciousness. In my mind at least I stood out as different in the negative sense of the word and tried to change it to appear more normal. Instead, my attempts seemed to increase the sense of isolation. Without the hearing aid it was easy to forget myself and get lost in the fun and games with the children. As a father I wouldn't think of forcing a child to do what he does not want to do. The humiliation I felt when everyone stared at the apparatus strapped on my body was something that stayed with me for a long time. I remember running out of the house out into the sunshine looking for some place to hide. I wanted the world to forget that this ever happened.

At home visitors asked where I was attending school. The term 'special' was attached to Beech Park, setting me apart from my brothers and sister and the rest of the children in the neighbourhood. It was the word my father used about education and school. In my mind it was normal to use words like that to describe Beech Park and St. Joseph's. In my heart it increased a longing to fit in with other children. And for some reason the word made my stomach turn into a knot. Even now the word 'special' still grinds my gears. In the Oxford English Dictionary the adjective implies something different from what is usual or something belonging to a particular place or person. To me the word places me under the spotlight for the wrong reasons. 'Different' seems a more appropriate term.

When you are stuck in sign language from an early age you are likely to be enthusiastically involved in signing. It is hard to stop when you are in the company of your peers. I loved the familiar rhythm of the hands leaping around our faces and bodies. The way hands are shaped gives expression to stories in clear and concise ways with sentences like bricks for building bridges. After being exposed to signing, signs came easily to me and despite my father's protest I could not contemplate life without signs. Years later, I discovered an age clause stipulated that Beech Park pupils transferred to St. Joseph's School in Cabra when they reached their tenth birthday. Being three months shy of my tenth, I was destined to remain in Beech Park but an exception was made in my case. At this point I now turn attention to the vignettes extracted from the detailed and longer stories about life in St. Joseph's.

St. Joseph's

Vignettes selected for this part of the chapter contains some general themes about life in St. Joseph's. They describe the setting and environment of the school to convey an atmosphere of the place and the experience of learning sign language with the boys.

Vignette one

I left Beech Park in the summer of 1972, relieved to be out of the watchful eyes of the Mother Superior. The first day of St. Joseph's lives long in my memory. I was nine years old the day I arrived there with my father. Awestruck by the sheer size of the school, I saw so many windows. The whole building – all four stories of grey-stoned construction topped by spiral gratings and spikes – loomed large before my eyes. In the September sunshine the school stood surrounded by immaculate and carefully landscaped gardens and orchards. Dressed in brown slacks, grey shirt and light brown jumper, I followed my father up the concrete steps flanked by stone walls on each side, all grey and gravel. At the top of the steps we faced a wooden door with large metal handles. The door was partly opened, showing an inside door with latticed window panes. Stepping inside, I wondered if I was heading inside a cold dark place.

Where the nuns in Beech Park held a strong presence in my earliest memory, the Christian Brothers dominated the rest of my childhood. The Brothers became my new guardians. The men appeared to be giants in my eyes, standing tall wearing ankle-length black cassocks and a white collar at the neck. I knew from the older boys who had gone from Beech Park the Brothers used strict discipline, and punishment was given far more frequently than the nuns. Their whole demeanour from the colour of their clothes to stern expressionless faces told me life had to be taken seriously. After the formalities were done with registration I bade goodbye to my father. No tears were shed this time. I can't recall how I felt then but I know my emotions may have deadened with the weekly shift from residential school to home and back again. I was living in two worlds and such was the confusion I did not know which one to call 'home'.

After getting the lowdown on rules and regulations of the school I was shown to my new dorm and classroom. Boys were grouped according to age and levels of hearing loss and categorised as "partially", "profoundly," or "severely" deaf. The audiologist's report identified me as "partial" and the school placed me in a class of "profoundly deaf" students. Conversation with the boys brought me in contact with a new sign language. Warnings came

to me in multitude of ways. We were: "not allowed to sign," "to sign only when not seen" and "to be careful or you will get punished."

Vignette two

It was all done spontaneously, the way I picked up new signs. The senior boys showed me how it was done: the hand shapes, the contours and movement. More coherent than the signs at Beech Park I found the language easy to memorise. It may seem strange to readers but the transition from the Beech park signs to the new signs learned at St. Joseph's was seamless. I learned the sign-alphabet and started to finger-spell words and phrases. Each sign was memorised and proudly displayed to the senior boys. I became more expressive and extrovert and able to explain a range of complex ideas and discuss events that happened in school. Within months my fingers were moving instinctively.

Vignette three

It was easy to get lost in the whole maze of rooms and corridors. A chapel occupied the entire top floor of the west wing of the building where mass was said at 7 o'clock each morning. All floors between the second and top floors were occupied by dormitories and Christian Brothers' bedrooms. A floor base a few steps above first floor level was occupied by classrooms. The ground level floor was where we found the students refectory, kitchen, laundry, play hall and lay staff bedrooms. Two dining rooms were reserved separately for the Brothers and staff and the boys. Our dining room was on the east wing of the building at the rear end overlooking the school yard.

I remember feeling awestruck with the sheer size of the school yard. It is difficult to give an estimate on size but it seemed to be equal in size to a combination of three tennis courts. A handball alley stood about twenty feet from ground level at one end of the yard. Across the yard from the school building was a yard shelter containing several workrooms and a lavatory. Workrooms facilitated training in tailoring, shoemaking and woodwork for the boys to learn a trade skill which they were able to put to good use in employment. Clothes and trousers were often made in the tailoring room for boys whose parents could not afford new ones. The atmosphere inside these rooms was often permeated by the smell of wood and leather.

I remember the first time I was shown the yard. Hundreds of boys were scattered all over the area playing football or simply hanging about[9]. I remember feeling distracted by movement on my left. A few of us had turned to stare at a boy pedalling around the yard on a bicycle chased by a posse of boys. He circled around the periphery and at one stage released his hands from the bars before quickly steadying himself. As I was beginning to wonder how he managed to find the bike, a Christian Brother appeared out of nowhere and gave chase. He ran after him with a stick in his hand. For some time the boy dodged and weaved his way out of the Brother's grasp until he was eventually caught and beaten. I suddenly felt lonely and frightened.

Vignette four

The sheer size of the senior boys caused me to feel a little intimidated until one day I displayed my sign skills. The students came from all over the country, a mixture of day-pupils living with their families and boarders. Students in those days came from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some of the boarders and day-pupils had brothers attending St. Joseph's and sisters at St. Mary's. A small number of them were admitted as orphans. Some of the boys were abandoned by their parents. I knew some were taken from their parents for neglect and abuse. A few hardy ones were found within the crowd of day-pupils coming from tough and poverty stricken homes. A small number of pupils with 'additional handicap' were amongst those housed in a secluded area called the manual school, a modern prefab-like house that accommodated pupils considered unfit for oralism. The building which was nothing like the nineteenth century architecture around the ground stood in isolation sequestered from all the main school activities. Across from the manual school was an infirmary for young children. An outdoor swimming pool lay at the back of the infirmary and behind the handball wall. Ground-empty and scattered with brown leaves, the pool had been out of use for almost two years.

Beyond the shelter at the school yard was a large field about the size of four or five football pitches. The play hall, a large rectangular shaped room, was often a hive of activities with table tennis, snooker, chess, and draughts the most popular games played. At one end of the hall was a built-in wooden platform about five feet above ground. It was stationed close to the film screen where we had movie shows during the weekend. In the early days the

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[9] Approximately one hundred and fifty boys attended St. Joseph's around the 1970s- age range from 3 to 18 years (see LeMasters, 1990; Crean, 1997).

school held drama shows and bingo sessions for members of the public to raise funds for a new swimming pool. At the opposite end was a space filled by three snooker tables.

Every one of us prepared for bed in the same meticulous way. Doing things in an orderly fashion was part of the culture of the school: clothes folded up neatly and placed at the foot of the bed. Kneeling down before our bed we prayed. The dormitory was much larger than the rooms in Beech Park. Hundreds of single cast-iron beds were lined in neat rows. I had seen order and cleanliness in Beech Park – and St. Joseph's was no different.

Introspection:

Overall these stories are concerned with the period of adjustment to a new environment and learning a new sign language. It may come as a surprise that the signs used by the boys in Beech Park were different to the signs learned in St. Joseph's. The difference was a consequence of segregation as the three schools – St. Joseph's, St. Mary's and Beech Park – may well be described as 'communication islands' (Grehan, 2008). Due to lack of contact with pupils from one of these schools different signed languages developed due.

The signs sourced and tapped by generations of children in Beech Park contained no traces of the English language (e.g. sign-alphabets or the use of finger-spelling). For story-telling the children used a combination of signs, gestures, mimicry, and dramatization. Sadly owing to the closure of the school in Beech Park in June 1998 the signs are no longer in use. Still the memories of them still linger in my mind.

While the nuns in Beech Park held a strong presence in my earliest memory, the Christian Brothers dominated the rest of my childhood. The next few sections contain vignettes that communicate the reality of life under oralism using the scenario of a classroom interaction.

The Mirror Talks

Already immersed in the world of sign language I had much to learn about the way of life of St. Joseph's. The way of life I encountered in the school are presented through a series of vignettes and snippets of commentaries and stories that reflect on the experience of oralism. Each piece has been extracted from the stories about life in St. Joseph's School. They are rendered powerful in different ways. Each story conveys different meanings about the experience of learning to speak and listen, the memories of being urged to push our vocals and create sound. Speech training events during primary education geared for normalisation and conformity to hearing values and norms are all contained in the following stories.

Vignette one

A transistor radio was brought into our class, a small square-sized room. *Listen,* the teacher said to us. A microphone placed on a table beside the transistor. *Listen*. Our hearing aids fit snugly in our ears. We waited for sound. Our teacher delighted in getting us to listen to the radio and raise our hands whenever we captured a word uttered by the speaker. Signing was strictly out of bounds. Only talking was permitted.

All around the brightly lit room the walls were filled with an assortment of drawings, art and craftwork on display on shelves and cream-coated walls. Behind me was long vertical bare window.

Did we hear something? What?

"Switch…T……."

"What…where? Oh."

Words were elusive, they slipped by me.

I switched the hearing aid to T so we could hear the voice of the speaker through a microphone. The T switch was supposed to drown background noise.

Listen, the bearded man said.

Our faces strained. Suddenly I felt a tickling sensation in my ear and then there was something: a sound.

Was that someone talking..? Was that the radio?

"No signing…."

"What…news?"

All of us pupils waited to hear a single word. A hand went up: Belfast? More hands: bomb? Excitedly: last night? dead? murdered?

Sometimes I heard sound and confused it as voices.

Listen.

Once a week in the speech laboratory I sat beside my speech therapist with a mirror in front of us. The class for articulation exercises focused on the use of vocals but also on training in lip reading skills. It was the mirror we turned to.

Can you read your lips? Yes. *Talk.*

When I spoke I saw my lips move. I permitted myself a smile. I could easily fool my therapist. I feigned understanding and didn't trust lip reading. 'Maybe' and 'baby' are two different words. To the watcher they are homophonous; that is, they appear the same but actually different in spelling and meaning.

Hands down…*Talk.*

Back in class, we prepared speeches and recited poetry and nursery rhymes: 'Old McDonald had a Farm', 'Oh My Darling Clementine', 'Choosing Shoes'. Memorise, recite, out loud. "Old McDonald had a farm….E-I-E-I-O". Come on…again.

"Again, again, again, again, again…..no, no, no, you…again, again…you….no, again…now you, no, again…"

Rhythms, vibrations, we absorbed them all. One by one, we strained our eyes and ears pushed our vocals hard.

Oh my Darling, Oh my Darling,
Oh my Darling Clementine.
Thou art lost and gone forever,
Dreadful sorry, Clementine.

One by one we sang into a microphone. With no idea how we sounded we searched for clues from our teacher's face. He wore a look that told us some were not doing so well. Patiently he spoke in slow, measured speech: again…now...again…again, until…

Oh my Darling, Oh my Darling,
Oh my Darling Clementine.
Thou art lost and gone forever,
Dreadful sorry, Clementine.

One by one we all sang into a microphone. In speech therapy we talked to a mirror. In class we thought we rhymed…again, again, again, and again.

Oh my Darling, Oh my Darling,
Oh my Darling Clementine.
Thou art lost and gone forever,
Dreadful sorry, Clementine.

Vignette three

Day in day out we practiced orating in class. Day in day out we prepared for the big day. Visitors, graduate teachers, arrived to hear us *talk*. Together we all sang. Then one by one we gave prepared speeches. Hearing us speak thrilled them no end. Off they went smiling happily.

In speech class, my therapist guided my hand to his throat.

"Can you feel….?"   I nodded.

I practised: learning to speak by imitation. I turned to the mirror and spoke, an act of ventriloquism. It was hard: the singsongs and nursery rhymes, always a constant struggle. *Blue shoes, red, pink and blue shoes*….no, no, no....*New shoes, red, pink, and blue shoes*…. well done…now you…. *New shoes…*

A flow of energy coming from our teacher, we responded with equal verve.

English, arithmetic, and geography: the capital of Italy is….? Rome. Say it again. R-O-M-E…no...no…again and again.

The capital of Spain is…?

Again…..

Our lips stretched with each utterance: M-A-D-R-I-D.

Vignette four

The book geared for early nursery readers contains stories with pictures and trivial plots and written in fairly simple language. Within a short time I had outgrown my interest in wooden-headed characters. I struggled to express myself in writing English but reading came easily to me. Books gave me a window into learning English. They gave me what teachers could not give. I studied how writing is ordered and structured in a sentence: the pronouns, nouns, verbs, and adjectives. I did not always depend on my teacher. The written word gave me the basic skills for learning. Reading notes and reading white-chalk writing on the blackboard helped improve my learning. I improvised, all the time looking to find an outlet for information. When the strict disciplinarian was present in teacher the wooden ruler was freely used for language offenders: three slaps on each hand.

Snippets:

School report: "good voice but poor vocalisation".

School report: "Improving steadily: takes quite an interest in the class library and is more inclined to read a book on his own. His latest is the "Noddy" series by Enid Blyton, particularly the current one "Noddy and the Aeroplane.""

School report: "inclined to sign and gesture" and "needed to be reminded to speak clearly at times. Enjoys the songs, carols, hymns we do in class……."

> *Oh my Darling, Oh my Darling,*
> *Oh my Darling Clementine.*
> *Thou art lost and gone forever,*
> *Dreadful sorry, Clementine.*

Introspection:

In oralism speech training and speech demonstrations are something many of us have experienced in childhood. For most of us it was rather unpleasant. The training and preparation that went into it was so intense it affected my confidence and brought more shame into my consciousness. For me, if the act of speaking was embarrassing in class, it was humiliating in front of visitors. There is little interpretation required about the stories as meaning can be gleaned from the events I describe. In my head I can see the futility of the speech exercises that went on that it pains my heart to replay the scene over in my mind because the whole process of teaching speech involves changing the way children behave. The events I describe are typical of an oral primary classroom. It was less intense in post-primary education but was still an important part of the curriculum.

A Confessional Tale

This story portrays a powerful scene that conveys the experience of shame. It is a vignette that illustrates stigma of sign language.

A major strand of life in St. Joseph's was Catholic religion. Religious enthusiasm permeated the tradition of the school. As children we went through the motions of First Confessions, First Holy Communion and Confirmation without fully understanding the meaning of the sacraments. Morning mass was attended regularly. Pancakes were made by the school chef on Shrove Tuesday. On Ash Wednesday we visited the school chapel to pray and receive the sacramental ash on our foreheads.

For Lent we promised to give up signing. Before confession we knelt before the altar to pray for forgiveness.

Inside the confessional, the priest raised his eyebrows. And I told him my sins:

Bless me Father for I have sinned
It is two weeks since my last confession.
I was fighting. I told lies. I was signing.

Eyeing me suspiciously he spoke in a measured manner.

"Any more sins?" he mouthed.

I shook my head. The priest held up three fingers instructing me to say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys. Three times for my penance, and the sinner had just absolved me from sins!

Attending the confessional was mandatory. On a pledge I made I promised not to sign again. Tainted and ashamed I prayed for help to stop. At home with family I felt estranged from my language. At school the dancing hands charmed my eyes. I itched to move my hands and feel the sensations of fluid movements. I was now awash with sin, making my teacher increasingly frustrated. In confession I told the same sins. He told me: "sit on your hands and resist temptation". Already it was too late. I was destined to sin for life[10].

Introspection:

This is a simple tale about the experience of going to confession, similar to that of Ellis (1991), a vignette about stigma. Some of the stories included in the chapter may well be called "stigma stories", demonstrating deep emotional pain. The power is not only in resistance to it but in the sharing and the telling of these stories. Disclosing the experience of pain helps understand why I had a need to hide in shame. My own interpretations of the stories are that both shame and stigma seem closely tied to one another. In the next section we will see how this sense of shame was carried forward into my teenage years and was brought to bear as a result of things that happened. They are stories that are of personal and private nature.

<div align="center">Shadow Stories</div>

There are things that happened to me in St. Joseph's that caused me to suffer bouts of depression in the last few years at school. This is a private and significant part of my life that I wish to share in the next story. I wrote it with some trepidation bearing in mind what Ellis (2004) writes about the 'vulnerable researcher' that once my writing is in the public domain I cannot take it back. I have no control over what people might say to me. To some extent writing has been a cathartic and therapeutic experience. As a starting point I wrote about a time before the beginning of the final year of school and described the troublesome period of my life, a time when I suffered lethargy and apathy had set in. It was the summer of 1980, a year after I began the Leaving Certificate course. I made every effort to block trauma from memory but it became my nemesis. Shame feelings made me think I was of a different breed of people unrelated to my family and other normal people. There were too many shameful feelings within me to find courage to confide in my parents. By that stage I was so damaged I lost trust in people and could not bring myself to discuss what happened. I wanted to get

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[10] Resonates with a scene in Frank McCourt's book *Teacher Man*

away from it all. The next vignette communicates several incidences of trauma that occurred in childhood.

Vignette one

The year I turned thirteen something happened to me that had a devastating impact on my childhood and later life. Although the dormitories were good places for storytelling, a shadow seemed to hover around the place. Sometimes the Christian Brothers on night duty paraded the passage ways at the centre of the dorm. Some of them were brutal and tended to lashing out at anyone found out of bed. At night I was careful at picking a time to slip out to the toilet and watched the black-clad figure roam around the place. For one Brother, abuse went beyond the physical to the sexual. The way he showed affection went beyond the boundary of acceptable. I was twelve years old when I was amongst the targets of his 'affections'. I was too young to realise the nature of his intent. On the outside he appeared harmless, not one to resort to violence. When he led me into a room, I became aware there was something odd about his behaviour, the way he turned the door keys and fidgeted with his hands. It did not go beyond touching and caressing because I managed to pull away and run out of the room. I was traumatised as a consequence. It was hard to believe something so strange could happen to me. In my confused state I was certain it was my fault. There was no way I would tell anyone. Who would have believed me after I voluntarily entered the room? I was certain silence was my only salvation.

Vignette two

When I was seven years old a teenage girl led me inside a toilet in somebody's house. The 'badness' that happened was threatening. Confused by the nature of the invite, I wandered around the street feeling lost. It happened again sometime later. Then I went looking for her. With a wave of her hand she told me to go away. I searched for her again but to no avail. The rejection served to further increase the emotional disorientation in me.

Vignette three

A shadow hovered over me like a dark phantom. I was thirteen when I lay in bed looking up the sky from under the curtains. I was in the dark about the way of the reproductive organs. For some time now I had weathered a storm of fear and guilt tearing inside me. I didn't know what to do with emotions, the thoughts that occupied my mind. Watching the moon I felt the illumination was penetrating my soul. Turning and twisting, I waited for sleep to arrive. The

room seemed filled with shadows and silhouettes.   Just as sleep beckoned, a body climbed in behind me. I lay frozen stiff unable to move. He would soon discover I was prepubescent.

Whatever he was doing, I remained still watching the pale round face above me. Numbness started to spread around my body. I started to withdraw into a moment of forgetfulness.

For weeks He never came near me. They say time heals but time would separate me from the experience of that night. I withdrew into my own private shell. The body became taut, the shoulders sagged. Preoccupied with body and mind, I watched people around me, thinking they were observing my every move. I looked at them searching for clues to see if they knew what happened. Drenched in shame, I avoided eye contact.

One day a Brother observed me from a distance with a glint in his eyes and a knowing half-smile.

I felt inadequate, different from the rest of the people in the school. In my mind my body no longer belonged to me.

One day His friend propositioned me. When I refused he laughed at the lifeless thing on me. On many moonless nights He came back for more. The ritual lasted two years. Soon I got caught in the ritualization of acting out behaviours. Feelings of disgust and shame stuck with me like a fungus. I sat in class watching rain pelt at window panes, oblivious to what went on around me. I felt lethargic, finding it difficult to rise in the morning. So ritualised I had become that by the time I was seventeen I no longer cared about my studies. My whole mind and body had been violated to an extent that I was reduced to a dissolved state.

The last figments of childhood innocence vanished long before then.

Introspection:

The stories about abuse were the most difficult ones to write. The memories are so vivid, so rich and fragile in detail, that it was incredibly difficult to keep from mind those sorts of events that I've personally experienced. For years I kept silent about those aspects of the past, and became hostage by the secrecy of painful memories which later contributed to alcoholism, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder in my life. In all that time I was focused on the lost innocence that occurred when I was thirteen. A few years ago counselling brought to light a memory of a much earlier intrusion to my innocence. At seven or eight years old, I was too young to notice things but probably old enough to tell the difference between right and wrong. The vignettes describe the scenes relayed in my memory of these events. They powerfully illustrate the experience of confusion and the struggle to make sense

of what happened to me, and the experience of apathy that followed. All these factors had an enormous effect on my education and personal development.

Stars of the Silver Screen

Saturday night film shows remain etched in my memory for the excitement it generated in all of us. In the evening before tea all chairs were set in rows facing the silver screen. The following vignette is significant in the way it illustrates the meaning of *lost* in translation.

A film projector stood at the aisle at the last row of seats. Films came in three reels and were loaded manually onto the projector. When the show was on each reel was manually changed and loaded which meant some interruptions were to be expected. Lights would come on and a few of us signed about our heroes: Robert Mitchum, John Wayne, James Cagney, Robert Redford and Paul Newman to name a few. A Christian Brother was in charge of the film show. Although he was never violent towards us he was extremely antagonistic towards signing and was often cruel when it came to punishing the culprit. Despite this threat the build-up to the film show was tinged with a great deal of excitement amongst us.

Once the hall was set for the show we lined up and headed to the dining room for tea. We wondered what kind of film was going to be shown. Our favourite films were Westerns, films that were action-packed with not too much dialogue. Subtitling was unheard of in those days. Many of us relied on guesswork to separate the good guys from the bad guys. Working out the story line was one of the challenges of watching films. For two hours we sat watching the action. Burt Lancaster in *The Professionals* and Dean Martin and Robert Mitchum in *Five Cards Stud* were some of the most memorable shows. For me the standout film in my memory was *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Robert Redford and Paul Newman were iconic figures of the silver screen in those days. The two together were heroes of our time.

There was a frantic tapping on my shoulder. Someone wanted to know what happened. Was this the end? A partially deaf boy beside me said he heard shots fired in the background. Yes, it was the end.

The following week the boy who told us about the shots was denied the privilege of watching the show. As punishment he was sent to the dormitory and stayed there for the length of the show. The Brother dealt cruel fate to those who signed.

Introspection:

Two things stand out in this story: firstly the confusion surrounding the attempt to follow the storyline and the end of the film; secondly the dreaded rule against signing. As I write this story I think back to that moment and I remember why it was significant. The profound loss was in not knowing, not realising that shots had been fired. Long after the film ended I felt deeply disappointed not so much with the way it ended but how we never could figure out what happened after the screen became still, after the two men had emerged from a hut with guns in their hands. Looking at the past from the perspective of today, I find it poignant the memories of our struggle to follow dialogue without the facility of subtitling. It seems cruel to the children to be denied the opportunity to be entertained by the films. Back then we found it fun to use guesswork at identifying the heroes in the drama. Staying on the subject of entertainment, the next story describes some of the best memories of my childhood.

Reflections: Summer Childhood

Summer days seemed endless: long, lazy and lively days spent with family. Each summer I grew a year older: thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen. Summer days were long days of doing nothing and of engaging in childish fun with hearing children. Imaginary games of hide and seek, cowboys and Indians, and cops and robbers were played out in laneways and byways. I have memories of fishing days, of long, lazy walks on the railway tracks, of climbing trees.

Summer holidays are suffused with warmth, full of images of dew on grass, rain, and sunshine, freedom and abandonment, adventures and escapades. Lying on grass I spent hours watching clouds go by. I remember the rough feel of iron as I sat perched on railings counting dotted tiny houses on the slopes of the Comeragh Mountain. Clothed in green and brown colours the mountain seemed within reach of me but was more than two miles from Ard na Griene. In summertime the weather often changed from sunshine to pouring rain in a twinkling. With the elements the mountain too changed colours: alternating between light brown and green to dark brown and black.

One summer, not long after school term ended, I felt a growing restlessness inside me. Some kind of force was within me that day. I had a need to take flight somewhere and ran out of the house through the garage door. At the gate I turned left and dashed towards the cul-de-sac. A gap at the corner brought me to a laneway that cut right through the back of the housing estate.

Trees and hedges whizzed by as I ran and ran. Something snapped at my heels. An irate Jack Russell gave chase. I pushed on faster not daring to look behind. By the time I reached the end, I found myself facing a large circular lawn bordered by green railings at the centre of the street. Seeing my brother playing football with a group of boys, I eagerly crossed the street, climbed and sat on the railing. There I waited to be called into action.

Football games in the bullring brought great entertainment. They helped alleviate the loneliness in me. Action games required little conversation, which suited me. Clothes were used as goal posts. Sometimes my brother relayed the conversations back to me. His talk was expressive speaking and gesturing with his hands and face. Robert and I were birds of passage in each other's company but our lives were too far apart to have any chance for the kind of closeness and intimacy I found with Deaf children. Summer was a time when an acute sense of awareness of the cultural boundary surfaced. On the rare occasions Robert's playmates came to the house with fishnets, fishing rods made from tree branches, and empty jam jars.

Before going out, I discarded my hearing aid in a drawer, hidden away from the prying eyes of children. The boys spoke to me slowly and deliberately while stretching their mouths. Gestures were used to good effect. Despite their good intentions, I became increasingly self-conscious when other children were watching the interaction. Speaking to me in the way they did attracted attention. Things that seem 'strange' always stood out. I had no idea this was impacting on my self-esteem. The sense of isolation was strong when everyone talked together, while their backs were turned, or their faces tilted the other way. Feeling lost and detached, I noticed how I failed to find a connection with the boys the same way Robert could with his friends.

A short walk from Ard na Griene down Powerstown Road brought us to a long stretching field. A stream ran right across the length of the field and flowed under a small bridge on Powerstown Road. Beyond the expanse of greenery was a ridge of high ground, full of rocks and stones and a mass of trees and hedges. The area known as the 'Wilderness' was a mountain of granite and shrubbery almost like the ones I saw in Westerns. The place was a haven for childhood games. A railway track ran from the town end of the field right through the wilderness area. The wonder was in the railway tracks, the delight in the swing, and the joy in fishing. Despite feeling out of place, I was generally happy.

As I got older I became a solitary teenager as a consequence of painful awkwardness with communication. One summer I grew tired of it all – the exertion of reading lips. I found solitude as my only respite and rediscovered my love for books. Up to then comics were my

only reading material, with 'Roy of the Rovers' and 'Billy's Boots' a particular favourite. Once I grew out of those things I started reading Enid Blyton books, the Hardy Boys Mysteries and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The book that made its mark in my mind is Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. While the vernacular of the narrator required a great deal of concentration, I was completely absorbed in the story. The strong attraction was the world of the thirteen-year-old boy Huck who seemed to epitomise the very things I understood: the carefree teenage boy who loved fishing, the misfit, and the outsider. The way the narrator was telling the story I felt as if I was sitting right next to him, that I was part of his escapade from abuse. The effect was profound, something I never thought a book could do to me. Ever since that summer I had a deep respect for the power of stories.

Introspection:

Memories of summer holidays are infused with happiness with sporadic moments of feeling lonely and isolated due to the language and communication barrier. The natural inclination for me was to look for some action or withdraw into a world of books about childhood adventures. When I returned to school in September I found my experience of summer was also common amongst my peers. Communication barriers were cited as the main problem for us all. This is especially true for Deaf children of families with no knowledge of a sign language.

Love Letters

Teenage infatuation brought me in contact with girls in St. Mary's. Love letters provided the link between two lovestruck lovers from the Cabra schools. To the boys in St. Joseph's it wasn't a secret that the girls had a different sign language. The first time I saw their signs was the day I travelled home by train. By the time I was fourteen, I had watched the girls and boys flirting and observed the signs with interest. The movement and positioning of the girls' hands had a touch of femininity. To me there was something mysterious about their language – as if they developed in a secret hiding place.

The first time I fell in love set the pattern for everything that came after. In those days writing letters was a way of showing you had a partner. If you weren't writing it meant you were not going steady with anyone. Day pupils acted as a 'go-between', delivering letters and passing on messages. Anticipating a letter was one of the highlights of my teenage years.

One day I left the classroom after completing an essay called: *What I did Last Summer.* I rushed out of class and ran down the corridor through a throng of boys mingling around the place. I eventually found the post boy.

"Where were you?" The post boy signed in exasperation.

"I was doing an exam. Do you have the letter?"

He handed a bulging envelope, all yellow with a strong perfumery scent.

"I have to hurry for class", he signed hands moving nervously. "I don't want to get caught."

I thanked him and hastily placed the envelope in the inside pocket of my jacket and headed outside. I found a secluded spot at a corner of the school yard. With no one in sight, I quickly took out the envelope, feeling anxious to know what she had written. I had met the girl at a school disco which was a monthly event organised by the Dominican Sisters and Christian Brothers. I studied her handwriting, a single line with my full name on the envelope, seeing the way the letters curled upwards and forwards, neat and flowery. Turning over the envelope my eyes caught the abbreviated letters S.W.A.L.K for "sealed with a loving kiss".

I was thrilled the girl had taken time to write to me. For a fourteen-year-old boy it was difficult to work up the courage to chat with her on the train journey. After so much agonising and planning I finally decided to ask her to be my girlfriend. The usual thing to do was to send a letter. I hadn't worried about the signs she used but when she said yes, I couldn't believe it. Like most teenage boys I longed to have a girlfriend.

I anxiously opened the envelope and took out the yellow pages. A coloured passport photo slipped out onto the ground. In shock, I quickly reached down and picked it up, grateful not a single eye looked my way. A lingering look at the photo told me she was pretty with a beautiful smile with wavy brown hair and green eyes.

My interest in girls had awakened when I noticed her on the train carriage in a way that was different to what it used to be. I watched her walk down the aisle with her friends oblivious to my stares. I thought she was the prettiest girl I had seen. My heart pounded whenever she was close by. She did not notice me until one day I wrote to her on a blue page with little transparent designs. The letter was teenage-passionate: I told her I thought she was pretty and couldn't get her out of my mind. Then I finished up by asking if she would be my girlfriend. It was the way it worked for us all. Letters were exchanged then and they'd meet at the railway station. Sealed in a matching blue envelope and written with her full name without an address, I had it hand-delivered, fully sure she would read it the next morning.

Reading her letter in secret gave me scope to have warm feelings. First I read it quickly and later read it once more. I slowly absorbed the thoughts of the girl that poured on the yellow pages. I was touched when she said she would meet me on the train. She said the

photo I sent was too light, making my facial features blurred and would I send another? I blushed at the mention of my photo. I had no idea words and letters could actually touch a girl's heart.

Some of the boys in school who had girlfriends jealously guarded their letters. Letters were about life in residential school, how teachers and authorities treated us, the things that went on in school. At night I reread her letter, noting that her friend wanted to meet another boy in my class and would I pass on a word to him? That night I took out pen and paper, climbed under the curtain and sat on the window sill. There was no moon that night. With a flashlight I wrote back to tell her he agreed and I'd see her at the station. The way she wrote about herself all pointed to a charming intelligent girl, a determined teenager who riled against life in residential school. In sentences that were short and tender we shared stories about friends, families, our hopes and dreams and our plans to meet again.

Introspection:

I include this story in order to portray the reality of gender segregation. When I was doing research for a Master's Degree in Deaf Studies, I discovered that gender segregation had much to do with the variations in Irish Sign Language. Students in the Cabra schools were kept apart from each other which means that some of the day pupils acted as 'go-betweens' delivering messages and letters to the boarders. Posting letters was out of the question as they were likely to be confiscated.

A Link to the Past

"I'm not teaching here anymore," signed Mr. M., the only Deaf teacher in the school. Mr. M. worked at the manual school. We were gathered at the blue gate close to the handball alley, hidden from the watchful eyes of the supervisors. Mr. M signed to a gathering of fifteen and sixteen year old boys.

"Not teaching here?" I asked, mystified. "I didn't know you are a teacher. How could a deaf person become a teacher? I've never seen one before."

Mr. M., a man in his fifties, was always polite to our questioning. His face seemed to display little emotion. There was nothing of the oral expression on his face – the way the rest of us had done when signing. Our mouths moved and faces contorted. Mr. M did none of those because, as he said so himself, he was the last link to a past that was unrecognisable to me. Mr. M. remained tight-lipped as he moved his hands with effortless grace. Always he found time to tell us stories of bygone years, his signing relaxed, clear and delicate.

Storytelling had to be done in secret hideaway places. The blue gate was the place for story-telling about the past.

"Are you leaving us?"

"No, I will still be working in the school over there but not teaching. I will be supervising."

The man with the last link to the past had the look on his face that told he was resigned to his fate. One day he told us a story that shocked the foundation of my senses. He told us the school did not always operate the way it was now. Something about the past caught my eye about a time when everyone in St. Joseph's signed: the teachers, Christian Brothers, staff and the boys.

"Why had things changed?" one boy asked.

I thought the no-signing rule had been there for a hundred years. Mr. M. explained that our signs were passed on from generation to generation, that we had sign-names that did not have English names. It seemed signs had been around for a long time.

One warm sunny day Mr. M gave stories that said something modern like technology had relegated our culture to the 'underground'. He remembered June 1957 the time when some of the students were selected to give speeches as part of the centenary celebration of the school's foundation (Ennis & Riordan, 1957). By then modern technology had made its presence felt in the school. Mr. M. said some of the Christian Brothers did not want change but they had to submit to the power of the Catholic Church. Mr. M was moved out of the main school to teach the manual students where he spent the rest of his career.

"I don't like this part of the story," I told him. It was too much to bear.

Introspection:

This story is significant in the context of the history of St. Joseph's. Mr. M. is a pseudonym for the man I remember meeting outside the school where he was supervising the 'manual' students. They were 'manual' owing to their dependence on sign language and were identified by the authorities as 'oral failures' (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997). Segregation has had an adverse effect on all of us, creating divisions and competition amongst the large number of pupils (McDonnell and Saunders, 1993 and 2005). In my time there was hostility between the segregated groups of pupils. Each group was categorised and labelled according to the audiologist's report which identified the various levels of hearing loss in all of us. Segregation created a sort of class consciousness; more hearing meant more intelligence and a higher social status in the school (Crean, 1997).

Farewell

When the end was near I felt as though I reached a crossroad with no signpost to direct me on my journey in life. I had just sat my Leaving Certificate. I took all subjects and gave them my best shot but I knew I had made a botched job of it. At a parent-teacher meeting earlier in the year I shared my dream of studying literature in college. My teacher glanced at my father. There was a look of pity on his face. He told me that I shouldn't be getting ahead of myself and to look for something more befitting my talents. It was a cruel blow to my self-esteem. I hated the paternalism he had shown. It was displayed in the disguise of being caring and supportive, all the while making me appear less independent and intelligent. The hardest part of the discussion was my father agreed with him. I caved in and made the decision to pursue a career in the civil service.

On the last day of the Leaving Certificate, it was time to leave St. Joseph's. Gathering my belongings, I said goodbye to friends and shook hands with some of the Christian Brothers who told me to come back and visit the school someday. In my mind I knew I'd never return as a nostalgic visitor. Without a thought I took my belongings with me and headed for the front towards the avenue and back to where it all began on my first day. I didn't care what I was leaving behind me. I just wanted to get away. Tensed and emotional, I wondered how I was going to cope in the outside world. I stood looking at the large building in front of me. The school had been my residence for most of my childhood.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a movement. One of my classmates ran towards me. He handed me a slip of paper.

"I forgot to give you my address," he signed smiling. "See you soon."

I turned around and continued walking down the avenue. A short time later a car emerged in the distance. I stopped and waited. As the car swept past a woman in the front passenger seat smiled and waved. Behind her sat a small boy of ten years. The eyes of the boy followed me until the car receded in the distance heading towards the school. My eyes followed the movement of the vehicle, watching it park just before the foot of the concrete steps. The young boy emerged with his parents. He looked in my direction with sad unsmiling eyes. I watched them climb the steps towards the door until they disappeared inside.

Introspection:

When I look back at some of the most painful moments of my life, I see myself sitting alone feeling either immense shame or regret. The picture of my past seems stark. Leaving St. Joseph's, I tried to block out the memories of what happened in the school. My life in residential schools began with the separation from family. I started there an innocent young boy and left it emotionally and psychologically dysfunctional. On an emotional level, I was ashamed of my past and was anxious to get out of school as fast as possible and never set foot on its ground again. Intellectually I felt a failure and assumed failure was my fault, considering how far behind I was in literacy. For me the school frustrated any chance for the students to get a good education by its crazy obsession with speech training and lip reading skills. Years after I left St. Joseph's I found that educators were unprepared to accept the system wasn't working. No one was prepared to listen to us about where the problems lay. Parents of new born children were left confused by all the arguments and disputes between the authorities and representative organisations and the Deaf community. On the last day I said goodbye to my friends, never willing to return since at the time I found it hard to say anything good about the school. In retrospect and having re-read my stories, it is clear that life in residential school gave me a talent for signing. I think that is something I will always be grateful for.

<div align="center">

Part Two
</div>

2.2   **Out of Place**

In my home away from home I was fortunate to make lasting friendships in St. Joseph's and Beech Park. Paradoxically, given the education system, the schools were the locations in which I gained a sign language which integrated me into the daily lives of Deaf people. The schools also supplanted in me a belief in the inferiority of my identity and culture and in the superiority of 'hearing' values and norms. During the process of doing a literature review I gained a perception of the past quite different to what I had when I left St. Joseph's in the summer of 1981. My perceptions then owe much to the education and training I received in the school. At the time I did not fully appreciate the socio-political aspects of history of Deaf education – save for a few anecdotes from a Deaf teacher. In remembering the past I understand now that I began my new life very much affected by the trauma that went on in childhood, but with no clear idea of how it would impact on my relationships with people, particularly with family. Unawares, I carried 'shame' with me, feeling a need to hide the literacy problem and vowing to work at improving my education. I decided I had two aims in

life: to get an education and try my hand at integration in society. As far as integration was concerned I believed I shouldn't go through life without at least putting to the test the advice from school and my father to socialise with hearing people. Integration for me generally meant being able to 'fit in' with hearing people, to gain 'full participation' in oral conversations, and to feel a sense of belonging with them. That was the way I thought I should live my life. Education was always going to be a major goal in my life. I had in mind a determination to retrieve those lost years in the classroom through a period of self-education and reading. *Catcher in the Rye*, *To Kill a Mocking Bird* and *The Collector* were amongst the most memorable books I read that year.

While Part Two presents stories about life after school, my aim in writing them is to consider closely the ways in which I related to hearing people and the points at which I dealt with the different challenges that life threw at me. This involves extracting from the larger narratives significant memories of events that are relevant to the research topic. Part Two is categorised in four themes which contains vignettes of certain life experiences that remain close to my heart. Learning to live in the hearing world goes back a long way to the early 1980s and I begin there with a series of vignettes on prejudice.

The Face of Prejudice

Here I begin with three auto-ethnographic vignettes which portray some of my life experiences during the early 1980s. Each one shows a scene in which I encountered prejudice.

Vignette one

"What…do….."

Pointing to my left ear I spoke and explained my hearing status to the employment officer. With a sick feeling in my stomach, I indicated I could lip read. I felt it was important he knew I could communicate with people who could hear and that I was capable of integrating with society and socialising with people. It was important that he saw how independent I was.

The smoke-filled lobby area of National Manpower Service was teeming with job-seekers, some sitting on chairs waiting for their turn, and others either looking at job notices or filling out application forms. I was sitting across from the employment officer who was smiling profusely. I remember thinking how little hope I had of gaining employment.

I handed him the completed registration form. Taking the form in his hand he eyed me intently. He seemed preoccupied. I spoke again and explained the list of jobs that I was interested in. I had just turned 19 years old. The officer studied the application form and wrote notes. Then he looked up. He asked me questions, one of which was about school and the Leaving Certificate results, the rest I struggled to understand. Several times I asked him to repeat himself. In all that time his eyes never left me. I got the feeling he was concerned about something. Soon the penny dropped.

When he spoke some more I noted several words like "speech… help…talk." I took out a pen from my bag and handed it to him.

"Please write on paper what you have just said to me. I don't follow. Sorry."

Shortly after he scribbled notes, he handed me the paper.

The writing was neat and legible with a slant towards the right.

"I think you have a speech defect", he wrote. "I know a good speech therapist. She may be able to help you. Would you like me to contact her for you?"

Astonished at the audaciousness of his conduct, I couldn't find a way to respond. After all the training at St. Joseph's, did I really need a speech therapist now? I started to feel on edge. My whole mind was taken up with what he had said to me and my memories of school were still fresh. I reached towards my bag and started to collect my belongings. Calmly I rose from my seat. Just as I was turning, the officer placed his hand on my arm and handed me a slip of paper with the name and phone number of the therapist. I shook my head: "no" and left. I walked out into the rain on D'Olier Street and began to wonder why I was attracting stares from people. Outside of school, was this to be my first badge of shame?

Vignette two

In early October 1982 I began my career in the civil service. The morning air was cold and crisp, and the grounds swelled with copper leaves. The thought of working with hearing people filled me with much dread. At the same time I had it in mind to show I was just as capable as anyone at conversation. Inside the office of the Department of Industry and Commerce, I was greeted by an Assistant Principal whom I will call Michael. The handshake was firm, courteous and welcoming. After he signalled me to a chair and seated himself behind a large oblong wooden desk, he went through the paper work. I sat nervously waiting for him to speak.

The room was square and dimly lit by a table lamp. The October sunlight was blocked by a pale yellow shade pulled down half way towards the foot of the window. The window

behind Michael on my left side was slightly opened, letting in a whiff of cold air. A pile of manila folders lay at the edge of his desk, close to a black telephone with rotary dials. The sight of the telephone made me slightly self-conscious. I wondered if I was going to be assigned work that involved answering phone calls. My stomach started to tighten at the thought.

Michael was neatly dressed in a faded blue deck shirt and dark blue tie that seemed to blend with his neatly combed black hair and a pronounced Tom Selleck-style moustache. I turned my eyes to his lips. He was talking to me.

"…partial hearing……"

I wasn't sure if he said something about hearing. In school they told me to stop the speaker and tell the person to repeat his speech and slow down. The onus was on me to make this known to hearing people, something that I did not have the courage to do. I allowed Michael talk away without interruption. Suddenly he stopped talking and looked up from the paper he was reading. He was waiting for me to answer.

"I can communicate because I have partial hearing."

He nodded appreciatively. "Okay….the first time…..this department…"

I raised my hand and felt my cheeks go red.

"Could you please talk slowly? I can lip read."

I hoped he didn't think I was being offensive. He held up his hand and smiled. As he spoke my eyes trained to follow every word he uttered.

"You are the first Deaf person working in the department. So, I will……."

With the next few words I managed to get the idea of what he was telling me. He reminded me that like all new recruits I was on probation and went on to say that he had to be more conscientious about me, that my position was going to subject to review. As he spoke those words haltingly he seemed to display an air of real concern about how I was going to settle in with staff.

"How--are---you---going---to---communicate---with---staff?"

I told him lip reading was no problem. It never occurred to me his comments and manner of speaking were hurtful and demeaning. I felt he was coming from a good place but something in the way he explained things gave me the sense he was talking down to me. As young and naïve as I was, I never gave it a second thought. Afterwards the feeling of being undermined by an attitude of superiority never left me. I felt totally disorientated unsure if I was mistaken or not. It was only with education that awareness would come to me.

In the end he wished me luck and I was shown to my desk in an office with four staff members. About fifty people worked in the building and many of them were pleasant and friendly. As each day passed I gradually settled in to my new working environment. I discovered there were plenty of characters in the office with no shortage of banter. Still I never managed to overcome nerves to hold a conversation. All the time I was conscious of getting entangled in a series of mistranslations and misunderstandings. My cheeks burned far too easily and frequently for my own comfort. I blushed profusely aware that people noticed how vulnerable I looked. I taught a few staff members the sign-alphabet which fascinated them but invited snide comments. Sometimes there was a show of imitation followed by laughter.

Snippets:

One colleague said I was "burning two ends of a candle" – an expression I had never come across in books before. It was said after I had been out drinking every weekend. I didn't know what it meant and my face reddened with embarrassment. Sometimes I stuttered in my speech which made me blush even more. I got patronising smiles from those who I could not understand. Every bit of slight or jokes said about me I took to heart and became upset. Consequently I went through a period of depression and became withdrawn and sullen.

Things began to fall apart in my working life. Friendships did not last which was mostly my own doing since I started to withdraw into my own shell and became increasingly isolated. It wasn't deliberate but I began to find comfort in being alone. It was better than having to deal with the pain of being cut off from oral conversation. I found hearing jokes so different to deaf humour that I became upset by them. In fairness some of the people tried to aid in communication but no matter how hard they tried I was always on the periphery of things.

Fifteen years on from the day I started in the civil service, I resigned from my job after having eventually found the courage to apply to university to study literature. All through the years I never once believed the civil service was the right career path for me. I had some good years there and met some wonderful people but it was time to make my dream come true.

Vignette three

In my youth discrimination came in many forms. At the club on Richmond Road it was a hot topic of conversation after a local publican in Rathmines banned all Deaf people following an incident the previous week that was sparked by a Deaf man who got into an altercation with another customer. A message was delivered to the club that we were not welcome to enter the premises in order to "protect customer safety." Our charge was the publican discriminated by disciplining us all on the grounds of disability. Other publicans in the area banned us all after they were contacted by the first publican. Shock and anger was written all over our faces. We were barred within the space of a week. It was on a cold, dark winter's night in November.

My own attachment to the club began the previous year. The first day I arrived I was filled with nervous energy at the thought of meeting friends from St. Joseph's. The building was located on Richmond Hill in Rathmines, Dublin, partly hidden behind a wall. It contained a cafeteria, television lounge, several meeting rooms, Chaplain's office, and indoor sports rooms and drama hall. We were a mixed assortment of people from all over the country: the sports stars, community activists and leaders, intellectuals, club diehards and young people. Grassroots simply liked being around the club and signing with each other. Bonded by language and through constant association and presence, everyone seemed to know everyone. The club was the headquarters of my social life; being in this place meant I could do things I didn't normally do in the outside world.

Some people told me the club was a dull place that when things happened there they usually happened again and again: fairly routine stuff. That night in November was no ordinary meeting. Sitting together at an assembly to decide our next move, we didn't know what to do about prejudice. The story of the publicans wasn't new. We had other stories of discrimination. One of us reported getting into fights with someone on the street after he was taunted and mocked for signing. Some people gave disapproving looks. A fight broke out at a McDonald's restaurant after a young couple imitated hand movement and laughed. An elderly lady came up on the street in Rathmines Road and stared at us signing to each other. She pointed her finger at us and said "what are you doing with your hands?" Hard as it was to understand why some people could not find it in their hearts to leave us alone.

There were thirty of us in the lounge room, all of us with stories to tell about experiences of discrimination. We knew were facing the same fog of ignorance towards signing. It seemed the time to act was now.

"We must stop people mistreating us."

"We must tell people we are not violent."

I could never forget the stories we shared.

It is true we tried to reason with the manager explaining that only one person should be held responsible rather than the whole community but it was to no avail. We were powerless and defenceless against the trauma of discrimination.

Then one day a Sunday World reporter got wind of the story. The incident was reported in the newspaper the following Sunday which came to good effect. The ban was subsequently lifted.

Introspection:

A key question arising from the stories here is: How has my encounter with prejudice affected my life? The adult in me searched for answers while writing the stories. The teenager in me ignored the pain and set out to tray and convince the world I was strong while inside I was about to break into pieces. There was a stubborn streak in me that refused to face up to the attitude that people showed me. I simply smiled and carried on with life. For a long time I regretted not standing up for myself and did absolutely nothing when people mocked at my sign language or talked in a condescending way. More people treated me the same and I let it pass. I feared rejection and avoided confrontation, in the hope people would accept me for who I was. While writing these stories I paused to consider the life of the teenage boy. I wanted to sit with him and tell him that he didn't have to tolerate the treatment he was getting. I imagined telling him that people often had a sense of judgement about 'difference' – that we should always be the same as them.

Outsider

In the next story I present the theme of the 'outsider' in myself and in other people. The story touches on the heart of culture, about what happens when people are confronted by difference.

Vignette one

When I joined the Deaf club in Rathmines on the south side of Dublin city, I went against the wishes of my father. The choice I made was a language decision. I found it was intolerable to go through long periods without any contact with my culture. During the time I was socialising with my colleagues I yearned to sign and missed the company of Deaf people.

Vignette two

One of my struggles at the office had been to find a way to connect with hearing people. Some of their reactions to me as a Deaf person varied from mild confusion to bewilderment, awkwardness and embarrassment. Even kindly and good-natured people reacted with unease. I got the sense that the onus was on me to put them at ease. Thinking this was the way to find a connection I took on the task of being nice and friendly. People noticed I was trying very hard. Some of them paused to consider what to say next.

How do I make him understand?

How do I talk to him?

What is the best way to make him hear me?

I saw it written all over their faces. That strained look told me they were trying to figure things out.

Some people made a show of carefulness, staying at a safe distance from me, a way of avoiding any potential awkwardness. Sometimes they smiled and waved their hands before quickly turning the other direction. Before long I started to notice the way people behaved in my presence. I realised some people simply sat near me staring straight ahead without saying a word. Occasionally when I addressed someone in conversation there were blank looks as if the screen suddenly froze. Some nervous people looked the other way. A look of indifference was not uncommon. Being stoically silent they shifted the burden of conversation on to me. The selfishness was in their reluctance to share the weight of responsibility. In all that time I was trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. I was totally out of place with hearing people. Every day I continued to miss out on details. Studying lip patterns took its toll on me. It was easy to drift away from concentration.

There was something of the outsider experience I found comforting. It seemed no one had a bad word to say about me. I kept to myself but the outsider in me was in need of a confidant, someone who understood my culture and language. I needed to be with someone to whom I didn't need to explain myself and my deep emotions. Like *The Count of Monte Cristo* the outsider needs to know himself first before he could find a true sense of belonging with his community. I realised my life was defined by pretence, imagining myself as a hearing person. I decided the Deaf club was the place for me. I believed it had everything I needed to be fulfilled as a person.

Vignette three

At the club I found something of the outsider in hearing people. Some of them arrived to learn our language. I saw the nervousness in their faces when they appeared from the doorway. Always the nagging question on my mind: why us? Why learn our language? The thought in my mind was there must be something wrong with them for wanting to understand our culture. How courageous of them to venture into the unknown. I saw the looks of apprehension. I've been there before. It was the same fear I recognised in them. Some of us tried to support them. Sceptics kept their distance watching them with suspicion. We had memories of people wanting to take control over the direction of our lives. Did they see our language as the gateway to the top of an internal hierarchy? Always the suspicion lurked that they might be motivated by self-interest.

Introspection:

On reflection I think the best insights are the ones where I was confronted by a scenario of the hearing person arriving at the Deaf club which helped me connect with the experience of an outsider exposed to a foreign language. In the course of writing these stories I realised my personal identity was wrapped up in the theme of 'outsiderness' and difference. Feeling out of place in the company of hearing people and seeing other people go through similar experiences fascinates me. Those insights help me feel a sense of belonging with Deaf people and the sense of separateness I felt with hearing people. The stories helped me empathise with the hearing people who were in our company. I can now see that as a young twenty-something I was on a learning curve on a solitary journey, a path through which the outsider experiences the trials and tribulations of life.

A Language without a Name

The three vignettes presented in this section portray aspects of my experiences of youth. They pertain directly to my language and my relationships with people and with the Deaf community. The first vignette is a short account of my observations about sign language; the second is concerned with my thoughts on prejudice in the community; and the third reveals my attitude to life and relationships.

Vignette one

We had a language without a name. It was simply called 'sign language' replete with indigenous signs. Indigenous we were when it came to sign language. The male variation was

dominant in the community. While Deaf women did not abandon use of their signs the female variant was still marginalised. This was a time when sexism and patriarchy ruled the roost in the community and the women adopted the male variation of signs instead of their own. Over the next twenty years I noticed a gradual increase in the number of male and female members using female signs. The hybridised male and female signs are now called Irish Sign Language.

Vignette two

I was not so naïve to think there were no unpleasant types in the community. I think the majority of the people held prejudicial attitudes towards gay and lesbian members and were unkind to unmarried mothers. Up until 1990s Ireland had a reputation of being the most sexually repressed country in Europe – if not the world. We were part of a country in which women were treated as second-class citizens and the Catholic Church ruled virtually every part of our lives unchallenged. But things would change fast when the 1990s came around. For now I must explain how things were back in 1980s when I was immersed in a society and community in which people were pro-life and celibacy before marriage was highly regarded. I knew a couple of girls in the community who ended up pregnant after a brief encounter. People, especially the male sectors of the community, were unkind towards them, shunning them and leaving the girls' reputations in tatters. It was a cruel fate that dealt them a life with little choice but to seek partners outside the community. Single mothers whose status as marriage or girlfriend material dropped considerably in the eyes of the men. No men seemed to want to take them out unless there was a chance he could take them to bed with him. I am ashamed to admit that I bought into their thinking. I regret to say that, like many of the men in the community, I did not have a high regard for women who engaged in pre-marital sexual encounters nor did I show any tolerance for gays or lesbians. I was still conscious about stepping outside the boundaries of Deaf community norms and social rules, unable to break free from the constraints of conformity. All that would change in the 1990s when I started to seek out people in the community who were non-conformist and tolerant of difference.

Vignette three

I was a little too sure of myself. Having been to boarding school during childhood I felt I was entitled to a good life. The Deaf world seemed like a life full of possibilities, full of interesting and exciting people with whom I wanted to socialise. Marriage of course didn't enter my head. I didn't want to be tied down at that stage of my life and did not envisage a

future with a family of my own. In a narcissistic way I felt life was something to be enjoyed drinking in pubs and night clubs. At some stage I did want to have a girlfriend but when relationships began I didn't take them seriously. I suppose I carried on with life with little regard to my future except to pursue my ambitions to study literature.

A Taste of Deaf Politics

The following vignette paints a scene at the Deaf club on a Tuesday night in November 1991 following the education forum. The scene recapitulates the discussion of politics to mark the attempt of Deaf leadership at educational reform.

The warning was in their faces, their facial expression. The manner of their signing displayed angry outburst of frustration. I saw them in the club one Tuesday night in November 1991. Something had happened the previous weekend. I was curious to know the story of the Education Forum that took place at the Green Isle Hotel. The conversation was held discretely without the presence of the Chaplaincy. There were four of us- Deaf men and women.

For some time I had known there was to be a meeting to discuss education policy. Most of us had thought we had a chance to change things. The *Irish Deaf Journal* indicated that Deaf people were welcomed to give a presentation. There was hope for a debate on language policy. We were full of cautious optimism. Seemingly things did not turn out the way we wanted.

"I'm talking about the type of discrimination against Deaf people," one lady signed frantically. "I'm talking about what happens when one person tells us we can't present a paper."

"Yes, I know. I meant that he was allowed present the paper but it was cut shorter than the others by about 10 minutes."

"It's not fair!"

"It means we are less important than hearing people."

"That is discrimination."

I knew them all. We went to the same schools together. From them I received first-hand information about the education forum. My spirits sagged with the stories. It was another hard luck story, a story of false dawns and dashed hopes. Things that went on at the forum mattered to us all. We wanted future deaf children to get the best opportunity to get an education.

"We didn't talk about language policy."

"What happened?" I asked finally.

All eyes turned to me.

"The meeting was supposed to be about policy but it ended up discussing the visiting teacher services."

"I don't understand," intervened the lady on my right. "Why?"

"The meeting was controlled so that it was steered away from any attempt at a policy discussion," one man said.

I recognised how people in the community were willing to sacrifice their time to campaign and argue for a better education system. There was no obligation on them to become activists. The easy way out would be to say: this has nothing to do with me. Leave it in the hands of others. There was a whiff of resentment in the stories. This was no ordinary Tuesday night conversation, full of intrigue. It seemed the entire club knew about the meeting. Someone suggested we should have created a scene at the forum to protest and force attention onto us. All of us agreed it was a shame the meeting concentrated too much on the one topic- the visiting teacher services. Another opportunity for debate was lost. In the past we met with resistance against us making representations during a discussion about education. A deaf lady turned to me and said:

"There are people like that-people who are prepared to resist and defend to protect the institution and the system. You would meet them anywhere, at a pub or a shopping centre. They are all over the place".

Introspection:

This story is an extract from a larger story I had written in an autobiographical chapter entitled "The Heart of the Matter". When deciding on what to include for this project I was faced with ethical dilemmas since the writing in the whole chapter is infused with political undertones and people could easily be identified in the story. In the extract I include dialogue without revealing the names of the signers in order to protect their identities. As I had not been present at the forum I relied on anecdotes from the people I met at the club. The discussion took place at a time when I kept myself on the periphery of politics. In my youth I never dabbled with internal politics. Instead I watched things from the sideline. No matter how much I tried to avoid it I could never escape from political discussions. I watched Deaf leaders express a level of defiance pushing boundaries in their drive for self-representation, becoming involved in activism to promote Irish Sign Language.

When writing the story I found it troubling the memory of seeing the fury and resentment in the faces of Deaf leaders. I found it especially upsetting the lack of democratic process at meetings and the way we were being prevented from 'voicing' our opinions. It bothers me that people would treat us like second-class citizens. Back then I had the kind of mentality that accepted it as an inevitable part of our lives, that every Deaf person experienced marginalisation, prejudice and discrimination at some stage in their lives that nothing could be done to change that.

Going to University

The following account describes the circumstances that led to the beginning of my academic life. Here I use the term 'exile' to mean a self-imposed separation from the culture of the Deaf community in Dublin as I took on the challenge of going to university and faced the obstacle of my father's deterrence.

Vignette one

In spring 1998 I left Dublin and became an 'exile'. It was the year my link with the community was broken, leaving behind everything that was important to me and had known and cared about since childhood. Earlier in the year I had been preparing for a new life in Northern Ireland. I left the civil service to embark on doing a degree course in literature at the University of Ulster in Coleraine. My girlfriend at the time was living in Belfast. She persuaded me to turn my attention away from the life I was living in the capital. Her display of confidence about the choice of a new life study was irresistible. I knew I had to leave the civil service and travel northwards to be with her. I accepted an offer of a place on the foundation course as a stepping stone to starting the degree course in literature. I was thrilled and excited at the prospect of reading and studying all my favourite writes and more.

At home I told my family the news. My father pleaded with me to reconsider and keep my job. He used the same old line of my former teacher.

"It's too difficult for you. Why don't you try…."

I was getting ahead of myself, he said. I needed to think about doing something else.

"What if you fail? What would that do to your confidence?"

I doubted my father knew the effect he was having on my self-esteem.

"I am capable of making it a success."

I kept my counsel and didn't allow him to get to me. In all that time I had been modest about myself but now I was letting down my defences and told him I was as capable as any hearing person. My father suggested I consult with my former English teacher for advice. The condescending attitude was stirring up old feelings of anger. I made every effort to restrain myself from arguing with him. Well, what sort of a career had you in mind? I told him I didn't care because this was something I'd always wanted to do.

Vignette two

Uncertainty, fear, anticipation, excitement and apprehension characterized my feelings during those first few months living in Northern Ireland. I made a conscious decision to adapt to a new environment. Another language came into my vision: British Sign Language. An expressively beautiful language I found it easy to learn from my partner and through sporadic socialisations with Deaf people in Belfast. Within months I was fluent at BSL. I started to adjust my character and signing skill to accommodate BSL nuances and facial expressions. BSL is so different to ISL. Comparing the two languages one finds that in BSL two hands are used in the finger-spelling. In ISL one hand is used. BSL and ISL contain different signs.

The relationship with my partner was interspersed with breakups and reunions, mostly due to my own sense of confusion and indecisiveness. A year after I left Dublin we parted and went our separate ways. I moved to an apartment in Portrush, a small coastal town fifteen minutes by train from the university campus. The town was to be my home for the next four years during which time I made many new friends at the Rogues Bar, a pub located close to the harbour. Sometimes I found solace in the company of books. On lonelier times I found comfort in alcohol, frequenting the Rogues Bar where I met the friendly locals and played the odd game of pool. Some of the locals at the bar learned BSL. A few interested people began to pick up signs. The level of skill varied but they never abandoned its use whenever I was in their company.

A Destiny to be Creative

I was well into my life as a full-time student becoming more self-aware, able to see, smell, touch and taste the things I had never known before. All my senses were connected to the experience of academia. Literature brought me to places I never knew existed. I learned about other people from another world and from another lifetime. My studies I found a rewarding experience, a great step in my personal journey towards self-discovery. Going to lectures and attending seminars were a thrilling experience.

A couple of students in the class thought it remarkable a deaf person could study literature. Another wanted to know where I had learned to read and write. So impressed were they I was asked for the name of my English teacher! Overall students were respectful and did not seem to think anything was out of the ordinary with me. The sheer volume of reading was overwhelming but I loved the challenge of reading Donne, Blake, Milton, Keats, Byron, Yeats, Sheridan, Webster, Dickinson, Fitzgerald, Steinbeck, Hardy, Bronte, Dickens, Synge and many more. I spent a great deal of time in the library. I became fascinated by Louis MacNeice's feelings of displacement and sense of alienation in which he found he could not fully belong to Ulster, Ireland or England. I was drawn to Derek Walcott's musings on the idea of a divided self, the sense of being 'half-home' or half belonging to St. Lucia, England or an African country of his heritage. Post-colonial poetry became my new fascination where the work of the two poets resonated with me a sense of having fallen between two stools. Instead of feeling compelled to choose one and reject the other I could accede and bear the two together and my internal struggle would subside. What a fascinating concept, I thought.

One day I took a leap of faith and made a decision to leave my hearing aid in a drawer so I'd get on with life without it. I was hurdling myself into the unknown, believing that this was the life that would give me the sense of self I longed to find. The hearing aid symbolised for me the experience of being an in-between: 'deaf' or 'hearing'. Now I was compelled to see the world through new eyes, and started exchanging notes with people instead of trying to read lips. As more and more people learned to sign, I had little need for note writing during conversation and soon gave up the will to lip read.

I graduated with a BA degree in English literature in June 2002 a year after the birth of my daughter. In September 2004 I began my studies for the Master's degree in Literature and Cultural Politics at University of Edinburgh. The day I arrived I fell in love with the beautiful city of Edinburgh and within a few weeks became a postgraduate student. Edinburgh had a small-town feel with all the advantages of a city. With accommodation sorted, I redoubled my efforts to complete the master's course and spent a great deal of time reading postcolonial literature and post-modern writers. Some of the postcolonial writings on identity politics seemed to resonate with my own experience of education and community life. Reading them gave the idea that my history is defined by experience of colonialism. I was thrilled to have come across Derek Walcott, Seamus Heaney, Louis McNeice and a host of African and Caribbean writers. I was inspired by Chinua Achebe's idea of 'writing back' to novels written by white European writers whose work portrayed his native community in negative and

derogatory ways (Ashcroft, et al, 1989). Achebe's impetus when writing *Things Fall Apart* was to 'write back' to the 'colonial centre' a way to resist dominant influences and present a reality of native life that reflected their own point of view. I understood that one could write a literature of resistance to subvert against dominant representations of a culture (Young, 2001).

<div align="center">

PART THREE

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2.3   **BELONGING**

The following vignettes and stories here are interspersed with descriptions of events and short excerpts about life as a Deaf Studies student at the University of Bristol. In these snapshots I reveal an experience of self-discovery a telling of an epiphany that occurred at a time when I was on the verge of learning about what it means to be *Deaf* in the context of identity and culture.

<div align="center">

Becoming *Deaf*

</div>

Vignette One

Arriving in Bristol in the autumn of 2004, I faced a potentially difficult transition from being a humanities student to undertaking a course from the social science discipline. It was hard for me to imagine how a narrative aesthetic could be applied to writing social science research. Coming from the world of the abstract and the imaginative, it seemed I had to go through considerable adjustment to familiarise myself with social science prose, research methodology and theory. I wondered how my experience of oralism could be analysed and studied without raking up all the emotions generated from the experience of reading deaf history and education.

The day I arrived at the Centre for Deaf Studies to meet my research supervisor, Dr. Paddy Ladd, two things caught my attention. On entering the lobby area I was faced with a poster on a wall welcoming me to "BSL Land".

"I'm here to see Paddy Ladd," I informed the administrator in BSL through a glass partition.

"Could I have your name please?"

I finger spelled my name and told her I had an appointment to see him.

"Okay, take a seat. He will be out shortly."

I sauntered across the room for a look around. I thought about the research proposal I sent to Dr. Ladd. In the proposal I stated my intention was to do a post-colonial study on Deaf people's experience of culture but had no idea of a suitable methodology.

As I was looking around, something caught my eyes. The poster I was drawn to displayed the eye-catching title: *Deaf Art: What for?* The sketch was a concept map for a critical ethnographic research. Impressive in its presentation I was gravitated towards the words: *what for?*

Vignette Two:

I spent hours in the library reading books on Deaf history. Everything I wanted to know about being *Deaf* was found there: culture, history, identity, language, politics, education and sociology. Until then I had no idea that books could actually cause me to reflect on the most painful memories of childhood. The powerlessness I felt was of being silenced, of being written about, of having no powers of self-representation. With some trepidation I began reading *From Silence to Speech*, a book authored by Sr. Nicholas Griffey the nun who introduced oralism to Ireland.

At the Highbury Vault pub later that evening, I shared my thoughts of the book to a gathering of international Deaf students.

"Why do you feel angry?"

"The book is about her life and work in St. Mary's School," I responded. "She was the main person involved in introducing oralism in Ireland. I am troubled by the paternalism in tone and content of the book".

With the Highbury Vault gang there was always someone to kick an idea around with. I had just gathered a small number of Deaf postgraduate students of diverse academic backgrounds with undergraduate degrees in biology, sociology, philosophy and literature. Here we had a stream of consciousness, a meeting of minds drowning in a current of ideas that sprang from these disciplines. As ideas were ignited politics of being Deaf were discussed and argued. Friends since we found some common ground that brought us to the warm cosiness of the Highbury Vault on dark, cold Thursday evenings we were a mixture of three females and two male students from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Wales, and Italy.

"What does the book say about Deaf people?" asked a female sociology student.

"Deaf people's opinions do not feature in the book. As characters we are nameless. 'Overcoming deafness' narratives gives the public a feel good factor in seeing us being 'helped' by hearing people. She presents herself as 'expert' and makes readers see her as leader. I feel so incensed I can't even begin to describe the sense of despair I feel right now."

Vignette Three

I was saved by Franz Fannon, Albert Memmi and Ngugi Wa Th'iongo. These post-colonial writers knew what it means to feel oppressed. I needed someone to tell me how oppression worked. In Harlan Lane's *Mask of Benevolence* I discovered the term 'audism'. Here at last I found a definitive word, a word that gave credence to our experience. The word was coined by an American Deaf scholar called Tom Humphries that gave weight to an understanding of the experience of marginalisation.

"Do you know what audism is?" I asked the students at Highbury.

"Yes, it is to do with discrimination," answered a Deaf Studies student. "Discrimination based on hearing and speech ability."

It was clear to me that oralism was inspired by audism, and that audism was a lethal injection to my self-esteem. I read a great deal about oppression and developed a new understanding about the past. Something in me had irrevocably changed. In a new sense of awareness, I felt as if I had come out of darkness and understood the experience of oppression. I was now signing in the bright light of dawn. I had never before been in a bilingual environment in which teaching, learning and communicating were conducted in British Sign Language (BSL). Being in the land of BSL I discovered a role reversal in my experience. Instead of us it was hearing students who sought the service of BSL interpreters to voice-over BSL-led lectures. The CDS was the place to be. It had all the advantages it gave Deaf students. So pleasant it was to be in the company of CDS students, I had the added benefit of sharing knowledge and experience with them.

Sharing stories with the Highbury Vault students instilled in me a sense of pride in sign language. A glowing feeling enveloped in me, a feeling of hope of better things to come, of feeling liberated by the experience of reading Deaf Studies. An epiphany lifted me to a new dimension. I knew that if I did not belong with deaf people, I did not belong anywhere.

One day I found myself all alone. The Highbury Vault gang had gone back to their countries. Without the high of their camaraderie, I felt as if my world had come crashing down. I was now feeling out of bounds. Suddenly the surroundings became irrelevant. I started spending time in pubs, drinking alone and writing notes. I missed Ireland and the friends I grew up with. Most of all I missed the language. Something inside me seemed to pull me towards home.

No one I knew in Bristol was aware I was attending counselling. I had been in and out of depression. A different dimension to my past was deeply affecting me. Once a week I had an hourly session of counselling facilitated by a kind and thoughtful lady interpreter.

Paradoxically I became attached to the interpreter and looked to her for support to guide me through past memories. I was not on speaking terms with my father. My counsellor eventually told me I could either accept him or decide not to see to see him. Two years passed and not a word between us. It was time to return to Ireland. In any case my ethnographic journey had to begin there. I was ready to do ethnography.

When Things Fall Apart

Vignette Four

The fourth story is about living in Ireland and trying to build bridges with people close to me. Here I started to reflect on the past and how my life had been while I was surrounded by family. The main theme of this story is the relationship with my father. Up to that point my life had been a steady stream flowing relentlessly in my journey from Clonmel to Dublin, to Portrush, Edinburgh, and Bristol. I was constantly shifting from place to place taking on new challenges, becoming someone that I was not, then reverting back, shifting and returning and becoming but never actually getting to where I wanted to be. Deaf Studies helped me achieve some understanding of the self but I had some ways to go to deal with the mess that was in my life. As I write the next story I am entering into a memory of troubled waters when I finally met my father and as things transpired there was little time left for a reconciliation.

Vignette five

Going home to my family I wondered how I would relate to my father after those years of constant arguments about sign language, lip reading and speech. Perhaps there was too much damage to repair? All those years he must have thought about why I was so obstinate about sign language. Maybe he thought I was being rebellious, striking out and trying to be different. I kept telling him that his idea of 'integration' was not the kind of life I wanted. It never occurred to me to tell him that he sent me to a school where I was exposed to signs. For years hence he literally tried to take the language away from me. At that stage I knew we had basically given up on trying to change our views. The period from the time I began the degree course in Northern Ireland marked a low point in the father-son relationship. Still there was something in the son that still yearned for his father's respect and approval.

The moment I arrived home I was alarmed at the state of his physical appearance. There have been hints that my father was ill but I didn't know how sick he was until I saw him. Physically he looked out of sorts. His weight had plummeted and he appeared shrunk and dishevelled. For days he seemed tired and spent most of the day in bed. Everything that

gave him pleasure, he had lost interest in. Following a full health check-up at Cashel General Hospital he was told he had cancer of the bowel and required an operation within a few weeks. That was in early August and he was put on a liquid diet the days before surgery. My heart went out to him. I had to set aside my resentment towards him. We had sporadic moments of chat.

Vignette Five

I have a memory of sitting on a high stool in a bar with my father who was talking to the bar man. Suddenly he turned to me. His speech was purposeful and unhurried.

"Do you see….at the pool table? He is deaf …good speech. You….talk to him." He was pointing out a young teenage boy playing pool with a few of his friends.

"No. I'm okay." I responded a little irritated knowing too well he was about to become persistent. Sometimes he would not take no for an answer.

"Why not talk to him?" His eyebrows furrowed. "It would be…thing to do…St. Joseph's…"

Seeing that I wasn't going to be pushed, my father turned and beckoned to the young lad to come forward. The boy walked nonchalantly towards my left and nodded. Instinctively I signed introducing myself. I told him I was a past pupil of St. Joseph's. The short conversation continued in ISL.

"How do you like school?"

"It's fine. I'll be finished next year."

"Will you be doing the Leaving Certificate?"

"No." he answered blushing. He was then distracted by his pool opponent to return to the table. We said good luck and he left.

"Why didn't you speak?" my father asked looking irritated.

I paused and considered how to respond. Time had caught up once more. It was the kind of talk I faced before. Usually it led to a row and things would have boiled over. This time I didn't fall for it. I simply smiled at him and turned away. Having tried for almost thirty years I learned that there was little use in explaining myself to him. Time seemed to stand still. The expression on his face etched in my mind. His fury was at my strong inclination to sign. The pure anger in his eyes showed the extent of his frustration.

Vignette Six

Towards the end of August 2005 my father was admitted to hospital to have the tumour removed. After the operation he was on morphine. When I visited him in hospital it was the day of his sixty-ninth birthday. To me he appeared older, more exhausted looking. My heart seized up at the sight of him. The man who was once a strong and powerful presence in my life was now looking forlorn and helpless. The transformation was a strange sight.

I was glad to see him.

Shortly after the operation I got word he was in pain. Swelling developed in both of his legs and infection spread around his body causing the rest of his body to enlarge. It seemed that his recovery had stalled because his kidney failed to function in the normal time required after the operation. Toxins were building up inside his body and he was given strong medication. Within five days he was sent for a emergency operation.

On reflection I remember thinking at that point about having a chat with him in the hope of reconciliation and now wondered if the chance was gone. I wanted to tell him I was sorry for all the troubles I caused him, that maybe I should have been a better son to him. I worried that I may not have this opportunity having seen how he had lost so much weight. I felt his body may not be able to withstand more surgery. Now my feelings were governed by fear of death.

After the operation, powerful drugs were administered to cleanse his body but his heart would not cope with the amount taken over twenty-four hour period. He died on 4th September in the small hours of Sunday morning.

I missed the chance to say goodbye to my father. He was unconscious during the last few hours of his life. Half an hour after he passed away, I arrived at the hospital. He looked unrecognisable in his bloated appearance. Seeing him I had flashbacks, memories of the past came flooding back. I had visions of him smiling in his fawn overcoat. Through a window in Beech Park I watched him climb out of his Vauxhall Viva. At the play hall in St. Joseph's he took a table tennis bat and challenged another boy to a game. The boys loved him for the fun and the charm he displayed. I sat watching the smiling figure recede in the distance as he walked down the corridor to the exit. Before he left he turned to me and waved.

I left the hospital in a daze struggling to digest all that happened. I walked out with my father's luggage in hand. Clearly I had expected him to be home but now I was taking his clothes with him. The conviction settled in me that he was never going to come home again.

Vignette Five

In spring 2008, following graduation at University of Bristol, I went through a valley period in my life. After a year of working, I left a job with a charity organisation serving the needs of deaf people due to problems I was having with alcohol. Although I performed the task to the best of my ability, alcohol consumption increased my natural weariness. I suffered hangovers and fatigue which I found unbearable. I suffered from sleep-deprived tiredness. I lacked motivation for work. Exhaustion and sickness became a way of life for me. I struggled to maintain a cordial atmosphere in the office. Work was punishing to the extent I was only in the job to earn money. One day I decided to stop pressing the self-destruct button but not before I handed in my resignation. In all honesty I don't know why I resigned but my memory of the time is all a blur. Mentally I was so confused. I did not find the courage to tell my manager the real reason for leaving. At the time I felt there was no option but to leave.

In hindsight I believe I made the right decision for it freed me to concentrate on getting well. Throughout summer 2009 I attended counselling to deal with the internal struggle that was going on. I learned to face my demons, the shadow of the past and discussed memories of abuse, the failed relationships, childhood experiences and the people who had been influential in my life. After a few sessions I was a tortured soul feeling raw from reliving pain and trauma. As the weekly sessions continued I turned to face the trauma of the toilet routine in Beech Park. It was at that point my counsellor informed me I was treated like a robot. That was something I could never get out of my mind: she touched a raw nerve.

Vignette Six

I wrote a letter to the superior at Beech Park telling her about the terror she caused us when we were children. Of course the letter was never sent but a weight was lifted to the extent that all the pent up emotions evaporated. Counselling and journaling gave me the idea to start writing about my experiences. Writing I found was about putting on paper my memories and making meanings out of the stories I wrote. I had in mind to write an autobiography with the impetus to write back to the 'colonial centre' perhaps with a book title that reads *From Speech to Sign Language*. I found the act of writing back cathartic and therapeutic in a way that it brought me to a place of forgiveness and acceptance. I forgave my father and learned to understand him in a new way. Seeing that he had a difficult childhood that he never received love from his parents helped put things in perspective. Someone once said to me if you never received parental love how was it possible to give it? The same is true for my

father. With this understanding I was able to forgive him for denying me an identity that I cherish today.

Indelible Imprints

Vignette Seven

December 2009. The rest of the year 2009 passed without anything noteworthy taking place. The lonely journey of writing was taking its toll on me. On paper I had let flow a whole range of emotions. At the end of it all I was exhausted. I read and re read the stories I wrote, all of the things that were important to me. Then I shelved it. By May 2010 I dusted the papers and resumed the writing still unsure of the direction or the genre I wanted to work on. There were times when I wondered if I was wasting my time writing. What if I got so many rejects from publishers? How would I cope with rejection? If I abandoned the story altogether would I live to regret it? I knew I wanted to write my story regardless of whether or not I'd get published. I continued writing all through summer until the day I travelled to Canada to attend the ICED conference.

Vignette eight

December 2010. I had visions of a dark morning where the black sky converges with the snow filled surroundings. I have a memory of my mother's stories about childhood as I turn back in time. Back and forth I went but something drew me ahead into the last few weeks of the year to a mid-December evening spent looking out the window with my daughter beside me. All day cold rain soaked through everything around me. It was one of those evenings when you felt glad to be inside the warmth of your own home. It was getting dark now. Many thoughts of the past came back but they didn't haunt me anymore like they did years ago. I no longer fear the colour of the Christian Brother's clothes. I no longer fear the memory of the nun in Beech Park who terrorised us. The ancient practice of nuns and Christian Brothers in the Cabra schools is long gone now. Since 1998 the schools were left in the hands of lay people and the Catholic Institute for Deaf People.

Vignette nine:

My daughter tugged at my hand and pointed skyward. I searched for the spot in the dark sky and turned to her. Her hands became little starlings.

"Look Daddy, snow!"

2.4   **REFLECTIONS**

We encounter a perspective that makes us judge ourselves, helps us to re-evaluate our moral practice or ideals[11]

The narrative presented in this chapter is grounded in lived experience of past events that has come to define the person I am today. I chose to document my personal experience using auto-ethnographical methods because personal narratives encourage researchers to situate themselves in research and write "evocative" stories (Ellis, 2004). In illuminating my cultural experiences the narrative fits appropriately within the framework of auto-ethnography as a methodological basis for the chapter. This is because I employed thematic analysis to interpret my personal narrative and stories.

2.4.1   On Data sources

Data sources not only stem from my autobiographical narrative, but also from recollections of past events during the course of research through personal journals, official documents, both informal and formal dialogues during interactions with Deaf people and with the participants in the study. Memories of past events are also derived from interactions with people in Deaf Village Ireland, the Deaf Heritage Centre and the Cabra schools. Data was also derived from family letters, school reports, photographs and personal documents.

2.4.2   On Data analysis

Ellis (2004) suggests one of three ways in which auto-ethnographers employ analytic techniques include the use of thematic analysis of narrative. Thematic analysis "refers to treating stories as data and using analysis to arrive at themes that illuminate the content and hold within or across stories" (Ellis, 2004: 196). In this chapter I engaged in the use of thematic analysis in interpreting and analysing my personal narrative. The first step in this process was to reduce data into categories and meaningful patterns. At first I wrote it chronologically as a straight-forward personal narrative, written from the heart, from start to finish. I wrote the first draft with little self-critical assessment so that the narrative would be presented in a candid, open and honest way. The next step was to engage in a process of self-reflectivity since, as Ellis (2004: 34) points out, "it is self-absorbed to mistakenly think that your actions and relationships need no reflexive thought." After re-reading the writing I identified recurrent themes in the narrative in the following way: (1) Personal understanding

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[11] Barbour (2004) p.97

of self-identity in relation to culture, and language; (2) communication issues with family and school; (3) my relationships with people, their culture and attitude towards Deaf people. These themes relate to the institutions in which I lived during childhood, to my language, my relationship with my father, and my connection with a network of Deaf people drawn together by Irish Sign Language.

What I had learned from the themes is that no one has the right to deny us a language that is part of our nature. Though I tried to conform to the wishes of the authorities and my father I led a miserable existence, lost in the search to find a true niche in society and community, until I eventually came to accept the hybrid nature of my identity. For me the hearing aid symbolised that in-between state of suffering that lead to confusion and uncertainty about who I was or where I fitted in with people. It should be obvious from the stories that Deaf people faced and continue to face marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination. Reflecting on the attitude of people towards us is still painful but much less so than before I began writing the auto-ethnography.

2.4.3   On Writing

It was within a short time after my father died that I considered writing a life story with no clear idea of a particular genre. I wrote sporadically in paragraphs here and there but in time stories accumulated. By the time I began the PhD my jumbled pieces of writing was hardly anywhere near being organised and coherent. After doing some reading about auto-ethnography I decided to frame the autobiographical stories within the tradition of auto-ethnography for the purpose of this study. Writing this auto-ethnography culminated in a two year journey of writing, researching and continuously engaging in retrospection. On reflection it must be pointed out that it is not my intention to generalise but rather to present experience as informative and enlightening (Ellis, 2004; Creswell, 2007). I do not believe that in writing about my experience I am representing the experiences of every Deaf person. I am basically illuminating my own subjective experience and worldviews. My aim in writing a personal narrative is to establish my identity from the outset in terms of notions of who I am as a person, researcher, writer and narrator. This has the advantage in foregrounding and disclosing the ethnographer's position within the study. According to Chiseri-Strater (1996: 115) researchers are "positioned by age, gender, race, class, nationality, institutional affiliation, historical-personal circumstances, and intellectual predisposition." It is this position that leads the auto-ethnographer to consider ethical implications in the writing of life stories and personal narratives particularly where it concerns writing about people. As Altorki

& El-Solh (1988: 20) argue the "manner in which the fieldworker presents her or his 'self' [is a] major aspect of the ethical implications of fieldwork."[12]

2.4.4   On Ethical concerns

Ellis (2007), Roth (2009) and Wall (2008) suggest that auto-ethnographers need to consider the lives of people included in stories and life writing. The controversial nature of Deaf education discourses, the sensitivities inherent in the stories and the people to whom I write about all suggest an ethics of writing (Eakin, 2004; Ellis, 2004). I sought feedback from my supervisors. While they gave positive endorsements to my writing, they conscientiously drew my attention to the issue of ethics. This was often a topic of discussion throughout the conversations I had with the supervisors. While I was conscious of the need to be ethical, I was also aware of that my story is situated within important historical and educational events. Consequently ethical problems were bound up with issues of relating to people in the stories. The question was how might my story do harm? I addressed the question by setting it against the good of writing auto-ethnography (Ellis, 2004). The outcome for me was an exercise in self-reflexivity. Following discussions with supervisors, I considered a range of ethical questions concerning disclosure of personal details and details about others. All things considered, the issue of anonymity was addressed and is maintained throughout the narrative. Where appropriate identifiable features were removed or altered.

One significant ethical concern that I addressed was the portrayal of my father and our relationship. I considered the implications this had on my father's reputation and on my family. I followed Ellis' (2004) suggested idea of consulting with members of the family. I also considered the ethics of writing about people who have died (Ellis, 2005; Barbour, 2004). I held discussions with my family members. I explained that my narrative included stories about my father that is only concerned about his beliefs about language and communication and that there is a part in the narrative surrounding the circumstances of his death. I showed extracts of the stories that mentioned my father. It was their suggestion that I present an account of him in a fair and balanced way. I believe I achieved that objective in my writing. A way to address ethics of writing about someone who had died is to present a background to the story of my father's life to help readers understand his persona and character and the significant influences that helped shape his attitude and beliefs about culture and language in the context of deafness and education (ibid). I explored aspects of his childhood to gain an

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[12] Cited in Chiseri-Strater (1996)

understanding of the person he was. What I understood from my research was my father was once a child growing up with his own pressures with family and school. Writing about him helped put things in perspective in that I now sympathise with him for his upbringing. I understand too that he faced difficulties in life that were reflective of the attitudes and beliefs of his own generation where conformity to certain values had to be maintained at all costs.

CHAPTER THREE
SETTING THE SCENE: A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS

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> Some of the long-serving teachers were Christian Brothers. A small number of them were fluent at signing. Lay teachers struggled to teach us, talking away to us as if we were hearing children. One of them prone to lose his temper appeared frustrated with us that we could not understand instructions. The progressive ones were the Brothers. Students who generally caused trouble for other teachers loved their class.

As long as we have deaf people we will have sign language[13]

George Veditz

The foreword of this dissertation began with the ICED Statement of Principle which implied that for the last one hundred and thirty three years signed languages around the world experienced a 'colonial'[14] history (Lane, 1992; Ladd, 2003; O'Connell, 2008). The events described in this chapter are in line with what the statement indicates. For this reason, they are worthy of exploration in the literature review presented here. Originally I wrote a descriptive account of a comprehensive history of Deaf education nationally and internationally. However, due to the scope and the extent to which this account is concise, I found it unfeasible as a starting point where signposts along the journey to the next chapter showed up methodological concerns. Further research drew my attention to the Cabra schools. My decision to begin the literature review with a study of the schools was based on two related ideas. First, that they represent the major and longest running educational institutions for Deaf children in Ireland. Secondly, the schools represent the central location in the evolution of Irish Sign Language and Deaf culture. I take the Cabra schools as the central axis for considering a range of ideas, and philosophies pertaining to the subject of education and Deaf people. I discuss the history of the two schools from a contemporary as well as historical perspective because these institutions continue to be an important nexus for Deaf education debates. Thus I believe it makes sense to describe the research setting in more detail than I had originally intended. It helps maintain focus while discussing all the critical issues concerning events, socio-political factors, controversies, and decision making, and curriculum design and development.

The chapter falls into four sections with each part covering a specific historical period. Part one provides historical context of the Cabra schools. Part two discusses the

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[13] Veditz, George (1913)

[14] E.g. 'linguistic colonialism' Ladd (2003)

critical socio-political issues and controversies that shape Deaf education. For a full understanding of the complexities and core issues at the heart of the debate the work of Griffey (1994), Crean (1997), Burns (1995), LeMaster (1990), Lane (1976, 1984, and 1992), McDonnell & Saunders (1993 and 2004), Branson and Miller (2002), Baynton (1996) and Ladd (2003) need to be examined. Part three maps out some of the legislation and policy issues that have influenced developments and changes in Deaf education over the last twenty years. Most of contemporary literature on legislation and policy is limited to commissioned reports, policy documents, unpublished dissertations, and published articles. Mathews' (2010; 2011 and 2012) discusses issues concerning the mainstreaming of Deaf children in the Republic of Ireland, covering a wide-range of qualitative and quantitative information on legislation, policy and developments in Deaf education. Part four discusses the various aspects of cultural transformations that took place in the Deaf community and examines the key role of Irish Sign Language (ISL) in education. In the context of a discussion on ISL, the linguistic research and unpublished dissertations and thesis of LeMasters (1990), Leeson (1997 and 2002), Burns (1995) and Grehan (2008) provide valuable sources of information. The CIDP commissioned Strategic Review Report (Ryan, 2006) represents an invaluable source of data in which to advance a discussion of the various changes that took place in the early 21st century.

Overall, the chapter attempts to highlight some of the strategies, assumptions and processes which underpin the Deaf education system. The purpose of the review is three-fold. First, it specifically questions the notion that Deaf children should be educated in the same way as hearing children that their education can be successfully organised around oralism. Second, it underlines and considers the changing character of the education curriculum in order to identify and highlight inherent contradictions in the different educational ideologies. Third, it attempts to explain the emergence of research findings that give indicators as to how Deaf children could possibly be educated.

PART ONE

3.1 ORIGINS: THE PROCESS

The origins of the Cabra schools can be traced back to the mid-19th century when a decision was made to establish a Catholic school for deaf children in Cabra on the north side of Dublin city. As Griffey (1994) and Crean (1997) point out, the Catholic Institute for Deaf People (CIDP) aided the establishment of the two singled-gendered institutions. The initial idea of the schools was for Catholic Deaf children to be raised in the Catholic faith and, in order to

be given the sacraments of the Catholic Church, the children had to be taught literacy. The brainwave behind this development is found in a chronicle of a Vincentian priest called Father Thomas McNamara. In 1845 McNamara witnessed from an upper window in St. Peter's Church, Phibsborough a group of children from the Claremont Institute walking the street led by a teacher throwing curses at his church[15]. The priest was greatly incensed at the affront. McNamara's concern reflected the general thinking of the time and it is worth setting his contribution to Deaf Education against a brief historical background on the influence of religion and politics on education in Ireland.

In "The Legacy of Legislation and the Pragmatics of Policy: Historical Perspectives on Schooling for Irish Children," Raftery (2009) charts the changes that took place in Irish education. The search for literature on the Dominican Sisters at St. Mary's led me to Kealy (2007), whose work presents a record of the role of the Dominican Sisters in education. A Dominican nun and retired school teacher Kealy contributes background detail on Father McNamara's role in the founding of St. Mary's at the Dominican Convent in Cabra. Both authors provide background information to the Penal period and the subsequent religious conflict that directly impacted on development in education in Ireland.

In the era of the Penal Laws (circa 1702 -1719), a series of laws were enacted in an attempt to prohibit Catholic education and to control schooling that promoted Protestantism. The passing of these laws suggests that Catholics were deemed a threat to the crown as Ireland was under the control of Britain at the time. The threat of punishment for breaking the law was seen as a deterrent to Catholics gaining control of education. Consequently the Catholic Church lost control of education. Later more laws were enacted making it illegal for Catholic families to send their children to Catholic educational institutions abroad. Furthermore, Catholics were forbidden to run schools.

An important development arising from the Penal Laws was the beginning of the hedge school[16], a native-Irish program and illegally run school catering for Catholics. The Catholics Relief Act of 1791 marked a step in the removal of the Penal Laws on education. The success of the hedge schools became a cause of concern for the Protestant leaders in the Church of Ireland who responded by establishing Charter schools to promote English Protestant Schools in Ireland. The aim was to raise children in the Protestant faith and encourage them to remain loyal to Protestantism and avoid exposure to Catholic influences. It

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[15] McNamara, Thomas (1850). According to Kealy (2009) the Claremont Institute, a protestant-run school for deaf children, was located close to St. Peter's Church in Phibsboro.

[16] Historians report that hedge schools were run under ruined walls, in dry ditches or by the roadside and in some cases in the shadow of a hedge and in others in barns (Raftery, 2009).

soon became apparent that the Charter schools were dishing out cruel treatment to children and reports from these schools suggest illiteracy was high amongst children. Charter schools became unpopular as a consequence and the pendulum of popular opinion seemed to have swung in the Catholic Church's favour when an increasing number of children were sent to hedge schools.

In *A History of Cabra and Phibsborough*, Bernard Neary (1978) examines the history of Phibsoro in which he includes a discussion of St Peter's Church, Father McNamara's local parish in Phibsboro. As Neary notes the achievement of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 brought a rise in power to the Catholic Church. Protestantism was perceived as a threat to the Catholic faith. By Raftery's (2009) account, the government of Earl Grey established a state-funded national system of education in 1831 supported by the chief secretary of Ireland E. G. Stanley. The aim was to provide a system of National Education, a non-denominational schooling for the lower class members of the population. However, the government decided to take a cautious approach and did not legislate for the new system (Raftery, 2009). This meant the system was to be in 'experimental' mode, a precautionary measure against the threat of conflict from religious orders. However, conflict did follow as it permeated all levels of the education system in Ireland, particularly where schools were headed by priests or vicars (Kealy, 2007). Obviously this was due in no small part to the opposing views of the different churches over control of education. While classes were taught in the English language, the Catholic Church became concerned about the high level of illiteracy amongst the Catholic population of Ireland. As Raftery (2009) states, the Catholic Church laid the blame for this educational shortfall at the door of its Protestant counterparts, claiming that Catholic children were being exposed to Protestant influences in 'mixed education'[17].

This section explores the background to the Catholic Church's role in Irish education and the resistant to Protestant influences. These factors are significant in the context of CIDP and Father McNamara's plan to establish a Catholic school for Deaf children which was instigated in response to the Claremont Institution. In that context the next section briefly discusses the history of Claremont and the circumstances that led to the formation of CIDP.

3.1.1   The Claremont Institute

To the extent that Deaf education is placed in a wider context the best introduction to the history of the Claremont Institute is found in Pollard's (2006) *The Avenue: A History of the*

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[17] Education for Protestants and Catholics together with no training to teach religion (Raftery, 2009: Kealy, 2009)

Claremont Institute. According to Crean (1997) and Pollard (2006), the founding of the Protestant school in 1816 was the first attempt at educating deaf people in the country. There is a scarcity of information and research on Deaf Education concerning the period before the beginning of the Claremont Institute. Mathews (2011) observes that Deaf children were educated through industrial schools, asylums and penitentiaries and some children from wealthy families were sent to boarding schools in Britain.

Against the historical background of religious conflict, McNamara became aware of reports of Catholic Deaf children attending the Claremont Institute, a school founded by a Cork doctor Charles Orpen (1791-1856) (Crean, 1997; Pollard, 2006). Orpen, the son of a Protestant clergyman, had been interested in educating Deaf children following an encounter with a young boy Thomas Collins. Collins was engaged as a case study for his teaching method of learning the skills of writing and articulation.

Orpen's ideas concerning education and Deaf children were gleaned from the work of the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb established in Birmingham in the early 19th century. In 1816 he began a class with eight boys in a building at Smithfield, an area close to the city centre of Dublin. Joseph Humphries from the Braidwood Academy, a school for Deaf children in Edinburgh was appointed teacher at Claremont. Pollard (2006: 122) suggests Humphries' connection with Braidwood means it is possible British Sign Language was used at the Claremont Institute. In 1819 Orpen's school was transferred to Claremont in Glasnevin with a small enrolment of students some of whom were Catholics. By 1830 the school enrolment figure had increased to 100 pupils. It had become a national school under a management group comprising of members of the colonial nobility of the Protestant Church and State.

Meanwhile, in 1822 a Catholic school for Deaf children was opened in Cork by Dr. Patrick Keogh, a physician who became interested in educating Deaf children following an encounter with two Claremont pupils (O'Shea, 2010). O'Shea's (2010) master's dissertation on a study of the history of Deaf people in Cork indicate that Dr. Keogh's school was the first Catholic school for deaf children opened in Ireland. In 1831 the Ulster Institute for the Deaf and Dumb was opened to Protestant Deaf children, a move that effectively curtailed developments at Claremont by reducing the number of enrolments (Crean, 1997). Despite this set back the Claremont Institute continued to admit Deaf children but its survival was dependent on funds. A percentage of the school's funds came from charities and voluntary contributions and the rest were drawn from tuition fees. As Catholic opposition towards Protestant-run schools was gathering strength it was inevitable that its influence would have a

telling effect on the future of Claremont. O'Shea finds that the Cork school had the capacity to accommodate 20 residential pupils and during its twenty-four year existence it enrolled a total of 73 pupils before it closed in 1846 due to lack of funds. The school's closure occurred the same year Father McNamara and Monsignor Yore established the CIDP. With the end of one Catholic school and the gradual decline of Claremont, the CIDP soon became influential in establishing the Cabra schools – as we shall see in the next section.

3.1.2   Catholic Institute for Deaf People (CIDP)

McNamara, for his part, had been greatly interested in education of Deaf children following a visit in 1840 to the Le Bon Sauveur School for the Deaf in Caen, France (Griffey, 1994). As Griffey and Crean (1997) report, McNamara was concerned with the lack of a Catholic school for Deaf children in Ireland. McNamara's account is revealed in *Good Tidings*, a serial magazine published by the Dominican Sisters. He believed Protestant schools might have a free hand at converting Catholic children[18]. In the face of this threat, McNamara decided to make plans to establish a Catholic school and in 1844 he enlisted the support of Monsignor Yore. In January 1845 they set up a twenty-six member committee presided over by Dr. Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, and chaired by Yore with overall panning responsibility (Griffey, 1994). The majority of its membership comprised of Catholic Church leaders and a number of lay people[19]. Throughout the year the committee met formally on several occasions. Initially its work encompassed two main areas: to raise funds and to establish a Catholic school for Deaf children (Griffey, 1994). The project was advertised in the leading journals of the time to publicise their venture and to raise funds (ibid).

The new group convened by Yore with McNamara as secretary took on the onerous challenge of raising funds. Over time it was proving difficult to obtain adequate funds as work was hampered by the disastrous effects of the famine in the country. Given the circumstances it seems remarkable that enough funds were secured to build a school. Crean (1997) suggests the Catholic belief that rewards of eternal life were reserved for those who gave to charity may have worked in the CIDP's favour. People were prepared to part with money regardless of the hardship they were suffering. As we shall see in the next section, the Dominican Sisters would have a big role to play in the CIDP's progress.

The next step was to entrust the responsibility of educating Deaf boys to the Irish Christian Brothers. As a group the Brothers had been open in their criticism of the influences

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[18] Good Tidings 1946
[19] Cabra School for Deaf Boys: Centenary Record, 1857-1957

of Protestantism and British culture (Crean, 1997; Raftery, 2009). They were strongly committed to the education of the poor. Founded in 1803 by Edmund Rice (1762-1844), the Congregation of the Christian Brothers were approached by the CIDP with an appeal for support. Their request was turned down. The Brothers were already tied up with demands to set up schools all over the country: it would have taken the Brothers several years to fulfil their goal had they accepted. It was at this juncture that CIDP decisions began to crystalize. Turning their attention to the Dominican Sisters, who were by then long established at the Dominican Convent in Cabra, they informed the nuns of the development plans (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997; Kealy, 2007).

This brief examination of the role played by Father McNamara in establishing the CIDP has shown that the organisation had an important responsibility and function in the course of establishing the Cabra schools. What follows is a brief discussion on the Dominican Sisters of Cabra and circumstances that led to them to take control of educating Deaf children.

3.1.3   The Dominican Sisters of Cabra

The work of the Dominican Sisters is relevant to the history of Deaf education in Ireland, particularly in the context of what was discussed so far about the work of Father McNamara and the CIDP. In this section I attempt to shed light on the life of the nuns from this religious order. The story of the Dominican Sisters is of interest to Kealy (2007), whose work is based on a doctoral thesis presented at Lancaster University. In *Dominican education in Ireland 1820-1930*, Kealy provides an historical overview of the history of the Dominican Education in Ireland, depicting an image of the kind of life of the Dominican nuns.

Established in 1206, the Dominican Order responded to the social and cultural changes of the thirteenth century. It was Saint Dominic who ensured the Order would be flexible enough to adapt to these changing circumstances. The Dominican Constitutions stipulated that working out new ways to the Truth should be encouraged in order to achieve openness to the truth of things and a compassion for human suffering. The message was carried by Dominican Sisters right into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, during which time they responded to various new ideas and changing social conditions and new modes of communication (Griffey, 1994; Kealy, 2007).

From 1819 onwards the Dominican Sisters gave years of service to the running of the 'poor schools' but the work was stunted by the gradual decrease in number of Sisters in the convent with little funds to maintain the running of the place (Kealy, 2007). A report

published by the Archbishop of Dublin in 1825 relating to the Board of Commission on Education omitted to mention the hardworking nuns. This oversight greatly offended the nuns so, on the advice of the Archbishop, applied for recognition by the Board. In 1831 the Sisters became part of the government-run school system, a status that gave them freedom to choose the curriculum and have the schools conducted according to religious ethos and practices of the Catholic Church. Since the Dominican Sisters were under the spiritual direction of the Vincentians they were also well-known to Father McNamara. Their need to educate the poor and disadvantaged section of the population meant they were in a position to respond favourably when McNamara called to them for support (Kealy, 2007). I now turn to a discussion of the beginning of Deaf education in St. Mary's School and the Dominican Sister's part in the development.

3.1.4   St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls

When McNamara put the proposal before Mother Columba Maher, the prioress of Dominican convent in Cabra, delivered it to her 'community'. The proposal was duly accepted and the nuns agreed to the undertaking. Sr. Vincent Martin and Sr. Magdalen O'Farrell were selected as teachers (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997; Kealy, 2007).

In the discussion that ensued perhaps the most complex questions concerned the formulation of a language program. According to Crean and Griffey, discussions centred around one key question: how to develop a suitable language program and curriculum for teaching. As Kealy (2007) notes, the Sisters moved into new and uncharted territory, an area in which they lacked knowledge or experience: that of teaching Deaf children. More significantly, they had no sign language. From that position, teaching Deaf children demanded an approach that was different to what they had known from running the 'poor schools'. Technical issues had to be addressed A language program had to be organised and put in place.

In January 1847 McNamara sent the two nuns to Le Bon Saveur in Caen, Normandy, France a school which he had visited six years previously. At the suggestion of the school in Caen, two Deaf girls, Agnes Beedam[20] (aged 8) and Mary-Ann Dougherty (aged 11), accompanied the nuns on a journey to France (Griffey, 1994; Kealy, 2007). Le Bon Saveur Institute was founded by Abbé Pierre Jamet, a disciple of the Abbé Sicard who was successor of the Abbé Charles de l'Epée (1712-1789) from Paris. L'Epée was founder of the world's

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[20] For the record Agnes Beedam is the first deaf girl enrolled at St. Mary's. Mary-Ann Dougherty was the second pupil named on the enrolment list. Both Agnes and Mary-Ann started school in September 1847.

first school for Deaf children. The story of his school is significant in this study where it concerns the origin and development of sign language in the Cabra schools.

The French monk l'Epée is best remembered for his work as a philanthropic educator and contributor to education of Deaf children in France (Lane, 1984; Crean, 1997). His interest in Deaf education was awakened during an encounter with the two Deaf girls whom he had observed communicating in a sign language. L'Epée's fascination with French Sign Language (LSF) brought him in contact with Deaf adults living in the city of Paris. It was there he learned to sign and began to believe he needed to use LSF to teach the young girls he had seen earlier. According to his biographer, Par M. K. Morel (1833) l'Epée knew that wherever Deaf people met, they were always likely to communicate in a sign language.

In 1760 he discovered a shelter in the city and taught a class of forty deaf pupils. Within two years l'Epée had raised enough funds to set up a school. In doing so he broke with the tradition of providing individualised education for Deaf children (Mathews, 2011). The school's success was soon attracting visitors from all over Europe fascinated with his teaching methods. Many of his graduates remained in the school to work as teachers while others went elsewhere on to found schools for Deaf children. Jean Massieu and Laurent Clerc were two of the most well-known Deaf teachers. It is from l'Epée's tradition that the school in Caen was founded upon.

Returning to the subject of St. Mary's, literature on the school is plentiful (LeMaster, 1990; Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997; Grehan, 2008; Kealy, 2007). The story of the two nuns and girls on their voyage to Caen is gleaned from these sources. They spent eight months living in the school studying the method of teaching and learning (Giffey, 1994; Burns, 1995; Kealy, 2009). According to Kealy (2007) the mission was for the girls to teach the fifteen girls enrolled in St. Mary's for September. However, given the ages of the two girls, this assertion seems rather questionable. Perhaps a more credible view is the suggestion that the girls learned French signs at Caen and passed this knowledge to the girls in St. Mary's. Burns (1995: 122) maintains that the nuns brought with them "a dictionary of French signs" devised by a student of l'Epée the Abbé Sicard and some books on teaching French.

In September 1847 the girls were admitted to a room on the convent grounds known as "The Cottage" and the Sisters introduced a "mixture of indigenous French Sign Language combined with additional pedagogical signs" from the books received from Caen (ibid). It is unclear how the nuns devised a language program using the French model of education. Given their lack of knowledge of a sign language, it is difficult to know how they could make this transfer a success. The ambiguity is due in no small part to the paucity of evidence on the

origin and evolution of Irish Sign Language. A gap in the literature exists whereby historians have failed to account for the girls' knowledge of sign language before, during and after the visit to Caen. Several key questions remain unanswered. For example: How did they communicate with each other on the journey to Caen? Did they learn French Sign Language in Caen? Did the nuns learn sign language during the period?

The answer to the last question may be found in Kealy (2007) and Griffey (1994). It seems the Sisters encountered problems in teaching a class using the French method. Father Burke, a Vincentian priest and fluent French speaker, was called upon to provide support. Burke became the school's first chaplain and in this role he was able to give hand-on support with teaching. Burke is said to have successfully translated the French signs into a system of teaching that could express English (LeMaster, 1990; Griffey, 1994; Burns, 1995). This does not go far enough to explain how teaching was conducted in a sign language. One must be fluent in the language before he or she can teach through it.

Burns (1995: 121) credits the Dominican Sisters for their role in introducing "sign language into this country" and for creating "'Deaf' communities where this language was used." Certainly I believe the Sisters should be credited for allowing sign language to develop in St. Mary's but I would argue it is naïve to assume they were responsible for passing on knowledge of sign language to the girls. The quote from Veditz implies that wherever Deaf people meet a sign language will naturally develop a point that is supported by Groce's (1985) book *Everybody Here Spoke Sign Language*, an ethnographic exploration of the Martha Vineyard settlers. From 17th century onwards the population of Martha's Vineyard, an island off the coast of Massachusetts, manifested a high rate of hereditary deafness resulting in the development of a sign language until early 20th century when it was no longer in use, a consequence of Deaf people attending schools for the deaf in mainland America.

Lane's (1984) account of Laurent Clerc's life suggests that Deaf people are indigenous where sign language is concerned. In other words they have a natural gift to develop the language spontaneously without any input from hearing people. The story of L'Epée's first encounter with the two girls in Paris is a case in point. He sought the help of Deaf adults in the city to teach him the language before he began teaching in the school. Yet it is the assumption of researchers and educators that hearing teachers developed and passed on sign language to Deaf children in Ireland (e.g. Griffey, 1994; Burns, 1995; Kealy, 2007). I argue that that both Agnes and Mary-Ann may have cultivated their own signed language or learned to sign prior to the journey to France and picked up French signs from the students in the Caen school. While there is no evidence to support that theory, equally there is not a

shred of empirical evidence suggesting they first learned sign language from the nuns or that they communicated with each other in a spoken language (e.g. English).

In 1848 the number of pupils in St. Mary's was extended to 150. That year an extension was built to accommodate the growing number of pupils (Griffey, 1994). A teacher training course was established in 1854 to prepare graduates for teaching in the school. Graduates trained through a monitored "system of pupil-teacher training" (Kealy, 2007: 50). Griffey (1994: 17) notes a natural affinity existed between Deaf teachers and their pupils in St. Mary's: "As adult role models these deaf people were an inspiration to the pupils". The Sisters took on the extra responsibility of finding employment for graduates. In 1863 a vocational department was established to provide training in preparation for a trade for school-leavers (Griffey, 1994). Lace-making was introduced followed by courses in spinning, dyeing, dressmaking, embroidery and tailoring. Without state aid, the school was a self-supporting school to the extent that staff and pupils grew their own vegetables and fruits and had their own meat (ibid). Cotton and woollen materials were produced by the pupils.

By 1877 St. Mary's had helped educate two-hundred and sixty-one Deaf girls, thus establishing a reputation both in Ireland and abroad a success that did not go unnoticed at a Conference of Teachers of the Deaf in London that same year (ibid). Two years later, Archbishop McCabe, who replaced Dr. Murray, gave support to the building of an extension which provided space for more pupils (Griffey, 1994; Kealy, 2007). In 1896 St. Mary's celebrated its Golden Jubilee. The year's record showed the school had two hundred and one girls on it roll. Over the fifty-year period one thousand one hundred and eighty-eight pupils had passed through the school (Griffey, 1994: 16). Progress did not go unnoticed by international educators. The school was acclaimed by Thomas Gallaudet in the United States for the great work it was doing. In the same year a principal of the Halifax school for the Deaf in Canada, after visiting St. Mary's, noted in a letter to the Dominican Sisters that he "was very much impressed by the work being done in the institution" (Griffey 1994: 17).

As Griffey (1994) reports it was in the 1870s that the Dominican Sisters organised and served retreats for former pupils of St. Mary's. The school's chaplain, Fr. Thomas Mulqueen presided over these events at St. Kevin's Chapel. Past-pupils of the school travelled from afar and in some cases cost of travel was funded by the nuns. Retreats were organised on the understanding that Deaf people could not hear the sermon given in other churches. The occasions proved popular as illustrated by the large turnout in 1945 when two-hundred and twelve past-pupils turned up for the occasion organised by Sr. Nicholas Griffey. In her account she describes the experience in the following way:

> I saw the joy and happiness among this group as they met old friends, as well as their teachers. Because the Sisters were fluent in sign language and because they knew individual pupils so well, the meeting was like a joyous family reunion. Problems were discussed-loneliness, rejection, unemployment, lack of contact with family members abroad, difficulty in rearing hearing children, and above all poverty. A form of group therapy was used even though I was unaware of the existence of such a technique. Groups met-the young, the middle aged, the elderly, the married, those with additional handicaps- to discuss their problems. Each group was led by the Sisters. Both deaf and hearing members of staff were available to give advice and help to individuals. Each night there was entertainment after which there was time for chats with friends. Sleep was abandoned because they were starved for communication with people who understood them. At the end of the reunion it was obvious that some deaf ladies were reluctant to leave.[21]

Griffey goes on to say that the event lead to calls from Deaf adults to form a club. The request was submitted to the chaplain. Following discussion with the CIDP a motion was passed to fund a new club. A CIDD report published in 1877 indicated that the CIDD provided rooms for use as a weekly social meeting for Deaf men in a building on 75/76 Marlboro Street, Dublin (DDA, 1988).

By the turn of the 20th century St. Mary's received international recognition for excellence. Further endorsements were received, of which one was from a teacher at a London school for Deaf children. In a letter to the Dominican Sisters following a visit to St. Mary's, Hugh Myddleton wrote: "the language results are the finest I have seen and I have learned much from the methods. As a teacher of the deaf this is one of the most helpful days..," (Griffey, 1994: 16).

3.1.5 St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys

Ennis and Riordan's (1957) account published in a booklet marking the centenary year celebration of St. Joseph's School brings to light the circumstances surrounding the foundation of the school. It begins by detailing the struggles of the CIDP in securing the services of the Christian Brothers. It then charts the search for a building to accommodate the boarders. According to this account, a furnished residential building was discovered at Prospect in Glasnevin on the north side of Dublin. It was deemed large enough to accommodate up to forty boarders. A young man named Sutton, fresh out of the Training School of the Board of National Education, was employed as teacher. In 1849 the new school

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[21] Griffey, (1994) p.17-18

was given its inauguration under the name of St. Joseph's. Four boys were admitted: Terence Farnan (9), Edward Clarke (8), John Code (11) and Robert Haughton (11) all from Dublin (Ennis & Riordan, 1957). The boys were placed under the guardianship of the Holy Spouse of Mary Immaculate Mother of God. Sutton taught for eight years before the school relocated to Cabra (ibid).

In 1851 the enrolment record showed 35 boys were registered and more lay teachers were employed (Ennis and Riordan, 1957; Crean, 1997; Breen et al, 2007). Given that pupil numbers were on the rise, the provision of a new and larger building became an immediate concern. Within five years the number had doubled. The CIDP purchased a site at the junction of Navan Road and Old Cabra Road. A further appeal to the Christian Brothers was successful and 5 Brothers were assigned to educate 68 boys enrolled in the school. An inauguration took place on 29th September 1857 and a report of the event appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* the following day.

Some of the Brothers embarked on a six months training stint at St. Mary's. Burns (1995) maintains that a sojourn at St. Mary's meant the Brothers were exposed to "the French system of signs." Crean (1997) counters this assessment, arguing that it was the *Course of Instructions* manual published by the New York Institution in America containing American Sign Language alphabet that the Brothers adhered to. It would seem from the account of Ennis and Riordan (1957) and the testimonies of the participants in Chapter Six that finger-spelling was employed to facilitate the spelling of English words which indicate the intent to teach literacy. The purpose was to ensure the boys were literate enough to be given the sacraments of the Catholic Church (ibid).

O'Shea (2010) sheds some light on the Christian Brothers' methods of teaching literacy. He cites a CIDP report published in 1859, finding that 'natural signs' were used by Deaf people. LeMaster (1990), Burns (1995) and O'Shea make reference to 'methodical signs', 'Signed English' (SE) or 'Signed Supported English' (SSE). O'Shea (2010) points out that methodical signs or signed English was used to teach literacy and grammar. Finger-spelling of English words was considered an extremely important aspect of teaching and learning where students were able to apply finger-spelt words with concepts and objects. This formed the basis of their literacy education. One can only assume the same methodology was used in St. Mary's given that the Brothers were trained by the nuns.

A *Cabra, 13th Report* published in 1859 show that pupils from the Cabra schools were able to develop language[22]. Indigenous signs and French signs provided the platform for a practical system of teaching and learning devised by the Brothers. Throughout the first one hundred years of St. Joseph's existence the Christian Brothers taught literacy to the boys and provided religious education, pastoral care and a variety of educational programs such as metal work and wood carving. Enrolment figures went on the increase. As the St. Joseph's admission report suggests, priests were the first point of contact for parents who then referred Deaf children to the CIDP as potential students of the school (O'Shea, 2010). A Cabra, 5th Report, 1851 records the daily timetables for the Cabra schools with details of subjects studied and activities performed. In an investigation of the state of education for the Blind and the Deaf and Dumb in the United Kingdom, the Royal Commission Report 1880 recognised St. Joseph's as amongst the best schools in the country.

Brother Walsh was known to have made an attempt to introduce the oral method of teaching. He encountered strong resistance and a dispute with other Brothers followed which forced Brother Walsh to depart from St. Joseph's. Walsh is said to have left the Christian Brotherhood to establish an oral school in Bombay, India. While teaching he encountered serious difficulties. Eventually he wrote an article openly criticising the oral system (O'Shea, 2010). Little is known of the subsequent whereabouts of the Brother, apart from the fact that he retired in Belgium during the outbreak of the Second World War.

The Christian Brothers' publication *Male Deaf Solidarity* and the subsequent published editions of the *Solidarity Circular* in 1895 suggest that religious education featured more prominently than the academic side of education[23]. As O'Shea (2010: 92) reports, a Royal Commission[24] tour of the Cabra schools found that both boys and girls were given religious instructions throughout their daily lives. While the children were taught mathematics, English, and geography, the practice of Catholic faith through prayer was considered paramount (ibid; Ennis & Riordan, 1957). Additionally, the boys received industrial training through the vocational department established in the school to provide training in shoemaking, tailoring, gardening, carpentry, harness making and the making of wire mattresses (O'Shea, 2010: 92). As the Royal Commission report suggests, the children from the Cabra schools lived a life of routine rising as early as 6am each morning and retiring to their beds at 8pm each night. Their daily lives were regulated by prayers before and after

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[22] Cited in O'Shea (2010)
[23] ibid
[24] Report from The Royal Commission on the Education of the Blind, Deaf and Dumb and Imbeciles, 1889

meals, and before and after class. These distributions of time were published in *Cabra, 5ᵗʰ Report*, 1851[25]. Some of the pupils remained in school; some of the children were either orphans or abandoned by their families. Some pupils, however, travelled home once a year during the summer months with their travel expenses paid for by the institution (O'Shea, 2010: 92).

A Deaf teacher Brother Byrne (1838-1909) issued the first copy of the *Solidarity Circular* in 1895. The *St. Joseph's* booklet was published the following year and went into circulation for many years hence. From these sources there is evidence that a number of Deaf people were employed by the school as teachers and care staff. The *Centenary Record 1857-1957* and *St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys, Cabra, 1857-2007* (Breen et al, 2007) provide an invaluable source of historical information on the history of St. Joseph's. Br. Michael O'Dowd's (1955) unpublished master's thesis "The History of the Catholic Schools for the Deaf, Cabra, Dublin" offers an account of the circumstances that led to the establishment of St. Joseph's. Crean (1997) makes a noteworthy contribution to a history to Deaf Education in Ireland. The author, a father of a Deaf son, is highly critical of Griffey (1994) and the education system she introduced to the Cabra schools. In Part Two, I draw on the ideas of these authors and thinkers in the field of Deaf education in Ireland and, in particular, I present their contrasting contentions.

3.1.6   Reflections

Overall Part One focuses attention on accounts of historical developments of the Cabra schools. It draws on literature that discusses the influence of the Dominican Sisters, the Christian Brothers, CIDP and Father McNamara. These people left a particular mark on the beginning of Deaf education in Ireland. We learned that the baton of responsibility of teaching was passed on to graduates who became highly influential in making the schools a great success. Consequently, the Cabra schools have been an object of international attention inundated with praise for what was described as impressive results coming from the institutions. For the first one hundred years of the school's existence the Cabra schools followed the l'Epée model of sign language teaching. Much of teaching and instruction was on religion through a sign language and as a consequence the children achieved proficiency in literacy. All that was about to change, however, as the resolutions at the ICED began to

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[25] Cited in O'Shea (2010)

impose its own views on Deaf education throughout Ireland. It was not until the 1940s and the arrival of Sr. Nicholas Griffey that oralism was introduced in Ireland.

PART TWO

3.2   SR. NICHOLAS GRIFFEY AND THE MILAN CONGRESS 1880[26]

Much of official and academic literature on Deaf education in Ireland links the Cabra schools with oralism. Griffey's (1994) autobiographical memoir *From Silence to Speech: 50 years with the deaf* champions the oralist cause. The background to the story surrounding the decision to abandon the culture of sign language teaching in favour of the oral-aural method of teaching and learning is revealed in her narrative. The book is based mainly on anecdotal evidence, on Griffey's views, observations and ideas about deafness in relation to education. Using the lens of the sociological perspective one can glean insight on the social factors that influenced her thinking about deafness and Deaf people. Crean (1997) is also on hand to give an alternative reading of Deaf education history. In order to understand the different perspectives of the two authors, it is appropriate at this stage to explore all these critical factors that helped shape Deaf education in Ireland.

3.2.1   Writing the past: states of change

While the basis for the oral system of schooling dates as far back as the 17th century it was apparently known to society in Roman and Greek times that sign language existed (Branson and Miller, 2002). Writing from a sociological perspective of deafness, Branson and Millar (2002) draw attention to how negative attitudes towards Deaf people and sign language influenced the way people thought about their ability to be educated. From their account it seems that 'invisibility' had been the hallmark of Deaf people's social experiences. Aristotle's philosophy concerning language may have been influential in how people thought about them. His claim was that without speech, they were "senseless and without reason." This assertion was a highly significant in the way people thought about difference (Branson & Millar, 2002; Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997; Ladd, 2003).

By the 16th century a general shift in attitude towards Deaf people emerged when Italian philosopher, Giralomo Cardano (1501- 1576) claimed that learning did not necessarily require hearing or speech (Baynton, 1996). Cardano argued that if Deaf people had the ability to learn they could also be educated. Cardano's ideas may have been picked up by Spanish

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[26] International Congress for the Education of the Deaf (ICED) held in Milan on 6th September 1880 is commonly referred to as the Milan Congress 1880

Benedictine monks Pedro Ponce de Leon (1520-1584) and Juan Pablo Bonet (1579- 1633) (Crean, 1997). Ponce de Leon's interest in educating Deaf children was spurred following a stint teaching a Deaf son of a mayor (Crean, 1997; Baynton, 1996). In 1620 Bonet's *The Reduction of the Letters and the Art of Teaching the Mute to Speak,* documents the teaching methods of de Leon includes illustrations of sign-alphabets. Thus Ponce de Leon and Bonet broke new ground in teaching Deaf children through basic and informal signs which probably paved the way for the distribution of teaching methods in years to come (Crean, 1997).

In the 18th century attempts were made to institutionalise Deaf education (Crean, 1997; Mathews, 2011). Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries the term 'institution' was in common parlance, owing to a policy of segregating the disabled, poor and the sick from society. The term 'institution' with regard to the marginalised sections of society is described as "'any long term provision of a highly organized kind on a residential basis with the expressed aims of 'care', 'treatment' or 'custody'" (Jones & Fowles, 1984: 207)[27]. As such, institutions include hospitals, asylums, workhouses and prisons. Foucault (1980) describes the process of institutionalisation as 'dividing practices' which emerged from the scientific experimentation on disabled people and the birth of asylums and modern hospitals (Rabinow, 1984; Branson & Miller, 2002). Foucault's theories on dividing practices and surveillance, and on the power and practice of medical professionals' work in institutional spaces are explored in Chapter Four.

It seems that institutionalisation became the drive for revolutionary changes to take place in Deaf education (Branson and Miller, 2002). Prior to the 18th century, individualised schooling was the norm for Deaf children from wealthy families until 1760 when l'Epée established the first educational institution for Deaf children in Paris. The school was named the *Institute Nationale des sourds-muets de Paris.* Although l'Epée asserted that Deaf people possessed the same mental capabilities as hearing people, he did not regard sign language as equal to spoken languages (Lane, 1984)[28]. People from all over the world studied his methods and began to imitate them. Over the years the tradition of his school was passed on to other teachers and other schools throughout the world.

One of l'Epée's most illustrious pupils, Laurent Clerc (1785–1869), accompanied Thomas Gallaudet to New York to set up the first residential school for Deaf children in the United States. The story of Clerc is worth a mention here. Lane's (1984) *When the Mind Hears* chronicles Clerc's life and celebrates his contribution to Deaf education. Born in La

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[27] See Barnes (1991) p.15
[28] Par M. K. Morel (1833)

Balme-les-Grottes, Isère, a village on the north-east part of Lyon in France, Louis Laurent Marie Clerc is widely regarded by Deaf people in America and elsewhere as one of the most celebrated and iconic figures in the history of Deaf education. He lost his hearing when he was a year old as a result of an accidental fall from a chair. He landed face down on a fireplace and suffered burns on the right side of his face and subsequently sustained a permanent scar below his right ear. The scar holds historic and symbolic significance in the Deaf world. Clerc identified by an ASL sign-name using the middle and index fingers to brush against the right cheek and stroke down close to the side of the mouth. It was never made clear if the accident caused his deafness but Clerc's parents believed the loss of his hearing and sense of smell was the result of it.

On his twelfth birthday Clerc enrolled at *Institute Nationale des sourds-muets de Paris* where he met Jean Massieu for the first time (Lane, 1984). Initially Clerc was frightened of the new school but quickly settled in after receiving support from Massieu, the school's Deaf teaching assistant. At school, Clerc learnt that 'institution' meant a routine and regimentation prescribed by written rules. He learned French Sign Language through prayer recitals and from the senior pupils. The story of l'Epée and the school's history was passed on to him by a Deaf man called Père Antoine one of the school's kitchen staff. Language and religion were supplanted in his education and speech tuition lessons were provided by Abbé Margaron. A short time after beginning the lessons it became clear that Clerc experienced difficulty with articulation. Margaron became so frustrated with Clerc he lost his temper and physically beat the young pupil around the chin causing him to bite his tongue. Clerc was badly traumatized by the experience and vowed never speak again.

Renowned as a brilliant teacher with a prodigious memory, Massieu was a great influence on Clerc. Massieu inspired him to believe that he would become a teacher. When Clerc graduated he taught at the school for a number of years before moving to America where he helped set up schools for Deaf children and introduced his knowledge of French Sign Language. American Sign Language (ASL) is said to have originated and developed from a combination of indigenous signs, Martha's Vineyard Sign Language and French signs from Clerc (Lane, 1984). By all accounts Clerc had a long and fruitful career as educator and administrator. Many of his students trained as teachers of Deaf children with some establishing themselves as leaders of their deaf community. He married Eliza Crocker Boardman, a former member of his first class of pupils. A year later, their daughter, Elizabeth Victoria, was born the first of their six children. He went on to teach for 40 years before eventually retiring in 1858 at 73 years. Since he retired, Clerc continued working as an

advocate of Deaf education maintaining an active interest in the schools for the deaf around the country. In 1864 he was invited as guest of honour at the inauguration of the National Deaf-Mute College (known as Gallaudet University). While he never possessed a university or college degree, he was the recipient of several honorary degrees for his pioneering work. Clerc died on 18th July 1869 at the age of 83 years and was buried at Spring Grove Cemetery in Hartford[29].

Returning to the story of the school for Deaf children in Paris, in 1776, following the publication of *Institution des sourds-muets, confirmée par la voie des signes methodiques* [Instruction of Deaf and Dumb using Methodical Sign], l'Epée began work on a sign language dictionary[30]. In 1794 the book was completed and published after his death by Abbé Sicard who later founded a school for the Deaf in Caen. Sicard continued with L'Epée's work with the publication of *Théorie des Signes* in 1818 which contained instructions on grammar and a dictionary of a sign language.

For all the work he had done, l'Epée's teaching philosophy would soon be challenged by an entirely different idea of teaching Deaf children. A physician from Leipzig in Germany, Samuel Heinicke (1727-1790), created a new movement in Deaf education that regarded deafness as pathology (Baynton, 1996). His work culminated in the establishment in 1774 of the world's first oral school for deaf children (Crean, 1997). Heinicke developed his ideas about education from the work of a Swiss physician Johann Conrad Amman (1669–1724) who first called attention to the method of encouraging Deaf pupils to the use of the larynx. Amman instructed his students to imitate his lip movements when he spoke to them (Burns, 1995; Crean, 1997). In *Surdue Louens* Amman claims to have been able to have successfully assisted deaf children to repeat distinct letters, syllables and words that he uttered (Baynton, 1996). Defending his theories against the face of opposition, he championed the divine quality of speech:

> The breath of life resides in the voice. The voice is the interpreter of our hearts and expresses its affections and desires [The] voice is a living emanation of that spirit that God breathed into man when he created him a living soul[31]

Burns (1995) finds that deafness has traditionally been considered a disorder or deficit: an assumption that emphasises disability. In that sense people regard speech and hearing as superior to the act of seeing and signing. Amman's negative attitude towards Deaf

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[29] ibid
[30] Par M. K. Morel (1833)
[31] Lane (1992) p.107

people is best summed up in the following quote: "what stupidity we find in most of these unfortunate deaf – how little they differ from animals" (Lane, 1984: 4). Taking inspiration from Amman's published work *The Speaking Deaf,* Heinicke wrote a series of newspaper articles promoting the oral-aural system. It is not clear from the literature the exact nature of his teaching method. Crean (1997) suggests that Heinicke was secretive about his methodology and did not want to share his ideas with anyone. Lane (1984; 1992) contends that Heinicke used sign language for a short period of time and abandoned it in favour of a purely oral method of communication. He taught speech through a machine from which he modulated the mechanism of speech. The reputation of his school was so well known that by 1777 Heinicke had secured more funds in support of his contribution to education in Germany.

L'Epée's ideas were identified as the "French Method" and Heinicke's was called the "German Method". Heinicke's school was given the elongated title: *The Electoral Saxon Institute for Mutes and Other Persons Afflicted with Speech Defects.* Today it is simply called the *Samuel Heinicke School for the Deaf*. According to a monograph published by Christopher Garnett, Heinicke was in correspondence with l'Epée over their respective views about education. He wrote the following words to l'Epée:

> no other method can […] compare with what I have invented and now practice, for mine is built entirely on articulate and vocal language, and on taste which supplies the place of hearing […] The method […] was never known to anyone besides myself and my son. The invention and arrangement of it cost me incredible labour and pains, and I am not inclined to let others have the benefit of it for nothing.[32]

L'Epée was subjected to personal attack by Heinicke for allowing sign language to take place in education. Although l'Epée was not opposed to speech or articulation exercises, a fact supported by Clerc's story (Lane (1984a), he was aware that for Deaf people communication through the oral-aural method was cumbersome and slower than sign language interaction. In an effort to resolve the dispute l'Epée invited Heinicke and his advocates to visit his school in Paris and observe the progress of his students. Heinicke, however, declined the invitation. A further attempt was made to resolve the conflict. The Berlin Academy invited the two men to debate on the merits and demerits of their educational ideas. L'Epée accepted the invitation but Heinicke stubbornly declined. The 'battle of the method', as it was called, could not come to a solution (Crean, 1997). Confusion, contradictions and misinformation reigned between the leading parties.

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[32] Crean (1997) p. 12-13

By the 18th century, madness was being marginalised and confined to asylums and people in these institutions were then looked upon as pitiful rather than dangerous (Branson and Miller, 2002: 37). The focus on madness had shifted from confinement to treatment based on diagnosis and experimentation. Central to this shift was the concept of normality and pathology (Baynton, 1996). Auguste Comte (1798-1875) advocated and directed the ideology of normality. While normality was equated with the "order of things" or "normative order," pathology was associated with "deficiency" (ibid). The concept of normality thus became part of the language of everyday life, especially where middle-class people were concerned and for whom the separation of the normal and the abnormal formed the basis of class distinctions and social status. While all these ideas were adopted in France the process would soon emerge in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

As Branson and Miller (2002:37) note, the term "normal," defined as standard or regular, first appeared in publications in 1828 and the word "normalize" emerged forty years later. Both of these terms were highly influential in the everyday ideas and thoughts about people with disabilities. The mad, the marginalized, the outcasts, or anyone diagnosed as pathological were classed as deviant from the normal. Classification, interpretation and evaluation of humans in medical terms through experimentation and diagnosis were developed. A law was passed in the United Kingdom allowing medical schools to experiment on dead bodies of people whose relatives were unable to pay for a funeral. A remedial process was developed in which the abnormal could be tested. Thus normalisation became the driving force in the treatment of the body and to be selected for this process the body first had to be diagnosed as abnormal (Baynton, 1996; Branson and Miller, 2002; Lane, 1992).

In Paris during early 19th century, Jean-Marc Itard (1774- 1838) became interested in a study of the developmentally delayed when he explored the mental state of a boy he named Victor. Ironically, Itard was a resident physician at l'Epée's school in Paris at the time when it was under the management of Abbé Sicard. Lane (1984) writes that Itard was employed as carer and teacher of Victor (c. 1788 – 1828), who was found in 1800 after spending the majority of his childhood alone the forest of Averyron (Lane, 1976). Itard was given responsibility to work with the boy for five years to determine what the boy could learn. Procedures were devised to enable the boy to learn to speak. It was during his experiment with the developmentally delayed that he began a series of work on deaf children to search for a cure for deafness. He began a procedure of physical experiments involving the piercing of ear drums, insertion of catheters into the Eustachian tube. At one stage he applied leeches, blistering chemicals and hot metal around the ear. He failed after each experiment and a

succession of failures followed. His tests also caused the death of at least one pupil. As Lane (1992: 213) notes Itard decided that "Medicine does not work on the dead and as far as I am concerned the ear is dead in the deaf-mute. There is nothing for science to do about it."

As Branson and Millar (2002) note, Itard's ideas about the oral and auditory system of education and training particularly with his use of experimentation, classification and his conclusions was highly influential in setting a series of changes that followed in the history of Deaf education. Itard regarded deafness as pathology, and it was this philosophy which dominated his work (Lane, 1992 & 1984a). Public demonstrations were formed to show the results of his tutoring. Candidates were carefully selected as 'suitable' to perform at these exhibitions, most likely those children with some hearing and who could function with spoken language. Questions asked of the children were prepared in advance of the occasion, a tactic that was picked up by educators and proponents of oralism (Lane, 1992; Crean, 1997). As a physician, Itard put to use his medical knowledge to treat children as objects or as "docile bodies" for his experimentations (Lane, 1992; Rabinow, 1984). He made his findings known to the medical authorities which, as Baynton (1996) suggests, led to an attitude of hostility towards sign language. Lane (1992) and Branson and Millar (2002) report that Itard sought the support of the medical authorities in France to sway opinion in favour of the oral-aural system of education and turn opinion against the signing schools around the country. Since his research findings were supported by the medical authorities, Itard was in a strong position to win favour for his ideas about Deaf education. The pursuit of the oral-aural system was gathering momentum in the early 19th century. The legacy of Itard would soon become more prominent by the middle of the century. Dominant ideas about deafness were now clinically-orientated – seen both as a medical condition and pathology. More physicians were taking an interest in deafness, a trend that was to become common in Ireland; Dr. Charles Orpen and Dr. Patrick Keogh were prime examples.

3.2.2 The Tipping Point: Milan Congress 1880

In the second half of the nineteenth century, two schools of thought concerning Deaf education emerged: to maintain the tradition of sign language, or to adopt the oral-aural system (Griffey, 1997). Branson and Miller (2002: 43) argue that the ICED in Milan 1880 can be best understood by exploring all the "interweaving of industrialization, imperialism,

bureaucratization, and professionalization."[33] According to the authors, the Itard movement was highly influential in the move towards oralism. By the middle of the 19th century, a group of middle-class professionals with imperialist notions began to reinterpret the aims and purpose of Deaf education by "orienting themselves toward others in evolutionist terms that were soon to become distinctly eugenicist" (Branson and Miller, 2002: 43). Darwin's *Origin of the Species* published in 1859 concerning theories on evolution had significant influences on attitudes towards difference:

> an imperial consciousness demanded a different view of the individual, a view linked to biological and cultural difference. Evolutionism filled the gap, a vital ideological force not only abroad but also at home.[34]

These ideas changed the course of biological philosophy where people with disabilities were concerned. People with disabilities were not regarded as social individuals but rather as people with physical impairments that needed to be fixed or cured. Darwinian evolution theory encouraged attitudes that perpetuate inequalities and legitimises colonialism and patriarchy. These ideas were extended to oralism in terms of biological and scientific classification and categorisation. Several other important figures were highly influential in the oralism movement. Alexander Graham Bell (1847 – 1922), renowned inventor of the telephone and married to a deaf woman, was a leading figure in the campaign against sign language. Bell was against the intermarriage of Deaf people and their socialisation at clubs. The very notion of a Deaf community was contrary to his eugenics ideas. Bell's concern about sign language has much to do with his belief that it inhibits speech development (Lane, 1992; Baynton, 1996). In France, Jacob Rodrigues Pereire (1715 – 1780) was a teacher who adopted Bonet's manual alphabets and applied them to sound and vocalisation instead of letters. Pierre's grandsons Émile (1800–75) and Isaac (1806–80) were well-known professionals in the financial world. Through the Pierre Society, the brothers held massive influence and power and were also staunch supporters of the oralism movement.

According to Levelt (2013: 121), the brothers "staged a coup" in organising the 1879 "Congress for the Improvement of the Condition of Deaf-Mutes" in Paris, where several delegates were carefully selected to attend. The purpose of the meeting was to organise an International Congress for the Education of the Deaf (ICED). The motivation behind this

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[33] Mathews (2011: 117) contends that debates concerning the extent of the impact of the Milan Congress 1880 on schools for the Deaf has become "somewhat of a legend in Deaf folklore," that various socio-political factors must be considered in terms of the overall context of history. In this thesis I emphasise the importance of ICED in Milan 1880 as a tipping point in the history of Deaf education.
[34] Ibid p. 26

move was to secure recognition of Jacob Rodrigues Pereire as first teacher of Deaf children in France[35]. The official outcome was that an agreement could not be reached on a single method of education and an international meeting was required to pass resolutions on the future of Deaf education. The event coincided with the advent of modern colonialism, a time when minority languages came under attack by foreign forces. Branson and Millar (2002) find a connection between colonialism and the history of Deaf education. According to the authors colonial ideas reflected the general thinking of the times when "overt linguistic imperialism with respect to the education of linguistic minorities" encouraged xenophobia and racism (2002: 43).

On 11th September 1880, the majority of votes (160 to 4) were cast at the ICED in Milan in favour of oralism. Resolutions banning sign languages in education were subsequently passed by delegates. Lane (1992) notes a significantly large majority of delegates were hearing professionals. According to Wilcox and Morford (2006: 184) Congress chairperson Abbe Tarra declared that,

> Gesture, instead of addressing the mind, addresses the imagination and the senses. Moreover, it is not and never will be the language of society. It is an absolute necessity to prohibit that language and replace it with living speech, the only instrument of human thought

Since the Congress, several conceptual theories have been proposed by scholars to define the term oralism. As Karacosta (1993) observes, it is sometimes used conversely with 'oral education' a process that can often lead to confusion and misunderstandings. For example, oral education is different to oralism in that it denotes communication in education through a spoken language and the use of residual hearing. Oralism, on the other hand, represents a politically-infused ideology concerning education (ibid). The term encompasses the attitude and belief in the superiority of speech, spoken language, the use of lip reading (Griffey, 1994), and residual hearing and in the inferiority of sign language, Deaf culture, facial expression, and finger-spelling. It is motivated by 'audism' a term that refers to any act of discrimination or marginalisation based on the status of hearing (Humphries, 1975).

Lane (1992) finds that a consequence of audism that prevailed following the Milan Congress was a gradual phasing-out of Deaf teachers and a process of conversion of signing schools. Karacosta (1993) goes in detail to describe the extent to which proponents and practitioners of oralism went to take control and change curricula, the selection of staff and the implementation of teaching methods at l'Epée's school in Paris thereby creating a gradual

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[35] Gallaudet, E. M. (1881)

transformation of the culture of the school (Lane, 1992). This process was in evidence in several schools throughout Europe and in the United Kingdom (Ladd, 2003). In the case of Ireland, there was a long period of delay during which the Cabra schools continued to maintain the system of education based on sign language communication. As Kealy (2007) observes, there was no expectation on the part of St. Mary's to conform to the philosophy of oral schools, even when it was becoming widespread in other countries. In continuing to teach through sign language they went against the practice of oral schools. Kealy states that the Dominican Sisters were a "closed community," so far removed from the everyday life of society that they did not get the opportunity to visit the continent or to meet with international educators (Kealy, 2009; Griffey, 1994). While the Christian Brothers had greater freedom to travel, they did not see the need to change the education system. The Brothers were adamant that sign language best suited the communication needs of the boys in St. Joseph's. When Sr. Nicholas Griffey became principal of St. Mary's in 1944 it was only a matter of time before oralism was finally introduced in Ireland.

3.2.3   Sr. Nicholas Griffey

It was in 1936 when Sr. Nicholas Griffey (1994) began her life and career in St. Mary's school (Griffey, 1994). The story of her life and work is recorded in her book *From Silence to Speech: 50 Years with the Deaf*. The background to the story of her early years is significant from a sociological point of view. It gives the reader insight into her motivations for what transpired in St. Mary's in later years. The book provides the backdrop to a discussion about Deaf education in Ireland. The narrative takes the reader on a journey beginning with her decision, at the age of fourteen, to devote her life to God as a Dominican nun.

Born in 1916, Clare Griffey was educated at the Sisters of Mercy School in Ennis Co. Clare. From an early age she desired to become a nun in order to seek a deeper knowledge and love of God. When she was sixteen the young lady left home to join the convent in Cabra where she continued her studies for the Leaving Certificate. By the time she was ordained two years later she must have known the life she was about to face in the convent. The attraction for Griffey was a life of solitude with God based on the Four Pillars of Dominican Life: community, common prayer, study and service. The name 'Nicholas' was given to her in reverence to Blessed Nicholas Paglia (1197-1266). For some unexplained reason she was disappointed with the chosen name but soon found it a source of inspiration after she discovered from a book that Blessed Nicholas had cured a lady from deafness and aided his nephew to speak. The discovery left her in no doubt as to her true calling. In later years she

was asked how she decided on a career in Deaf education she responded: "the work was selected for me."[36] From the day she was professed she lived a secluded life completely divorced from the twentieth century modern world and from everything she had known before.

Language

Although they are significant from a sociological perspective, Griffey's (1994) account offers somewhat complex, ambiguous and contradictory ideas and opinions about teaching and developing language in Deaf children. When she arrived in St. Mary's in January 1935 Griffey was first assigned the task of observing a classroom and supervising during out of school hours. It was the first time she encountered a "silent community" in an environment in which speech was hardly ever used.

"As a young teacher," she writes, "I was advised not to speak in the presence of the children in case they would feel isolated."[37]

Griffey was very much "captivated"[38] by sign language and by the family-like atmosphere in the school. Within a few years from the first day she learned the indigenous sign language of the school. Her opinion of the role of sign language in Deaf education is tellingly told in the following way:

> Like parents, teachers and social workers to-day, I believed that educational problems could be solved [by its use, but] sign language is quite dependent on concrete situations and mime. Its informative power can be very limited without knowledge of a major language like English, French etc.[39]

Burns (1995) and Crean (1997) dispute her comment about the linguistic status of sign language, particularly the part where she writes,

> [the girls had] no language other than crude gestures which they used mostly to indicate their physical needs. In social, emotional, educational and vocational terms, their development was seriously retarded.[40]

By her own admission, the Sister was now a part of 'deaf culture' in which children and staff communicated in sign language. Hearing adults often served as interpreters for hearing visitors of the school. In this way, the children had access to information that was

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[36] *Link*, Winter 1988
[37] Griffey (1994) p.19
[38] ibid p.19
[39] Ibid: p..28
[40] ibid

passed through the classrooms and beyond. The experience of Deaf culture is told in the following way:

> [T]here was a true community spirit among us all. The relationship between the Sisters, the children and the deaf adults was similar in ways to that found in a family. We were a group of hearing and deaf people happily working to-gether.[41]

In a short time she would become unnerved by the silence that permeated the school. It was the children's silence that gave her cause for concern:

> [T]he children were wordless, unable to communicate amongst themselves and incapable of understanding explanations. The deaf child is totally trapped in a world of silence unless help is available. The intellect, no matter how superior is literally locked.[42]

The title of her book provides the inkling behind her ideas. It might be worth noting its inference to a desire to replace silence with speech. If the ambition was there for change, one might ask: for whose benefit was it to change a silent community into a speaking community? Griffey may have wanted to fill a void created by the absence of sound. Given her ideas about deafness as a 'handicap' it is reasonable to state that she equated silence with loneliness and believed the children lacked a language and were isolated as a consequence. In 1939 she moved to Belfast to attend a three-year primary school teacher training course at St. Mary's College of Education. It was during her sojourn there that she first met Sr. Peter Flynn, the nun who later became Prioress of St. Mary's and accompanied her to Manchester University to attend a Teacher for the Deaf training course. Mathews (2011) surmises that Griffey may have learned something about oralism during her spell in college. It was on her return to St. Mary's that the nun came to the realisation that her pupils were 'totally deaf.' She seemed to have developed a new awareness of hearing loss that she may have picked up in Belfast. It was her observation that the girls were "functionally deaf and completely visual," and "missed the rhythm of speech which is such an aid when we are developing language" (Griffey 1994: 19).

It is interesting to note Griffey's views about language. She may have assumed that spoken language was required for the girls. For example, all through her narrative she discusses the idea of 'developing language' in Deaf children but her explanations remain unclear. Sometimes she discusses speech and language as if they mean the same thing. Burns (1995: 122) helpfully explains that 'language' has traditionally been associated with the English language as only spoken and written languages "are recognised as legitimate

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[41] ibid p. 21
[42] ibid p.19

expressions of language." Burns' (1995) master's dissertation locates Irish Sign Language within a minority language framework. She finds that dominant languages usually acquire a high level of status and prestige and tend to "maintain that status on the basis of political and social factors" (Burns, 1995: 36), whereas minority languages are regarded as inferior in some way. On the basis of Burns' argument about language we may conclude that Griffey was referring to spoken language albeit the English language. It seems clear from her narrative that she did not regard Irish Sign Language as a legitimate language. Given the school's international standing in education and literacy, it seems remarkable that she was inclined to change the cultural landscape of the school and would eventually decide to remove sign language from the curriculum.

Introducing oralism

Griffey (1994:30-31) maintains that deafness causes linguistic deprivation and on that basis she was teaching her pupils 'language' in order to liberate "them from the prison caused by profound congenital deafness." These assumptions formed the basis of her ideas about education which may have convinced her to push for change in the education system at St. Mary's. Crean (1997) and Burns (1995) argue that her theory about deafness in relation to education was baseless and without foundation. Neither do the findings arising from of a host of linguistic research on signed languages in Ireland and United Kingdom support her hypothesis (e.g. Kyle, 1994 and 1997; Leeson, 1997 and 2002; Stokoe, 1960; Brennan, 1984).

Two years following her appointment as principal of St. Mary's in 1944, Griffey attended a teacher training course at the Department of Audiology in Manchester University under the direction of Lady and Alexander Ewing, one of the leaders of the oralism movement in Great Britain. She recounts her experience as a student there in the following way:

> The emphasis on audiology and speech training opened up a new world for me. The English deaf children seemed closer to the normally hearing. They were more integrated in the family […] while their written English did not reach the Cabra standard it was more fluent and natural (sic).[43]

During the month-long tour of the oral schools in Britain she was becoming more convinced that oralism was the way forward to address the language issue. "The task ahead was overwhelming" she notes "but, I know that, as in the past, God would help the deaf who were so close to Him" (Griffey, 1994: 38). Indeed she must have felt it was her calling to

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[43] Ibid p. 38

'help' Deaf people. Parental desire for speech and audio training and the wishes of deaf adults for training in lip reading and vocalisation were cited as factors that led her to decide to push for oralism (Griffey, 1994). Some of the wealthy or well-to-do parents were sending their deaf children to oral schools in Britain. This may have been one of that factors that led Irish parents of deaf children attending St. Mary's School to push for change. Griffey (1994) reports that some of the parents were reluctant to learn sign language and were convinced that the Cabra schools had lagged behind. Crean (1997) questions why parents would arrive at this conclusion given St. Mary's international standing and the literacy success achieved down through the years. He also questions whether Deaf adults asked for sign language to be removed from the curriculum given that Deaf people are said to be indigenous at cultivating the language (e.g. Lane, 1984; Groce, 1985). By his argument the opinions of a small number of Deaf adults could hardly be representative of the entire Deaf population in the country.

On her return from Manchester Sr. Peter Flynn and Griffey submitted a proposal for oralism to CIDP which includes the following statement:

> many parents, especially educated parents, are seeking lip-reading and speech training for their children, and we believe the time has come when we must offer such training to Irish Catholic children in their own country.[44]

CIDP subsequently allocated funds for the delivery of audio equipment and hearing aids to St. Mary's. Owing to lack of evidence it is difficult to ascertain who made the decision on oralism for the school. However Mathews (2011) maintains that change in leadership within the school might have been an initiating factor in that regard. It has not been made clear in the literature whether or not a debate took place in the interim period leading to the transformation in St. Mary's (Crean, 1997). Either way the proposal was given the seal of approval for a system of classification and segregation (Griffey, 1994).

In 1945, the year after Griffey was appointed principal of St. Marys, Sr. Peter Flynn was assigned the position of Prioress of the adjoining Dominican Convent. It seems from Griffey's account that the Dominican Sisters had free rein to make important decisions concerning education and the school with no government intervention. Mathews (2011) infers that Sr. Peter Flynn may have been a major influence behind the decision making process due to her experience working as principal of St. Mary's College and the fact that her sister was a teacher at St. Mary's. It is not clear if the college had any connection with oralism but Sr. Flynn's position as Prioress gave her the authority to change the name of the school to St. Mary's. On the basis of her leadership abilities displayed in the ensuing years and her

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[44] Griffey (1994) p.155

continued involvement in Deaf education, I argue that Griffey was most likely leading figure responsible for the change that occurred in St. Mary's. In 1957, ten years after oralism was introduced in St. Mary's, Griffey established the Teacher of the Deaf Training Department at University College Dublin (UCD), the National Association for the Deaf (NAD), and was instrumental in setting up a pilot project that led to the birth of the Visiting Teacher Service (Griffey, 1994).

Matters concerning policy seemed to have been part of internal discussions within the school. Crean (1997) decries the lack of evidence of a public debate and a thorough research study on the pros and cons of a momentous decision. What he finds odd is the apparent absence of an official discussion with government ministers, Deaf adults and parents[45]. By Griffey's (1994) account a questionnaire distributed to Deaf people throughout the country found that 95% of the respondents wanted speech and lip reading training introduced in the school[46]. Crean (1997) finds no evidence that such a survey was published. If indeed there was the question remains as to whether or not deaf people understood what was being planned in the school. Although it is reasonable to assume deaf adults were anxious to integrate with hearing people and thought training in speech and lip reading would be of great benefit to the children, I am doubtful they wanted sign language removed[47]. In my experience Deaf people cherish the language. I have never come across any person from the Deaf community that said he or she wanted Irish Sign Language taken out of education. Given the outcome of the survey, I would argue that the respondents hardly understood what was at stake and did not see any reason that sign language might be under threat of suppression.

While in Manchester Griffey became aware of international trends in Deaf education, seeing that Irish parents who could afford it sent their children to oral schools in Britain. Griffey felt she had an obligation to respond to the wishes of the parents, some of whom wanted speech training for their children as a means of preparing them for integration. Parents were aware of new developments emerging in the United Kingdom and reports from oral schools suggested great success in getting Deaf children to speak (Crean, 1997).

Griffey (1994) found the gradual move towards oralism and the transition process proved a long and arduous exercise due to the girls' strong attachment to sign language.

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[45] Mathews (2011) claims the minutes of meetings recorded during the period exist in CIDP archives. My investigation led me to Deaf Heritage Centre archives. Unfortunately I have been unable to obtain the file. I am led to believe it has been misplaced.

[46] In my investigation I have found no evidence of a survey. Though O'Dowd (1955) reports that the nuns got CIDP approval for carrying out a survey and that they reported their findings to them. Cited in Crean (1997) p. 49

[47] Crean (1997) wonders why would deaf adults want to remove the very thing that was close to their hearts?

During out of school activities she observed the girls' interactions in the playground. Griffey (1994: 43) notes how "it was obvious that all pupils were more interested in manual communication than in speech. Left to themselves, they rarely spoke." While she recognises the difficulty associated with lip reading and the attraction of signing for the pupils, she was convinced that sign language caused isolation and saw no alternative but to prohibit its use for 'oral students' in St. Mary's.

Teacher qualification and fitness to practice

In September 1952 St. Mary's achieved the status of a national school (Griffey, 1994). A consequence of nationalisation was the payment of salaries to nuns who took on teaching duties. The status of St. Mary's had implications for Deaf teachers who were without a nationally recognised teaching qualification. They could no longer be included on teacher pay roll apart from taking on work in the manual section of the school. In some cases lack of qualifications meant demotion. Other Deaf teachers lost their jobs. It would probably not have mattered in any case given that they were deemed unfit to teach oralism[48] (Crean, 1997). The change in staff appointment has had profound implications for the school. The result was a gradual decline in the number of Deaf teachers who were replaced by new recruits with no knowledge of a sign language. For many years since, Deaf people were prevented from entering the teaching profession owing to the fitness to practice criterion and the Irish Language requirement for primary teaching.

Reports on the current situation in Deaf education suggest that the Education Partnership Group (EGP) documented and submitted a proposal to Department of Education with a recommendation to waive the Irish language requirement and replace it with an Irish Sign Language prerequisite (Mathews, 2012a). The document informed the government that, as students of the Cabra schools, Deaf people were exempt from studying Irish which in turn prevented them from applying for a primary teacher training course. While Irish was not a requirement for entry to post-primary teaching they had to undergo a medical assessment to determine fitness to practice. The EGP proposal recommends that when ISL becomes a requirement for entry to teacher training fitness to practice should no longer be an issue (Mathews 2012).

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[48] To be fit to teach oralism teachers had to pass the medical exam and only teachers with hearing and speech could pass.

Audiology, technology and segregation

Initial efforts to build an oral school were hampered by a shortage of funds but this was quickly resolved with state aid (Griffey, 1994). The school's national status made it possible to receive funds from the government. Modern technology began to make its presence felt and soon consolidated oralism with the installation of new and advanced group hearing aids and amplifications in classrooms. These classrooms were known as 'oral classes' (ibid). The culture of oralism gathered strength with the establishment of an audiology department in the school (Griffey, 1994). Speech therapy addressing student's speech and vocal production was launched to form a major component of the curriculum. The availability of audiology paved the way for a system of classification and segregation. Audiology put the school in a position to determine levels of hearing loss in the students and group them in categories based on the audiologist's report (ibid). The report offered Griffey a technique with which to use to control the influence of sign language. Fearing the negative impact of sign language on speech development she was anxious to separate oral pupils from signing pupils so that oral pupils would not be attracted by signing. In her estimation sign language slowed down speech development in children. Most researchers, particularly academics of sign bilingualism, find no evidence exists to support this claim. Their findings show that learning a sign language has had no adverse effect on children learning to speak and speak a majority language (Kyle, 1994 and 1998; Swanwick and Gregory, 2007; Marshark, 2010).

Griffey (1994: 43) became anxious to change things to make oralism a success. "This is unacceptable," she argues, "from the point of view of lip-reading and speech skills […] there will always be the danger that auditory experience will be missing because of the visual orientation of manual communication." Audiology made it possible for her to consider segregation an idea borne out of information received from abroad. Prior to the switch to oralism, Griffey visited the Donaldson School in Edinburgh where she learned that British Sign Language (BSL) was excluded in the school curriculum and two separate classes were run in the school with one class designed for 'oral failures.'[49] A letter received from a nun at St. Joseph's School in St. Louis, Missouri, an institution that practised oralism advised her as follows:

> [As] a teacher in our school before the transition I can judge both sides. Sister,
> speech and lip-reading make the deaf child much more normal, facilitate his

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[49] Students who could not adapt to oralism were considered oral failures. The term implies that students were responsible for the malfunction (Crean, 1997)

thinking process and fit him to take his place in a hearing world for he then hears with his eyes.[50]

Significantly news had come through that Le Bon Sauveur Institut in Caen had already switched to oralism. Griffey reasoned that if the Sisters in Caen had no faith in the new system they would have switched back to the traditional way of life. It was the nuns at Caen who advised her to segregate: "Find a building where the oral pupils will have no contact with those who are using signs. Separate! Separate! This is how we developed an oral atmosphere in the school" (ibid: 47).

Griffey wasted no time in devising a system based on the audiologist's report on the pupils. Oral students were kept sequestered from signers. Certain pupils with some hearing and speech were placed in oral classes. The rest were housed in the manual section of the school, a room reserved for oral failures. They were isolated and sequestered from the rest of the school. The impact on the students was not lost on the school principal: "I regretted the segregation of the oral children from those who used signs but I could not see any other way of making a success of the oral method" (ibid: 57).

Segregation did more than cause difficulty for the children. The system, according to Crean (1997), inspired a tightening of control over sign language use instigated by a process of "surveillance" in which pupils were under constant watch. Senior pupils were encouraged to report incidents of signing. An examination of Saunders' (1993; 2005) narratives accents these claims and demonstrates clearly the work at controlling the behaviours of the students. Saunders (1993; 2005) highlights examples of discipline and control through threats and punishment. Students were threatened with a move to the group of 'oral failures'[51]. These incidents that form part of the culture of oralism are further explored in Chapter Four in a discussion on modernism and postmodernism.

Crean (1997) questions the value of implementing segregation, seeing that the majority of pupils could not adapt to oralism. He maintains that the success of a small number of pupils did not make the whole education system effective. The majority of the students were adversely affected. The psychological impact of segregation is highlighted in Saunders' narrative. According to her, the system created a type of class consciousness based on audism where stereotyping and labelling was a common occurrence (e.g. McDonnell and Saunders, 1993; 2005).

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[50] Griffey 1994, p. 45
[51] Students who were unable to function in an oral-aural environment

Crean (1997) notes how audiology classification actually created a sense of psychological inferiority, a social belief that being deaf was something to be ashamed of. He finds a connection between the system operated at St. Mary's and apartheid in South Africa. There appears to be a strange irony in Griffey's (1994: 112) story concerning her visit to the country during a time of upheaval. The following quote illustrates the full impact of the apartheid system: "I could not accept the injustice of the apartheid system […] The rules and regulations were hard to take. I would not be allowed to sleep in a convent run by 'coloured' or 'African' sisters."

When audiology paved the way for hearing tests to be conducted on the students, the provision of hearing aids became a priority. It was the audiologist who determined the appropriate amplification for hearing aid purposes (Griffey, 1994). Hearing aid technology has advanced greatly since it was introduced in the Cabra schools from the early 1950s (ibid; Crean, 1997). Currently digital hearing aids are provided with a higher quality of sound than it was previously available through analogue aids (Mathews, 2011). While the Cochlear Implant revolution emerged in the United Kingdom in 1980s, Ireland had to wait until 1995 before the first implantation occurred (ibid). The origin of this electrical method of stimulating hearing can be traced back to the late 18th century when Alessandro Volta discovered the electrolytic cell. Volta is known to have discovered a way to stimulate the auditory system. Over the next one hundred and fifty years various breakthroughs have been recorded at different times by scientists reporting having conducted successful experimentations with auditory stimulation.

Teacher of the Deaf Training

In 1957, five years after St. Mary's received national status, Griffey established a Teacher of the Deaf Training department at University College Dublin. During an investigation for his master's degree dissertation Crean (1997), found the course was designed to ensure continuity of oralism where graduates of this department would become teachers of deaf children and work according to its ideals. UCD appointed Griffey as part-time director of the department and Lady Ewing from Manchester University was chosen for the role of external examiner.

St. Joseph's and Beech Park

The case of St. Joseph's requires only a brief summary for two reasons: firstly, the Christian Brothers' path to oralism was similar to the nuns at St. Mary's except that it took them ten

years from the time it was introduced in St. Mary's before they made the decision to change. Secondly, documentation of the move is miniscule compared to what can be found with St. Mary's (Mathews, 2011). In that regard, Crean's (1997) account is useful where he explains the process towards the changeover and where he hinted at how the decisions were reached. Prior to the changeover, the Christian Brothers carried out their own research on the merits and demerits of the oral system. Two Brothers went on a tour of the schools for the deaf in Britain. Both oral and signing schools were observed. The basis of their research was to make a comparable study of the two opposing schools of thought. On their return to Ireland they gave a report as the following extract shows the essence of their conclusions:

> ...teachers used no signs […] In some schools sign language was not allowed […] It is the boast of the oralist that they can make pupils speak like ordinary people […] we got intelligible speech only from those who had hearing or had lost their hearing. The attempt of the congenital deaf to speak was very poor indeed, while written work was far below [St. Joseph's]. The results were better where they had sign language.[52]

Convinced that oralism was not the way forward, St. Joseph's went against the practice of St. Mary's, much to the annoyance of the nuns. A request was submitted to Archbishop McQuaid during a time when calls were made from parents to establish a separate school for younger boys in Stillorgan. Mary Immaculate School in Beech Park was founded in 1955 to cater for Deaf boys between the ages 3 and 10 years old. Field work interaction with my participants suggests that parental desire to have their children to be cared for by nuns instead of Christian Brothers was the motivation behind their campaign for a separate school in Beech Park. Meanwhile the Archbishop who was patron of the CIDP was allegedly made aware of the situation at St. Joseph's. According to Crean (1997: 50) the Brothers decided to transform the education system in 1957 following an "expressed request" from the Archbishop after he was alleged to have been contacted by the Dominican Sisters in St. Mary's.

3.2.4 Modern service provisions

Concerned with the delay that came with initial diagnosis of deafness in newborn babies Griffey (1994) considered how parents could do with information and guidance on how to plan the future of their children. She knew they were in unfamiliar territory with little or no information about deafness (Griffey, 1994). Referrals often came from doctors and while speech and lip reading was now the most common choice for the children parents sought the

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[52] Crean (1997) p. 50

advice of audiologist (Mathews, 2011). Audiology was a relatively new field in Ireland during the early 1960s. Parents often found it difficult to locate them. Even today, parents report that services are under-resourced and provision is unsatisfactory (Mathews, 2011). However, nowadays relatively minor delays are reported where deafness can be identified as early as possible through Universal Neonatal Hearing Screening (UNHS) programs[53].

In 1963 Griffey helped two parents of Deaf children establish the National Association for the Deaf (NAD). She was supported by several prominent legal figures including a barrister and a Supreme Court judge. DeafHear.ie, the organisation's current name, was first formed as a public relations exercise. Over the years it became one of the most influential organisations serving the needs of Deaf people in Ireland (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997). NAD's first quarterly magazine *Link* published in 1968 outlined the voluntary association's aims and objectives. The periodical updated readers on the latest developments on technology, audiology and information on hearing loss, speech therapy, and mental health issues. Currently the organisation serves to provide information and support on hearing loss, aural rehabilitation, lip-reading skills, audio technological aids, social services and Deaf awareness training. It is managed by a chairperson, a board of directors, and a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) social workers and community officers.

The campaign for early intervention led to the establishment in 1967 of a pilot Visiting Teacher Services (VTS) with responsibility to advise and disseminate information to parents of newly born children (Griffey, 1994). A small number of exiting teachers from the Cabra schools were employed with a function that involved home visits and travel to various parts of the country. According to Mathews (2011), the VTS was actually established in 1972 following recommendations in the Report of the Committee on the Education of Hearing Impaired Children. The 1972 Report originated from a request made by the Minister for Education to set up an advisory committee comprising of representatives from the NAD, CIDP and the Cabra schools (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997). The group had overall responsibility to conduct a policy review with particular regard to the opinions of hearing parents of Deaf children and to make recommendations to the minister. The policy document was submitted to Department of Education that year and subsequently endorsed by the Minister.

As Mathews (2011) states, the VTS initially operated as an 'itinerant service' under the Department of Education and Science co-ordinating between parents, schools and health

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[53] Mathews (2011) report that Ireland currently does not have a UNHS.

services. She maintains that its focus "is [now] on the provision of mainstream education to D/HH children and as a result, it does not have the same level of contact with those children in schools for D/HH"[54]. In the past, the role of the visiting teacher involved the provision of support and advice to parents and co-ordinating with schools. With the increase in number of children placed in mainstream school the role has shifted to an advisory function (ibid). The VTS is currently managed by the regional offices with an inspector appointed to oversee each of those regions reporting to the Directorate of Regional Services, a centralised office (Mathews, 2011).

PART THREE

3.3   DEAF EDUCATION: POLICY, LEGISLATION AND CHANGE

In the context of the history of the education of children with special education needs (SEN), Deaf pupils were educated in 'special national schools' which gave rise to notions of isolation and segregation from mainstream education and society (Griffey, 1994; Moloney and McCarthy, 2010; Mathews, 2011; Griffin & Shelvin, 2007). Education programmes of Deaf education were endorsed by government in 1972 and provided by Department of Health. Historically the needs of Deaf children and students with SEN were considered more of a medical than an educational issue (ibid; Crean, 1997; Carey, 2005).

The first Inspector for Special Education in Ireland was appointed in 1959 by the Department of Education (Griffin & Shelvin, 2007). In 1967 the Minister for Education invited representatives of NAD, CIDP and the Cabra schools to set up a Special Committee to review educational provisions for Deaf students and to make recommendations (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997)[55]. A Special Advisory Committee was formed with responsibility to obtain the views of people involved in Deaf education with particular regard to the opinions of the parents of Deaf children. Crean (1997) notes a certain discrepancy existed where the views of Deaf adults were not considered by the committee. The review committee conducted a study of all policy options. In 1972 the group submitted a report to the Minister of Education recommending oralism and greater integration opportunities. The document made reference to the controversy arising from the clash of different educational ideologies. It also proposed for the appointment of a permanent advisory committee to make future representations to parents of Deaf children and the National Association for the Deaf[56].

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[54] Mathews (2011) p.147 Note: Capitalised initials refer to Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
[55] *Link* Autumn 1978
[56] *Link*, Winter 1991

Crean (1997) suggests that government endorsement gave oralism complete protection and ensured its continuance in the Cabra schools. Crean contends that it placed educators in a far stronger position to maintain the oral tradition.

Following the report's recommendation, an advisory committee comprising of educators and parents was established in 1975 with the purpose of updating and sharing information on deafness and education issues (Griffey, 1994). By 1987 the group advised the Minister for Education to review the 1972 Report claiming it was "inadequate as a model for education policy" (Crean, 1997).[57] Following a series of meetings with the minister the group was suspended indefinitely. In 1991 the NAD organised and convened a national forum on the education of Deaf children for the purpose of discussing the 1972 Report and government plans for mainstreaming children with disabilities. There was concern about the threat of falling in enrolment numbers at the Cabra schools due to potential impact of possible mainstreaming policies[58].

As Crean (1997) report the meeting ended in controversy owing to a conflict of interest between NAD delegates and members of the Deaf community. A report from the *Irish Deaf Journal* suggest a lack of democratic process occurred which further fuelled the conflict between the two groups. Crean suggests it was the NAD people who controlled the direction of the meeting to suit their own agenda. By way of example, he gives an account of an incident where one Deaf delegate had his presentation restricted to ten minutes, much shorter than the original time slot allotted to him and he was not even given time for a question and answer session. It seems from the reports of Crean and *Irish Deaf Journal* that hearing delegates were given far more latitude for their presentations in that their time allotted was far greater. The forum concluded with a recommendation to reduce the VTS for Deaf children and integrate it with VTS for children with disabilities[59]. It seems the 1972 Report was left on the backburner for another few years at least.

The early 1990s saw an increased interest in education for children with disabilities emerge which led to the establishment of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) with the objective of promoting integration and mainstreaming. The implication of this change was that education in segregated settings would soon give way to the impetus for inclusion whereby children with disabilities would be placed in mainstream schools. According to Griffin and Shevlin (2007), the concern was that children in 'special schools'

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[57] D. Nelson addressing the education forum *Link*, Winter 1991
[58] *Link*, Winter, 1991
[59] *Link* Winter 1991

had little contact or interaction with their peers in mainstream schools, a situation which created a problem in the attitude of people who tended to focus on the disability or impairment of these individuals.

3.3.1 Mainstreaming

In the context of Deaf education, Mathews (2010) asserts that the move towards mainstreaming was,

> driven by ideals of deinstitutionalisation, viewing the amalgamation of children with disabilities with their nondisabled peers as a means of promoting social and educational equality, and is influenced by the civil rights movements from 1960s and the rise of the social model of disability.[60]

Mathews (2011) highlight a considerable shift in thinking towards mainstream education emerged as a consequence of international legislative enactments arising from United Nations Conventions on Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) coupled with the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Education Needs (2004a). Citing Rose (2007), she notes how these international policies served as a catalyst for the Irish government to turn its attention to children with disabilities and those considered marginalised.

Since SERC, a range of policies and initiatives have been developed to highlight best practice in education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. According to Glendenning (1999) and Griffin and Shelvin (2007), education for children with SEN was "totally unregulated until 1998 with the enactment of the Education Act" (Griffin and Shelvin (2007:57).

The Education Act 1998 provided a statutory starting point for policy and practice in relation to all education provisions. While the Act is wide ranging in covering all aspects of education, one of its aims is to "give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children, including children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education"(Maloney & McCarthy, 2010).[61] For Mathews the Act represents one of the prime instigators towards a policy for mainstreaming for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. It acknowledges the rights of parents to send their children to a school of their choice with regard to effective and efficient use of resources. The Act provided the first legal

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[60] Mathews, E. S. (2010) p. 265
[61] Part 1, section 6

definition of Special Education Needs (SEN) in Ireland as "the educational needs of students who have a disability and the educational needs of exceptionally able students."[62]

The Act gives ISL informal recognition to the role of Irish Sign Language in education in stipulating that the constitutional rights of children with disabilities must be recognised. It states that a statutory duty rests with the Minister for Education and Science to ensure appropriate education and support services such as Special Needs Assistants should be made available to pupils with disabilities. In the interest of clarity, the Act simply legislates for ISL as a support tool for Deaf students in a learning environment. As things currently stand, ISL has yet to receive official recognition by the Irish State by means of legislation (Mathews, 2011).

3.3.2 Equality legislation

Following the Education Act 1998, a range of legislations were enacted such as: National Disabilities Authorities Act, 1999; the Education Welfare Act, 2000; the Equal Status Act, 2000; Education of Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004; and Disability Act, 2005. The Equal Status Act 2000 and 2004 are concerned with policies regarding admissions, access to education courses, and access to facilities that protects the right of deaf children where it concerns access to education. If they are denied this right to access ISL interpreters, for example, recourse could be sought through the Office of Equality Investigations dealing with discrimination cases. The Act applies to all education institutions, both public and private, which are prohibited from discriminating against students with disabilities.

3.3.3 Inclusion

In 2003 Minister for Education and Science, Noel Dempsey, indicated that Government was supporting the idea of the integration of pupils with disabilities into the mainstream educational system. Further to this the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004 was passed in July 2004 with a five-year plan to be implemented. The Act is said to be one of the most important pieces of legislation in the history of the State in relation to the education of children with disabilities (Moloney and McCarthy, 2010). According to EPSEN Act, 'special educational needs' refers to a

> restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education
> on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or

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[62] Part 1, section 2

any other condition, which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.[63]

The Act is committed to the concept of inclusion for children with special needs. Mainstream schools provide the ideal setting for these children (Mathews, 2011). The EPSEN legislation led to the establishment of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in October 2005 with responsibility to oversee key functions related to special education provision in terms of the planning and co-ordination of resources and support services aimed to facilitate inclusion of children with special education needs within mainstream education. The main purpose of EPSEN Act, 2004 as set out in the preamble is basically to ensure children with SEN have the same rights to education as those without SEN requirements: "A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs."[64] The NCSE has responsibility to ensure the Act is fully implemented. One function is to provide an in-school assessment process to determine the needs of each individual student conducted by health services under the direction of the NCSE (Moloney and McCarthy, 2010). Whenever special needs are identified, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is required for each pupil in order for the school to receive additional resources and supports to assist in the implementation of the plan. The Act aims to,

> ..assist children with special educational needs to leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.[65]

At the time of writing the implementation of the EPSEN Act, 2004 has been deferred indefinitely. This is due to the government introduction of the Financial Emergency Measures Act, 2009 in response to the dire current economic climate (Armstrong, et al, 2010).

3.3.4   Education Partnership Group

Contemporary research on Deaf education in Ireland is limited to commissioned reports (Ryan, 2006; Leeson 2007; Conroy, 2006), an unpublished dissertation and thesis (O'Shea, 2010; Mathews, 2011), and one unpublished proposal document (Mathews, 2012). In March

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[63] Government of Ireland (2004) *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act* Dublin: Stationary Office Section 2
[64] Government of Ireland (2004)
[65] Government of Ireland (2004) *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act* Dublin: Stationary Office Section 2

2010 a policy paper drafted by the Education Partnership Group (EPG)[66] was presented at the National Conference on "The Future Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in the Republic of Ireland" at Croke Park Conference Centre. The education policy paper made specific recommendations about a "new approach" based on the "communication and linguistic needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children"[67].

The EPG was established in 2008 following the disbandment of the Advisory Committee with the specific aim to design a framework for the development of practical strategies to ensure best practice in Deaf education[68]. Marshark's (2009) policy paper commissioned by the NSCE and submitted to government identified and outlined good practice in Deaf education. The EPG also commissioned and submitted a "Proposal for Access to Initial Teacher Education for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Individuals" (Mathews, 2012a: 32-40) to National Teaching Council in June 2011. The report suggests ways in which to break barriers in order to access Initial Teacher Training for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals and proposes avenues for entering teaching training and the teaching profession (ibid).

3.3.5 Mainstreaming and inclusion: key issues

It is clear that current government policy on Special Education which involves Deaf and Hard of Hearing children supports the provision of education in 'integrated' and 'inclusive' environments rather than 'special schools'[69]. There are several key issues that need to be addressed where Deaf children are concerned. Firstly, attempts to define 'inclusion' are problematic due to the multiple interpretations of the term (Maloney and McCarthy, 2010). Although relevant in the context of children with SEN, inclusion definitions in the literature appear ambiguous since they focus mainly on a discussion about "participation", "equality", "diversity", "belonging," and "membership" to name a few. The term therefore is open to different interpretations and perspectives. The United Nations Education and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO, 2005) defines inclusion as "a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning" (Maloney and McCarthy, 2010: 8). Jennings (2005)

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[66] The Education Partnership Group comprises of representatives from Irish Deaf Society (IDS), Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS) at Trinity College Dublin, CIDP, and DeafHear.ie
[67] CIDP (2010)
[68] CIDP website www.cidp.ie no further updates available at time of writing
[69] Collin's English Dictionary & Thesaurus defines 'special' as "distinguished from, set apart from, its kind..." a definition that implies a contradiction to our understanding of 'inclusion.' Perhaps the term 'different' is more appropriate.

suggests that to understand how inclusion evolves issues relating to cultural and historical differences need to be taken into consideration[70]. In the case of Deaf children, inclusion is more than participation, it means recognition and acceptance of their differences (Marshark, 2009). Marshark (2009) finds that teaching and educating Deaf children as if they were hearing children does not work in practice since both groups of students have different ways of learning and comprehension. Mathews (2010 and 2011) finds that schools need to have the capacity to respond to the cultural and linguistic needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children since mainstreaming initiatives continue to be guided by "pathological views of disability driven by the medical model and its variations which continues to focus on curing disability and normalising difference" (Mathews, 2010:265). In the case of Deaf children, the focus is on ability to communicate through oral-aural channels as opposed to visual-manual (ibid). The key issue in mainstreaming is adequate access to curriculum and classroom instruction. As Mathews (2010) suggests, success of mainstreaming is dependent on the provision of appropriate resources such as Irish Sign Language and ISL interpreters in situations where teachers do not have knowledge of the language.

PART FOUR
3.4   DEAF VILLAGE PROJECT: RECONCILIATION AND TRANSFORMATION

For a number of reasons largely stemming from a decline in enrolment numbers at the Cabra schools, Deaf education underwent a series of significant changes. Firstly, the year 1998 saw the departure of the Dominican Sisters from St. Mary's and the Christian Brothers from St. Joseph's[71]. After over one hundred and fifty years of control the religious orders relinquished responsibility and handed the schools back to the CIDP. Since Mary Immaculate School closed that year, St. Joseph's and St. Mary's remain the only surviving schools with links to the 19th century. Currently the schools operate under the management comprising of lay people. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the Cabra schools and Mary Immaculate School in Beech Park came under the spotlight of the state's investigation that led to the establishment of the Residential Redress Board in 2002[72]. Several forms of abuse and neglect were identified as physical, emotional, sexual and neglect of children's education (e.g. language abuse). Following extensive coverage on national television programmes and a host of books and memoirs on the subject of abuse, the Government issued a public apology to the

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[70] Cited in Moloney and McCarthy (2010)
[71] CIDP www.cidp.ie
[72] CICA Investigation Committee Report Volume 2. Chapter 16

victims of residential abuse. In April 2010 the government met with representatives of the Religious Congregation who were part to the 2002 Indemnity Agreement and survivors of residential child abuse groups. The purpose of the meeting was to seek additional contributions from the Congregations by way of reparation in response to the Ryan Report published in 2009 and to acknowledge and deal with the reality of child abuse that prevailed in residential institutions. This proved significant for Deaf people in that it led to a public apology from the CIDP to the victims of abuse who had attended St. Joseph's, St. Mary's and Mary Immaculate schools.

In 2006 a significant development occurred within the CIDP with the formation of its Strategic Review conducted by an external and independent audit consultant (Ryan, 2006). The review brought the Cabra schools into the equation with the recommendation to establish the Deaf Education Centre an enterprise that would form part of plans for a Deaf Village Project (ibid). The Strategic Review Report (SRR) states the purpose of its investigations was to respond to concerns about CIDP handling of public policy and Deaf-related issues and the control of its properties and resources.[73] The Review addressed the following issues:

> …falling enrolment in the Schools for the Deaf, concern within CIDP and more generally concerning public policy in relation to Deaf issues, a review of the properties and resources of CIDP, and tensions surrounding the relationship between CIDP and the Deaf Community.[74]

Furthermore the report highlights "tensions surrounding the relationship between CIDP and the Deaf community."[75] It was found that the CIDP "had not been an open, transparent or cohesive organisation" and "had issues to address in terms of its strategic focus."[76] These issues are connected to the CIDP relationship with the Deaf community over the last twenty or thirty years. The SRR notes the widespread disillusionment and anger permeated the community with the "perceived absence" of public policy and the "apparent lack of vision in relation to the education of Deaf children".[77] The report recommended the CIDP give priority to the establishment of a Centre for Education and Development and plans should be undertaken in agreement with institutions and organisations working in partnership. Interestingly, the report recommends CIDP undertake the,

> Commission of an independent research study, by the Department of Education and Science and/or by the National Council for Special Education, to review and

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[73] ibid
[74] Ryan, (2006) p. 2
[75] ibid p. 2 note: the abbreviation CID stands for its former name Catholic Institute for the Deaf and the capitalised D for the term Deaf denotes a cultural and linguistic category of deafness
[76] Ryan (2006) p.2
[77] Ibid p.2

evaluate the outcomes of mainstreaming of Deaf students should also be proposed as a central part of policy platform.[78]

A Deaf Village Project (DVP) was initiated as part of a new development for a social and community centre and that at least a fifty per cent majority of Deaf people sit in the board of management and directors. When construction work was completed in 2012, DVP was renamed Deaf Village Ireland.

3.5   IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE

The languages which are at present in contact in the Deaf community of Ireland are Irish Sign Language (ISL) and English (LeMaster, (1990); Burns, (1995); Matthews, (1996); Leeson (1996 and 2002). Both of these languages stem from Deaf people's association with each other as a community and from their everyday interaction with members of society (Matthews, 1996). A scarcity of linguistic data and documentation on ISL makes it difficult to trace its historical development but linguists have cited the Cabra schools as the origin of its history. Little is known of its historical development before the founding of these schools in the 19th century but a viable 'sign language' may have existed around the time of Claremont (1816-1971) and Dr. Keohe's school in Cork (1822-1846). Historians suggest indigenous sign language developed in close geographical areas interspersed throughout the country. What seems certain is that the Cabra schools are the crucibles for the historical development and evolution of ISL.

3.5.1   ISL Linguistic research

The first known academic study on Irish Sign Language (ISL) is said to be Barbara LeMaster's (1990) ethnographic exploration of gendered variations in the language. LeMaster's contribution developed from a doctoral study of variations identified in ISL which evolved due the gendered segregation of the two schools, like two 'communication islands' (Grehan, 2008). Le Master (2000:76) finds that due to minimal contact with each other at school, Deaf men and women were "forced to find a resolution to their language barrier in […] mixed-sex interactions" at the club after leaving school. To adapt to the variation of signs, the solution was for women to learn the male version of signing. However, as LeMaster states, these challenges did not pose any difficulties for them. She maintains that evolution and standardisation of Irish Sign Language developed from these

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[78] Ibid p.2

variations due to Deaf people's continued socialisation and high literacy skills in the pre-oralism era.

LeMaster's (1990; 2000) study on gender variations in ISL was picked up by a Deaf researcher, Carmel Grehan (2008), in her unpublished master's dissertation "Communication Islands: the Impact of Segregation and Attitudes to ISL among a Sample of Graduates of St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls." Grehan (2008) contends that segregation was always a significant factor in the way ISL was developed. When the girls left school they adopted the male signs and sometimes switched to the use of female signs when their male counterparts were not present. Leeson and Grehan (2004) find that female signs are commonly used nowadays by Deaf women. While detailed information on the use of female signs by men is not available, I feel this is a potential area for future research as it may be reflective of the changing times, marked by a shift from patriarchal notions of ISL use.

Grehan (2008), Leeson and Grehan (2004) and LeMaster's (1990) output contribute important and valuable information to linguistic research on ISL. This is significant when it is borne in mind that in 1979 Sr. Nicholas Griffey and the NAD documented the language in the form of a dictionary and named it *Irislan* much to the consternation of Deaf community members (Crean, 1997). Burns' (1995) in her sociolinguistic study of the language locates Irish Sign Language within a minority language framework. The minority status applies to ISL due to the number of users in the country being relatively small when compared with the majority population's use of English.

Furthermore attitudes towards the status of ISL have been negative. Burns (1995: 8) cites two examples of negative attitudes towards ISL: firstly, the educators who embraced a strong anti-signing bias; secondly, Griffey's (1994) naïve statement that "a manual world is a silent one. It causes social isolation."[79] Despite research into the linguistic status of ISL, the Irish government has yet to accredit the language with official status (Burns, 1995)[80]. Burns states that ISL represents the third indigenous language of Ireland after Irish and English. Many linguists concur that ISL represents the first and preferred language of the Deaf community in the country. Although it is a language usually associated with hearing people because its modality is in written form, or can be used through speaking and listening, some of the Deaf population regard English as their first language (Leeson, 1996; 2002). According

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[79] Griffey (1994) p.16
[80] Burns (1995) predates the Education Act 1998. Currently IDS is continuing its work for state recognition for ISL.

to Leeson, ISL as a visual language communicated through the use of the body, particularly the hands. In contrast to English, ISL has no known written form.

The first official classification of ISL emerged with Patrick Matthews' (1996) timely publication *The Deaf Community Vol. 1*. The study conducted by Matthews and his team of Deaf researchers marked the beginning of a period of lexicographic linguistic research into ISL. The project was launched in response to demands from the deaf community to provide statistical and linguistic evidence pertaining to the history and sociolinguistic nature of the language (Matthews, 1996). Two crucial and interconnected principles applied to the project: one was that it should be carried out by deaf people and secondly it should serve the interest of the deaf community (ibid). Several other academic research projects followed in the form of unpublished dissertations and theses from Leeson (1996; 2002), McDonnell, P (1997), McDonnell, J. (2002) and Grehan (2004; 2008). The studies lend clarity to a historic confusion surrounding the autonomy of ISL as distinct from the majority language (i.e. English). By demonstrating that ISL is a true language containing grammatical structures required for all human languages linguists dispel all notions that ISL is pantomime, gestural, conventional and arbitrary (e.g. Griffey, 1994). For example, Leeson (1996; 2002) argues that ISL can be used to discuss any topic from the simple and concrete to the lofty and abstract. Leeson also makes a distinction between ISL and English/Irish illustrated by the concept that ISL is a visual language expressed through use of hands and body while the other is expressed through the oral-aural faculties and can also be expressed in writing.

3.5.2 Community

In her memoir, Griffey (1994) notes the strong attachment that Deaf people held towards their way of life and language and the affinity they had for each other. Their relationship with Irish Sign Language transcended outside the confines of the Cabra schools towards the central location of the club in Dublin. As most researchers concur that the Cabra schools were the foundations for the creation of a vibrant Deaf culture, they also agree that the schools were responsible for the evolution of a Deaf community, as noted by Matthews (1996). In the international context, Groce's (1986) ethnographic account of the Martha's Vineyard inhabitants alludes to the idea that a sign language draws Deaf and hearing people together as a community. Matthews (1996) finds that a deliberate alliance between Deaf school-leavers resulted from their dependence and attachment to Irish Sign Language. This gives rise to the creation of a space in which they were able to pool their cultural resources and it was this

space that drew school-leavers to Dublin in order to live and work and to socialise at the Deaf Club (ibid).

Thus the Deaf community formed at the Cabra schools and maintained at the club gave rise to a strong tradition and culture. In the club a small number of hearing people, mainly members of CIDP and devotees to the Chaplaincy, were fluent in ISL and traditionally took on the role of volunteer interpreters (Matthews, 1996). While untrained and unskilled professionally they provided a useful service to the community.

Matthews (1996) finds that historically Deaf people displayed a guarded approach to hearing people. LeMaster (1990) reasoned that their protected stance against outsiders was fostered as a consequence of their school experiences. There was a tendency in Deaf people to ascribe historical significance to things linked with outsiders and cultural surroundings (Matthews, 1996; LeMaster, 1990). That the community's survival is contingent on preserving and maintaining the existence of Irish Sign Language is noted by Matthews (1996), Burns (1995) and LeMaster (1990). The growth of ISL classes and training of interpreters at the Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS) in Trinity College made it possible for hearing people to integrate with Deaf community.

3.5.3   Irish Deaf Society

Historically the quality of life for Deaf people has often been defined by inequality experienced in education and community life (Conama, 2010; Conama and Grehan, 2002). LeMaster (1990) and Crean (1997) argue that experience of oralism was a motivating factor in Deaf people's drive for self-reliance and self-governance. The prevalent view of the community in the early 1980s was that nothing was being done to address experiences of discrimination and prejudice. Grievances were directed at representative organisations such as the NAD and CIDP. A small number of Deaf youths assembled at the club to form the Wednesday Group with the aim of holding weekly meetings to air their grievances and share their thoughts. In 1981 the Deaf Action Group was formed to mark the year designated as International Year of the Disabled. Top of the list of agendas was to address the lack of professional interpreting services, tax-free allowance, television subtitling, fair car insurance premiums and telephone service for Deaf people[81]. A year later the group was named the Irish Deaf Society formed at its first Annual General Meeting with the explicit aim of lobbying groups and campaigning and raising awareness for Deaf rights. By the mid-1980s

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[81] *Irish Deaf Society Jubilee* 2006

there was a radical shift in thinking and Irish Sign Language became the focal point of their campaign for equality and social justice. By the 1990s a series of seminars, conferences and public marches were organised to promote the language. Significant milestones were achieved along the way: one concerned its role in alerting the government of its importance in education which culminated in the Education Act 1998 and the other was its part in establishing the Centre for Deaf Studies in Trinity College. By definition, the IDS represents an organisation operated and managed entirely by Deaf people[82]. It is run by the general consensus of its members who propose an action, or raise concerns for or against any item taken up for consideration. This enabled the IDS to make decisions that reflect the ideas and thoughts of the Deaf community and the right to Irish Sign Language were always governed by IDS policies.

3.5.4 Sign-bilingualism

Historically, a variety of approaches to Deaf education has been on offer in policy discussions, namely the Irish Sign Language model (Leeson, 2002; 2007), oralism (Griffey, 1994), Total Communication (Berke, 2009), and bilingualism (Kyle, 1994). Total Communication (TC) is a philosophy of educating children with hearing loss that incorporates all means of communication; formal signs, natural gestures, fingerspelling, body language, listening, lip reading and speech. Both oralism and ISL model adopt the monolingual approach to education.

One reason for a call for change to the education system has been the poor average academic performances arising from literacy outcomes. Research findings in Conrad's (1979) study and Marshark and Harris (1996) indicate this is the case with deaf school-leavers. Research findings in Conrad conclude that serious deficits in reading ability occur in deaf children. Marschark and Harris (1996) indicate the majority of school leavers were functionally illiterate. While proficiency increased with age the average school leaver produced the same proportion of compound and complex sentences as ten-year-old children (Conrad, 1979). These reports show evidence of low literacy amongst deaf populations had serious implications for their academic performance.

Advocates of the sign bilingual approach to Deaf education provide evidence that sign language has a major role in the educational success in Deaf children (Swanwick and Gregory, 2007; Svartholm, 2010; Baker, 2011). These scholars argue that oralism causes

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[82] www.irishdeafsociety.ie

educational failure in Deaf children, that when sign language is removed the conditions and environment becomes inadequate and inappropriate. Several reasons have been proffered by the scholars in favour of the sign bilingual approach. Firstly, that Deaf people usually have contact with two languages. In the context of Ireland Deaf people encounter ISL and English. Secondly, a growing number of researchers identify Deaf people as a linguistic minority group (LeMaster, 1990; Burns, 1995; Matthews, 1996; Ladd, 2003). Furthermore, it has been documented that as a community Deaf people wish to be recognised in that framework. The increase in linguistic research validating sign languages provides legitimate supporting arguments for its inclusion in education as a first language of instruction. One compelling case favouring the sign bilingual approach is cited in Kyle (1994 and 1998) who argues that Deaf children of Deaf parents achieve better educational outcomes than Deaf children from hearing families. They have already acquired a first language prior to starting school while a language delay develops in Deaf children of hearing parents.

Kyle (1994) argues that problems arise in a debate about Deaf education because of its heavy emphasis on teaching methodology and communication methods with little regard for the role of sign language. In a study of the Deaf population in the United Kingdom, Kyle points out that most debates tend to divert away from the real issue which is language. According to Burns (1995), educators often assume the term 'language' relates only to English or to the language of the majority population. For Deaf people the main issue is a language that provides full access to curriculum content (ibid; Leeson, 2002). Kyle and Leeson (2002) find that educators tend to ignore the opinions of former students with first-hand experience of education in the dominant language.

It seems the case for sign bilingualism has been put forward as a solution to educational problems. Many researchers argue in favour of the sign bilingual approach in response to educational problems and to the discovery of the value of sign language and the success of spoken bilingualism (Baker, 2011; Svartholm, 2010; Swanwick and Gregory, 2007). Bilingualism, in the context of spoken languages, refers to the use of two languages (ibid). Grosjean (2010) sees bilingualism as having regular use of languages rather than achieving fluency. Sign bilingualism, by general definition, refers to two languages, one of which is a sign language and the other is a majority written/spoken language (Baker, 2011). Where the Deaf community is concerned it means the use of a minority language and a majority spoken/written language.

International literature discussing and linking bilingualism with Deaf education is plentiful (e.g. Swanwick and Gregory, 2007; Grosjean, 2010; Svartholm, 2010; Baker, 2011).

The Swedish model of Deaf education has been put forward as a starting point (Svartholm, 2010). In 1981 Sweden became one of the first countries to introduce sign bilingual education. The change occurred in response to reports of poor educational attainment in deaf children educated in schools that adopted the oral approach and the Swedish government had passed a law that gave recognition of Swedish Sign Language. Reports on the success of bilingualism in the context of spoken languages was also said to be deciding factor (Svartholm, 2010). The goal was to achieve age-appropriate educational attainment equal to hearing children and to ensure Deaf children became proficient in Swedish, Swedish Sign Language and English. Exposure to Swedish Sign Language occurred right from the beginning, from the time of pre-school to school-leaving age (ibid). Mayer & Leigh (2010: 176) contends that the move from oralism to sign bilingual programmes in some countries around the world emerged as a result of successful outcomes of sign bilingual education programmes in Sweden.

In the context of Ireland it seems that research on proposals for sign bilingual programmes is either scarce or non-existent. As things stand, researchers studying sign bilingualism and its potential influence on Deaf education in Ireland are required to use international literature. Looking at it from the perspective of language, current discussions about issues regarding language policy in the Cabra schools remain unclear. St. Joseph's report that the "core belief here in the school is that students prosper when they can communicate with their teachers, SNAs and classmates. With this in mind we operate a flexible and inclusive approach to communication; one that caters for the diverse communication needs of each student"[83]. Likewise, St. Mary's emphasis a variety of choices about communication: "It is the policy of St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls to utilise a variety of communication modes to enhance the language development of our students, in accordance with the individual needs of each pupil. This entails the use of oral, total communication and bilingual methods of instruction"[84].

3.6   REFLECTIONS

On reflection, I find that overall the literature review reveals several significant themes one of which concerns the assumption that Deaf children can learn in the same way as hearing children, that they should be treated as if they are hearing children. Marschark (2009) contends that teaching Deaf children as if they were 'hearing' does not yield positive

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[83] Personal communication St. Joseph's School principal email correspondence 26th April, 2013
[84] Personal communication St. Mary's School principal

educational outcomes. I heed to his advice that educators need to focus on the children's strengths rather than perceived weakness. In other words, concentrate on what they can do rather on what they cannot do. I also find it true his view that historical approaches to Deaf education did not work well enough to maximise Deaf children's potential.

The absence of a proper history of Irish Sign Language was one of the things that fascinated and disappointed me. It was something I wanted to address myself if nobody else did. The ambition to do so compelled me to spend many hours going over scholarly dissertations, documents, books, and journals discovering all the linguistic descriptions I found in them. A casual interest became a passion and my desire was to correct the historical narratives on the history and origin of ISL. Thankfully a host of PhD and Master's dissertations validated the language by giving it linguistic status.

The chapter sheds some light on how Deaf students could be educated- through Irish Sign Language. It has been suggested that Irish Sign Language provides access to curriculum and education. Conditions must be appropriate in that it includes ISL as a cultural resource to make it effective. Teachers need to be fluent in the language and their attitude towards it must be taken into account. As the literature review shows, it is quite common for non-deaf teachers to believe Deaf children are the same as hearing children and should be educated according to that principle (e.g. Griffey, 1994). For hearing children, information is garnered through oral-auditory channels. In the context of Deaf children barriers exist where they are given the same opportunities to learn as their hearing peers.

The review of literature suggests that educators and policy makers have been looking to the wrong place. The dominant perspectives seem to persist with the idea of whether Deaf children should speak or sign or do both. The debate continues with no real solution offered because Deaf people have been inadvertently excluded from discussion, decision-making and from any real involvement in teaching. In this chapter I noted the pleadings and enragement from Deaf people which reflect on the deep dissatisfaction and anger felt about the education system. They pleaded for change before further damage occurred to the children but the call fell on 'deaf ears'. For change to happen, ISL must be accepted as the first language of instruction in the education of Deaf children. English should be the second language of learning. In that context sign bilingualism entails the use of both ISL and English. However, myths still abound about the role of ISL with claims that it handicaps speech development (e.g. Griffey, 1994). There remains a fear that if Deaf children learn to sign, they will not be able to develop speech as early as possible. According to Marshark (2009), there is no evidence to support that theory. Indeed it is a myth, and one that needs to be dispelled.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOCATING POSTMODERNISM IN THE STUDY

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> To make up for the loss, I read text books. All books were written in English: history, geography, science, mathematics. History books were full of stories of the resistance movement against British rule over Ireland and the attempted eradication of the Irish language. We had stories about the struggle for independence, and stories about people who died for our country. We memorised the names of the dead. Each name was articulated with great effort. […] we asked why we weren't learning the Irish language. Our teacher smiled. It was not part of the curriculum, he mouthed, because it was too difficult for us to learn the language. We needed to have good English to be able to study Irish.

The primary emphasis of this chapter is to adopt a postmodern theoretical position within Deaf education in Ireland, engaging the field while at the same time challenging it. This engagement is partly an attempt to estrange the basics of oralism, partly a call for dialogue and change, partly a critical review of discourses of Deaf education utilising the critical theories of Michel Foucault, partly a call for a space for an analysis of the Deaf worldviews, and partly to undo oppressive systems. It is through Foucault's theories that dominant theories about Deaf education can be highlighted for its contradictions and challenged for its oppressive force. In this chapter I first examine the difference between postmodernism/postmodernity and modernism/modernity. Secondly, I situate my stance on postmodern theory, linking it with Deaf education, and identify issues affecting the lives of Deaf people and highlight audism[85]. Thirdly, I allude to the exclusion of Deaf people in academic research and look at creating a space made clear by the postmodern notion of respect for the perspectives of the marginalised. Concepts of postmodernism and postmodernity are used interchangeably in this study.

4.1 Postmodernism

> The postmodern approach […] provides an important departure from the medical and social models' insistence on defining identity fundamentally in terms of disability via either the acceptance or the rejection thereof[86]

Debates surrounding definitions of postmodernism remain contentious within and beyond academia (Usher & Edwards, 1994; Kellner, 1995). The prefix 'post' which generally means after that which is current, new or update makes it problematic. How does one explain something that came after modern? Underlining the meaning of the "post" is literally to imply

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[85] Audism is a term that refers to discrimination on the basis of hearing status (Humphries, T, (1975) cited in Lane, 1992)

[86] McILroy, G & Storbeck, C (2011) p. 496

a disassociation from the modern which is a contradiction of terms since the prefix coexist with "modernism". A starting point in the discussion on postmodernism is to describe what it is *not*. Usher and Edwards (1994: 7) suggest that postmodernism is not a "fixed body of ideas" because this definition implies taking an authoritative, universalised and objective stance which in turn is paradoxical to the term's principles. Postmodernism is therefore impossible to simplify into something tangible, structured and authoritative. To deconstruct would be problematic because the term's central meaning is constantly shifting (ibid). Like the era that postmodernists define, the central meaning of the term is also changing. The exact emergence of the postmodern movement is said to occur as a consequence of Lyotard's work *The Postmodern Condition* published in 1979. In Lyotard's (1984: 21) view,

> Postmodernism is undoubtedly part of the modern […] A work can be modern if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.

Featherstone (2007) suggests it is useful to consider what postmodern thinkers have already established. Since they are all intricately linked I will now address key terms such as postmodernism, postmodernity, modernism and modernity. Harvey (1990) finds that postmodernism and postmodernity refer to the same thing; Foster (1985), Best and Kellner (1991) and Bauman (2000) uncover distinctions between the two terms. On the one hand, postmodernism is more often utilised as a critical theoretical perspective. On the other, post-modernity is said to refer to a condition of being associated with changes to institutions and conditions developed from social innovations and political changes (Giddens, 1991). The distinction between the two terms can be further explained thus: postmodernism or postmodern perspectives describe a range of theoretical perspectives about postmodernity or the postmodern condition. In other words, while the concept of postmodernity refers to a condition, postmodernism offers a way to understand that condition (Bauman, 2000). For Lyotard (1979), the postmodern is a counter-discourse which acts from within the modern and a return to pre-modern views of the universe. The implication of this idea is that any discussion of the postmodern condition must entail an analysis of the modern condition. Post-modernity requires us to consider what is meant by modernity. As much as there is hardly a single definition of postmodernism, it seems equally impossible to define a single, coherent set of ideas to which we can attach the term 'modernism.' One way to understand postmodernism is to remove the prefix and discuss modernism, modern perspectives, or modernity.

4.1.2 Modernism

Modernity is said to represent a period of historical development. It has its origins in the Enlightenment period of the late eighteenth century (Usher & Edwards, 1994). The modern movement beginning in the 19th century is regarded as a "post-traditional order marked by change, innovation and dynamism" (Barker, 2000: 131). Modernism is rooted in the idea that traditional ways of life have become obsolete, so that it is necessary to regenerate and advance culture. Every aspect of 'primitive' culture had to be subjected to review and examination so that society would have 'order' and be defined by decisions based on the rational thinking and rules of expert knowledge and systems (ibid). Bauman (2000) states that modernity's mission for 'order' and 'classification' stemmed from a desire for homogeneity, a rejection of diversity, and intolerance for difference.

The modern 'state of mind' was marked by emphasis in reason and progress (Bauman, 2000). The word 'progress' was an important metaphor of the time (Giddens, 1991). The term refers to the notion of moving along the one true pathway towards a universal goal towards an objective unified knowledge. This process of 'moving along' is guided by an interest in the growth of science and technology, the capitalist market, the modern state and industrialisation (Featherstone, 1991: 6). Thus, as Giddens (1991) contends, modernity is motivated by power (control by means of coercion), surveillance (control of information), Capitalism (marketing of products), and industrialisation (transformation of nature). The notion of 'progress' also entails the creation of binary opposites such as masculine/feminine, mind/emotion, nature/culture, rational/irrational, homogeneity/ diversity and sameness/difference. A legacy of modernist binary opposites was the creation and institutionalisation of segregation along gendered and racial binaries. Within these binary relations one group becomes associated with negative notions of inferiority and deficiency (Bauman, 2000). For Bauman (2000), modernity created colonialism and the Holocaust, both of which were motivated by racism. Human needs have priority over human nature and science and technology would accomplish the goal of social and cultural progress to the satisfaction of human needs. Order must be made to restrain what was natural and spontaneity must be suppressed to maintain order (ibid). This is secured by institutions that decide to put away those who fail to comply with the rules or did not fit with the designated society. Institutions include prisons, houses of detention, hospitals and lunatic asylum which houses people who do not conform to the norms and values of society and who represent a threat to society (ibid). Bauman (2000) contends that modernism helped create such brutal ideologies as Nazism and Communism ideologies that justify power through a defence of its

superior beliefs and principles. The modernist is said to be the originator of new ideas, the discoverer of inventions and the intellect on scientific inquiry (Bauman, 2000). Knowledge is discovered and problems of the world addressed. Emphasis is on new technologies and the acquisition of new skills (ibid; Giddens, 1991). Bauman's (2000) theories are strongly influenced by Foucault. Like Foucault, he argues that for modernity to achieve order there must be the threat of punishment which then leads to discipline. Order is secured by institutions that can segregate those who do not comply with the norms of society: prisons, detention houses, hospitals and asylums.

4.1.3 Postmodernist challenge to modernism

Postmodern philosophers such as Lyotard and Foucault challenge the foundation of modernist thinking – a process of disruption of what Foucault refers to as "the smooth passage of regimes of truth" (Rabinow, 1984:3-30). According to Lyotard, postmodernism marks the end of 'grand narratives', the universalising stories of modern thought. It also marked the loss of faith in progress. The postmodernist response to 'grand narratives' of modernism is the notion that we will only have an incomplete picture because all forms of knowledge are only constructs. Therefore the pursuit for truth is a lost cause. The objective and universal truth is rejected as an illusion. For Lyotard and Foucault, truths are only language constructions put in place by those who have influence and power. Postmodernist thought emphasises diversity, pluralism, variety, and uncertainty: all traits which are in direct opposition to those characterised by modernist thought. While modernists think in terms of logocentrism, ethnocentrism, continuity, totality and unity, postmodernists think in terms of fragmentation, discontinuity, multiculturalism, biculturalism, pluralism, and openness and transparency. Postmodernism brings about the "dissipation of objectivity." (Bauman, 2000: 35)

Foucault (1980) combines Friedrich Nietzche's theories about how those in power shape the world with ideas of how language is the primary tool for creating culture. As Foucault writes, those who dominate or control a society's official use of language hold the key to social and political power. While Nietzsche believes all reality is someone else's wilful, powerful construction, Foucault claims language is the primary tool in that construction. In poststructuralist terms, Jacques Derrida (1978) theorises that language creates a set of opposite beliefs a binary in which 'the privileged' is set against 'the marginalised' but the 'privileged' beliefs gets favourable recognition (Baumann, 2000).

4.2   Postmodernism and Education

According to Usher and Edwards (1994), education is founded on the discourse of modernity. Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) find that, to some extent, educational theory and practice is considered in terms of the language and assumptions of modernism based on autonomy and rationality (also Lyotard, 1979). In the field of education, modernity is rooted in the notion of the necessity to educate in order to enlighten and emancipate. Usher and Edwards (1994) find that education has been founded on notions of power and control intent on reproducing the dominant values of society and to legitimise its authority. Dominant educational narratives and discourses can force people to consider where they belong or put them where they are considered to belong (ibid). Accordingly, the potential is there in education to oppress, establish hierarchy and hegemony, and to either include or exclude people. Modernists' desire to overcome ambiguity leads to assertion of certainty that exclude and oppress and education is the means of eliminating difference and otherness (e.g. the abnormal) and of reducing contingency (Usher and Edwards, 1994). Education in the condition of modernity is the site where the abnormal is brought under the control of reason so that difference becomes downgraded and produced as sameness (ibid).

Due to its link with modernity's desire for control and order, education has often been resistant to alternative perspectives (ibid). Usher & Edwards (1994: 214) claim that resistance to postmodernism equates with resistance to the possibility of change: "For those who desire the continuation of the modern project [..] the postmodern is represented as a moment of danger." Aronowitz and Giroux (1991: 188) favouring the postmodernist perspectives of education, argues that postmodernism opens space for plurality that develops a "radical ethics that rejects finality and certainty for the voice of difference and dialogue." Postmodernism therefore has potential to effect change in education. Both Usher and Edwards (1994:1) and Aronowitz and Giroux (1991:1) propose for a study of education from the postmodern perspective in order to understand "contemporary social and cultural trends." In challenging existing "concepts, structures and hierarchies of knowledge" (ibid: 25) it opens the way for an understanding of the effects of educational structures and methodologies which may lead to a reconsideration of existing infrastructures.

For education to go through profound changes is an aspect of the postmodern condition. However, there is no unified or uniform postmodern discourse in education in that postmodernists do not offer solutions or recommend a course of action. Rather they subject educational theories and practices to a critical examination under the lens of postmodernism. While no new theories are offered, postmodernism teaches us to be sceptical of education

systems and educational theory and practice (Usher and Edwards, 1994). It teaches us to ask questions on ideas raised by modern education: Whose reason? Who has control? For whom is progress for? In terms of binary relations it asks: Who is positioned as the 'other' to be dominated and excluded? Postmodern discourse is based on intellectual inquiry (Usher and Edwards, 1994). It opens the way for an alternative discourse to education: "a different way of speaking, thinking and acting" (ibid: 26). Postmodernism creates the possibility of a multiplicity of perspectives rather than a single, unified and invariant perspective. For example, since education's emphasis has been on methods and techniques of education, a product of modernist discourse, the postmodern perspective questions the appropriateness of method and technique. Thus the significance of locating postmodernism in education is in the way it increases the possibility for a deconstruction of educational methods and techniques. Usher and Edwards (1994:31) find that more than ever, "education needs a critical scepticism and a suitable degree of uncertainty whilst close attention must be paid to the need for a careful deconstruction of the theorisations and discourses within which educational practice is located."

4.3 Linking Postmodernism with Deaf Education

> The very rationale of the educational process and the role of the educator is founded on modernity's self-motivated, self-directing, rational subject, capable of exercising individual agency[87].

This quote, which links education with modernity, neatly reflects the character of Deaf education under oralism. The project of deconstructing oralism thus entails recognition of its audism and systems of oppression when it comes to educators' desire to control language use. There is a certain frame of mind that modernism and oralism share, a frame of mind that Lane (1992: 26) identifies as the movement banishing traditional sign language in favour of oral languages.

4.3.1 Modernism and oralism

Like modernism, oralism is rooted in the idea that signed languages and Deaf culture have become outmoded and needed to be eradicated in favour of more advanced ways of living for Deaf people. The tradition of signed languages was regarded as 'primitive' and its role in education had to be re-examined and rethought so the 'community' would have 'order' (normality). Oralism's desire for 'order' is to seek to change Deaf people in some way to

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[87] Usher and Edwards (1994) p.2

make them appear normal through 'technologies of normalisation' (Lane, 1992) [88]. As modernity is fundamentally about order, oralism is about 'normality' (Baynton, 1996). Modernity attempts to create order out of chaos through a process of modernisation (Giddens, 1991; and Bauman, 2000); oralism attempts to make normal out of abnormality through a process of normalisation (Lane, 1992; Baynton, 1996; Wrigley, 1996). To the oralist, 'chaos' is the 'silence' of Deaf children and the rationality is: if society is 'order' (normal), then modernisation (normalisation) will make it better (progress). To the modernist, order is superior. Likewise, to the oralist, 'normal' is superior. It follows that 'disorder' and the 'abnormal' becomes the inferior 'other'. So, the modernist creates categories of human beings such as order/disorder – just as oralists categorise people as normal/abnormal, both in the pursuit of wholeness, completeness, and stability (Lane, 1992; Wrigley, 1996; Bauman, 2000; Giddens, 1991).

Modernism tends to present a fragmented view of human beings and present them as something tragic, something to be lamented, pitied or mourned as a loss (Bauman, 2000). Griffey (1994) holds the view of deafness (hearing loss) as tragic, Deaf people as suffering from 'loneliness' and 'isolation.' For Griffey (1994: 30-31), oralism is the promise of "liberating the human spirit from the prison caused by profound congenital deafness." In sociological terms, modernism aimed toward "a progressive force promising to liberate humankind from ignorance and irrationality" (Rosenau, 2002: 5). Modernist and oralist obsessions of ending 'disorder' and 'abnormal' (deafness) stemmed from a desire for homogeneity and a rejection of difference. The oralist 'state of mind' emphasised progress through technology and advanced ideas. The idea of installing group hearing aids and amplifications in classrooms was to create 'order', to make the Deaf child "much more normal, facilitate his thinking process and fit him to take his place in a hearing world" (Griffey, 1994: 45).

The advent of new scientific and technological advances changed and shaped the way Deaf people communicate with each other and wider society. Technology would accomplish the goal of oralism to integrate Deaf people in society. Oralist thought was based on new ideas to deal with the problem of deafness. As Chapter three points out that the oralism movement championed by Alexander Graham Bell was a modern development (Lane, 1992). His eugenics ideas discouraged 'bad breeding' practices in favour of 'good breeding practices' which opened the way for 'dividing practices' to emerge in Deaf education

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[88] Lane (1992) engages a Foucauldian analysis in a discussion about cochlear implant (The body is the site of control)

(Baynton, 1996; Branson and Miller, 2002). Thus reason becomes the ultimate judge of what is true, what is right and what is good for the Deaf individual (Lane, 1992).

The rationale of oralism was guided by audiology and the study of "hearing impairment", the testing of hearing loss and the implementation of new teaching methodology (Lane, 1992; Griffey, 1994). Modern audiograms were introduced in Deaf education to test hearing and hearing-aid technology began to emerge (Griffey, 1994). Hearing loss was measured by a kind of technical advance that gave further hope for progress. Hearing tests and rehabilitation programs were provided through the use of hearing aids and auditory training and lip-reading programs. Since then the study of hearing, hearing loss and audiology rehabilitation escalated and expanded and was introduced to Deaf education. Deaf children's language ability was measured in terms of speech ability, and intelligence measured in terms of hearing and speech ability: "People who were deaf did not stand a chance ... In many cases, deaf children and adults were not actually identified as deaf but were assumed to lack spoken language because they were 'idiots'" (Branson and Miller, 2002: 48).

4.3.2   Foucault's theories and Deaf education

Foucault's theories are useful for inclusion in this study for their deep commitment to social change and for the ways they analyse and identify various political and historical issues (Rabinow, 1984; Mills, 2003: 5-7). I locate his work – a combination of philosophy and historical research – in relation to the notion of 'abnormality', the formation of psychiatric knowledge used to divide, classify and arrange human beings into groups. Foucault's work is said to be characteristic of postmodernism. Usher and Edwards (1994), for example, in discussing postmodernism and education examine his ideas in an analysis of education systems. Foucault's interpreter, Paul Rabinow, finds that Foucauldian ideas "create new options for thought and new possibilities for action" (Rabinow and Rose, 2003: xi). Mathews' (2012) study on mainstreaming draws on Foucault's concept of dividing practices and classification. Lane (1992: 83-4) holds that Foucault's "observation has truly terrifying relevance for members of the deaf community who accept the rewards offered by audist establishment in return for wearing the emblem of disability."

What Foucault does is identify, highlight and point out systems of power or operations of power within social practices and disciplinary institutions such as schools, prisons, hospitals and asylums. Modern reason is a power that defines itself against the 'Other' whose identity is also assigned by modern reason. His comments about the use of

discipline in institutions divide the method of discipline into three modes in the 'objectification of the subject': "dividing practices", "scientific classification" and "subjectification" (Rabinow, 1984: 5). Dividing practices refers to how the body or the subject is objectified or treated as a thing through a process of distribution or segregation and partitioning of space in which certain human beings are to live separate from others (Mathews, 2012; Rabinow, 1984). Dividing practices have their roots in the rise of modern psychiatry in institutions like hospitals, prisons and clinics. They emerge through a process of classification, segregation, and the confinement of segments of the population deemed outside the norms of society: the abnormal, the insane, the lepers, the poor, and the vagabonds. Dividing practices are 'modes of manipulation' developed from a process of medicalization, stigmatisation and normalisation of deviance in Modern Europe (Rabinow, 1984). They segregate and objectify people from society for exhibiting difference or deviants from the acceptable defined by science.

The second process of 'objectification of the subject' is "scientific classification," which defines how science classifies the individual as the subject of life (biology), labour (economics) and language (linguistics) (Rabinow, 1984: 9). The aim was to achieve coherence autonomy of the social body mediated through concepts of disorder and deviance. The third mode is what Rabinow (1984) calls 'subjectification,' in reference to the way in which human beings are turned into objectified subjects through a process of self-formation. To Foucault, it consists of a series of "operations on [human beings'] own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct" (Rabinow, 1984: 8-11).

Discipline and Punishment has been used as the basis of many works on social discourse (Rabinow, 1984; Foucault, 1977). Here Foucault identifies the existence of a range of techniques used as part of disciplinary measures to control 'abnormal' beings and regulate their bodily movement. Visibility is paramount and regarded as authoritative of modern power (Foucault, 1977). Two types of techniques are identified: "synoptic" and "individualising" (ibid). "Synoptic visibility" defined by Foucault's interpretation of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon[89] represents the way in which discipline and punishment work in modern society. The effect of the Panopticon is in the pressure of the "gaze" on the individual, forcing the subject to self-regulate and conform to certain norms and standards. Thus the individual, according to Foucault (1977:200), is always "the object of information, never a subject in communication." Another apparatus of behaviour-control is known as

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[89] Bentham's model prison with a tower at the centre that offers maximum surveillance

"individualising" visibility which refers to technologies of the expert. Foucault sees technologies of power as emanating from confessional religious practices (Besley, 2005). Confession, according to Foucault, was as an agency of domination and a technique for managing the sexual lives of individuals. He notes how a historical shift in confessional practices was evident from religion to medicine and then to therapy. Thus confession was organised in scientific terms through "a clinical codification of the inducement to speak […] and the medicalization of the effects of confession."(ibid: 83-4). In individualising visibility, the individual adopts the ways of thinking of the suppressor and loses his or her own individuality (Foucault, 1977). In essence the individual becomes a docile and useful body (ibid). If disciplinary power has the facility to increase the power of individuals it could also reduce them docile. For Foucault (1980), disciplinary practices are dividing practices that create binary divisions which is the hallmark of modernist thinking: sane/mad, able-bodied/disabled-bodied; healthy/ill; normal/abnormal. This is an effective technique of social control and normalisation.

4.3.3   Disciplinary practices and surveillance in oralism

Disciplinary practices and surveillance in oralism have been well documented in the literature (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997; Ladd, 2003, Lane, 1992; McDonnell and Saunders, 1993 and 2005; O'Connell, 2008; Mathews, 2011). In Ireland, methods of dealing with Deaf students' cultural behaviours are quoted in McDonnell & Saunders (1993 and 2005). The narrative of Helena Saunders concerning her experience of school in St. Mary's in the 1950s reveals specific techniques of control that treat students as objects and instruments in the exercise of oralism. Her story centres upon a discussion of the use of panoptic surveillance and Foucauldian discipline in St. Mary's. In Saunders' experience various strategies were utilised to manage and discipline the pupils:

> The principal slapped pupils who were sent to her for signing. Most of the corporal punishment administered in the school was administered for signing. Speech was connected to moral behaviour; signing was related to disobedience and sin[90]

A public display of shame was an effective technique of disciplinary practices used by oralist teachers which was common practice in some of the oral schools in Britain as the following extracts demonstrate:

> I had a lot of punishment for signing in classrooms and at playground [….] then one morning at assembly I was caught again, then, ordered to stand in front. The

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[90] McDonnell, P & Saunders, H. (2005) p. 44

> headmistress announced that I looked like a monkey […] waving my hands everywhere. She [said] she will put me in a cage in the zoo so the people will laugh at a stupid boy in the cage[91]

> Teacher said, 'name? where from?' all in speech. Came to me, I fingerspelt my name …oh oh-Boom! Teacher picked me right up off the ground, held me dangling in front of the class and said 'What's that? That's a monkey!'[92]

The idea of using shame to correct the children's behaviour was one of the techniques used to practice oralism in school. Oralism 'trains' a multitude of bodies and forces them to conform to the school rules. In the above stories, control of activities and behaviour is apparent. The school represents a culture and society of its own. With its own laws and principles, each Deaf individual is required to submit to this order to become an element of its machinery. Oralism subjugates its subjects and the schools are always ruled by hearing adults. Freedom from the constraints of the system becomes a desirable option for the pupils and, as Foucault states, the law is challenged by those hoping to go unpunished. Since educators are not omniscient surveillance is necessary and the school analyses (audiology), separates (segregation), differentiates (classification), and carries its procedures of categorisation into sufficient single units. In Foucualt's (1977:136) view, disciplinary practices in institutions is aimed at creating a 'docile body', a "body that is subjected, used, transformed and improved." Docile bodies are created so that they are willing and capable of following any order.

Dividing practices

Audiology made it possible to classify and categorise Deaf people with labels such as 'partially deaf', 'profoundly deaf', 'hearing impaired' and severely deaf' (Griffey, 1994). Audiology also paved the way for dividing practices to take place within the schools. Pupils were identified and separated by a classificatory system of groups that corresponded to levels of hearing loss. Units were established within the Cabra schools to accommodate the different categories of students. The system was designed to identify those who could benefit from oralism (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997). This resonates with modernism's creation of binary opposites- the separation of the abnormal from the normal, the superior from the inferior. Crean (1997) argues that segregation perpetuated stereotyping and the creation of class differences and a hierarchy of deafness. Segregation, according to Crean, must have instilled a sense of inferiority in pupils. Segregation or partitioning was a major element of the oralism

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[91] Kyle & Woll, (1989) p. 259
[92] Ladd (2003) p.303

system in the Cabra schools (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997; O'Connell, 2008; Mathews, 2011). The schools created 'coded' spaces where different activities took place (e.g. the oral space and the signing section). Segregation made it easier to control activities.

The "clinical gaze"

Where deafness was seen as both a medical condition and pathology, "educational treatment" became a by-word of oralism (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997). Deaf education under oralism was not education but an institution that focused on the Deaf body to govern, correct and improve upon the body (Wrigley, 1996; Ladd, 2003). There was little made of assessment skills. Lane (1992) finds that the "clinical gaze" focuses on the Deaf body classified as pathology. The concept of inferiority was synonymous with the concept of 'abnormal'.

Surveillance

Since educators are not omniscient, surveillance becomes necessary (Wrigley, 1996; Ladd, 2003). Saunders (1993 and 2005: 44) recounts her experience of the panoptic surveillance at St. Mary's:

> The pupils were under constant surveillance and since the staff was outnumbered, older pupils were encouraged to report incidents of signing to the school authorities.

With surveillance, the ordering of Deaf children's lives is easily carried out and 'misbehaviour' identified. Where children were seen signing, they were duly punished. Punishment forces them to make moral judgements of behaviour in terms of 'good' and 'bad' (Wrigley, 1996). 'Badness' (signing) was punishable. Badness was also something to confess (McDonnell and Saunders, 2004). Saunders (2005) reports having to confess signing to a priest at confession. Foucault's notion of 'truth telling' is interesting here. He identified "a shift from confessional practices of the religious world to medical then to therapeutic and pedagogical models in secular contemporary societies" (Besley, 2005: 83). Agency of domination resides with those who questions and listens rather than the 'confessor'. According to Foucault admission of sin, removes the sin but actually reveals the sinner. The sinner is identified and the technique is for 'normalisation'.

As Wrigley (1996: 77) notes,

> The method of surveillance, the scheduling of time, the regimentation and ritualization of life, and the uncompromising control of the body in action or repose that emerged from the tactics of the nineteenth century remain the dominant features visible in current approaches to educating deaf children

According to Ladd (2003), self-discipline is instituted in Deaf pupils and consequently they get rewards by becoming monitors on behalf of the school (e.g. McDonnell and Saunders, 2005). In doing so, they become part of the system. This is Foucault's view that via the "mechanisms of observation, [the method of surveillance] gains in efficiency and in its ability to penetrate into men's behaviour; knowledge follows the advance of power" (1980: 204). The more Deaf people are known to the observer, the more educators have control over their behaviour.

4.4   Postmodernism, Methodology and Other Theories

In Chapter Two I present my personal narrative utilising the auto-ethnography method of research and writing. Thus I include fragments of my own life history and thereby establish my bicultural identity as an auto-ethnographer and researcher. I reveal my identification with the Deaf world. Dumitrica (2010: 20) points out that the choice of a method "within the framework of a doctoral dissertation becomes interwoven with the politics of the disciplines and of the wider academic setting." On that basis I argue that my own views and beliefs cannot be separated from the choice of method I made in the research. Acknowledging my position in the research is at odds with the modernist perspective of doing research (Dumitrica, 2010). This research method is informed by postmodernist perspectives of doing research and by Foucault's discussion of power discourse and authority. I recognise aspects of my culture and history and personal identity such as age, education, gender, social status and culture, all impact on the research process and the perspective of which I view my research subjects. Having constructed a personal narrative through auto-ethnographical methods I locate and construct myself as a postmodern subject in the research and position myself as a postmodernist.

4.4.1   Bicultural Identity and Identification

The relationship between Deaf culture and identity is complex (Ladd, 2003; McIlroy and Storbeck, 2011). Many scholars such as Glickman (1996), Padden and Humphries (1988 and 2005), Ladd (2003), and Leigh (2009) recognise the contested notion of deaf and Deaf identities. Part of this complexity is linked to what Ladd (2003: 406) identifies as "the plurality of deafness" which is to say that Deaf people have a tendency to develop a bicultural identity due to their exposure to two cultures and languages within a Deaf community and the

society in which they live. They tend to develop 'multiple selves' due to gender, religion, language, nationality, hearing status, and family of origin (Ladd, 2003).

Recent theoretical and empirical research on identity of Deaf people (e.g. Leigh, 2009) suggest three basic qualities are at play (Glickman, 1996). Firstly, they agree that Deaf identities are multiple and tend to be in conflict within each individual. Secondly, identities are fluid in that they change over time according to particular social and cultural contexts. Taking the first and second points into account it is argued that d/Deaf identities are not unchanging but rather constructed, negotiated and maintained.

Solomon (2013) offers a theory of identity suggesting there are two sides to the process of identification: vertical and horizontal. Vertical identities, according to Solomon, occur where children identify with their parents and adopt and assume the values, norms and beliefs of the parents. The dynamic interplay between parent and child is disrupted where they are confronted by difference. According to Solomon, Deaf children's identification with hearing parent is a case in point. Solomon contends that where children cannot find identification with their parents they tend to seek identification with their peers. Deaf children of hearing parents tend to develop a horizontal identity when finding identification with other Deaf children. Ladd (2003) finds that when identification with educators who are hearing is not possible Deaf children tend to identify with their peers. It is in the absence of Deaf adult role models that peer interaction creates culture which is then transmitted horizontally.

4.4.2 Deaf Culture

In presenting a brief discussion on Deaf culture, I draw on the work of Ladd (2003) and Padden and Humphries (1988 and 2005). Taking into context the theories of these Deaf writers, Deaf culture is said to entail a set of linguistic beliefs and values for understanding and acting upon the world. By this understanding, Deaf culture is cognitive (individual) and social (community). It is said that culture generally means a way of life and a way of understanding the world around us (Geertz, 1973). In other words, culture permeates our everyday life in everything we do, say and experience (Storbeck & Magongwa, 2006). The model of Deaf culture mirrors the worldviews of Deaf people that is something individual, linguistic and social in nature (Storbeck & Magongwa, 2006; Ladd, 2003). Ladd extends this understanding of culture to the concept of 'Deafhood' a term that defines the essence of experience and sense of being Deaf within various social, historical and cultural contexts. That said, Deaf cultural identity is a complex phenomenon in that each individual has "more than one cultural reference point" (Storbeck & Magongwa, 2006: 114) due to family of

origin, nationality, religion, gender, education etc. Therefore multiple cultural perspectives exist in each individual Deaf person.

4.4.3 Audism

In 1975 Deaf studies scholar, Tom Humphries, coined the term 'audism' in an unpublished dissertation to describe a set of attitudes and behaviours towards deaf people that judge or belittle them on the basis of hearing and speech ability (Lane, 1992). Audism describes stereotypical assumptions that people hold about deaf people and deafness in general. Since Humphries (1975) the term was left in 'cold storage' for many years before it appeared in Harlan Lane's (1992) publication *The Mask of Benevolence; disabling the deaf community*. Lane broadened its meaning to include other forms of oppression that deaf people endured. As Lane (1992) suggests, 'audism' refers to the assumption that people hold of deaf people as being inferior to hearing people due to their inability to hear and speak. While the term is a modernist construct, framing it within the postmodern is to take an 'anti-audism' stance which is to argue that Deaf and hearing people are different and equal.

Lane (1992) extends the meaning of audism further suggesting that it is analogous to racism and sexism where it describes an attitude in which society denigrates, devalues and thus discriminates a certain group of people while privileging others. This is because the language surrounding the term is almost as charged as racism and sexism. It might be argued that the literature about deaf people shows that audism is an attitude that has been prevalent for centuries. Even when society is infected by the belief of the innate inferiority of deaf people, many people are unaware of this infection and they can often be 'unconscious audist' because of their inability to escape their culture's construction of themselves as superior to the culture of the Irish deaf community (Forbes-Robertson (2004).

The notion of 'dysconscious audism' coined by Gertz (2008) is derived from the concept of 'dysconscious racism', a term utilised to describe people who don't think critically enough about oppression (Forbes-Robertson, 2004). Rather they accept and perpetuate the assumptions due to limited understanding and experience. Gertz (2008:5) suggests that there is a "form of audism that tacitly accepts dominant hearing norms and privileges [...] an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking" about deaf people. This means that 'dysconscious audism' as a form of oppression refers to someone who implicitly accepts audist beliefs about Deaf people; an attitude that accepts the views of hegemonic powers about deaf people as victims and perpetuators of their own victimisation (Forbes-Robertson,

2004). Since they are not critically aware of their situation, deaf people tend to "remain within the confines of this elaborate pinball machine" (ibid: 28).

4.5   Reflections

In this study I invoke a framework of 'postmodernism' in a commitment to exploring the complex relationships of power systems in Deaf education and to position myself within the research. My concern is to formulate postmodernism in the study of Deaf education in order to take it in a particular direction. I provide an analytical critique of certain aspects of Deaf education history to identify the modernist perspective inherent in oralism which is at odds with the cultural and linguistic perspectives of Deaf people. Locating a postmodern framework with the study allows me to take a turn towards the work of Foucault (Usher and Edwards, 1994) and to embrace a method of research that is emancipatory (Ellis, 2004). The importance of Foucault's work lies in his critique of power systems in institutions and systems of control and repression. Foucault's writings are focused on attempts to deconstruct hidden meanings in these power systems and perhaps help us understand and break free from these forms of power inherent in institutions. For example, his theories are useful in providing a lens in which to uncover and examine structural biases of oralism that construe the cultural beliefs and values of society in classrooms at the Cabra schools.

The methodology I adopt in the study could be said to be a postmodern construct (Ellis, 2004). Auto-ethnography is said to help raise awareness to those in power who may be unaware or choose to ignore the problem in their role in the marginalisation of a cultural group under their watch. The method calls into question the objective observer position of traditional ethnography and challenges modernist assumptions about doing research which is from a position of neutrality and objectivity. Scholars of auto-ethnography adopt the postmodernist perspective by arguing that such a position is difficult to defend without acknowledging the researcher's cultural, linguistic, social and historical background (Hughes, et al, 2012; Ellis, 2004).

By acknowledging my position in the study through auto-ethnographic writing I utilise a postmodern perspective of doing research and writing. My personal narratives reveal my bicultural identity. I am bicultural due to my experience of 'cultural border crossing'[93] between the Deaf world and the world of mainstream society. Ellis (2004) states that

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[93] Ellis (2004) p. 200

"bicultural people" learn to adapt in several different worlds. This proliferation is a consequence of postmodernism and its emphasis on fragmentation (ibid).

CHAPTER FIVE
METHODOLOGY: CRITICAL (AUTO) ETHNOGRAPHY

CHAPTER FIVE
METHODOLOGY: CRITICAL (AUTO) ETHNOGRAPHY

Liam O'Flaherty's "The Reaping Race" was next on our reading list. The blackboard was scribbled with a list of adjectives attributed to the characters in the short-story: Gill was "wiry", Bodkin was "fleshy" and Considine was "brawny." Mr. M. was anxious for us to understand the story. With no sign language, he proceeded to mimic each of the characters. The story was mimed from start to finish. Standing in different postures he showed how each reaper stood in line at the start of the race. Bodkin had his arms folded and legs spread apart as if he was king of the rye field. Gill stood motionless with a reaping hook in his hand. Considine's posture was clear: shoulders up and arms hanging out like a wrestler. We all watched him eager and fascinated by the dramatics displayed right before us. Then the race was on. Mr. M. moved air reaping hook at great speed. I saw Bodkin going furiously like there was no tomorrow. Considine was not far behind with his head down going at great speed. Mr. M. switched to Gill and the pace slowed as he moved air reaping hook in a relaxed and meticulous fashion like he had all the time in the world. If you move faster he said in protracted speech, you would get tired quickly. Then he returned to action…

As many research theorists suggest, ethnography is a journey in itself, encompassing all the highs and lows of doing field work and of engaging stories of adventure and self-discovery (Spradley, 1979; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Coffey, 1999; Ellis, 2004; Muncey, 2010). One way to acquire knowledge of the methodology is simply by 'doing it' and 'being in it' (Creswell, 2007). On the basis of knowledge acquired, this study could be characterised as post-modern ethnography, self-reflexive ethnography, critical ethnography and auto-ethnography. This chapter discusses these research methodological considerations and addresses the theoretical background behind the selected methods. This is followed by a description of the research design, the process of data collection, data analysis, ethical issues and writing ethnography. The chapter explores the history of ethnography and the developing methods of auto-ethnography, critical ethnography, postmodern ethnography and the relevant ethical considerations. These distinctions seek to keep the critical ethnographer close to the research subject at hand, the research topic and the research field.

5.1   Background

A decision was made not to engage in quantitative research which, as Cohen and Mannion (1989), Patton (1990) and Creswell (2005) point out, has its roots in science and involves gaining and collecting data, comparing statistics and figures and attempting to define a situation in an objective and repeatable fashion. The quantitative approach entails the researcher testing a hypothesis using statistics. Statistics, however, are not used in qualitative research.

Creswell (2005) emphasizes the benefits of doing quantitative research in that it seeks to test a generalized result or theory from a random population sample through probability sampling, where each person has an equal chance of being selected in a sample. However, the use of hypothesis is inappropriate for this study. As Creswell (2005) indicates, in quantitative research the researcher seeks to measure multiple variables. Terms like 'measure' and 'variable' are not appropriate usage in this study. Instead of testing theories I seek the thoughts, feelings, emotions, experiences and memories of my participants, from which I can build theories based on empirical data.

Several key features of qualitative research have been identified by Creswell (2005: 41-5) which I include for the purpose of this study. Firstly, qualitative research is concerned with eliciting the meanings that people attach to their lives. Secondly, it involves the use of descriptions of a people, their surroundings and way of life. Thirdly, the researcher plays a significant role in data collection and is concerned with a process rather than an outcome. Finally, the qualitative researcher attempts to develop a new theory from data collected during the course of the research. As Ellis (2004: 14) points out, a qualitative approach is appropriate for a study of culture in providing "natural bridges between social science and humanities." Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) SAGE *Handbook of Qualitative Research* emphasizes social change and face-to-face social interactions with people under study (Ellis, 2004). The key points outlined by Creswell (2005) best sum up why qualitative research is selected for this research project. I believe a qualitative research approach provides this study with a theoretical and conceptual framework within which to unearth meaning in context. As Creswell notes, the qualitative approach allows this researcher to focus on complex issues from the point of view of the marginalised. Moreover, Bulmer and Warwick (1993) find the advantage in employing this method is that it provides multiple perceptions of reality and brings to the surface the lived experience of a 'colonized' language.

So far I have discussed the kind of theoretical knowledge required to consider before I began to engage myself in qualitative research. In other words I have presented a list of characteristics that shows the distinguishing features of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Before embarking on doing qualitative research, I first addressed the research question and the rationale for the study. Here I introduce the problem or the need for study with intent to provide a rationale for studying the problem (Creswell, 2007).

5.2   **RATIONALE**

The motivation behind this research is to locate the worldviews of Deaf people at the center of analysis. As pointed out in Chapter One, this is an area of study that is rarely considered in educational research (Ladd, 2003). Chapter Three reveals a wide range of research outlining the linguistic status of Irish Sign Language. Linguists argue that ISL is the most accessible cultural resource for Deaf children in education. Specific research questions arising from these claims are concerned with the political and historical context outlined in Chapter Three. What are the issues in Deaf education that are the cause of controversy? The answer, as Chapter Three confirms, is that language is a key issue that is often overlooked or ignored in debates concerning Deaf education. The research 'problem' identified refers to the debates that seem more concerned with the most appropriate teaching and communication method underlying the dominant worldview of Deaf education. This thesis identified a gap in the literature concerning the views of Deaf people which have been consistently ignored in research and policy discussions. This raises two important questions: from the perspective of view of Deaf people, why is oralism so controversial and why were their views not considered? These are the key questions that guide the research process.

Since the study is entirely focused on Deaf people and their views about education and culture, I believe the project will make a useful contribution to our understanding of Deaf education. It is my hope that the study will generate discussion that may help inform policy and legislation. By increasing awareness of the 'Deaf experience', I hope I can contribute to a better understanding of "the way things appear to someone else and through that insight lead to improvements in practice."[94] Whatever the outcome of this study, I believe Deaf people will benefit from having their 'voices' heard. The next section discusses the notion of including the 'voice' of the researcher as an auto-ethnographic method. Having presented a series of vignettes in Chapter Two, I now discuss the meaning and origins of auto-ethnography.

5.3   **TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY**

Several authors have been highly influential in increasing our understanding of auto-ethnography: Ellis (2004), Reed-Danahay (1997), Ellis and Bochner (1996), Denzin (1997), Muncey (2010), Hayler (2011) and Hughes et al, (2012) to name a few. According to Ellis and Bochner (2000: 740) "autoethnographers vary in their emphasis on the research process

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[94] Barrit, L. (1986) cited in Creswell, 2007

(*graphy*), on culture (*ethno*), and on self (*auto*)" but usually it is writing of the autobiographical genre focusing on memories, physical feelings, thoughts and emotions in order to understand an experience of culture. Thus the researcher's participation with the research subjects forms part of the research process. In traditional ethnography the researcher's thoughts and feelings and experience do not tend to come alive in the writing. Consequently they do not reveal how they arrive at decisions in the research process (ibid). Accordingly Ellis (2004) maintains that postmodernist writers have issues with the authority of researchers who prefer to adopt a dispassionate voice arguing that researchers are situated within historical, social, linguistic and cultural practices to which they belong. By not revealing aspects of their personal history they obscure their own ideological interest. The aim of doing auto-ethnography is, therefore, to write "meaningfully and evocatively about topics that matter and may make a difference, to include sensory and emotional experience, and to write from an ethic of care and concern." (2004: 46). By its very nature auto-ethnography is a 'term of choice' for a range of qualitative research methods and the movements associated with the term is exerting considerable influence upon contemporary education (Ellis, 2004). Thus to understand auto-ethnography and its significance for educational research, we must first discuss issues concerning ethnography and critical ethnography and their historical influences in qualitative research.

5.3.1 Ethnography

Ethnography, the writing of culture, is a "practice and an expression with a capacious historical past that necessarily includes philosophical, political, spiritual and aesthetic elements" (Clair, 2003:3). Thus attempting to discuss a comprehensive history of ethnography is voluminous at best but Clair (2003) provides an accessible historical account in which ethnography is located within its historical and political terrains of First, Second, Third, and Fourth Wave Colonialism. This is then followed by an exploration of ethnography as a 'postmodern turn'.

In the age of First Wave of Colonialism, Clair traces the origin of ethnography back to ancient Greece when the word *History* denoted an inquiry into cultural and political history of Eastern and Western civilisations. Writers were understood to have regarded 'the Other' as primitive and inferior. Interest in ethnography emerged during the period of Second Wave Colonialism between the late fifteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, when certain European countries took the lead to colonise some parts of South America. Ethnographers were in the

main historians, explorers and missionaries providing accounts of culture that featured incidents of slavery, annihilation and torture (ibid).

During the Third Wave of Colonialism phase characterised by the Scramble for Africa, European countries like Britain, France and Belgium amongst others conquered African nations. It was here that ethnography emerged between the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century out of anthropological research and from the tradition of the travel account in which colonial travel writers recorded their observations of native cultures. Traditionally, ethnographers travelled from Europe and USA to parts of the African continent to become immersed in the culture of the native communities for long periods of time (Creswell, 2005). Since colonisation was motivated by racism based on racist presumptions about the inferiority and backwardness of a people and culture[95], these writers carried with them white supremacist endeavours to 'prove' that natives were sub-human (Gould, 1983; Abrahams, 1997). From this standpoint ethnography is said to have originated from within the colonial project of knowing and controlling 'the other' through their understanding of race and ethnicity (Said, 1994; Skeggs, 1994). These accounts compared distant cultures with dominant cultures and such reports were accused of bias in favour of dominant culture[96]. Researchers from dominant cultures were predominantly white, male ethnographers from the colonial centres such as Europe and the USA. Some of the most well-known ethnographers from this tradition include W.E.B. DuBois (1914) Margaret Mead (1928), Bronislaw Malinowski (1935), E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Ruth Benedict (1946).

Mead studied people from the island of Samoa and Benedict's ethnographic study focused on Japan as a nation (Clair, 2003). Malinowski conducted an ethnographic study on the Trobriand Islanders and Evans-Pritchard was concerned with the Nuer. E.E. Evans-Prichard (1940), in a study of the Nuer people[97], failed to acknowledge the impact of his connections with the colonial administration when working in Nuer land[98]. Ruth Benedict (1946) describes the Japanese community as a "shame culture" in which behaviour is determined by her own assumptions about social standards (Ryang, 2002). These texts illustrate how certain data could be combined to form a coherent whole. Consequently the groups under study were already defined by outsider researchers that the image they portrayed was incomplete. Moreover, tribute was given to ethnographers without acknowledging the role of the natives in the study. Thus the ethnographer assumed he or she

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[95] Also said to be inspired by economic greed and missionary zeal
[96] E.g. Evans-Pritchard (1940) cited in Claire, R. P. (2003)
[97] ethnic group inhabiting the Nile Valley.
[98] Southern Sudan in Africa

could write or speak for everyone without taking into account the views of the participants and the people. Malinowski's (1922) presentation was accused of being androcentric for concentrating on men and their activities and ignoring the important role of women. Consequently his authoritative account failed to take on the issue of gender.

These ethnographers produced a number of important texts which marked ethnography's early history. Some ethnographers avoided 'going native', which means working closely with the people under study and seeing things from their point of view. The aim was to present an 'objective' account of their work. The way to do that was to keep the researcher's thoughts and emotions out of the writing, apart from the stresses involved in doing fieldwork (Ellis, 2004). As Ellis (2004: 15) explains "the researcher's own experience was not viewed as interesting, or even legitimate." The fact that ethnographers were uncertain about research technique may have contributed to their reluctance to show how they conducted their study. On that basis and from a contemporary perspective, early ethnography is formed on dominant assumptions which were fundamentally androcentric and ethnocentric (Clair, 2003).

The Fourth Wave of Colonisation emerged as a result of capitalist globalisation. The period between the 1930s and 1960s was marked by the beginning of a new movement of 'decolonisation' during which time colonised natives began to speak out and resist against colonising forces (Clair, 1993). Consequently new forms of ethnography emerged with the study of the linguistic and political aspect of culture taking centre stage. Colonised subjects, recovering in postcolonial states, reached out to academic audiences and began speaking for themselves with "altered voices" (ibid). According to Clair (2003), four schools of thought on ethnography emerged: interpretive, critical, feminist and postmodern ethnography. Interpretive ethnography focused on meaning in a culture that inspired researchers to carry out ethnographies in communication. These researchers drew attention to cultural symbols and linguistic systems and cultures were defined. They believed that truth and true representation could be garnered from doing interpretative ethnography. Thus the 'linguistic turn' emphasised the position of language and its role in an ethnographic understanding of culture (ibid).

Critical and feminist ethnographies regarded communication as synonymous with language, and that communication can either be a cause of oppression or increase possibilities for emancipation. Revealing the oppressive practices was a challenge for feminist and critical ethnographers where feminists sought to uncover sexist language and patriarchal structures,

while critical ethnographers exposed the political nature of language and offered forms of resistance.

Postmodernist ethnographers locate "language, discourse, text, or symbol systems in a privileged position beyond that of previous schools of ethnography." (2003: 15). In other words they emphasise language, discourse, and text in order to expose systems of power relations that are not usually identified in traditional ethnographies. They call attention to the constructed nature of cultural accounts of traditional ethnography (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). All three schools of thought – interpretive, critical and feminist – have been criticised by postmodern ethnographers (ibid). They argue that previous ethnographers are "couched in colonial constructions" (2003: 15), where they tended to present dominant views of the Other. Postmodernists suggest that more than one truth could be acquired in ethnography. Clair (2003) points out that interpretive ethnography is criticised by postmodern ethnographers for not mentioning critical and political researchers and writers and for disregarding the contributions of feminist ethnographers. Tyler (1986) defines postmodern ethnography as,

> ...a cooperatively evolved text consisting of fragments of discourse intended to evoke the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of common sense reality, and thus provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect[99]

It goes without saying that postmodern ethnography derives its goals from postmodernism (Tyler, 1986; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Clair, 2003). Thus postmodern ethnography is an ethnography in which the researcher engages in self-reflexivity, questions truth claims, and experiments with new modes of writing (fragmentary). It is based on the belief that the role and power of the researcher have been ignored by previous ethnographers and that these issues need to be made explicit in ethnographic research and writing.

Clair (2003) outlines strengths and weakness of postmodern ethnography beginning with its main limitation: that it is replete with paradoxes. Several examples are offered, one of which includes the tendency to distinguish between modern and postmodern which creates a list of binary opposites something of which it accuses modernist of creating. Postmodernist argue against one single Truth and their thinking becomes legitimised as the answer to modernist weakness which seems to indicate an "inflated sense of self-importance" (Clair, 2003). Another example provided by Clair (2003) is where postmodernists, concerned with control, hegemony and oppression are predominantly European and male and therefore their

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[99] Tyler (1986) p. 125 also Clair (2003)

ideas are influenced by European philosophy. Since postmodernists offer criticism they are not immune to criticism from other theorists. On the positive side, postmodernists are commended for identifying the concept of multiple subject positions, multiculturalism and for facilitating "methodological pluralism" (McLeod, 2003b: 189) where both researcher and researched are studied.

Ethnography came into the domain of educational research during the 1950s and continued to develop throughout the 1980s (LeCompte et al, 1993). It was Jules Henry who portrayed school classrooms and high schools as constituting a culture and social structure. Spindler and Spindler (2009) conducted an ethnographic study of educational decision-making and curriculum content and teaching. Educational anthropologists regarded single classrooms as small societies and schools as discrete communities (LeCompte et al, 1993: 14: 241). They began focusing on sub-cultural groups and concentrating on the life histories of individuals.

5.3.2 Critical ethnography

Critical ethnography "examines cultural systems of power, prestige, privilege, and authority in society" Creswell, 2007: 241). It locates at the centre of analysis an examination of "marginalized groups from different classes, races, and genders, with an aim of advocating for the needs of these participants" (ibid). According to Madison (2005: 5), critical ethnography begins "with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain." Thus the critical ethnographer is politically minded. However, such arguments are incomplete without a degree of self-reflection on the part of the researcher. Since this project is focused on the subjective beliefs of the people under study and due to its political agenda, critical ethnography has been accused of bias. How do I weigh this against the sense of duty of the researcher to act on the principles of social justice and compassion for human feelings? As Creswell (2005) and Ellis (2004) note, writing on behalf of marginalised groups is a means of empowering them. The researcher thus has a moral duty to seek to change a system by placing the views of the marginalised at the centre of analysis.

Thomas (1993) finds that in critical ethnography the researcher asks critical questions that seek answers to how systems of power exist and why they continue to exist. Questions are 'critical' in the sense that ethnographers,

describe, analyse, and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centres, and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain. Critical scholarship requires that common sense assumptions be questioned[100]

Therefore, critical ethnography is transformative since it is primarily concerned with "the process of separation from constraining modes of thinking" (ibid). By contrast, traditional ethnography is domesticating and modernist in that it assumes and affirms the status quo (Thomas, 1993; Denzin, 2001). In a commitment to gaining empirical knowledge the critical ethnographer locates the study "on the ground" at a level that is *with* the marginalised (Madison, 2005).

5.3.3 Auto-ethnography

As stated elsewhere auto-ethnography locates the researcher as the subject of research, analysis and writing, employing the use of personal experience in order to "connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political" (Ellis, 2004: xix). Although the term relates to a variety of research methods namely critical ethnography (Thomas, 1993), reflexive ethnography (Davies, 1999), or native ethnography, it is also distinctive from them in that it is self-reflexive or self-focused and 'context-conscious'[101].

The writing is of the autobiographical genre focusing on memories, physical feelings, thoughts and emotions in order to understand an experience of culture (Ellis, 2004: p. xvii). The auto-ethnographer engages in a process of "emotional recall" and becomes "self-questioning" to the extent that he or she confronts things about the self that "are less than flattering." (Ellis, 2004: xvii). Consequently auto-ethnographers face several challenges and ethical concerns. The challenge is in telling their stories that deal with sensitive issues, stories of hurt, pain, loss, betrayal, and trauma, and the concern is to do with ethics where stories include others such as loved ones, family members, colleagues, and friends (Ellis, 2004).

Due to its concentration on personal experience, auto-ethnography's legitimacy as a research method has been challenged, primarily for its lack of theory and for being subjective and too personal (Sparkes, 2000). Hughes et al (2012) suggest that contesting auto-ethnography has been part of a critical dialogue on methodology in discussions between qualitative and quantitative approaches. One possible reason why legitimacy is being questioned may have something to do with auto-ethnography's newness in social science research, since it emerged in the discipline of anthropology only fifty years ago. It is only in

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[100] Thomas (1993) p. 4
[101] 'connecting the self with the culture under study (Ngunjiri, F. W., et al., 2010 p.)

the last twenty years that researchers have increasingly made reference to the method or utilised it in publications and dissertations (Hughes, et al, 2012). According to Hughes et al (2012) the term was first introduced by Raymond Firth (1956) in a public lecture held in London. Jomo Kenyatta's (1966) *Facing Mount Kenya* is credited as the first published auto-ethnography which was heavily criticised by social scientists for being too subjective (Hayano, 1979). Karl Heider (1975) is said to have used auto-ethnography in relation to the Dani people's own account of "what people do"[102]. It provides information about the Dani people's own understanding of their world. David Hayano (1979), who coined the term auto-ethnography as a research method, argues a case for 'insider' researchers in the postcolonial era to study their own world and culture. Hayano describes auto-ethnography as a method in which the marginalised could have a voice by virtue of being native (Ellis, 2004). To reflect the shift to 'insider voice', Hayano published *Poker Faces* (1982), a study of professional poker players grounded in personal experience as a semi-professional poker player.

According to Hughes et al (2012), the foundations that support auto-ethnography are located in the 'crisis of confidence' inspired by debates in postmodernism in the 1980s. Gradually scholars from a wide variety of disciplines began to consider the notion that stories could be part of social science research, which presents a shift away from the modernist ideas of grand theories. Pratt (1986:7) and Reed-Danahay (1997), for example, characterise auto-ethnography as a politically motivated activity that challenged modernist notions of absolute truth and realist conventions of ethnographic representation. For Reed-Danahay (1997: 2) auto-ethnography,

> synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography, in which the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography have been called into question, and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of a coherent, individual self has been similarly called into question. The term has a double sense –referring wither to the ethnography of one's own group or to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest. Thus. Either a self (auto) ethnography or an autobiographical (auto) ethnography can be signalled by "autoethnography"

Since then, auto-ethnography has evolved and widened across a variety of disciplines from anthropology to communication and sociology. This development gives rise to the idea that there are various interpretations of the method from 'personal experience narratives' (Denzin, 1989), 'narratives of the self' (Richardson, 1994), 'reflective ethnographies' (Ellis

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[102] Heider, Karl. G. (1975) Dani people live in the Grand Valley of Balim in the central highlands of Irian Jaya Indonesia

and Bochner, 1996), 'first person accounts' (Ellis, 1998), and 'evocative narratives' (Tillman-Healy, 1999), to name a few (Hughes et al, 2012).

Hughes et al (2012) give credit to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and Ellis and Bochner (1996) for introducing auto-ethnography to the field of education. Scholars of auto-ethnography submitted their work to peer reviewed journals and publishers paving the way for researchers to examine power dynamics in research. Auto-ethnography was regarded as a politically conscious act in uncovering and revealing issues that would not otherwise have been made apparent using other research methods (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010).

5.3.4 Reflexivity and role of the researcher

Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) and Creswell (2007) suggest that the role of the researcher and the data collected by the researcher are inextricably related. The roles and personal characteristics of ethnographers can have profound implications for the kind of data that can be collected. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:123) argue that this is not necessarily a bad thing because "by systematically modifying field roles, it may be possible to collect different kinds of data." The central argument here is that reflexivity in the research process is paramount, since it ultimately leads to better understandings of the social world. For May (1998) reflexivity has two dimensions: the endogenous and the referential. Endogenous reflexivity refers to the examination of the processes by which the communities under study constitute their social reality. Referential reflexivity is the study of the relations between the researcher and the community or group who are the focus of the research. Worsley (1997) finds that communities have their own ontological structures, which can be both subtle and complicated to the researcher who may not appreciate the community's own knowledge. Thus the 'outsider researcher' runs the risk of imposing ontological structures from his or her own dominant culture. This is where self-reflexivity is central to the process of developing a better understanding of the social world.

As a Deaf researcher I locate myself in a position to respect Deaf culture and Irish Sign Language. In this position I have gained critical insight into the condition of oppression that affected Deaf people. Self-reflexivity enables the 'insider researcher' or 'indigenous researcher' to engage with this research by playing a part in the re-articulation of the Deaf experience of education. The 'Insider Researcher' can be defined as researchers who identify principally with the culture of their own community under study and who contribute ethnographic knowledge primarily for the benefit of members of that community (Reinhartz, 1997). This appears to be a significant validation of the point that 'insider' knowledge is

important, as the same could be said about feminist research where women study women (Harding, 2003). According to Harding, the insider researcher constructs insider knowledge of a community or group using concepts from academia such as colonialism and presents this knowledge in a way that renders the culture, beliefs and values comprehensible and sympathetic to outsiders and insiders alike. The insider ethnographic contributions to academia may be crucial in bringing to light the dynamics of a culture that increases the possibility of more empowering research in the future (ibid).

Aguilar (1981) argues for insider research on the basis that the insider has already acquired an enormous amount of cultural knowledge that the 'outsider' researcher will have to learn either before entering the field or as an early part of the field experience. Insider research is therefore seen as "more economical and efficacious" (1981:16). Aguilar also claims that insiders are less likely to disrupt the social setting of a community and may find members less likely to conceal things from them. Thus the researched are likely to be interested in the researcher's attitude towards their culture and language. Therefore the insider researcher has the advantage in terms of access, in that those being researched are less likely to fear being judged or criticised.

5.4   Research Design

A necessary requirement of the ethnographer is the production of a research design that contains a strategic plan setting out structure and style of the research process (Creswell, 2007: 435-71). Since the study is conducted in "natural settings", it was necessary to be as flexible as possible since, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 23) note, the ethnographic research process is "replete with the unexpected." Therefore a great deal of preparation, flexibility, and sound judgement was required. What follows is a discussion of the "reflexive process" that I conducted through each stage of the project (Brewer, 2000: 25).

5.4.1   Sampling

Since this research is entirely focused on the deaf population of Ireland, non-probability sampling methods were used in this study for the potential to provide information that will contribute to a theory. In other words, certain people in the Deaf community were selected on the basis of their association with residential schools in Cabra. Creswell (2005) makes the distinction between two forms of non-probability sampling: "random sampling" and "purposeful sampling". In random sampling, researchers select individuals either to make claims about a population or to test a theory that explains a phenomenon. In purposeful

sampling, researchers select participants or research sites to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of the study. Purposeful sampling was selected for this study for the potential to give 'voice' to deaf people and to provide useful information.

Patton (1990:169) finds that purposeful sampling allows researchers select "information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are the ones which researchers can learn "a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the evaluation." I selected the Cabra schools and Deaf Village Ireland as a single site for study. Due to the nature of the study, purposeful sampling was therefore employed. The aim of this sampling method is to select the cultural scene and the research participants from that culture.

5.4.2 Selecting the cultural scene and participants

At this stage of the research process, I selected the Cabra schools and Deaf Village Ireland as the research site and deaf people as my research subjects. According to Holliday (2002:37) to find the research setting is,

> ...to go deep into definable setting in which phenomena can be placed meaningfully within a specific social environment. Such an environment can be groups of people, institutions, cases, geographical areas, communities, texts and so on.

Selection of topic was decided on the basis of previous interests or concerns about issues that resonate deeply within the auto-ethnography of the researcher (Holliday, 2002: 28). I intended to weave together stories of deaf people to provide insight into a time of historical change. The research site selected remained the central axis for considering a range of ways deaf people are redefining their relationships with society and their experience of education. The aim was to seek a sense of considerable diversity in perspectives regarding the impact of education and the practices of the educational institutions had on their lives.

One criterion I identified in Holliday (2002) that I employed in selecting the research site was the idea that the setting had to be defined as a culture. As Holliday suggests, the setting must also have people with whom I could interview and observe. Matthews (1996) identified the Cabra schools as a cultural site where Irish Sign Language flourished and this tradition was maintained outside of school. Both the schools and Deaf Village are linked and interrelated by history. These two spheres represent one site that provided information-rich data. As things turned out, there was sufficient access to the research sites and participants.

Holliday (2002: 43) argues every that classroom "has its own individual culture, but a wider, average culture for a particular educational institution can be ascertained by observing

a large number of cases." I must point out that selection was not based on convenience of access since this criterion would have led to certain limitations in the research (Walford, 2008). Selection was considered carefully and made on the basis of appropriateness, and also with due regard to close relations to the research questions. Research problems were identified from which more questions were asked. Appropriateness was much to do with the notion of a "natural" setting. In other words, the setting had to exist independently of the research and was not established specifically for the purpose of the project. Furthermore, the setting was not of my own creation and this is what motivated the research (Holliday, 2002: 37).

5.4.3 Access

Creswell (2005: 12) sounded a cautionary note with regard to access, emphasising that respect must be shown to the research site and the potential participants. As a first step, advice was sought about the best way to access the field because, as Walford (2008) warns, certain people could make or break the whole endeavour of doing research. Practical issues such as discussions with supervisors and gaining ethical clearance or approval from the college's Ethics Committee (MIREC) were sought.

The purpose of negotiating through a review process is to familiarise the MIREC board with the research process and strategies of inquiry. The college's researcher are required to provide detailed descriptions of a research design and the research methods to fully disclose potential risks and ensure that ethical procedures will be followed to minimise risk. Ethical considerations such as anonymity of participants and confidentiality procedures demonstrate ways in which research sites will be respected and how researchers can in some way reciprocate the participants. Of paramount importance is good research practice and conduct including intellectual honesty, accuracy, fairness, and protection of human subjects involved in the conduct of research (Creswell, 2005). The steps I took for obtaining approval from the MIREC included developing a detailed description of the research project rationale and purpose, research design and methodology, data collection techniques, steps taken to minimise risk, participant selection procedure, informed consent forms (Creswell, 2005: 208). The application was presented to the MIREC for review and approval was subsequently granted.

Access entails the processes of gaining entry into the field, meeting the people, identifying gatekeepers and selecting the appropriate spaces to conduct the study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Of particular relevance to this project is Creswell's

(2005: 63) point that access requires "multiple levels of approval from schools, such as district administrators, principals, teachers, parents, and students." Schools need to ensure that the rights of the participants in the research are protected. The researcher's ability to gain access to people and sites can help determine whether or not the study can be conducted (ibid: 63).

Due to my role as member of the Deaf community I had easy access to adult research participants. I know most of the participants and those I am acquainted with were introduced to me by the participants I knew since I attended school. With these people I did not need to negotiate access or to establish credibility and trust. Each of these participants were told the purpose of the interview and my role as researcher. Initially I approached them and asked if they were willing to be interviewed. Then I explained the purpose of the study. At the interview stage, I again reminded them of the purpose of the interview and the study and my role as researcher. The utility of serendipity in making fortunate discoveries by accident played a part in access and information retrieval. Fine and Deegan (1996: 436) defines the term as "the unique and contingent mix of insight coupled with chance." A chance encounter with a potential participant occurred during field work at the Deaf Village arena. Following an interview with a participant, I met a young Deaf adult on my way out from St. Joseph's. While we were chatting she asked me what I was doing in the area. After I explained the purpose of my visit, she seemed keen to know more about the project. I asked her if she'd be interested in doing an interview and she agreed. An interview was arranged for the following day. Later that day I booked a room for the interview session at the Deaf Village building. I had easy access to all individual participants apart from those living in a retirement home. Access had to be negotiated with a gatekeeper.

5.4.4   Role of gatekeepers

The gatekeeper issue was particularly relevant to the early stage of the study. The role of gatekeeper and my networking ability proved vital in the process of gaining access. Access to the field where it concerns vulnerable participants – people under 18 years of age and elderly people – began with a 'gatekeeper,' a person with inside knowledge of the cultural group or community selected for study (Creswell, 2007: 125). A gatekeeper is someone who "provides entrance to a site, helps researchers locate people, and assists in the identification of places to study" (Creswell, 2005: 209). As Creswell (2005: 209) points out, gatekeepers may be identified as a school teacher, school principal, group leader or someone with 'insider' status within a school. As such they are "actors with control over key sources and avenues of

opportunity." The process for taking time to find the right person is known as 'prospecting' (Walford, 2008: 22). Prospecting is considered a worthwhile exercise involving some preliminary research on people. One method of finding out about potential gatekeepers is to check the person's academic qualifications. For example, Walford (2008) suggests that someone who has done research for a postgraduate degree may be more receptive than someone who is not.

Identifying the right person for the role of gatekeeper is crucial in this study. Amongst the possible gatekeepers I have identified for this study are visiting teachers (for access to current and former mainstream educated deaf people), medical professionals[103], current school principals, the Co-ordinator of Deaf Education Centre, Deaf teachers and Deaf participants, the Manager of St. Joseph's House, Club secretary and chairperson, and Chief Executive Officer of the Catholic Institute for Deaf People (CIDP). All of these people hold some authority over potential participants. While all the people listed held a certain amount of sway over potential participants, I narrowed the list down to four gatekeepers: the CEO of CIDP, manager of the retirement home, and the principals of St. Joseph's and St. Mary's schools. The CEO of the CIDP provided the ideal direct link to the relevant gatekeepers in schools and the retirement home. School principals are said to be more likely to agree if it is ascertained that the researcher is 'one of us', someone who shares some common ground and experiences (Walford, 2008).

Since selection of gatekeepers itself is a sampling decision, I made the decision on the basis that they were quite public figures in the deaf community and the deaf education domain where they hold positions of authority. In identifying them I profiled them as a prelude to sampling based on reputational or biased sampling (Adler & Adler, 1987). Due to hierarchical positions in institutions, I found them to be the most appropriate people to relay information to potential participants.

The CEO was the first person I contacted due to his hierarchal position and the organisation's relationship with the schools and the retirement home. Under the circumstances I felt it was appropriate to take this path since the CEO was in a position to refer me to the relevant authorities in the aforementioned institutions. I emailed an attached letter to him outlining the purpose of the letter and purpose of the research (Appendix 1). Since he did not know me personally, I gave a brief synopsis of my school background and

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[103] Cochlear Implant specialists, audiologists, organisations, institutions

education. His role in putting me in touch to the relevant people was particularly helpful. The school principals were subsequently contacted by letter (Appendix 1).

The letter was not meant to get access to the research site but to gain an initial interview. Walford (2008) advises not to give too much detail in a letter as a long letter tends to give the reader the opportunity to nit-pick issues that give 'good grounds' to refuse or make an objection. On the other hand, a short letter containing a brief outline of the research proposal is more likely to encourage the reader to want to know more about the research project and more details can be given in an access interview. Walford (2008: 21) suggests the researcher adopt a salesman's approach to letter writing and meeting the gatekeeper should be adopted as if selling a product or service. The 'selling point' being research could benefit the community, the school and the participants.

Within a few weeks I was invited to meet for a discussion. The meeting took place at the schools and the residential home separately and at different times between the months of October and November 2012. The authorities subsequently obtained the approval of the Board of Management to carry out research work on site. Gaining their approval and support provided the benchmark in the project. At that stage I hoped they would offer ideas on how I might best go about approaching participants and get involved in activities and the location where I could perform the task of observing and interviewing them. With that in mind, a further meeting was arranged with the gatekeepers whereby I explained the sampling methods. I raised the question about how criterion-based sampling would impact on those eliminated from the list of potential participants. I told them I wanted to avoid the conflation of giving the impression that certain people are deemed worthy of volunteering but not participation (Pole and Morrison, 2003).

I had no clear idea how to deal with the situation but Fine and Sandstrom (1988) suggest gatekeepers could be consulted for advice on selection procedure. During discussion about how to differentiate key and other participants, both the school principals and manageress assured me that things would work out fine. They suggested a notice should be posted on a board inviting interested participants to participate and if they had any questions to ask a meeting would be arranged so that I would be in a position to answer them. Distinctions were made on the basis of attraction and appeal. These steps were taken conscientiously to ensure disturbance was kept to a minimum and that I was presenting myself as a 'guest' at the place of study. I had it in mind that the relevant authorities had an interest in protecting the participants (Walford, 2008; Pole and Morrison, 2003).

5.4.5   Selection of Research Participants

Once access was approved, I waited for the school principals to inform me of the number of interested participants. I had informed them in a letter that a maximum of eight post-primary pupils between the ages of 14 and 18 were identified for participation in group interviews (Appendix 2). A parent information sheet and consent form was attached to the letter (Appendix 3).

Apart from the elderly adult participants selected, a gatekeeper was not required. They were selected on the basis of deafness, understanding of cultural knowledge and school affiliation and a willingness to divulge information. The selection process is known as 'judgement sampling' Creswell (2005). Sampling demanded an exercise in sound judgement in selecting those involved. For example, I became aware that some participants were sensitive to the concerns of the research and needed assurance their rights would be protected by a consent form, that they were under no obligation to participate and when they did participate, they could still withdraw from the study at any time.

Purposeful sampling was used to select former pupils of the Cabra schools. The literature review was the guide behind the selection of adult participants since very little empirical research has been conducted on this particular group. The residential schools under study make deaf education an interesting area of study. Since the study is entirely focused on Deaf people the aim is to create a space for them to achieve greater visibility. Deaf adults educated in mainstream schools were included on the basis that they provide a contrast to the experiences of residential school. Other categories of deaf community membership were not considered: hearing people of Deaf parents (CODAs), hearing friends, parents, siblings, spouses of deaf people – all were purposefully excluded as their life experiences differed. Although many hearing people of Deaf parents are native ISL users, they are not selected for inclusion in this research due to the fact that they do not experience deafness.

The target number of people selected was 36 categorised into groups of 20 adults and 16 post-primary students. The target number for each school was 8 post-primary students selected for group interviews. A total of 20 adults and 7 students were interviewed. Out of a total of 20 adults 4 were elderly people living in retirement homes. A total of 7 students from the Cabra schools took part in focus group interviews at separate time- 5 boys and 2 girls. All participants were not reimbursed for taking part in this research project, nor were they given incentives or inducements for participation. In other words, participation was voluntary.

To ensure maximum variation, participants were selected due to family, school, gender and age background. For example, some Deaf people come from Deaf families while

others come from families with Deaf parents and hearing siblings or hearing parents with deaf siblings. As the literature review highlights, the majority of the Deaf population[104] come from hearing families. The implication of this selection criterion is to indicate the diversity of experiences. Indeed, there are a small minority of Deaf people with an extensive family of deaf grandparents, uncles and aunts and cousins and several generations of Deaf members in the family. It was intended to have an equal number of male and female participants selected, where both can contribute a variety of educational experiences but this was not possible. Dublin was selected as the ideal location to sample the Deaf population since a great majority of the deaf population in Ireland currently live in or near the city and the research site is in the capital.

Ladd (2003) finds that selecting known participants has added advantage in that they are easily identified for their level of awareness of the political, historical and cultural dimensions of education. As Ladd (2003) points out, Deaf researchers' insider status gives them the advantage where participants are more likely to feel comfortable discussing their experiences than they would with an outsider. While contact with Deaf participants was done by letter, I was conscious of the issue with literacy. Ladd (2003) informs us that the role of the Deaf researcher is different compared to the hearing researcher. There are issues to be considered that are not found in traditional or mainstream ethnographic interviews. With that in mind I offered to meet them to explain the letter in Irish Sign Language either in person or on recorded video. In most cases this was not necessary for those who understood the letter. In the letter I avoided use of academic jargon and wrote in plain English. The letter introduced the name and academic details of the researcher, the place of study, and the supervisors and contained an outline of what the project was about, the reasons for doing the study, and to whom it would benefit (Appendix 4). Prior to interviews, meetings were arranged with participants to engage in conversation with them. I wanted to try and build trust and ensure they had a good level of understanding of the purpose of the research. How would they know that my motivations were genuine and how could they trust that I will not abuse power they have exerted on my behalf? The consent form written in English was translated to ISL for them on the day of the interview before they signed it.

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[104] People who are Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing

5.4.6   Snowball sampling

'Snowball' sampling is one of the most commonly employed sampling methods in qualitative research (Noy, 2008). This process occurs where participants refer or introduce the researcher to other potential participants who are contacted by the researcher and then refer the person to another potential participant. The metaphor of 'snowballing' is depicted in the way participants are selected due to the accumulative element of sampling (ibid). During interviews the 'snowball sampling' technique was used in some cases where participants recommended another person or put me in touch with a potential participant. Sample size increased as a result. I was conscious of what Creswell (2005) points out that, since qualitative research takes time, the greater the number of people involved, the greater the length of time it takes to conduct the study. Nevertheless, I found snowball sampling had an advantage in knowing a few good participants.

5.5   Data Collection

Steps undertaken at the data collection stage include considering the actual data collection procedures, transcription, data analysis stage, categorising and organising of data, the writing up of ethnography and ethical considerations (Madison, 2005; Creswell, 2005; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Data collection methods identified as appropriate for this study include: interviewing, participant observation, documents and audio-visual materials.

5.5.1   Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted on a study of the experiences of former students of mainstream schools as part of the early stage of preparing the research. Four Deaf adults between the ages of 30-43 years willingly participated. They provided valuable insight into the requirements and needs of ethnographic fieldwork, into the value of doing critical ethnographic research and auto-ethnography. The purpose was to see how research skills can be fully applied for the main project at hand. The results of the pilot study is used as a supporting tool to this research

5.5.2   Ethnographic interviewing

A popular data collection method in ethnography is interviewing (Creswell, 2005: 214). Ethnographic interviewing entails a face to face encounter between researcher and participant. In this situation the interviewee responds to questions posed by the interviewer Spradley, 1979; Hammersely and Atkinson, 1995; Creswell, 2005). However, ethnographic interviewing is not a simple question and answer session in the conventional sense. It has

distinguishing features that contrast with ordinary interview situations. Ethnographic interviewing "collects verbal reports of behaviour, meanings, attitudes and feelings that are never directly observed in the face-to-face encounter of the interview but are the data the question is supposed to reveal" (Brewer, 2000: 63). The aim is to encourage people to talk about their worlds in their own way, and in their own terms.

Two types of ethnographic interviews were conducted in the study: one-to-one and focus group interviews. Creswell (2005: 215) points out that a popular approach to interviewing in educational research is the one-to-one interview format which may suit certain participants particularly those who are articulate and can easily share ideas. In this way, data is collected from one individual at a time. The focus group interview will involve the process of collecting data through interviewing a group of deaf pupils in one setting. Although the intention was to interview a group of eight pupils in each school, a total of seven pupils – five boys and two girls – responded with an expression of interest in partaking in the study and were subsequently interviewed in their respective schools following receipt of signed parental consent forms (Appendix 3).

During the interviews I asked a number of questions to the group and elicit responses from each individual in the group (Appendix 5). This approach was used to collect shared understanding from several individuals in one interview session (Creswell, 2005: 215). Group interviews were especially relevant to interviewing current students of the Cabra schools. Two group interviews were conducted at separate times over a two-day period during the months of October and November 2012. Creswell (2005) argues that gatekeepers are more likely to agree to have fieldwork proceed in their schools where focus group interviews will be conducted. The advantage of the group interview approach is that it enables the participants to discuss details with one another which in turn may elicit the best possible information that would not otherwise be possible in a one- to-one interview (Creswell, 2005). Certain details revealed by one participant helped jog another individual's memory and thereby co-operate in the discussion. While on campus Deaf teachers were selected for the one-to-one interview sessions.

A series of 22 interviews- 20 with individual adults and 2 with students- were conducted during the period from July 2012 to end of January 2013. Two participants withdrew from the study. In one case a request for extraction was made following an interview due to a concern about confidentiality where the participant felt that working in the field of Deaf education made it difficult to maintain anonymity. In the other case it occurred subsequent to the return of transcripts and triangulation and validation procedures. Again the

issue of anonymity was a concern. The secessions were acknowledged and respected by the researcher. Twelve one-to-one interviews with adult participants were conducted at Deaf Village Ireland and St. Joseph's, while others took place at the place of the residents. Both group and one-to- one interview took place during school term in order to gain rich, 'thick description' (Brewer, 2000).

The format of ethnographic interviews can vary from structured to unstructured or semi-structured or involve a combination of both (Creswell, 2005). I adopted a flexible approach combining unstructured and semi-structured interviewing techniques. In advance of interviews I drafted a formal list of closed and open-ended questions (Appendix 5). Answers were recorded on camcorder and by means of field notes. In order to give greater latitude to respondents to discuss freely, open questions were asked only when necessary and with minimum disruption to the storytelling. The intention was to go with the flow so that the responses could go in unanticipated directions and thereby elicit information-rich information (Creswell, 2005).

I followed Creswell's (2005) direction of starting the interviews with unstructured questions to facilitate discussion at length before probing questions were asked. Sometimes with experienced interviewees I avoided probing further when the storytelling flowed. This provided more in-depth information from the participants. Sometimes I triangulated by way of mentioning an incident in a story given by another participant without naming the person and taking care not to reveal anything traceable in the process. This method helped trigger some memory and provide rich detail. Burgess (1984: 102) calls this "conversations with a purpose." Furthermore Spradley (1979: 58-9) gives suggestions about conducting ethnographic interviews:

> It is best to think of ethnographic interviews as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants. Exclusive use of these elements will make interviews become like a formal interrogation. Rapport will evaporate and informants may discontinue their cooperation.

The trouble with ethnographic interviews as a data collection method is that they only provide information that is given by the interviewee (Creswell, 2005). Creswell (2005) reminds us that data may be deceptive in that participants may only give information that they feel the interviewer wants to know. In my case it was hard to know for certain if my participants were being truthful but where appropriate probing questions helped to elicit more information. My own insider status and presence as researcher may have affected how they responded to my questions. The presence of a camcorder or audio recording equipment may

be a factor that affects how participants respond to questions. This is known as 'interviewer effect' (Brewer, 2000). I believe the setting of the interview and the informal nature of conversational interviewing helped minimise interviewer effect.

As Brewer (2000: 65) suggests, I undertook reflexivity exercises and note taking before, during and after interviews in order to be aware of "situated understandings that interview data represent and that they convey this to the readers when writing up." During interviews I memorised details and noted them straight after the interview. Details like emotions were noted. I was conscious of using ice-breakers in case things became emotional. Ice-breakers came in the form of an offer of a coffee/tea break. On one occasion I had to switch off the camcorder and asked gently if the participant wished to continue or take a break. The eventual result was the interview had to be discontinued and never resumed. I was prepared to allow time for a cooling-off period but apart from that one interview it was not required. Overall I found participants showed a willingness to co-operate all through the interview.

5.5.3 Interview preparation

A vital part of interviewing is preparation since unforeseen difficulties may arise due to bad planning (Creswell, 2005). With that in mind, I made sure the location was accessible and convenient to the participants. I allowed them to decide on the location and in some cases was asked to make a suggestion. Deaf Village Ireland, St. Joseph's and St. Mary's and residential locations were selected following consultation with participants. The practical aspects of doing interviews were considered. Although I did not live on campus, I made many trips to Cabra at different times to spend two or three consecutive days in Dublin. Cost was not an issue and had no impact on the research process.

It was in September 2012 when I first returned to the scene of my childhood. That was the day of the first series of discussions I had with the school principals. I took the opportunity to absorb the surroundings, meet with the day-pupils and residential students and deaf teachers to assess suitability of rooms and classrooms prior to the actual event and familiarise with the health and safety regulations. Time and space proved crucial in arranging ethnographic interviews (ibid). Opportunities emerged spontaneously for an interview from regular field contacts. Classrooms and rooms in DVI buildings were booked in advance of interviews and in consultation with relevant authority figures.

On the day of interview the rooms were re-visited and inspected to assess visibility and suitable space for setting the interview and video equipment. With the environment a

deaf-friendly place, I encountered no difficulties in setting up the interview and the equipment and making seating arrangements. Room size was not an issue since classrooms accommodated up to twelve students. Seating arrangements were prepared to ensure clear face-to-face visibility of the participants and researcher[105]. This idea was significant given the visual nature of Irish Sign Language. In one-to-one interviews with deaf adults, seats were arranged in such a way that participant and researcher sat facing one another. In both cases the camcorder stood on a rod on my left side. In group interview settings, a semi-circular seating arrangement gave increase visibility to students and researcher. Strategically, the room was easy to find for the participants. The adult participants were familiar with the DVI area and the interview room was arranged in advance.

On the day of interview in the Cabra schools, most staff and students were aware of my presence and knew about the purpose of the research. The schools arranged the seats and participants took the seat of their own choosing. The group interview was conducted in the presence of a teacher. This was agreed in advance for health and safety reasons. The idea of providing lunch or refreshments was considered but the school assured me this was not necessary. Recording equipment was set up and tested ten minutes before the interview.

Prior to signing the consent forms, I thanked the participants for agreeing to take part before going on to explain in ISL the purpose of the study, interview procedure and reminded them of their right to confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time. In the case of students, I received the consent forms signed by parents before the interview took place. I explained the purpose, procedure and their rights to confidentiality and withdrawal. Permission was sought to interview and record on video by getting the participant and in the case of students, their parents, to sign a form of consent.

Ladd (2003) and Forbes-Robertson (2004) suggest that deaf interviewers sit beside the video equipment placed on a ramrod and face the interviewee. Yet this raises the issue of how ISL questions will be recorded on camera. A way around this was to instruct the participant to repeat the question I asked in ISL for the benefit of the camera before answering. Participants understood the need for that and co-operated accordingly. As all interviews were conducted in ISL, an interpreter was not required. I wrote detailed notes before and after interviews and on the data observed on video as soon as possible after the event in an attempt not to lose any information, particularly where it concerned my own questions and contributions. Although a formal list of questions was prepared and

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[105] Clear visibility is crucial bearing in mind that ISL is a visual language. Participants facing a window, for example, may be blinded by light and may have difficulty in accessing discussions in ISL.

constructed, I had a clear idea of the kind of discourse that might be present in the interviews. The questions were based on an interview guide (Appendix 5) to make it possible to develop a list of areas for discussion.

5.5.4 Interview procedure

Before I began the interview, I reiterated that their interview was to be video recorded. I allowed them the opportunity to make an objection before proceeding. I then explained that if they wished I could switch off the camcorder momentarily should they want to express a view that they did not want recorded. I also explained that field notes would be used to record data not recorded on video. I assured them I would endeavour to ensure these notes or transcripts of the actual interview would *not* be traced back to them. While questions were asked in ISL, they were presented in a way that was age-appropriate and that participants could easily understand. In some cases I was asked to repeat a question. I also asked them if they understood me. In the classroom I repeated a question by asking it in an alternative way.

As a neutral opener, I began by asking them to briefly discuss their family and the circumstances surrounding diagnosis and the lead up to the first day of residential school. Communication and language was a dominant theme in the narratives. This is particularly evident where respondents from hearing families encountered problems with communication. The interview guide illustrating themes derived from the literature review proved useful. Table 1.1 outlines relevant topics or categories to be explored with participants and Table 1.2 forms the interview guide. Throughout the group interviews I encouraged participants to direct their response to the group. For the most part, I had difficulty getting the discussion going. This is probably due to my lack of experience at doing group interviews. About 15 minutes before the end of the one-hour interview I decided to change tack and asked others to respond to a story related by a group member. I wanted to see if any of them could identify with the story. It worked a treat as lively discussion followed. I kept it in mind to use this tactic for the next group interview. It goes to show that experience can be a great teacher at the best of times. I must state a limitation arose in these sessions where I was only given consent to do one interview and there was no follow up. However, casual conversation helped elicited more useful information. The presence of the teacher may have been another possible constraint to the interview process where participants may have been prevented from being more open in their discussions. Overall, though, I found participants co-operative and attentive and staff members were very helpful and courteous.

Apart from a couple of elderly people interviewed, adults required little direction from me. Care was taken when stories began to trigger memories of trauma in the participants. How did I respond to trauma? I actually ended up sharing my stories with them. It was a spontaneous reaction due to the fact that I was so immersed in their stories. A variety of trauma stories were told and shared. Sometimes I was asked to turn off the camcorder. When I did we shared a lot of memories, and the memories caused me to feel tearful and sad. It was only when I left the building that I allowed the tears to flow. During interviews I had to keep my emotions in check to allow participants to sign about their experiences. Sometimes forgotten memories resurfaced in my mind.

Creswell (2007: 82) recommends doing a second interview two or three weeks after the first interview. The initial interview introduced topical areas for discussion and the questions are formulated based on theories and hypotheses. For the second round of interviews, seven adult participants were selected where concepts were presented to them in small cards. The method provided an opportunity to triangulate and validate the contents of their stories and to expand on certain points I raised. As with all participants there was an option for them to review statements that they may want to reformulate, replace or remove.

5.5.5   Participation and Observation

A decision had to be made on whether or not observation should be confined to social interaction based on being a remote observer of behaviour with no attempt at participation in the interaction or to engage in participant observation. Observation, as part of data collection, took place in the months between July 2012 and February 2013. While observing a class in session, I unconsciously engaged in question and answers with teacher and student. It was only after the vent that I became aware of my role in the class. I had shifted from a non-participant role to that of a contributor to the class lessons. I asked a teacher to tell me the title of the story they were reading. The question led to more questions and a discussion about the "Coming of the King" followed by which I found myself observing and asking questions. I got the sense of being 'involved' in the class and noted it in my writing later. On reflection, I had just changed roles without considering the implications that I had moved from outsider to insider roles (Creswell, 2005). Creswell (2005: 212) writes that 'observation' entails a "process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site." The participant observer gets involved in activities. In the participatory role there is the risk of being removed from using a critical eye for detail that details recorded may be less concrete (ibid).

An important research device in ethnography for transmitting cultural understanding and knowledge is field notes. Van Maanen's (1988: 119) classic work offers insight into personal narratives and personal observation. In field notes I wrote my thoughts and feelings in relation to the research sites and participants to see how they impacted on the research process. Observation and notes were taken over a two and three full consecutive day period on seven occasions in six months. In school I sat with teachers in the staff canteen. Conversational topics varied from school to general education, to legislation to the history of the school. One teacher informed me there was concern about the future of the school. Sometimes I went outside for a look around which gave me the chance to record notes. I decided not to write notes in front of the staff and pupils. Due to the visual nature of the researcher-participant, it was impossible to write notes while observing participants signing to me. Notes were written directly after the event. In any event, field notes should be made immediately after each field contact.

I was able to ease in and out of the site at regular intervals and took time to look around and gain a general feel of the area. I was shown around the building and introduced to all staff and many of the pupils. At Deaf Village Ireland I took a wander around the place observing how people interacted with each other. I noticed things I took for granted as a member of the community rather than researcher. I wrote notes either in my car or while I waited to chat with the principal. While note taking was a vital part of observation, I relied on memory and a sharp awareness of the surroundings for details.

5.5.6   Transcribing and documentation of Data

A significant part of the work involved documentation of data. Mainstream assumptions about research most commonly concern themselves to audio and voice recordings (Flick, 2002: 167). As Ladd (2003) states, this has been the most widespread and common form of data collection. In that regard, this study is a departure from traditional forms of data collection. For example, the language used in interview situation is of visual-manual modality and therefore does not constitute sound recordings. The task for this researcher was to transcribe interviews in ISL to English. Therefore the actual practice of transcription is fundamental to examining data from interviewing and observing participants who are deaf/Deaf (Ladd, 2003). The production of the camcorder-recorded transcript is an analytical process in itself. Van Maanen (1988: 95) notes that transcription statements may lead to different versions of events. This is because there are many ways to interpret data recorded and they can be disputed on many points. Thus the actual transcript should not be viewed as

data, but rather as a "representation" of it (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). The data is the actual interaction and the recording is merely a "good enough" reproduction of it (Sacks, 1984: 26).

Instead of doing a word for word transcript I watched the full taper in order to gain a full understanding of the context. On revisiting the recording I put on paper the meaning contained in the stories. I also added a summary of the event. While this was time-consuming, it was a worthwhile task since it had me sufficiently prepared to write the full transcripts. Ladd (2003) offers a standard method of transcribing a sign language to written English. Since sign language does not have written form I considered engaging the service of ISL interpreters for validation checks but Flick (2002: 171) states that "linguistic exchange" of data for exactness actually absorbs time and energy. Instead, I took the 'interpretive' approach and invested time in the interpretation of meaning. Flick (2002: 173) proposes that researchers conduct a re-check of the transcript against the video-recording to ensure closeness and attaining maximum exactness.

Transcripts were returned to participants to give them an opportunity to correct things, make adjustments and add any changes. Amended summaries were returned to the participants for validation. On receipt of these I included them as data collected. Over the next month I went through a process of revision and reading until I discovered certain themes and strands emerged in the data. The next step was to organise data into categories.

5.5.7 Translation issues

Ladd (2003) advises researchers undertaking a study on Deaf people to be aware of fundamental translation issues pertaining to sign language and the majority language. Since the production of a camcorder-recorded transcript requires the translation of Irish Sign Language to English, the researcher must pay close attention to linguistic features that may be omitted from written texts. According to Mishler (1986: 47), transcribing video/tape recorded interviews is "complex, tedious, and time consuming work that demands [..] the use of explicit transcription rules, and a well-specified notation system." Ladd (2003) maintains that transcripts should not be viewed as data but a "representation" of it (e.g. Hutchby & Wooffit, 1998). Data obtained from participants is the actual interaction, and camcorder-recording is merely a "good enough" reproduction of it (Sacks, 1984: 26). I was aware of the possibility of mistranslation and of the difficulty of avoiding subjectivity. I am satisfied, however, that having checked with the participants for validation and accuracy the transcripts closely represent data obtained from the interviews.

5.5.8 Validity

Validity, as a procedural rule, represents an important part of the research project (Brewer, 2000; Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2005), the term has been primarily associated with quantitative research methods of inquiry but it has received a great deal of attention in qualitative research for evidence could be tested not only for accuracy but also for credibility. The kind of data built by ethnographers who have established relationships of trust with participants are likely to be of use to validity (Walford, 2008). The production and representation of data becomes the starting point for judging their validity. Issues of representation of data are then addressed (Flick, 2002: 222). All transcripts included in the project were validated by participants. They were given ample time for reflection and feedback opportunity enhanced validity. Validation has been conceptualised as being characteristic of postmodern ethnography (Lather, 1991; Creswell, 2007: 204).

5.5.9 Catalytic validity and Triangulation

Triangulation was first used in the social sciences to describe multiple data-collection techniques designed to measure a single concept (Creswell, 2007: 204). It involves the use of multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes. Denzin (1978: 292) outlines various strategies of triangulation including multiple data technologies, multiple theories, multiple researchers and multiple methodologies. In this project I utilised a theory-triangulation approach which involves analysing and comparing video-recorded and other recorded materials as well as historical documents and papers. I was able to place them side by side for assessment (Denzin, 1989b: 239-40). Callender (1997: 8) finds that catalytic validity, a process of increasing participants' awareness of their own situations, "requires that documentation of the research project should lead to greater awareness and, where possible, the increased participation of informants." It can take the form of informal discussion and, as Ladd (2003) notes, it is vital to ensure the increased involvement of participants.

5.6   Data Analysis

Creswell (2005: 241) notes that "developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and forming an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development." Themes that emerge in the data were both layered and inter-related. This means that for each theme sub-themes emerged. Subsequently I linked the various themes together in chronological order before grouping them according to their sub-themes. It was interesting to note Atkinson suggest organising data in different

ways: chronological, thematic and natural history. This process entails experimenting with themes and ideas, shifting them into groups, reading and re-reading each category of data to ensure clarity of meaning.

5.6.1   Data protection principles and data storage

Following recorded interviews, cross-validation and triangulation procedures formed part of the research process. Where appropriate personal identifiers such as individual names and addresses were removed from link file and replaced by a study number unique to each participant. Appropriate security measures are in place to protect against unauthorised access alteration, disclosure or destruction of information in accordance with the eight rules of Data Protection Act 1988 and 2003.

Access to computer stored information is restricted to the researcher- and is password protected. At all times waste papers, printouts, etc. were disposed of carefully. Information stored on computer is password protected. Information stored on disk or USB is currently secured in a metal box locked in the reading room. Data recorded on CD/DVD disks will be kept in a locked file cabinet marked by numerical identifiers and accessible only to this researcher. Hard copies of data will be locked in the filing cabinet in Mary Immaculate College. Data will be kept for three years following completion of the research project. I engaged in discussions with supervisors and advice was sought on areas of potential difficulty or conflict. Regular consultation with supervisors was maintained throughout the duration of the project. Vigilance has been accorded to the project in case of unauthorised access alteration, disclosure or destruction of information in accordance with the eight rules of Data Protection Act 1988 and 2003. This researcher will have access to and custody of the data. Database linkage information will be stored for 3 years after the completion of the project at Mary Immaculate College after the publication of research results and should be disposed of thereafter. Data without personal identifiers can be kept indefinitely. For audio/video-taped data involving sensitive topics, consent will be sought from participants on the method and duration of data storage. Hard copies of data will be destroyed one year following completion of the project. The intervening period allows this researcher to check data for any research papers which may emerge from this project.

5.6.2   Organising and categorising data

Due to the volume of data and the nature of narrative, I utilised a thematic content analysis data. From the transcripts I distilled a list of common themes in order to give expression to the stories of the participants. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999:154), this entails identifying,

> salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together

Consequently the vast amount of data was reduced to a more manageable proportion. Wherever possible names derived from the actual comments of the participants were assigned to identified themes. In many cases I selected the themes on the basis of commonality. On that basis, organising data and naming themes (categorising) required some level of "interpretation" on my part but was kept to a minimum. I began by deciphering the transcripts into themes and sub-themes. Since the opening lines in the stories told by participants commonly followed a similar pattern the main themes were organised in the following way:

Theme 1:   Family background;

Theme 2:   Education;

Theme 3:   Post-school years

At the heart of each story are the identifiable themes of *language*, *communication* and *culture*. These categories formed the sub-themes and were derived from the main themes. After I had identified and named each theme I looked for key words and phrases, which summarise elements of the data, or capture the essence of what was said (Pole and Lampard, 2002). Quotations were lifted out of their original context from the transcriptions and I linked them with the wider project. I was conscious of the wording and decision of including quotes that they would not be traced back to the participants. In the end I had a series of quotes and excerpts and had them validated by the participants. Therefore, as the data was re-read for a third and fourth time, descriptive and interpretative notes, on what the informants said during the interviews, were made in the margins. These notes acted as categories to the data, becoming what Pole and Lampard (2002) refer to as "signposts" to the data. Table 1 displays the Categories and Codes developed within each category:

Table 1 Categories and Codes

Family background and experiences	Educational experiences	Post-school	Deaf village
Culture/ language- Deaf or hearing family?	Language/culture/identity Oralism/audism	Resistance/ revival	Culture/education

Taking each category individually, and using them as signposts to the relevant sections in the data, the transcripts were reread and significant statements made by each individual within each category were extracted. The statements extracted from each category were then grouped together as patterns began to emerge. For example, in the first category – school and educational experiences – participants shared stories of their experience of oralism. Their experiences were matched with others to develop further themes on culture, difference and fragmentation of identities. This was significant in the context of the literature review in Chapter Three. The purpose was to interrogate the educational ideology inherent in the discussion. This was a phase of analysis that brought me to various sub-themes derived from the data. This developed into a pattern of experiences, beliefs and understandings that were identified during this stage of data analysis are presented in Chapter Four. For example, patterns that have emerged from participants include the practices of coercion, punishment, and surveillance.

The final stage of data analysis involved comparing patterns of experiences and beliefs that emerged within each category, across all categories in order to identify an overlapping pattern of experience and belief. By combining the significant and alternative patterns that emerged during data analysis stages, a theory on how Deaf people resisted oppressive forces and empowered themselves in the process from their own perspective was developed and presented in Chapter Six, Seven, and Eight.

Thematic content analysis was useful for the way it helped reduce the large volume of data and make it more manageable for the study. Following interpretations and thematic content analysis I organised the themes and data and presented them in the subsequent chapters.

5.7   **Ethical Considerations**

Approval from the Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee (MIREC) was granted before beginning the fieldwork stage of the research. The conduct of the researcher is crucial in maintaining close adherence to ethical considerations. The need for a rigorous approach to ensure best research practice and an ethics of care is a critical area for this research project and therefore ethical approval was required. Given the nature of the study and the selection of vulnerable participants this was a valuable research activity as the aim was not only to contribute to the well-being of society but also to ensure the research process does not exploit the rights of the participants and the benefits of the research must be safeguarded. The following is a discussion of the steps taken to minimise risk in line with MIREC guidelines and codes of practice.

5.7.1   Ethical principles

This study is guided by five ethical principles: (1) Non-maleficence; (2) Munificence; (3) Justice; (4) Respect for autonomy; (5) beneficence

Non-maleficence

An important ethical concern in educational ethnography is the principle of 'do no harm' (non-maleficence) and maximising possible benefits (beneficence). These principles apply to research subjects, gatekeeper, the cultural group under study and society at large.

Critical ethnographers have a responsibility to anticipate problems and, as far as possible, to resolve them without harming the research participants, others connected with the field, the group under study and society at large. As a member of the Deaf community I have an awareness of the 'local level politics' (Swartz, 1969), a politics in which there exist multiple perspectives concerning methodology, culture and language in Deaf education. Prior to entrée in the field I was sensitised to power relations within the field that by the time I entered the field my awareness had increased. Care had been taken to manage relationships with the people to the best of my ability throughout the fieldwork and the research process. It was important to be sensitive towards research participants who did not know much about the political, social and cultural issues that permeated the field. I was aware of my responsibilities to the participants in a position to anticipate possible harm or repercussions to participants and other members of the Deaf community and wider society. Care was taken to ensure the physical, social and psychological well-being of all participants. Their rights and interest had to come first. Preparation of interviews and selection of interview location was

considered with these issues in mind. For example, the locations were selected for convenience to the participants rather than for the researcher. Locations were selected on the basis where it was possible to keep disturbance to a minimum.

Informed consent does not absolve me from my obligation to protect the participants. Given that English is not the first language of most of the participants, it was imperative to avoid using language that participants were hardly going to understand. Informed consent was communicated in a language that was accessible to the participants. I was aware that participants could find the experience of doing interviews on camcorder a disturbing one. Prior to starting interview I reminded the participants of their right to withdraw at any time and their right to anonymity. I explained the possible consequences of doing the interview that if they find it difficult to discuss their educational experience, they could either take a recess or stop the interview and resume at a later time or end it altogether. All participants were happy to continue. During the course of their interviews at St. Joseph's House two elderly people showed signs of distress. The interview took place in the presence of a staff member. After the camera was switched off there followed a five minute recess during which we engaged in casual conversation. Once the participants looked relaxed and comfortable I asked if they wished to continue. One of them did not want to resume. The other was happy to continue but after five minutes she decided to end the interview. Subsequently the participants withdrew from the research. I checked with the participants and staff member for an update to ensure there were no possible effects or harm done to them. They assured me that they were fine. While it was not possible to guarantee the interests and safety of participants it was necessary for me to return to the participants to engage in casual chat with them to see if there were any issues that I needed to address.

Respect for autonomy

Throughout the field work I remained sensitive to social relationships with people and avoided actions or statements that could be disruptive to these relationships and relationships between people within the group under study. Researchers should avoid undue intrusion into the private space of individuals and institutions without permission. It must be borne in mind that researchers have no special entitlement to study all phenomena. Where vulnerable participants are concerned interviews took place in the presence of a teacher or member of staff. When there was an interruption to the interview session, someone called the teacher aside for a chat. To avoid risk to health and safety reasons I left the room and waited in the hallway until they were finished. Care was taken not to intrude uninvited upon private space

and that participants did not suffer intrusion in private and personal domains. Potential threats to confidentiality and anonymity were avoided whereby all traceable details were removed or altered and storage and security of information were adhered to.

Relationships have important ethical implications since they can harm those studied especially the accounts written of their lives. Researchers have responsibilities towards participants and gatekeeper to gain and maintain trust. I used social skills to the best of my ability in making progress towards long-term relationships. I was conducive to open dialogue with gatekeepers, participants and other people within the field. This was done by showing a genuine interest in people and the environment. A strong relationship of trust was built with the people in the schools under study, in the St. Joseph's Home for Deaf and Deaf-Blind Adults and in the Deaf Village arena. In all that time I was alert to power relations within the field. There were questions asked of me by staff and teachers about my work and my connection with St. Joseph's and Beech Park. It was important I avoided commenting or giving my opinions about anything that might be construed as criticism of people or institutions. Throughout, I remained calm and offered assurances that there was no obligation on their part to carry on with the interview. In order to ensure they were not affected I engaged in chat with them in the aftermath. A member of staff was presence throughout before, during and after the session.

From the time I entered the research site I was able to build rapport with the gatekeepers and my participants. This was vital from the point of view of building trust. I built a good professional relationship with the gatekeepers conscious not to devolve responsibilities upon the gatekeeper. The school principals supported me when placing an open invite to the students to participate and contacted me with information on the number of interested students. To maintain trust I was open about my research interest and membership role in the community.

I began the research conscious of my role as researcher and member of the Deaf community. The roles shifted when I returned to the Deaf Village to attend a meeting or social function. Being part of the community meant I had friendship links with people. In some cases I was a 'friendly cultural stranger' (Deegan, 1995) as well as a familiar face amongst the crowd. How did these people see me – as friend or researcher? With access to many snippets of information I become sensitised to relationships, conscious of my responsibilities as researcher to treat people with utmost care, "doing no harm, being kind and considerate, and honouring norms of reciprocity" (Ellis, 2007). I managed this situation well by avoiding a discussion on sensitive topics and respected the rights of those who choose not

to get involved in the research. The issue of language was foremost on my mind since literacy may be a concern for some of the participants. Language has the potential to exclude or include and this was a theory I kept in mind. In all the time I was doing fieldwork I was conscious of participants' rights, seeing that their interest and indeed privacy should be protected.

Munificence

Participants were made aware that their involvement was wholly voluntary. There was no economic exploitation of individual participants.

Justice

This research was conducted where participants were treated in a fair and just manner. All were treated equally and no one was unjustly favoured. Participants from the Cabra schools were invited to participate and all interested individuals were selected equitably.

Beneficence

Professional and scholarly integrity was maintained throughout the research process. Information in the study will serve the interest of the schools and the Deaf community and will not threaten their good reputation. A five page summary of the research findings will be produced and made available to the Cabra schools at their request. It must be said that research can never be entirely objective in selecting research site and topics all of which reflect a bias in the researcher in favour of the cultural values of Deaf people. In striving for objectivity I have maintained the principle of openness and transparency and have ensured there are no misleading results or misrepresentations of findings.

5.7.2 Informed consent

MIREC guidelines and codes of practice recommend that signatures from adult participants or, in the case of children, their parents or guardians be required for consent to participate. A clause contained in the consent form allows the participant to withdraw consent at any time (Appendix 1-4). On that basis, freely given informed consent was based on the expressed belief in the need for truthful and respectful exchanges between researcher and participants. The possibility of publishing the results of the study in peer-reviewed *journal* article, *book*, or *thesis* form to be made available to the academic world and to the Deaf community was stated clearly in the participant's information sheet and the consent form. They were assured

that results would not be published in a form that permits the identification of individual participants but in a form that gives due regard to cultural and other sensitivities.

In the case of elderly participants, care staff assisted them in giving consent. One of the care staff was present when I gave them procedural details. This is to ensure the participants were comfortable and understood fully what was involved before signing the consent forms. The case of children was slightly different. There is no specific age when the child becomes competent but once children reach the age of 18, no one else can take their decisions on their behalf. Consent was given by the parents before the actual interview. On the day of interview a teacher was present when I explained the procedures and reminded them of their right to withdraw at any time. The same was said to all participants. I encountered no resistance from the students after the parents consented.

For the purpose of this study informed consent entails communicating in a language that is accessible to them. Given that English is not the first language of most of the participants it was essential that information sheet was delivered in English and a follow up be given by way of a presentation in Irish Sign Language to explain the purpose of the study, anticipated consequences, anticipated uses of data, possible benefits of the study, issues relating to data storage and security, and degree of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants must have legal capacity to give consent. In the case of students a parental information sheet and consent form was supplied. Consent required constant renegotiation over time. I had to return to participants for further interviews to elicit some important information. The issue of consent was addressed and I also assured them that their rights to anonymity and confidentiality would be protected and they could withdraw at any time.

5.7.3 Openness

It was important to be honesty and open from the time of entry into the field. This formed the basis of my relationship with participants and representatives of the institutions under study. For example, at the meeting with school principals and manageress I explained clearly the purpose of the research and assured them that I would endeavour to avoid doing harm to the participants and the school. I explained in detail the research procedure. I also invited them to ask questions in person or in an email. Prior to adult participants signing the consent forms, I informed them that signing it meant they were involved in the study. I then explained the purpose of the study. I asked if there were any questions they wanted to ask concerning the consent form and the purpose of the study. This was to test their understanding of what I had just told them. It was important to avoid deception about the nature of the study. This was to

ensure there was openness and transparency in the research process. I explained the possibility of discussing sensitive topics may arise at some stage during the interview and that steps would be taken to minimise stress. Throughout the field work stage I engaged in close consultation with teachers and parents in order to be aware of any issues concerning field work.

In the participant information sheet, I outlined the research procedure and informed them of their right to refuse participation whenever and for whatever reason they wish. A consent form was attached to the sheet. Participants were told how far they were afforded anonymity and confidentiality, e.g. data will only be used for the purpose of the research. I explained how data were being collected, what the researcher would do with the data and to who they would be released and the researcher's contact details such as name, address, e-mail addresses, and mobile numbers. It is important for the researcher to be clear about what participants are giving consent to. Participants need to be clear that they are asked to agree to the processing of data. For the letter of consent to be as clear and concise as possible, the researcher needs to write in accessible language and avoid using jargon.

5.7.4 Confidentiality

Walford (2008: 32) notes that anonymity "has become the default option for most ethnographic work in education." The difficulty with ethnographic research where anonymity is concerned is where ethnographers spend a great deal of time on the research site that their identity is known to the people in the area (Brewer, 2000; Walford, 2008). With so many people knowing about the research it is difficult to conceal the identity of the participants involved if reports have local or national exposure. It is vital, therefore, that steps be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants in the study.

In line with MIREC ethical approval, the anonymity of *all* participants is protected by pseudonyms or aliases. As Walford (2008: 35) points out, the use of pseudonyms "means that readers are unable to verify any of the material presented in a research report." In this way care was taken in the processing of data and presentation of the report so participants would not be identified. Following discussion with participants, details that were deemed traceable to these individuals were removed, changed or re-written in a way that rendered a composite picture rather than a description of one individual. Extracts of a report deemed identifiable were sent back to participants for validation. Care has been taken with reportage in that it is accurately presents the contexts of the discussion with participants before, during and after interviews. Views and opinions were presented with supporting arguments and evidence. I

endeavoured to ensure that the final report does not use any quotes or identifying details that may cause the 'gatekeeper' or any third party to identify the participants from the information used in the narrative.

Where the research site is concerned, to give the schools and Deaf Village Ireland anonymity would not work in practice. Employing institutions as research sites means researchers have to explain social conditions and history and geographical locations, appearance and facilities. Therefore the research site has to be identified to be "understood in the context of its history and socio-political location" (Walford, 2008: 35). The issue of confidentiality can be overcome by a confirmation on the signed consent form that the participants' real names and identities would not be revealed. The assurance of confidentiality has practical benefits to this study since the informants are much more likely to participate in the research and to give honest and valid responses to questions.

5.8   Scale and Scope of the Study

The primary concern of this study is Deaf people's experience of education and culture. Due to financial and time constraints, the study limited its investigation to the Cabra schools. Consequently it did not allow for assessment of other schools for the Deaf in Ireland. Moreover, due to the scope, a number of people were excluded from analysis on the basis of age, hearing status and school affiliation. Children in the age bracket of 3 to 14 years were not considered. Given the age profile of these potential participants it was considered inappropriate to engage in ethnographic interviewing without fully understating the interview process. The ultimate goal of ethnographic interviewing is for participants to provide a vivid description of their educational experiences. Care extends to the researcher being adequately skilled and experienced to communicate with young children. An alternative to interviewing might be narrative inquiry but while this method is beyond the scope of this study it offers a great deal of flexibility in generating data from the stories of young children (Creswell, 2008). Findings from this study, therefore, could only reflect current and former pupils of the Cabra schools and Beech Park, both of which were located in Dublin. While the study did not allow for an investigation of former or current Deaf students of mainstream schools, the results could be utilised as a reference for further study on their experiences of mainstream education.

5.9   Ethnographic Writing

The implications of writing ethnography can be found in Clifford and Marcus' (1986) classic work *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* which discusses the encounter of the self and the writing of ethnography. The decision on how to express and present data in written form is at the heart of ethnographic writing. Holliday (2002: 98) finds a distinction between "data as *evidence* and writing as presentation and *discussion* of this evidence within the context of developing *argument*." In ethnographic writing, documentation and analysis must be communicated in a language that is accessible to the reader (ibid). For Clifford and Marcus (1986) ethnographic representations are inherently subjective and partial. To address concerns about bias the critical ethnographer needs to be self-reflexive. The researcher needs to question their own assumptions and views concerning the research findings and the writing. The process of self-reflexivity requires the researcher to ask questions: what is my cultural background? Who am I writing to? What are my personal views? Who is writing the text? With these questions in mind, Wolcott (1990: 20) suggests that ethnographers begin the process of writing prior to entering the field. Writing a personal narrative using the auto-ethnography method of writing enabled me not only to be self-reflective but also to think clearly. As Becker (1986: ix) notes, our thoughts become clearer as we write and this in turn helps the process of writing and rewriting.

Data derived from student participants and writing was presented as characters in a classroom drama to serve as their stories rendered at interviews and participant observation. As characters they served multiple purposes to portray the setting and interactions during class and group interviews. What the characters say reflects what the students discussed. I called upon my critical auto ethnographic orientation to help me write using a literary convention. The transcripts of the interviews and field notes of observations were employed to create characters, plots and dialogue. The main story line followed a class on teaching Ted Hughes' short play which "produced a fairly dense academic plot" (Ellis, 2004: 337). In writing it I gave myself freedom to make parts of the dialogue reveal themselves. As Ellis notes that freedom created its own pressure in that I tried to faithfully reflect what actually happened the day of the group interviews and observations. I resisted the temptation to make it more dramatic since to me the story line appears rather mundane. However I feel I have accomplished what I set out to achieve in that I tried to present it as authentic in the way I developed plot and dialogue.

5.9.1 Field notes

During field work the ethnographer "writes down in regular, systematic ways what [he or she] learns while participating in the daily rounds of life of others" (Emerson, 1995)[106]. Writing field notes was an essential part of observational techniques. During the course of field work I made notes and jotted down observations on human behaviour and to generate explanations and understandings and generally arrive at conclusions based on these observations. It was important to be conscious of the need to go beyond the subjective and eliminate bias by using a self-reflexive approach to the notes. My insider status meant I was able to follow much of the local dialogue and pick up on local meanings as expressed in every day discourse. Field notes and analytical notes were stored in electronic copy and hard copy format and care was taken to ensure confidentiality. Field notes recorded contemporaneous events. Field notes were only a representation of the selected events I had witnessed. They do not accurately describe them since it is difficult to record every detail and everything that happened (Emerson, 1995). Field notes represent a broad set of intuitive understandings of field work situations.

5.9.2 Writing Up, Writing Down

The idea of "Writing Up and Writing Down" was inspired by Atkinson (1992). The process involves constructing the field through observation (ethnographer's gaze), writing down "texts-of-the-field" and writing up the interpretation of the work (Atkinson, 1992: 9). Following the writing of field notes I re-read notes in an attempt to make sense of what I had written down. The next step was to go through the process of 'writing up' of consciously making sense and refining on what I had written down. Therefore writing up is based on what I have written down. While writing up I was initially alerted to the significance of ethical consequences of writing practices that I had considered for the auto-ethnography. Since I may well be implicated in the writing the personal identifier "I" cannot be removed from the textual constructions of writing the text. Everything I have noted on paper, read and write will have this researcher as writer and narrator implicated in it. This does not invalidate the writing in any shape or form but the shadow of the researcher will always be part of the writing and that has to be acknowledged.

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[106] Emerson (1995) http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit/SEAreadings/Robert%20et.al.%20-%20Writing%20Ethnographic%20Fieldnotes.pdf

CHAPTER SIX

CREATING CULTURE: DEAF LIVES IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, 1930-1960

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> It was an important game. St. Joseph's had good players. We would soon be the best in the league, better than hearing people in other schools. The boys on the field knew what to do with the ball. The boys in the other team called to each other for the ball. For our team the pass would come when the hand was raised. But this alerted our opponent. They always seemed a step ahead of us, passing the ball at will, making it difficult to decode their strategy and to try and shut them down. In St. Joseph's the boys trained hard and knew how they liked to play. The trained eye would see an opening and the mind knew when a team mate was ready to move forward. The wingers made a direct run to the other half of the field. A game plan was learned from the training field and the in-house league games. It was important to know when your opponent was going to move. Timing was crucial. Trained to be in the right place at the right time, the boys out smarted the others. Some of us were naturally gifted soccer players. There was one with quick feet. He ghosted past a few as if they were fresh air. Then the referee waved his arms and signalled for the ball. The end the first half, and we were level at nil-nil.

In writing this chapter I present thematically-organised data collected material of the lived experiences of the participants who were schooled during the period between 1930 and 1960. The various ethnographic themes and sub-themes are presented to reflect the experience of language and culture. The aim is to explore communication issues and culture in greater depth through the use of quotation and extracts from the stories of the participants. It is worth bearing in mind that deaf narratives of life before and during residential school sometimes feature trauma stories. In all, eight participants of the pre-oralism era – Angela (1930-1936), Niamh (-1952 circa), Lesley (1932-1940), Nora (1940-1950 circa), Simon (1941-1952), Yvonne (1950-1961), Robert (1948-1957), Eamonn (1953-1958), Celia (1947-1960) and Daniel (1937-1947)[107] – shared their experiences with me. Interviews of Niamh and Lesley are not included following request to retract. The rest shared stories of the many facets of family and residential school life. The significance of these is revealed in the extracts from their stories.

6.1   Early Years

Most of the individuals interviewed began their storytelling by discussing their family background and the circumstances surrounding discovery of deafness in their lives. Robert and Yvonne have hearing brothers and sisters. The others were born to hearing families. The

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[107] All names are pseudonyms. Year participants attended school. Niamh does not remember the year she started school.

stories they share contain anecdotes of communication experiences. Identity markers 'hearing' and 'deaf' are in evidence in the context of the stories of family.

Angela: I came from a hearing family. I became deaf when I was very young. I was seven years of age when I started in St. Mary's School in Cabra.

Nora: My parents communicated with me in alphabet-signs. They did not have signs but used the sign alphabet all the time. The rest of my family did the same. I have deaf brothers and sisters. My parents were hearing. I learned signs from my brothers. At home I enjoyed chatting with them. It was great.

Simon: My mother wanted me to talk…..

Yvonne: I am one of my hearing parent's […] children. I have deaf […] brothers and sisters. The rest of my family are hearing. How did I become deaf? My parents started getting worried when I had not developed speech. When my parents found that I was deaf they worried about communication. How do I communicate with her?

Robert: I'd watch my uncle sign. I didn't know he was my uncle and knew who my father was but he was gone then. As a young boy I looked up to my uncle. […] When I was small I knew some signs from seeing my uncle and my mother communicating with each other as we had meals. This was when I was six years old. He was in St. Joseph's School before I started.

Eamonn: As I was growing up signing was a normal part of the family home. I learned from watching my uncle communicate with my mother every day at tea, breakfast and dinner time. The family knew natural signs. It was not the sign language of St. Joseph's. While my uncle William was fluent in ISL, having been to St. Joseph's, he also switched to our family's natural signs. My mother could not finger-spell. It was natural and fluid signing.

Celia: I was born to hearing parents. All of my family members are hearing. Two have died. I communicated with them through writing notes. For me reading notes is better than reading lips. Some of my family used gestures and some signs like a, b, c, called the alphabet signs…

Daniel: My parents were hearing [..] big family, all hearing. I can't remember how we communicated before I started school but no one knew signs.

Only some of the participants shared anecdotes from their parents. One of them explained that her parents did not want to discuss the past because it was too painful to recall memories of diagnosis.

Celia: I remember my mother taking me to a doctor. My mother told me I became deaf after a bad fall off a tractor. I don't remember it myself. It must have been hard for my parents.

Daniel: I have no idea how I became deaf [….] It was very seldom I visited home…

Nora: I have no idea how I was diagnosed with deafness. I have not asked my parents or anyone about it. I simply accepted myself as deaf. I was the last born of my parents' children so I grew up with my deaf brothers and never questioned about deafness. It was normal for me. My youngest brother was hearing. He is dead now.

Yvonne: In those days there was no early intervention or early screening or testing for young babies.

Eamonn: I lost my hearing when I was nine years of age from meningitis. It happened out of the blue. My parents were in shock. I was their only son. […] My father especially was in a state of shock. He was so upset he could not believe this kind of thing could happen. I was lying unconscious in a hospital bed. The doctor told my parents there was no hope for their son. A bishop was called to anoint me with the Sacrament of Confirmation. A few days later I woke up and realised I was in hospital. I was confused wondering what happened to me. I was told to take it easy and take my time. I felt very drowsy. […] My hearing deteriorated very quickly until I could hear no more. I became stone deaf – total silence. It felt as if air was being let out of a balloon until it was deflated.

It is noteworthy that the formative years in the lives of participants are characterised by issues with communication, identity markers and language. Some of the stories seem to support the theory that when more than one deaf person is present in a group a sign language usually develops.

6.2 First Day in Residential School

So far participants recounted their experiences of communication and memories of their parents' discovery. First day in residential school are recalled with some painful memories of separation from parents being particularly traumatic for some of them.

Daniel: I arrived in St. Joseph's September 1937 with my mother and uncle. On the day we arrived my mother and uncle were shown around the school. I did not know this was a school for deaf boys. I didn't learn much on the first day. I looked around the place feeling confused. It was such a strange place. I started to cry. I picked up a football and ran around the yard with it. I was chased by boys. I wouldn't give them the ball. I held on to it tightly with my arm around the ball. It was a brother who told me the story. The boys wanted to take the ball off me but I ran away with it. One of the Christian Brothers played me a terrible joke. He encouraged me to stay where I was and play with the

football. I wasn't aware that my mother and uncle were leaving me. Soon I realised she was gone. I asked: where is my mother? The Brother tried to calm me. He got me an orange. He peeled the orange and handed them to me. I ate the orange and enjoyed the taste of it. It was a trick to make me feel calm. [One Brother] told the boys to leave the ball with me.

Eamonn: I started in St. Joseph's in 1953 and met deaf boys for the first time. The boys were moving their hands. I was puzzled. I had no sign language. I was happy there because I made friends with boys who were like me. Some of them were of similar age to me. I attended class and went out to the school yard to play football with them.

Yvonne: I was seven years old when I arrived in St. Mary's. I had been to a deaf school abroad before then. In September 1950 I started in St. Mary's. At the time I used a different sign language. My former school was run by Catholic nuns.

Robert: My parents had no choice but to send me to St. Joseph's. Then shortly afterwards my father died. I went to St. Joseph's in 1948 when I was six. I watched my uncle sign to me. He told me I was going to a school where I would learn signs for 'cat' and for 'dog'. The sign for dog – your hand taps on your knee and for cat you bend your hand to a C shape and place the hand at lower end of your cheek and make a waving motion.

Nora: I was seven years of age when I started in St. Mary's School in Cabra, Dublin. I arrived there on my first day with my mother. She wanted to speak with the nuns. At first I was terrified of the girls who were signing to me. After a while I got used to them. I never learned to speak. I learned to sign by watching the girls. I learned the sign for tea. I was excited about learning to sign. One nun was surprised that I became enthusiastic about learning to sign. I was very happy to learn sign language.

Celia: The first day the nuns had to carry me down from the ambulance. I kicked as hard as I could. I wanted to get off, stand on the ground and run but the nuns held on to me firmly. I got a slap across the legs. The pain from my legs forced me to stop crying. I lay still as I was carried inside the school building. Later in bed I cried some more until I fell asleep.

Robert: We waited inside the parlour on the left. It was 1948. I was seven years old at the time. One Christian Brother arrived inside the room. He was a tall well-built man. My parents spoke to him and they wrote something on paper and a book. They talked for a while. My cousin [a student] promised to look after me. He brought me out to the school yard. By then my mother and uncle had disappeared. There were so many boys around and it was evening time in October. I was upset and cried as my cousin brought me to the dining room for tea. I was also brought to the field beyond the school yard where we grew potatoes. There I watched senor boys pick potatoes from the ground. I saw was a horse drawn plough. The boys picked the potatoes and put them in a basket. I had to stand and watch them in the cold. After that we had our tea. I

was in bed shortly afterwards. My cousin helped me undress and put on pyjamas. The older boys slept in a separate part of the dormitory.

As the above examples illustrate, Deaf life stories of residential school contain images of parting from their parents. Perhaps for obvious reasons some of them avoided discussing their emotions in their memory of separating from family while others revealed their experience of confusion and heartbreak. The following extracts presents the transition period where some of the children encountered sign language for the first time:

Robert: The next day I started class with deaf boys. My teacher was deaf […]. He taught me for one year. I got a sign name then. There I learned new words in English like cat, dog, etc. A chart drawn by deaf artist Thomas Mahon (who was dead at the time) was hanging up a wall. The chart displayed numbers and alphabets and pictures and a picture of hand shapes showing the sign for each picture. Colours were also on display and I learned the sign for each colour: green, brown, red, blue, white etc.

Daniel: The next day my football was stolen by one of the older boys. My mother bought me a couple of things and one of them was a football. The big boys kept the ball from me. [….] The next day I began school for the first time. I was brought by a […] to my new class of nine boys all sitting in a semi-circle. My new teacher was deaf. He told the boys I was the new boy of the class. I was to begin learning signs. I found it very hard to learn. My teacher got a piece of paper with sign-alphabets on it. He taught me how to shape my hand for A and how to make a hand shape for B. It went on from A to the last letter. I struggled to form a shape using my hand. I eventually learned to sign. I had to go back to A and start again. I had to repeat the process again and again until I got it right. I was then able to sign the alphabet on my own. Everyone applauded me. They lifted my spirit and I was happy. From then on I learned to sign from a chart sketched by deaf artist and teacher, Thomas Mahon. I learned the sign for 'cat' and 'dog' and 'pig'. There were pictures alongside signs and English words which helped me memorise them all. I started to sign on my own without help from my teachers. After nine months I was able to sign very well. I was moved to another class.

Eamonn: Gradually I started to pick up signs for good, bad, food, tomorrow, play, night, bedtime and many more signs. Bit by bit I picked up on new signs and learned every sign from the boys. I didn't learn signs from my teachers. I learned by writing notes about the different signs but most of the times I memorised them. Signing came naturally to me.

For many of the participants the time of adjustment was a time of transition to a new way of life. Being separated from their family they went through a process of settling into residential school life that for some meant they encountered a culture that was far removed from what

they had known in the family. While the first day was remembered for learning sign language, the following days were especially remembered for the fact that signing became a way of life.

6.3   Transmitting Culture

One of the most prevalent and emergent themes derived from the narratives of individuals interviewed is the experience of culture and on how those experiences were transmitted to the students. Deaf culture pervades the everyday life of the people in the Cabra schools. One of the symbolic forms of Deaf culture is the notion of storytelling, a defining feature of the Deaf experience (Ladd, 2003).

6.3.1   Signing Stories

Stories from students of the pre-oralism era highlight significant memories of seeing sign language and the sense of freedom they experienced in expressing the language. As Daniel tells me: "In St. Joseph's everyone signed…" Some of the narratives reveal examples of how signing brought a desire to learn new things. For the participants sign language represented a cultural resource for storytelling and learning about the world around them.

Nora: I learned to sign by watching the girls. Every teacher in school signed but not many were fluent at sign language. Some relied on finger-spelling while others used sign language. Some of them learned to sign by degrees especially new staff. When a nun arrived at St. Mary's for the first time she was terrified of learning sign language but it took time for her to get used to it.

Daniel: I was signing very well and was fluent at sign language. I learned so much from watching the boys and the Christian Brother signing to each other. Sometimes I was told to go away because I was too nosy. The Brother said I was like a cow in the field staring at him. I learned a lot from watching people sign to each other. I got so much information from communicating in sign language.

Simon: Everyone signed to each other, the teachers, the boys and Christian Brothers, everyone…

Yvonne: My first teacher in St. Mary's was deaf. She taught me ISL.

It seems the schools had a separate oral class during 1940s. It is interesting to note the participant mentioned speech lessons which seem to indicate the schools were not exclusively sign language orientated.

Simon: There were two types of classes available in St. Joseph's. On the one hand there were many ordinary classes in which sign language was used but on the other there was one special class for learning to speak and lip reading.

Daniel: One Brother […] taught us religion. He taught us through sign language but he also had one class in which he had to teach speech which he found very hard.

Daniel: On parents' day my mother told a teacher she would like him to help me learn to talk. My mother wanted me to communicate with her through speech and lip reading. I attended his class for speech lessons but I was not able to talk well.

As Daniel failed speech lessons, he did not have to attend speech class again. Sign language remained the dominant language of the Cabra schools. Celia had this to say about storytelling:

Celia: My deaf teacher told us about students in the past. She shared her memories of school with us. Other girls sat and watched her. My teacher had many interesting things to say about past pupils who were in his class. I loved the stories.

Daniel: The Brothers could sign. Some of them were kind enough to share news about things that went on in school. They told us stories about the boys who started in school for the first time. One of them told me that my vocals were not good. I was told what happened when my mother called. She was told there was no need for me to learn speech.

For the participants it seemed that sign stories represented the link with the past. Participants noted that the Christian Brothers and teachers communicated in Irish Sign Language and understood the deaf way of life.

6.3.2 Deaf teachers amongst Deaf children

As lay staff members, deaf teachers were often commented on in the stories. Many of the participants were taught by three or more deaf teachers throughout their school. It is clear from the stories that deaf adults were revered for their teaching and stories they shared outside of class.

Daniel: My first teacher for primary class was […] a deaf teacher. He taught me a lot about signs and gave me a sign-name.

Nora: I was taught by […] a deaf teacher. She was with me for First Holy Communion. I also had another deaf teacher […]. She was a lovely teacher. I learned to read and write in class. I did a test. Sometimes I gave the right

answers and sometimes I got them wrong. I learned to write in English. I got on well with my teachers. They were very good teachers, always helpful in explaining things to me. I got on well with all my teachers. They all used sign language…

Simon: My first teacher was […] was deaf. He was the first person to give me my sign-name. After that I was taught by Christian Brothers.

Robert: My teacher was deaf […] I learned the signs for each colour: green, brown, red, blue, white etc. I moved to another deaf teacher's class. There were three deaf lay teachers in St. Joseph's. Five other teachers were Christian Brothers. I started in primary school then went on to post-primary. Deaf teachers worked in primary school [……] a good teacher [..] prepared for First Holy Communion. We signed in preparation for it with another […] went around the classrooms to help us all prepare for the big day. For 2nd year [my Deaf teacher] taught our class in which we learned how to work the sums. I learned a lot from those teachers.

Yvonne: As my first teacher was deaf, I learned ISL very quickly. We were not punished for signing. Everyone, including the nuns, signed to each other. Teachers discovered I was a quick learner. I got on well with senior girls and signing to them was easy. Many of them looked after me and other younger girls. We had a good relationship with deaf teachers. One of the teachers I remember was […] this is her sign-name. There were a few other deaf teachers […] She taught me to sign the Our Father and Hail Mary, in preparation for Holy Communion.

Eamonn: A deaf man was my first teacher. He was one of the few lay teachers in the school. He wasn't qualified to teach. In those days there were four or five deaf teachers –all male. It was normal to employ deaf adults to teach even when they didn't have the qualification or training. They would only be allowed to teach children at primary level.

It is noteworthy from the above comments that Deaf teachers were employed in the Cabra schools with no teaching qualifications and their duties were restricted to primary level teaching. The Christian Brothers taught secondary education. Religion and prayers seemed to have played a big part in the students' education. It is significant that literacy was a subject mentioned in the narratives where students received lessons in signs and learned to read and write.

6.3.3   Sign-names

Another symbolic form of Deaf culture could be said to the idea of sign-names as identity markers. Celia's comment that "things we did that people from outside thought was strange"

seemed to draw examples of Deaf culture, a culture that is distinct from mainstream culture. References were made to outsiders, non-deaf people, as "hearing." These represent clear identity markers that help distinguish difference in terms of culture. Sign-names, something unheard of in mainstream culture, were a common feature of deaf life in residential schools.

Celia: Oh yes, that's right…. Yes, it was […] who gave me my sign name. Most deaf teachers give the children a sign-name so that everyone had one like an identity. We all knew everyone by our sign-name. If a girl didn't have a sign name we had to finger-spell her name.

Daniel: Of course we had sign-names. It was a natural thing to do. Sign-names were given in school and they stuck with us for life.

Celia: It was normal for us to have a sign-name. Everyone had one. Even the teachers and nuns had one. When I went home to my family I found out my deaf brothers also had a sign-name but my parents never knew about it. It was different for them. The things we did that people from outside thought was strange. So we never told our parents. We didn't want them to think we were strange. Anyway, my parents did not understand sign language.

Sign names of individuals were a key aspect of the culture of the Deaf community in the Cabra schools. Culture is a resource on which the participants were able to draw on to relate to the people in their lives. One indication of the visual nature of the Deaf experience of culture is illustrated in the following extracts from Daniel and Celia:

Daniel: Lights in the dormitory flashed on and off. When that happened we woke up. Sometimes the Brothers stomped their foot on the wooden floor to send vibrations around the dorm floor. Tapping on the shoulder was also our way to get another person's attention. Outside people shout or call to get someone's attention. Sometimes I waved my hand so that another boy could see me and turn to me.

Celia: In St. Mary's I learned to sign because it was there that I met deaf girls who taught me a lot about deaf culture. Only deaf people know about signs. Deaf people need sign language more than people who can talk and hear. They will always sign no matter what happens.

Celia's comment that Deaf culture is something outsiders like hearing people may find different resonates with the above quotes. Since the students were communicating in a language that has no written form, it is understandable that they would create their own identity markers and refer to each other by sign-names. English names are signed through the use of finger-spelling.

6.4   **Inculcating Catholic Ethos**

A common theme running through the narratives of the individuals participating in this research is the experience of religion. Earlier in this chapter some of the participants, like Yvonne, revealed instances where religion played a part in their lives. It seems from the narratives that Catholic ethos were inculcated in their consciousness through regular prayers, religious lessons and preparation for the sacraments.

Celia: I remember getting myself ready for First Holy Communion trying to remember the words in prayers. I used sign language to remember the words. I signed prayers. The school was very strict about religion.

Daniel: One Brother prepared for Holy Communion and Confirmation by teaching us to sign the prayers using finger spelling. We signed Hail Mary and Our Father. The Brothers taught us religion through signs.

Simon: I think I was in third year in 1951. A deaf teacher taught me the sacraments of Communion and Confession. They were important lessons for everyone. We learned the words of prayers and translated them in signs. Prayers were very important.

Yvonne: In those days prayers and religious studies were so important and less important was English. I learned prayers and religion. I know all the signs for religious words. Signs helped us understand prayers.

Simon: Scriptural reading, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayers had to be memorised.

Celia: In class we learned to sign the Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Lord's Prayer. We read the Life of Jesus and the story of the Ten Commandments.

6.4.1   Gender segregation

The segregation of the two schools characterised the lives of the participants. As children the boys and girls had little contact with each other.

Daniel: No, the boys weren't allowed to meet the girls in St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls. The Brothers and nuns were very strict about that. Only those who had sisters in the school could visit and they had to be brought over by a Brother. The meetings were supervised all the time. If the girl wanted to see her brother it was the same with the nuns supervising the girl meeting her brother. In St. Mary's the girl was allowed to introduce her friends to her brother. In St. Joseph's the Brother said the boy and girl must meet in the parlour. They would sit in the parlour and sign to each other. In St. Mary's it was different. The girl was able to bring her brother to the play hall where he could meet the

girls. The big difference in the attitude of the nuns and of the Brothers is concerned with visiting of relations.

Simon: Many years after I left school I was told one of the Brothers was forced to join the Christian Brothers by his wealthy family. There were three Christian Brothers from wealthy families, some joined voluntarily but one was pushed into join the Christian Brothers against his will. That is why he did not have the qualifications to teach. He was not bright enough and not fit enough to teach the boys. He arrived in St. Joseph's at the expense of his father and mother which was a terrible thing to happen anyone. He had no choice but to please his parents.

Simon's comments may be reflective of the attitude in Irish society at the time. The stories of the participants indicate a strong presence of the Catholic religion existed in the lives of the students.   The inculcation of Catholic values was of paramount importance in the Cabra schools and religious studies were often provided in tandem with learning literacy.

6.5   Marking Time: routine, regulations, and regimentation

One aspect of residential school culture is reflected in the story told by Daniel who marks time on daily activities in the school in the following way:

Daniel: From Monday to Friday I did the usual – getting up at 7.30am in the morning and attended mass at 8.00am. We went to the refectory for breakfast at 8.30am. Class began at 9.00am and finished at 3pm. The older boys finished class at 4pm. Tea was at 4pm. There was a light meal then. We played sport from 5pm until 6pm. The senior boys went to the work rooms to learn a trade at tailoring, shoemaking and carpentry […] From Monday to Saturday dinner was at 3.30pm after school finished. The older boys had their meal at 4pm. The young boys and senior pupils had dinner at separate times. Brother Callaghan then changed the routine so that boy groups had their dinner at the same time at 4pm. After dinner we went out into the yard where we lined up to prepare for football games. I stayed with younger children of my age group […] Junior boys went to bed at 8pm. The senior boys went to bed an hour later.

Daniel: During holidays we had a full day of rest. We had film shows during a weekend. Old films were loaned or hired for the show. The Christian Brothers used to give us a treat for special occasions like a boy's birthday. If it was my birthday there would be a film show for everyone over the age of ten years old. Boys from ten to seventeen years of age were allowed watch films. My parents brought me sweets and cakes which were shared with the boys. I was happy with watching films. We had regular film shows every Sunday evening but sometimes on Saturday evening for someone's birthday. After the show everyone went to bed at 10pm. Film shows always began at 7pm and supper was at 6pm. If someone from the government or the Catholic Church was

visiting the school all boys had to wear nice clothes. Our shoes had to be shining and we had to wear ties. We had to wash our hands and bath ourselves.

Daniel's story details cruel punishment meted out by one of the Christian Brothers. Some of the young boys suffered severe beatings from the man described in the following way:

Daniel: [he was] well-built […] over six foot tall, physically imposing in appearance with bulky arms and large hands. Richard describes the terrifying ordeal those young boys were subjected to when individuals were brought to a room beside the laundry, told to strip the top half of his clothes and given several slaps across the face and punches in the body. The beatings were ritual until one day the Brother was caught by the superior who put an end to it….

All the above passages contain a general introduction to the regimental way of life in the Cabra schools characterised by routine regulation and punishment.

6.6   **Signs of Change**

Perhaps it is worth mentioning that Nora, Yvonne, Robert and Eamonn from Chapter Six provide 'eye-witness' accounts of moments of transformation taking place in the Cabra schools. Oralism was introduced around the time the schools celebrated the centenary year of existence- St. Mary's in 1947 and St. Joseph's ten years later. Clear evidence of historical changes exists in the narratives. It might be a good idea at this point to present extracts from the aforementioned participants' stories.

Nora: For the celebration we did acting and performed in a play for an audience. It was around that time all girls got their hearing tested. The nuns wanted to know who could hear and talk better. It was a strange time for me. I could not talk.

Yvonne: I was deemed unfit to learn to talk. I was born deaf. I could not learn to speak. It was […] who decided that I would not get speech training.

Robert: Before I left [St. Joseph's] I had a hearing test done and was identified as a deaf signer. I was not oral. I remember going to class for speech lessons […] I had speech lessons and a hearing test done […]. He would test my hearing by working on a machine and asking me if I heard anything. When I said no to every time he asked I was identified as deaf and a signer. That was in 1955 when changes started to happen. Those who could lip read and had some hearing were put into a group away from the rest of us.

Eamonn: [Centenary year celebration] I took on the role of Monsignor Yore, the first chairperson of the Catholic Institute for the Deaf and Dumb as it was called

back then. I was selected to speak on stage in front of an audience. I spoke from a script and did not sign. The performance was open to parents and their children. There were many important people, politicians and clergymen amongst the audience. We performed a play on stage for those people. Each one of the boys dressed as bishops and priests to represent the people involved in the founding of St. Joseph's. I was given the role of Yore. I spoke to the audience. I wasn't allowed to sign. Only those with speech were selected. I was selected because I had a good voice, I think.

Robert: Early in the New Year we prepared for the Easter celebrations and the Centenary Year of the founding of St. Joseph's School. Three Brothers were involved in talks and planning. They wanted to take four of my class mates to do presentations because they had some hearing and good speech. They arrived in Cabra when they were twelve or thirteen after losing their hearing. The Brothers wanted to use them as speakers for the Centenary celebrations. It was the Brother's idea to select the boys who could talk. I was selected for a part in a play…

One of the most interesting features of the extracts is the historical significance of the celebrations. In the case of St. Joseph's, the Christian Brothers must have been anxious to impress the visitors and invited guest especially the Archbishop who was patron of CIDP and was influential in the changeover to oralism[108].

6.7   Reflections

Eight former students of the pre-oralism era included in this chapter shared stories with me concerning family and residential school. While the most predominant themes that emerge in the stories centre on language and communication, the stories provide interesting insights into religious and cultural practices of the schools. Although the stories reflect a particular period of time before I attended residential schools, the narratives sparked memories of my relationship with the Christian Brothers. I could well imagine the actions, the locations, places in which they described. Certain cultural nuances such as the use of sign-names and storytelling are familiar features of residential school life to me. They were easily identifiable when reading the transcripts. Deaf culture was a naturalised category in which certain sub-themes emerged like the scene of the dormitory presented by Daniel. It was a little strange to find there was a noticeable absence of stories relating to the acts of lip reading and speaking as an alternative mode of communication. These aspects generate meaning in the sense that some of the stories did not reflect my own experience of culture. As an example, the

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[108] See Crean (1997)

discussion about deaf teachers was something I could not relate to as all my teachers were hearing.

Several times I have had to reconsider whether or not to include a story or part of a story due to the sensitive nature of the content which may have implications for both the researcher and researched. With issue of confidentiality in mind, I was consciously aware that the stories I include should not be traceable or contain information that could be related to a particular person in the school. In that regard names were removed and some stories were eliminated as a precaution. I also had to consider how I could use the quotes with the aim to authentically represent what the participants had to say. I edited some parts to ensure they were not identifiable and that the writing would do not harm to people.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FRAGMENTED DEAF LIVES: RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLING IN THE ERA OF ORALISM

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Themes of fragmentation and displacement emerge in the stories shared during the interviews with participants. Out of these categories sub-themes emerged that relate to the suppression of sign language, categorising identities resulting from labelling and segregation, classification, surveillance, physical control. In all, eight participants of the oralism era – Ned (1964-1980), Anna (1965 -1979 circa), Mark (1964-1978), Eleanor (1990-1999), Bethany (1990-1999), Martin (1979-1987), Frank (1959-1973) and David (1968-1982)[109] – shared their experiences with me. Apart from Frank, none of the participants were born to deaf parents. Ned, David, Martin, Eleanor and Bethany come from hearing families, while there are deaf siblings in the families of Anna and Mark. Almost all of the participants schooled in Cabra from 1940s onwards discussed their experience of oralism and examples of its practicalities are provided in passages extracted from their narratives. For the participants educated during the oralism years, their way of life was characterised by attempts to conform to dominant norms and values about culture and language. For many of them memories of residential school are mainly negative. In sharing their experience of oralism they look back on the past and tell what life was like for them between the years 1947 and 1997.

7.1   Early Years

This section is primarily an introduction to each participants and their family background. Anna, Ned, Mark, Eleanor, Bethany, Martin, Frank, and David recount stories of their early years of childhood the period before they began life at a residential school.

Anna: I have no memory of the first few years of my life but when I was four or five years of age some things stand out in my mind. I remember during weekdays feeling lonely and isolated while my older sisters, who are hearing, were outside playing with their friends. I was too young to join them. I remember waiting for my deaf brother to come home [from boarding school]. I knew that by Friday he would be home. I looked forward to seeing him so that we could go out to play together and sign to each other. We were together all weekend. On Sunday I was heartbroken to see him return to school. [..] I did spend time playing with my sisters but it was only for a short time. I did not go out with them much. My mind was on Friday when my brother would be home. That is my earliest memory. My brother and I were very close.

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[109] All names are pseudonyms. Year participants attended school.

It is interesting to note the strong bond between brother and sister. Perhaps the cultural divide in the family is based on language and identity. Frank shares his own experience of family life and sign language.

Frank: I was born deaf to deaf parents. I have deaf brothers and I have one sister who is also deaf. I have one hearing brother who can sign. Growing up, sign language was a normal part of family life. Through sign language I learned a lot from my parents. For me sign language was a normal way of life.

Anna: My older sister told me things about the past. Some of the things she told me I have no memory of. She said my mother tried to get my sisters to stop signing to me. She wanted me to lip-read instead.

Frank: She was my mother's sister. I remember seeing her talk to my mother. One day I asked my mother about my aunt. I was curious to know why she talked instead of signing. My mother explained that my aunt was 'hearing'. That was my first memory of someone called 'hearing'. I told her that my brother is hearing and he could sign. I asked: Why can't she sign? My mother said that many hearing people can't sign so they speak. I learned something else too. I discovered that 'hearing people' hear things. It was at that time I discovered what it meant to be 'deaf'.

In the families of Anna and Frank, 'deaf' or 'Deaf' and 'hearing' labels are commonly used to differentiate between the two groups based on language and communication issues. By contrast, the experiences of the other participants differ since their family members are all 'hearing'.

Ned: I am the only deaf person in my family. I come from a hearing family which means both my parents and my siblings are all hearing. […] Remember, my family have no sign language. They always talked never gestured. Growing up the home was an oral environment. I often felt left out of conversation. I believed being excluded was a normal part of my life. If I didn't understand who said something I usually left it at that and moved on. But there were times when I said: "what? What did she say?" I would ask a family member to update me and to keep me informed. I didn't find it frustrating because I was too young to understand.

David: As I was born to hearing parents and with hearing brothers and sisters, I am the only deaf member of the family. […] I am close to my sister as she talks to me and treats me like a Deaf person using mouth movement. […] At home during the summer, I used lip reading and speech to communicate with my brothers and sisters and my parents […] Of course I had to get used to lip reading but found this boring and tiresome. My speech was constantly corrected. I was tired of getting speech lessons.

The comments of Ned and David indicate that communication is an issue in hearing families in which none of their parents and siblings have knowledge of a sign language. They face different obstacles where in Ned's case he felt cut off from family conversations while David was compelled to adjust to the norms and behaviour of the family. Oral communication is the main theme of Bethany and Eleanor's narrative of family life.

Eleanor: I have three sisters younger than I am. I have a brother who is a year older than I am. My sisters are younger by one, three and eight years. No one in my family can sign. Everyone uses oral communication. Naturally, I was often left out of conversation when everyone was together. I usually do better at one-to-one conversations. Overall I have a good relationship with my family.

Bethany: My mother likes having a family day when we all get together at home. When that happened I usually stayed in company with one person at a time […] When everyone talked I got on fine because there were fewer people than there would normally be on family day for example. That was when I was growing up but now people assumed the same with about fifteen people in the one room. When I was younger I spoke to one person at a time. When my father spoke everyone turned to him and listened. My eyes would focus on him and if someone replied to him I turned my eyes to that person. With about fifteen people sitting in one room on family day I talk to one person at a time. Now people talk in groups and when I try to fit in I'd manage to stay with the group until I start to drift away because I couldn't keep up with them. I missed out on so much that it was hard to stay on. So I drift away and move to talk to other people. The same thing usually happened – I'd move on to talk to other people.

The most dominant themes to emerge in the excerpts in this section are language and communication. The comments illustrate how language has potential to exclude and include. The social dimensions apparent in the stories about family are fundamental to experiences of communication. In a family environment where a sign language is non-existent participants report struggling to adapt to social situations. By contrast, the story of Frank and Anna in which sign language is an important component of family relationships communication is never an issue.

7.1.2 Discoveries

In contrast to stories of former students of the 1940s and 1950s, the early years of their lives is characterised by stories of diagnosis and the presence of audiology. The narrative of Ned, Frank, Mark and David describes the process of discovery of their deafness a crucial period in the early years of childhood.

Ned: I am not sure how my parents suspected I was deaf. My memories of childhood around that time are vague so I am relying on the feedback I got from my parents. I was told a doctor gave the diagnosis about my deafness. I don't have specific details of what happened but I know I was sent to an audiologist in St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls. The audiologist confirmed I was deaf.

Frank: My parents received a booklet from the audiologist published by Dr. Alexander and Lady Ewing in Manchester about deafness. They read everything about deafness but found the information was wrong. One example is the book mentioned a young girl having lost her hearing late in life was very intelligent because she could speak. The information was wrong because my parents thought the same would happen to her children. The truth is I was born deaf. I could not be compared to the young girl who had hearing before she became deaf. They did not accept what was said in the booklet.

Ned: The audiologist assured my parents that I would learn to speak because I had some hearing. It was decided I could benefit from using a hearing aid, other technological aids and from oralism. The audiologist advised my parents to avoid sign language and to stop me from signing. My parents didn't know anything about deafness and therefore did not find her advice objectionable. Added to that is the fact that they were never exposed to sign language and could not form an opinion on the matter. If they knew that ISL is a language with its own grammatical structures, I am sure they would have been in favour of it instead of oralism.

Mark: My mother did not want to send me to a hearing school because my deaf brother was a pupil there and had poor literacy skills. He can't read or write. My mother became concerned about me. She wondered why my brother could not read and write. She found out about St. Joseph's and he was sent there but the Brothers said due to his age, it was too late to teach him. My mother decided to send me to St. Joseph's.

David: My parents were obviously upset as they knew nothing about deafness. They did not know where to go to for information. This was in the 1960s when there was very little support and information to be got. This is what my mother told me. A year after I recovered from meningitis I suffered a relapse but it lasted a short time, for about two weeks.

In this section two aspects of the Deaf experience of family life in early childhood are explored: firstly, the absence of identity-resemblance is apparent in hearing families. This is less salient in deaf families. Secondly, perceptions of difference and experiences of alienation in deaf participants in hearing families are noticeable. The most common concerns that the participants from hearing families address are issues relating to communication.

7.2 A New Design for Living

Deaf narratives tell of experiences of oralism. In recalling their time at school under oralism, participants shared memories of first day in residential school, of taking speech lessons, of using hearing aids, and of attending hearing tests. These details give impressions of specific incidents of what happened in school. While Deaf culture was not accepted by the schools the students were compelled to adapt to ways of living unrelated to Deaf culture.

7.2.1 First day

Stories from children of Deaf parents paint a poignant picture of them finding out that their understanding of culture was being suppressed by the school authorities. For Frank coming from a family where signing was the norm, it must have seemed strange to be told by adults that they were no longer allowed to sign in school. For Anna and Frank it was their first time encountering Deaf people who spoke and used lip reading when communicating with teachers and staff.

Frank: I remember wondering: talk? How? I asked my father this question. He told me the boys were not allowed to sign that they had to speak. He said that was the rule but the boys usually signed in the school yard. I just had to be careful. I did not want to get caught.

Anna: I don't remember my first day very well but I remember seeing the girls mouthing words. They did not sign much. It was strange to see deaf girls moving their mouths. At home we signed with our mouths closed. I still do it. At that time St. Mary's was strictly oral. I saw deaf teachers. I had one deaf teacher for a short time. Later I was put in an oral class. My teacher taught through speech. It was hard. I asked other girls to tell me what the teacher said. It was hard work.

The rest of the individuals interviewed recalled a memory of seeing sign language for the first time.

Mark: They were moving their hands. I didn't know what they were saying to each other. They were playing football. It was nearly dark. The boys were wearing shorts on them. The senior and junior boys were all out in the school yard. Later when it was getting too dark we went inside the play hall to play snooker and other games. The senior and junior boys were in the same room. I remember watching the boys play a game of draughts. I had never seen the game before. I thought the draught pieces were chocolates. I was four and a half years of age at the time.

Ned: Although Beech Park was strictly an oral school I was able to learn sign language from the children. On my way home every day I met senior deaf pupils in Beech Park. With them I learned to communicate in their sign language. Signs in the two schools were different. When you have two separate schools you have two different sign languages. I was fascinated by the St. Joseph's signs and wanted to learn more [signs].

Martin: In St. Joseph's I was placed in a partially deaf class and I remained there throughout my time in the school […] I can communicate by talking and lip reading. I learned ISL in St. Joseph's from my first day there. In class there was no signing. We were purely oral at communication. Fortunately we had a good teacher who was fair and did not strictly forbid us to learn and communicate in sign language. However there were many things done in class which he did not explain. I understood what was said but there was no real explanation for things we did not understand.

Eleanor: [aged ten when started] I began in an oral class in St. Mary's. It was a shock to the system because I was so used to attending a signing class at […]. Communication was through speech all the time. Fortunately my teacher was easy to lip read. I was about to start First Year but my teacher felt I needed to improve my lip reading skills and held me back for one year. While in sixth class I was given first year tasks to do. I resisted and said I would wait until I started First Year to do that work. I was told I was a clever student and would be able to do the work. I still resisted and refused to do it. Soon after I was given one-to-one tuition, I was told I would skip First Year and start Second Year in the new term. So I agreed to do the work for First Year while in Sixth Class. The other students told me I was being groomed for Second Year. I denied it because I was told not to tell anyone about it.

Bethany: By the time I was five years old I had already acquired a spoken language which of course is English. My mother did not want to learn Irish Sign Language. When she enquired about it she was told by a nun in St. Mary's School that learning sign language should be avoided. She was told that learning sign language destroys the opportunity for speech development. The nun said it was advisable to refrain from learning sign language so that their daughter would be able to talk all the time. My first language is English. I started in St. Mary's….

It seems that for most of the participants their first encounter with Deaf culture occurred the day they started school. This is usually the case with Deaf children from hearing families. In the following sections a number of individuals recall how they learned an early age in experiential ways that they were partially, profoundly or severely deaf. Some of them discuss their experiences of segregation, surveillance, and discipline.

7.2.2 Taxing times

In this section participants provide examples of various aspects of the school cultures that form part of oralism. Stories are told of their oral language experiences which many found challenging and at times exhausting.

Yvonne: When we were given speech lessons, I was shocked. I could speak and lip read. I resisted speech lessons. The nuns knew I hated learning to speak. They said I had to take the lessons. I was frustrated.

Ned: Looking back on my childhood, I realise educators were more interested in teaching us to speak than giving us an education. That was the way the system was at the time but it was still the same system for many years after I left school. I was unable to communicate my problems to my parents.

The oral-aural culture of the school influenced patterns of communication in the students. In this section participants provide examples of various aspects of the school curriculum that form part of oralism.

7.2.3 An aid to hearing: technology and audiology

With the availability of hearing assisted technologies in the form of hearing aids and audio equipment in classrooms, students were compelled to try and adapt to the use of listening and reading lips. The use of hearing aids was compulsory in school, particularly in the classroom. Teachers spoke into a microphone and students tried hardest to follow instructions in given in speech. Almost everyone interviewed mentioned the impact of hearing technologies on their lives. For Ned, a former day-pupil, the hearing aid made him stand out amongst other hearing children at the family home.

Ned: I was the only one in the family wearing a hearing aid. Without my hearing aid I was stone deaf. I was dependent on it because I felt completely lost in conversation at home. The hearing aid did not make me hearing. It only helped me lip read a bit better and made things a bit easier when communicating with family. Even while I had a hearing aid switched on, I was left out of conversation. I am emphasising the word 'easier' to explain that it does not make me hearing or able to communicate like hearing people but makes me understand a little better. I still had to struggle to get into a conversation.

Ned was keen to emphasis the fact that he could never attain the same level of hearing as hearing children, that having some hearing does not mean he would be able to integrate with hearing people. David's stories demonstrate the school's rule in which students were expected to wear hearing aids.

David: Some of the boys got punished for not wearing a hearing aid. Whenever I was caught without one, I was told to go back to the dormitory and put it on. I could hear sound coming through the ear moulds but they made no sense to me.

David: We had to obey with school rules about speech, lip reading and hearing aids. We had to follow the norms and values of society. I remember new audio equipment arrived in the school from Germany or The Netherlands. The equipment was made by Philips. We were told to use the audio equipment to decide who had the most hearing in the class. Although we were a profoundly deaf class some of us could hear with the hearing aid on.

David: I remember the hearing aids we wore were larger than the behind-the-ear hearing aids we now have. This one was put in a pouch and the pouch was strapped around my body. We spoke into a microphone to try to communicate through speech. I left the hearing aid on but it made no difference to hearing speech. It wasn't much help to me. The battery lasted two months but I didn't get it replaced. I wore the hearing aid with the ear moulds inside my ears and let on that it was working. I told my teacher that the hearing aid was no use to me but he insisted I should use it. Sometimes I did not bother using it. Whenever I was caught without one, I was told to go back to the dormitory and put it on. I could hear sound coming through the ear moulds but they made no sense to me.

Regardless of how advanced they were hearing aids did not facilitate natural hearing or hearing at a level required to integrate with hearing people and become immersed in oral-aural conversations. Aside from assistive technologies they had to contend with speech lessons provided in class at the expense of education.

7.2.4   Articulation lessons

Participants report examples of classroom activities dominated by speech training. Frequently he witnessed a speech class procession whereby students were instructed to hold a sheet of paper a few inches from their mouths. The paper must quiver after each student took turns to utter the same word. During speech class the student had headphones on and a speech therapist covered her mouth with a sheet of paper and spoke through a microphone. Here are a few examples of speech exercises in classrooms:

Ned: In those days we had to wear headphones in class. In speech class the therapist covered her mouth with a sheet of paper and spoke against it. The paper blocked the view to her lips. It was a tactic to force me to use listening skills to 'hear' her speech.

David: She placed a sheet of paper in front of her mouth to test our hearing. She wanted to see if I could understand speech without recourse to reading lips. Some of us were able to pick up words but we could not understand a full

sentence. Once we had our heads down and whenever our names were called out we put our head up. I left my head down when my name was called because I could not hear it. All I could hear was sound. My teacher thought I was pretending not to be able to hear my name. He said according to the audiogram I must have some hearing. If you saw my audiogram you'd see the lines going across the sheet down at the very bottom which means I am stone deaf. Still I was forced to use my hearing aid. This was in primary class.

David   I received more severe punishment for signing. She knew we could improve our speech and wanted to control the way we communicate with others. At the time I didn't understand why the others didn't get the same level of punishment as I did. Now I know the reason. […] At the time the punishment we received was hard to understand.

Ned: The most difficult part of school was speech training where teachers wanted us to learn to talk. To be honest, like some boys, I was able to improve my speech because we had some hearing. It helped to have hearing. I was labelled partially deaf. I don't like that label but as a child I was given it. I used the term when I define deafness in the medical model.

David: They worried I'd lose my ability to speak. When I returned to school in September I was excited to sign with the boys. It went on like that until June 1975 when I left Beech Park.

When students attended speech classes they tried to use their vocals and pronunciations. They felt a sense of duty to learn to speak. Their efforts to speak were not naturalised but rather they were engaged in training. Sometimes a select few of those who could speak were presented for demonstration to visitors to the school. David was one of those students:

David: Selection was based on our speech ability. I was included in this group formed for the purpose of oral demonstration on parents who were thinking about sending their sons to St. Joseph's and wanted to see for themselves how the system worked there. The three of us met with the parents and the principal asked us to speak out our names. I said "My name is David." The parents were moved to tears by the demonstration. We showed them that deaf people could learn to speak. I remember we kept answering questions through speech. We did not sign. The parents got the impression their sons could be like us. It gave them false confidence and false hope. I didn't know any better and simply followed instructions and spoke to the parents. The principal asked the parents: "Do you see how well they could speak?"

These quotations provide interesting insights into the practice of oralism in the schools particularly in classroom situations. It is noted that students were taught to pronounce words repeatedly, which seems to indicate the difficulty they experienced with articulation. The whole process could take most of the class time because some of the students could not

vocalise words intelligibly. Conformity requires a degree of control over how the students behave regardless of whether they could speak or not.

7.3 'Cultural Genocide': discipline, punishment, segregation

Disciplinary regulations mentioned in the narratives are presented to illustrate how oralism practices were employed in school. In the 1970s some education authorities issued punishment, and established divisions and segregations and used religion and surveillance in an attempt to eliminate Deaf culture and control behaviour. It is just as well to reiterate that a protracted way of 'cultural genocide'[110] refers to attacks on sign language and Deaf children through physical punishment and the use of restrictions upon Deaf cultural and traditional practices.

Yvonne: We signed behind [our teacher's] back but one of us got caught. She got very cross and told us to stop signing. She used a stick to slap me on the hand. It was very sore. I was shocked. She said it was to teach us not to sign. When we went back to the classroom she tried to stop us signing and hit a few of the girls. Some of the girls received punishment from her. Everyone started getting nervous. Punishment for signing was common.

Anna: I was caught doing that a few times and got punished. It was best to hide most of the time. I tried to stop but I had a thirst for signing.

Ned: One morning it was snowing […] my dad […] brought me [to school] that morning. [..] It so happened that I arrived in school too early. All the day-pupils had queued waiting to get into the building as the doors had been locked. This nun opened the door for us. I don't know her name but I know her sign-name […] She had a bunch of keys with her. Before she came around we were all signing. I signed to […]. This was a normal way of life for us. The nun grabbed my hand and with the other hit me with the keys. When she finished she wagged a finger at me "Don't be signing again!" My hands were already cold when she slapped me with the keys. I was in terrible pain afterwards. […] Some of the nuns used the keys to punish us so that we would be forced to stop signing.

Anna: Anyone caught signing was told to pay something like 2 pennies. We thought it a stupid idea but we had to pay the nun. When I went home I asked my mother for more money. She asked what did I need money for and I told her. She didn't say anything about it.

Anna: When the teacher turned around we signed and stopped when he or she faced us again. We signed when no one was looking, be it in the toilet or the

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[110] Ladd (2003)

dormitory or the hall way or the bathroom where we washed ourselves. We signed in secret. Our eyes were sharp for we were watchful for teachers and nuns and knew when to stop signing.

Yvonne: She was a new teacher and was sent to teach our class. At first we thought she had years of teaching experience and training. Within one year she was gone. We didn't know her before she arrived and never saw her again after she left. In that year we found her to be a strange teacher. In class she drew our attention to the blackboard where she drew a spiral. First she drew a circle and then another circle but each one of us took turns to use our vocals to make a sound: aaaaaahhhhhhh. She drew an audio spiral on the blackboard for each time we increased our vocals. The circles got larger and larger as we continued with our vocal without catching our breath until our face was purple and we could not continue anymore. The point of the exercise was to make a sound: aaaaaaaaah. Whoever was made the sound aaaaahhhhh louder and longer received sweets as a reward. We were anxious to please her for the sweets she gave us. Whoever got the most number of circles received sweets.

These anecdotes are examples of the strategies adopted by education authorities to prevent the students from exercising their cultural values and norms. The experiences of the participants seem to resonate with Saunders' (1993) experience of oralism. Many of them recount examples of surveillance where the students were under constant watch by the authorities, an experience that also reflects Saunders' (1993; 2005) personal story.

Frank: I signed behind his back and thought Brother Wall did not see me. I think someone told him. Anyway, Brother Wall sent me to the superior's office where I got a warning. I was lucky. Other boys were not so lucky. I know there were older boys telling the Brothers about who was signing.

Mark: One day a teacher (Christian Brother) signed to us in class when he was teaching. He stopped suddenly and looked over to a window. The superior had knocked on the window. The two Brothers spoke to each other for a few minutes. The next thing our teacher spoke to the class. He never signed in class again. Brother The superior went around to all the classrooms to warn all the teachers not to sign to the boys.

Other forms of discipline and control emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the school adopted a system of segregation. It is interesting to note Frank's comment where he compares the school system to the system of apartheid in South Africa:

Frank: They began separating us in the 1970's but it really began around 1968 or 1969. I'm not sure when but a new school was built outside of the main school. You know the house used to be called the 'deaf and dumb' place. It's a horrible name. That was the way the system was then. Things changed. It is like

apartheid in South Africa where black people were divided by colour. With us it was about degrees of deafness.

Mark: I remember it clearly [separating students]. It was in 1971 when it happened. There was a new house built opposite the infirmary house on the side of the main St. Joseph's School building. If you came in from the front you go right and down the path to the house which was the 'deaf and dumb' school. I remember many boys who signed were transferred there. They were told the main building was too old that the new building was better for them. The boys who were moved there believed this to be true.

Mark: The Brother got the boys all lined up in seven rows. He pointed to those who he felt needed to be in the manual school. […] was one of them he was told to join the deaf and dumb boys. […] was also selected. There were so many I remember. All of them could not talk. They signed. I watched them all move out of the line and stand with the group. Three of them were my class mates. I rarely saw them afterwards. The group had to follow a Brother to the classrooms to collect their books. I watched them come out of the building with their books and stuff and walk down the yard to the new house. I met a former deaf teacher. He told me he was transferred to the manual school.

Anna: If you are called 'deaf and dumb' you are labelled deaf with an inferior intelligence. You are not a person. In school we believed the boys in the 'deaf and dumb' group were slow. I rarely met them but when I did I thought they were clever enough. Their signing was fluent. They were able to express themselves well.

Yvonne: The girls were divided into groups. Those who could not speak were transferred to a room upstairs. The room was for girls who were called 'deaf and dumb'. Signing was forbidden. The nuns announced to us that we were not allowed to sign. Only the deaf and dumb could sign. They were kept away from the rest of us who had to concentrate on learning to talk all the time.

Participants present powerful images of the reality of segregation. Many of them who faced segregation in the school lost friends because of the system. The partials and the profoundly deaf were forbidden to interact with one another.

7.3.1 Confession and internalised shame identities

In the stories of residential school life there is a strong presence of the influence of Catholic religion. This is especially prominent where control over signing is concerned.

Yvonne: My teacher wrote on the blackboard a list of words to practise before going to confession such as 'disobedient' and 'immoral'. I never knew the meaning of the word 'immoral' until I left school. I found out it was to do with having bad thoughts. There was no explanation given in school. I just learned to spell the

word and speak it. Often we got lessons in English but the teachers never explained what they meant. It wasn't translated to ISL because teachers didn't know ISL. I wanted to know what these words meant. I wanted the teacher to explain. We were told to look them up in the dictionary which was in English. I didn't know the ISL translation for these English words so I never knew what they meant. If lessons were given in ISL I would have understood.

Celia: The first time I was told that signing was a sin was in class when our teacher prepared us for First Holy Communion. We had to go to confession first before we received communion. I didn't know anything about confession. My teacher said if I signed I would go to hell so it was better for me to tell the priest. I was frightened.

Celia: Years after I left school I felt ashamed of signing in public. When people stared at us, it was embarrassing. I believe the shame we felt was the result of what happened in school. We were taught to see that signing was bad.

Shame-feelings towards deaf cultural norms are frequently found in narratives of participants educated under oralism. This provides an interesting contrast to the stories of students of 1940s and 1950s since they seemed to display no sense of shame in Irish Sign Language. Participants attributed these feelings to the influence of the Catholic religion and the philosophy of oralism.

7.3.2 Surveillance

The dominant theme of Frank's narrative concerning segregation is the use of surveillance as part of the school's discipline against sign language. As Frank testifies students lived under conditions where they were being constantly watched:

Frank: There were a few supervisors around the school yard. They seemed to be everywhere because they were watching for anyone signing. Of course we didn't stop signing. There were so many of us in the yard it was hard for them to stop everyone. Only some supervisors were strict.

Celia recounts how some of the girls were hand-picked to take on responsibility of reporting anyone signing:

Celia: Maybe one or two girls were picked as favourite by the nuns. We had to be careful of the girls who were pets and spies.

If the presence of surveillance people in school was meant to prevent sign language and encourage them to speak to one another, it did not deter the students from signing to each

other. A consequence of surveillance and control over language is the creation of a counter culture.

7.4 Resistance: creating counter cultures

In the stories about life in residential schools, themes emerge as significant, one of which suggests that the education system of oralism went against the grain of human experience. Although oralism intervened on the nurturing of the deaf experience, it has not managed to eradicate Irish Sign Language or change the ways and behaviours of deaf people. Out of these themes of resistance certain sub-themes emerged. The first counter discourse identified is a response to dominant forms of surveillance.

7.4.1 Surveillance: watching the watchers

This chapter has illustrated the extent to which the school sought to control use of signing through a system of surveillance. In response participants report incidents in which students assisted each other in guarding themselves from getting caught while they signed. Frank illustrates this rather succinctly.

Frank: We stood at a corner of a yard away from the school building. One of us kept an eye out for the Brothers or supervisors. When I was small I looked up to the big boys. I watched them sign to each other. One of them told me to stand and watch for anyone coming towards us. I wanted to please them so I stood at the pillar and looked across the yard where so many boys played football. I was proud to help them.

Anna: When the teacher turned around we signed and stopped when he or she faced us again. We signed when no one was looking be it in the toilet or the dormitory or the hall way or the bathroom where we washed ourselves. We signed in secret. Our eyes were sharp for we were watchful for teachers and nuns and knew when to stop signing.

Celia: One of the girls brought a flashlight from home. In the dormitory at night we sat together to sign to each other using the flashlight because signing is visual. One of us had to stand near the door. We took turns to do that. I hated it because I wanted to chat with the girls.

Dora: In the dining room […] I kept my eye on the supervisor walking around. When she came near our table I kicked the girl's leg or if she was opposite me I'd shake my head quickly. This was a sign that we had to stop signing.

As life under oralism was typified by rules imposed against signing, students displayed nuances of a counter culture whereby they continued to sign. The act of signing does not seem like a sign of rebellion but emerged out of a conscious need to communicate in their own way. The students found time and space to express themselves and to produce a culture that runs counter to the school's policy on language. One key sub-theme concerning resistance emerge in the notion of interpreting.

7.4.2 Finding Deaf interpreters

Students' constant interaction with each other provided the platform for support in times when some of them struggled during class. There was always someone with enough residual hearing in class on hand to translate spoken instructions from teachers. In most cases lessons were relayed when teachers had their backs turned.

Anna: Sometimes when I understood the lessons I'd relay to the others in class what the teacher was on about. When lip reading I used what knowledge I knew from reading books to make sense of what he was teaching us. For example, when teacher was telling us about World War One I would have read about it and would be able to explain to the others what the teacher was talking about. Our teacher began to allow us to sign in class because the message was getting through to us. He had been at us to stop signing for a long time but now he had stopped.

Frank: I learned a lot from my parents but when I went to class [as day pupil] I found it very hard to understand my teacher. We were lucky that one of my classmates had partial hearing and could understand most of what the teacher said to us. He did two things: sign or write. When teacher wrote notes on the blackboard, he signed to us. Other times he would write notes and pass it on to each of us.

Anna: Sometimes I interpreted for the boys whenever the teacher had his back turned to us as he wrote notes on the blackboard. Sometimes I got caught and was fined 2 pence. That was money out of my pocket money which meant I could not afford to buy sweets.

Mary: The nuns told me I was a good lip reader. I know it was because I had hearing when I was a child. In class I told others what the teacher said. Of course I waited until the teacher was not looking. They asked me: what did she say? What was that? I had to wait until it was the right time to tell them.

The desire to get information and to help others is a common theme running through the participants' narratives about classroom experiences.

7.4.3   Passive resistance and disobedience

Hearing aids and other audio assisted technologies synonymous with the realities of oralism have been used as a tool of passive resistance.

Frank: I did a hearing test. After a month I received a hearing aid for the first time. I was too young to object but I had a lot of problems. It was making my ears sore because I could feel air coming into my ears. I took it off at home and went to school without it. Teachers told me to bring it in the next morning but I refused. In the end I did but then I had it switched off while the thing was in my ear. I made it look as if I was listening through the hearing aid.

Anna: We lined up and the school principal examined our hearing aids. She wanted to ensure they were switched on and working. As I had mine switched off, I quickly turned the switch back on. In class I switched it off. I fooled the principal every time. She never knew I had it off all the time. The nuns were very focused on our hearing aids.

Acts of non-compliance vary from individual students and some of the participants report being told to return to the dormitory to collect their hearing aids. Much of the stories about resistance to using hearing aids were built around opposition to the rules and regulations that guided their lives.

7.4.4   Story-telling

The sharing of stories resulted in the development of a tradition in school that Deaf people maintained outside of school as past-pupils at the club. Signed storytelling was an effective way to develop a particular way of life. These events also required one or two pupils to stand guard as look-out while the others gathered around and shared stories.

Frank: In my time at school […] we were always looking information. Stories that we shared were something we learned every day. We told each other stories of what happened last year or the year before. We had memories of the football games we played against hearing students from other schools.

Celia: In my time stories were always shared in places where the supervisors or nuns were out of sight. It could be in the dormitory at night with a small number of us girls gathered together. I remember we shared stories in when we went for walks. The supervisor walked in front of us so she could not see us. Stories were a great way to understand the world.

Mary: We stood around signing telling each other stories about families, the secret letters we received from boyfriends, talking about home, nuns, teachers and

what we got up to last week or last month. The stories helped us learn about things. We had to be careful around the nuns and supervisors who would have reported us for signing.

Anna: We had no deaf adult in school except a couple of teachers who taught in a room upstairs. So with no adult signing to us we learned from each other. We got together in school yard to chat about things. We had good stories to share.

Several other participants from St. Joseph's School mentioned sharing stories in the play hall which was packed with students. The fact that something of a routine developed around storytelling indicates that it was a frequent occurrence.

7.4   Reflections

The account of participants revealed in this chapter begins with personal stories about the early years in family life and about the circumstances surrounding the discovery of deafness. This was followed by recollections of residential school life under oralism and the various practices used to control use of language and the students behaviour. On reflection two important issues central to the discussion presented in this chapter are language and identity. On the basis of the stories presented it seems language represents a powerful symbol of Deaf cultural identity that is often used as a point of resistance to the imposition of dominant language and culture. The narratives of the participants strongly demonstrate that they identify with Deaf culture. Various individuals make these observations. Anna, for example, longed for the arrival of her Deaf brother from residential school. For Frank, Deaf culture was a normal way of life in his family home. Possibly a more pertinent example is the resistance to oralism, where students continued to sign and supported each other by taking on roles of interpreters. The chapter also points to the notion of fragmentation of identities supported by examples of dominant forms of labelling and segregation. It also considered the emergence of resistance and counter cultures.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SCENES OF 'DEAF VILLAGE' LIFE: COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION RE-ASSESSED

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SCENES OF 'DEAF VILLAGE' LIFE: COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION RE-ASSESSED

> At the club I discovered a poster displaying images of a Deaf Village. It was the strangest thing posted on a wall, a drawing of futuristic quality. Impressive and frighteningly strange, the buildings bloomed huge, deep, multi-layered, oval and square. I felt I had seen a picture like it before but could not be sure.
>
> It now faced two directions at the same time: forwards and backwards. Forward thinking ideas were being gelled with old ones.
>
> The review loosened its grip of hierarchical control. Becoming less hierarchical meant that Deaf people were now being listened to more and more. They were now involved in decision-making: something not tolerated in bygone days.

The previous chapter illustrates that resistance is evident where students experience suppression of their language. Resistance emerged out of an inner resolve to maintain a way of life that was natural and spontaneous. In this chapter, narrative of resistance to the imposition of dominant norms and values emerge through the telling of stories and the daily conversations in Irish Sign Language (ISL). The stories were prompted by interviewing and in some cases were gleaned from general conversation around the time of interviewing and observation of the Deaf Village area. During interviews, stories were usually presented chronologically but when discussing lives after school they were recounted sporadically in an open-ended mixture of multiple explanations and eye-witness accounts. Personal relationships were not revealed but focus was on how they related to the community and their relationship with institutions and organisations that had a direct link with their lives. Their stories impart relations of marginalisation, representation and discrimination issues. Discourses of resistance and self-determination are documented in this chapter. To begin with, I have categorised the stories into themes of community and culture, hegemony, resistance, and education in contemporary times.

8.1 Deaf Community and Culture

In this category Eamonn, Celia, Yvonne, and Anna recount the processes that led them to develop strong ties with the Deaf community. Their stories are analysed in the context of the history of the club which is split in three different eras marked by significant changes: firstly, the decade between the 1960s and 1980s, during which time the club was located in Rathmines on the south side of Dublin city; secondly, the decade of the 1990s and the early 21st century was marked by the club's relocation to Drumcondra, north of the city centre;

thirdly the era of Deaf Village Ireland, which was officially launched on March 2013 on the former St. Joseph's school grounds. As the narratives indicate, it is not unusual for Deaf school-leavers to join the club for the purpose of socialisation with people who share the same experience of language and culture.

8.1.1   Socialisation: The Deaf club

The first quote I present here is from Eamonn. I knew Eamonn fairly well through my own association with the club in Rathmines during the 1980s. I sought an interview with him with the intention of learning about his experience of education in the 1950s and of community culture from the 1960s onwards. In the first of our interviews I drew on his school experience. In the second he recounted his life after school. Eamonn's stories about life after St. Joseph's in the 1960s provide insight into the initial experience of isolation in his family home.

Eamonn: In those days jobs were scarce. It was difficult to get employment. My father was delighted to get help from me. I worked really hard. I had plenty of energy and had the strength to keep on working. My father no longer needed outside help. I could do the job myself. At the same time I was very lonely. I watched people talk amongst themselves. I missed the company of people. My father noticed I had no friends. He knew I could not communicate with people.

The above extract reveals the personal crisis that Eamonn experienced as a consequence of being basically cut off from contact with society and due to a language barrier he had no access to a social life. With the support of his parents he was able to make the difficult decision to leave the family home and start a new life in Dublin.

Eamonn: My parents studied me and decided it was not good for my mental health to remain working [at home]. They said I should return to Dublin where I would meet my deaf friends. In the city I would have a job, have friends and be able to get involved in sport. They said home had nothing to offer me for a social life. My father was heartbroken. He needed a son to take on the [business] but at the same time he was concerned for my health and state of mind. He was reluctant to let me go. It was heart breaking for him.

It is clear from Eamonn's narrative that he was destined to return to Dublin – the city where he was likely to find access to a social life. Although he recalls the period as a turning point for him, he displayed deep sympathy for his parents. It was after he joined the Deaf club that he found a new confidence in himself. Having regular contact with Irish Sign Language seemed to have given him a new lease of life.

Eamonn: Things went well from there on. I wrote home to my father to say I was sorry. I went home for the summer to help [him]. I never went abroad for my holidays. I went home for weekends and for the summer holidays. I wrote to my father to tell him I was sorry – I was better off living in Dublin because the local people at home thought deaf people were bloody fools! He knew people had been giving me strange looks because of my deafness.

Eamonn and his parents recognised that he experienced isolation as a consequence of hearing people's negative attitude towards Deaf people. With no access to Irish Sign Language, he knew he had to leave his family home.

The impact of childhood experiences of education and culture at St. Mary's in the 1950s led Yvonne to look towards the club for social contact.

Yvonne: When I went to the club for the deaf I found there were two clubs – one for men and one for women. I went to the ladies' club on Friday nights. The club was in Gardiners Place on the third floor. One of my friends brought me there.

Celia emphasised that her desire to be part of the club was instigated by an awareness of the possibility of social isolation in society.

Celia: I knew I needed to be with deaf people because for me signing connected me with people. If I did not go to club, I think I would be lonely.

Like Celia, Yvonne and Eamonn, Anna was motivated to join the club by a desire to communicate in ISL.

Anna: After leaving St. Mary's I attended the club regularly on Tuesday and Friday evening. I looked forward to going to the club on those nights. Every other night I was bored at home. It was a great thrill to meet my friends at the club. When the club closed for the night I was disappointed to leave my friends and go home.

Celia: I think it is to do with ISL but also to meet people, to go out together, meet my future husband, get married and have children. It was normal for me. In the club I never felt alone.

Anna: For me the club was always like a second home. I loved going to the club and signing to deaf people.

Collectively these quotes form one of many experiences of 'survivor discourses' to interpret their experience of culture and to reaffirm their Deaf identities.

8.1.2 Hegemony: leadership

In the previous section I concentrated on the circumstances of how Deaf people tend to seek people who understand ISL. In this section I present insights into the experience of social life at the club. Catholic ideology marked the stories of David, Celia and Anna who recount experiences of their first encounter with the Catholic Institute for Deaf People (CIDP). For David, who was part of the club scene in the 1980s, there was little awareness of the local hierarchy:

David: I knew very little about CIDP […] I began to learn more about CIDP and learned the organisation owned the Cabra grounds where the residential schools for deaf children were located. I learned CIDP owned St. Joseph's House for Deaf and Deaf-blind People and the club for deaf people. I learned all this stuff [at a] time when the Strategic Review of CIDP policies took place.

In her recollection of life in the 1960s and 1970s, Celia could not distinguish between owner and management of the club:

Celia: The only people I saw from the CIDP were the chaplain. He was present at the club but I always thought Deaf people owned the club. When I think back to the 1960s, I realised I should have known it was the CIDP who owned it because they bought the premises but I was confused because we raised money for them. The money we raised was from selling flags with "Help the Deaf" labels. We were helping ourselves but the money went to the chaplaincy who said it was for the CIDP.

For David there was ambiguity about leadership in the club. In the early stages of his socialisation conformity and submission to authority preceded knowledge and understanding of the structure of the club. Celia and Anna concur,

Celia: Every time I discussed it with others, no one seemed to know who was leader of the CIDP. I thought we were owners but it was the CIDP all along.

Anna: While attending the club I never knew the CIDP owned the club premises. I thought the Dublin Deaf Association was a group led by deaf people, who actually owned the place but I was wrong. By the time the decision was made to move the club to a new place in Drumcondra I discovered who the real owners were

The above extracts convey experiences of marginalisation which was hardly unique to Deaf community as David illustrates in the following quote:

David: It was only after the Strategic Review in 2006 that names of people running the organisation was revealed. I found out that there were no deaf people on the CIDP board of directors. The IDS made it known to them that this was unfair. Later the CIDP agreed to take on deaf people as members of the Board of Directors. That was the first step in the right direction.

For David transparency and openness were important issues in relation to CIDP.

The CIDP are now open in their policies that many Deaf people know who is held accountable and running the organisation. Many of us are now more able to 'speak out' whereas before they were terrified to do that. CIDP people are now more aware of our rights and they listen to our demands more than they used to.

The discourses of transformation apparent in David's narrative suggest that Deaf people have gained increased self-empowerment where it concerns policies that directly affect the community. I now turn my attention to a discussion on discourses of transformation that permeated the community in the early 21st century.

8.1.3 Deaf Village Project

On a cool summer evening in August 2012 I wandered around the Deaf Village Ireland grounds to survey the area and observe the people mingling in the centre. I had been here several times on a casual visit just as I had attended the club in Rathmines and Drumcondra. I had it in mind to compare notes derived from interviews which discussed the village with my observation of the area. Several people gave their views of Deaf Village Ireland and each one considered it in terms of locality and the position of the new buildings close to the old St. Joseph's building, which for Eamonn holds schizophrenic resonance:

Eamonn: Well, I think people would rather not have it in Cabra because of its negative history. I think it would have been better located at another place more neutral. However I believe it will take time to get used to life in the Village. There's a massive sport complex there which is good. It's rather strange seeing new buildings standing close to old buildings. Hard to know where we stand with regard to the buildings. The area is like a split personality. I wonder do we feel attached to the old one or the new one. All this will take time to adjust.

Frank regarded Deaf village life in terms of the difficulty in separating culture and community from history.

Frank: I think the move to the 'village' area in St. Joseph's ground was a good idea. I believe we need time to get used to it. The change reminds me of the club move to Drumcondra in the early 1990s. So I think we will get used to it. The strange thing is [seeing] the old St. Joseph's building sitting close to the new and modern ones. I was very sad to see most of the school buildings demolished. That place was the scene of my childhood. Everything about the place reminded me of my time in St. Joseph's but now it's all changed. Only the old building reminds me of the past.

Daniel was concerned about distance but concurred that the St. Joseph's School ground is the ideal spot for a village-type community centre.

Daniel: It's in Cabra which means we have to travel a long way. Anyway I think it is a good place to have because there are many young and older people attending the village. There are more hearing people but some need to learn to sign.

By foregrounding Deaf narratives concerning Deaf Village Ireland I have provided a grassroots analysis of how community has become defined and re-defined in the context of history. The invocation of 'village' as a description of contemporary community alludes to the discourse of transformation.

8.2   Counter-hegemony: Irish Deaf Society

References to community-based activism are at the centre in the narratives of Eamonn, Anna and Frank. A significant theme arising from their involvement in activism is a desire for self-determination and self-reliance in response to lack of support from representative organisations and the social injustice of discrimination against the community. The response was to establish a group or organisation that could be described as a form of counter-hegemony to dominant institutions serving their needs.

Eamonn: The Irish Deaf Sports Association (IDSA) was the first deaf-led group to be established in 1968. That was the beginning of change. We proved we could manage our affairs very well. Why not? Over the years we showed that we could indeed make our own decisions and not depend on hearing people such as priests, Christian Brothers and nuns. We could do things ourselves and make decisions for ourselves. Indeed IDSA was the first deaf-led organisation. The club was run by the Chaplaincy because he was the president there. The club was controlled by CID. So after IDSA we had the Irish Deaf Society (IDS). We were self-representative. The idea of IDS was inspired by the IDSA. It had evolved now into a strong organisation with many more deaf-led associations formed over the years since. There was an increase in deaf power.

Deaf resistance comes in many forms. Anna remembers how Deaf people found time and space to produce a counter-culture in a youth club and counter-hegemony in Irish Deaf Society. These counter discourses are built around opposition to the aims and objectives of oralism which is integration and rejection of Deaf culture and Irish Sign Language.

Anna: I remember nothing was done. It always seemed as if National Association for the Deaf (NAD) people were inactive […] I was very lucky being young at a time when IDS was a newly established organisation. If I had left school much earlier I'd have suffered from marginalisation and oppression but the fact that the IDS was in existence the time I joined Deaf Youth Club I felt something was happening. There was hope. [My] heart was with the IDS because the people in the organisation were on the same wavelength as the Deaf community. The NAD wasn't. The IDS believed in the same principles about rights and social justice as the Deaf community.

Eamonn: I saw the IDS committee had self-belief and I knew they would do well. There were no hearing people involved in the IDS. So the group was self-representative of the deaf community. Before the IDS the team was called Deaf Action Group (DAG). This team was set up due to lack of action from the NAD in representing our needs. Since there was no action taken by them we decided to take things into our own hands and take action ourselves. The NAD was wary of the new group. We had to fight for self-representation and self-control. They were sceptical about the kind of Deaf empowerment that we were working on. That was the beginning of change in the deaf community. […] At that time it seemed the NAD people did nothing […] to help our cause to fight for our rights.

While doing fieldwork and interviews I asked to explain in more details why support was so ineffective from the dominant representative organisation, no one knew or offered an explanation for this inactivity. Frank recounted experiences of discrimination and gave an example of discrimination on motor insurance premiums which were higher for Deaf people than it was the case for members of mainstream society. Later in the interview he recalled how the IDS made efforts to change its agenda.

Frank: IDS policy changed in the middle of the 1980s. There was a new committee involved. Those people wanted to work at promoting sign language. They stressed ISL over everything else […] ISL was more important than other issues.

Frank: IDS wanted to include ISL in education. With my experience of education I believed ISL should be allowed. I still do.

It was the coalescing of cultural resources of IDS and Deaf people that made their resistance against discrimination possible. The outcome of all this has been the coming together of many Deaf groups. While organisations such as the IDS, IDSA and Irish Deaf Youth Association are still around, the NAD changed its name to DeafHear.ie. The comments from Anna, Frank and Eamonn illustrate that stereotypes and audist attitudes towards Deaf people contribute to their marginalisation. Their accounts show that they used their resources to deal with discrimination at grassroots level rather than seek support from those in power.

8.2.1   Irish Sign Language and education

The annotations noted the IDS agenda was geared for the promotion of Irish Sign Language in education. Attempts to put forward their ideas at an education forum organised by the NAD failed in the following ways:

Anna: I remember the atmosphere of the forum in the Green Isle Hotel was tensed with teachers, professionals and members of the Deaf community in the audience. NAD people were running the meeting. They were controlling how the meeting should be run. […] How awful Deaf people were treated. For example hearing people were given more time for their presentation than deaf people. A question and answer session followed a presentation by a hearing person. No questions were asked after a presentation given by [a deaf person]. No professionally qualified interpreters were provided. Instead one of the NAD staff members took on the role of interpreter. I felt the meeting was very much controlled so that it went in the direction the NAD wanted.

Frank: We were hoping for the return of ISL as a language of instruction. That was our expectation of the meeting. We were highly critical of the schools we attended as children for providing oralism and for the consequences we suffered. A few deaf people had stood up to discuss these ideas but nothing changed.

Ned: The forum was tightly controlled and had been pre-planned to go a certain direction. There was never a notion of debate. If there was then different views would have been put on the table but, no, unfortunately it didn't happen the way we wanted. There was no discussion about language policy. It was all about the Visiting Teacher Service and things that had nothing to do with policy.

Participants such as Ned and Anna recall that one deaf person was prevented from "giving a presentation about his experience of education."[111] Later he was given allowed back on the

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[111] Ned

agenda and given less time than was originally scheduled. Anna was advised not to give her views on education. By her account many deaf people believed the meeting was about education policy but they soon learned the debate was not about whether or not there should be reform in the education system but rather a discussion on concerns about mainstreaming of deaf children.

8.2.2   ISL interpreting service

Chapter Seven highlights instances of resistance to oralism in the form of interpreting for classmates during class lessons. The idea of interpreting was foremost on their minds during the post-school years. Following the education forum, IDS people shelved the issue with education policy for the time being and turned their attention to promoting and professionalising the ISL interpreting service in Ireland. Frank offers an assessment of the history of interpreting in Deaf people's lives.

Frank: Most people believe the idea of interpreters came from the chaplaincy. That is not true. I get angry when people say that. The idea was borne out of our school experiences. Remember a few deaf people had experiences of interpreting in classrooms. This is how the idea started. We needed hearing people to become interpreters.

As Frank stated it was hearing people at the club who took on the role of interpreting for the community.

Mary: One of the Chaplains at the club was fluent fluent in ISL He was happy to interpret for us. Sometimes when he was not available it was difficult to attend an event with hearing people but we wanted real interpreters, you know the ones who had training and passed tests.

Frank: Professional interpreters were non-existent during the 1980s and the early 1990s

The impact of interpreting services on Deaf lives is clearly illustrated by Ned and Frank in the following ways:

Ned: The interpreting idea proved very useful for us to access information. It is now a valuable resource we can use for getting an education.

Frank: Can you see how things seem strange in education? The fact that we seek interpreters when we do a course in college should be enough evidence that we need ISL in education.

Bethany, Eleanor and Mary and Eva, school-leavers in the late 1980s and late 1990s, recount experiences of doing higher education courses. Eva, who attended mainstream school, first started to learn ISL when she started in college. Since she was at beginner's level, employing an ISL interpreter was counter-productive so she relied on other sources for support. This is her story:

Eva: I visited a girl at her parents' house. There we turned on the television and watched a programme called *See Hear* on BBC. It was then I saw sign language in full view. The programme was presented in British Sign Language (BSL). I was fascinated with the signs. I kept watching it. There was another programme on RTE called *Reasonable Doubt* with deaf actress Marlee Matlin, Oscar winner for her role in *Children of a Lesser God*. Matlin plays a lawyer who signed in the courtrooms communicating through the service of a sign language interpreter. It was while watching it that I realised access to education could be achieved through an interpreter. Watching *Reasonable Doubt* I thought about how a deaf person could be a professional and I believed this was possible. Watching these programmes seemed to have transformed me because now I was enthusiastic about learning sign language. […] I knew sign language was the solution to breaking down the barrier to access. […] I started at college and began attending ISL classes. For the next two years I went to ISL classes [..] I continued on learning sign language knowing that one day I could engage an interpreter. I was already two years on the course at TCD and had missed a great deal of important information. Most of my learning during the first two years came from text books and notes I got from other students. I got an interpreter for the final two years of my degree course. My work performance improved greatly. During the first two years I was amongst the bottom half of my class and by the time I graduated I achieved an honours degree and graduated first in my class, all because of the support of a sign language interpreter. For the majority of the course I had been self-supporting.

Mary: Interpreters gave me the opportunity to be included in meetings or events where no one knew sign language. Without interpreters I would have been lost. I have no doubt about that.

At first Bethany was resistant to the notion of engaging an interpreter to access lectures.

Bethany: Before the course began the Disability Officer asked me about my communication needs. She wanted to know if I needed a note taker, speech to text equipment, or an ISL interpreter. I said I'd think about it and get back to her. I told my friend that I was offered an interpreter. My friends advised me not to apply for interpreting. They said no, it's too embarrassing! They said if I use an interpreter I'd have to sit in the front row. I went back to the Disability Officer and told her I had decided not to use an interpreter. She asked me how I was going to follow lectures. I lied and told her I'd lip read and will be able to access 80 per cent of the lectures. I asked for speech to text or a note taker.

Second year came and the Disability Officer asked if I wanted an interpreter. I said no. The same happened in third year.

On reflection, Bethany rued the missed opportunity to benefit from the service of interpreters when studying for her first degree. However, her postgraduate experience led her to take on the service.

Bethany: I know now if I had used an interpreter I'd have full access. After the degree course was completed I went on to do a postgraduate diploma […]. I asked for an interpreter but there were no funds to pay for one. My friends had already graduated. Fortunately one of the students in class is an interpreter. She was only there once a week as she studied part-time. She said she would interpret for me if I could copy notes for her. I couldn't believe how much I learned through an interpreter. I said "Wow, this is brilliant!"

Bethany: I can now imagine how much I would have benefitted for my undergrad degree if I had used an interpreter. I was raging that I didn't avail of this service. I went to [college] to do a postgraduate diploma. By then I knew what I wanted and asked for an interpreter and other services. For one full year I had access to everything in the training course. The interpreter came to every session including lectures and seminars and for placement work when a lecture observed me teaching in a class. Once I went out to see a play in the college he came with me. I secured better results in [college] than I did in my other courses. This is due to having full access. I now have one undergraduate degree and two postgraduate degrees.

David: After leaving school in the early 1980s, I started to panic not knowing what to do about living in society. Obviously college awaited me but I was unsure what to do next in a hearing world. The school had not prepared us for society apart from speech training. I never knew anything about the hearing world and about how to cope with a different language and culture. I knew something about the hearing world through my family but not about the world in which people knew nothing about sign language and deaf culture.

Perhaps one of the reason why deaf people attend the club and seek an interpreter lay not only in their fear of facing barriers to access information but also in the fact that lip reading was not reliable communication skill to use to enable integration. Bethany's story is quite interesting from the point of view of the shame-feelings expressed by her friends in relation to signing. Eva's story seems to emphasise the true value in having ISL. In David's case the lack of available interpreters militated against him taking up a higher education course. For Mary, interpreters are useful in so far as they bridge the cultural and linguistic divide between Deaf and hearing people.

8.2.3   Second Chance Education: Mastering English

Under the legacies of oralism, Deaf people experienced literacy problems due to barriers to access education. In defence against oralism, the Irish Deaf Society people sought government funds to train Deaf tutors and provide free literacy courses to their community. The narratives of Ned and Frank suggest that demands for literacy courses came from the majority of the Deaf population in Ireland. As Ned points out, literacy has been a major bone of contention.

Ned: The majority of the deaf population in the country is affected by literacy problems due to the education system of oralism. That is true. Yes, oralism caused literacy problems but oralism is not an issue we are addressing where we are concerned about deaf adults today. School leavers of today have learned through signed supported English or Total Communication. People accuse me of dwelling too much on oralism that it is all in the past. So I have two groups of deaf adults on our register: the first group is those who were educated under oralism and the other group concerns those educated through signed supported English or Total Communication. Both groups have literacy problems. Of course some of them have done well in their Leaving Certificate but still have difficulty with English grammar and language.

Frank finds the tapestry between literacy and the Deaf community is inflected by the effort to master English, a cultural necessity since failure to acquire the language sufficiently occurred in childhood which in turn initiated resentment and mistrust against educators:

Frank: For me, literacy involves learning and understanding about things that happen in society. The IDS organise courses to be delivered in ISL that include deaf history, culture, English as a foreign language, computers, driving test preparation and others. The IDS provide Deaf studies courses to give deaf people a better understanding of their culture and identity. So literacy courses aims to empower deaf people to become self-reliant and [understand] their rights in society. Many of them are angry for missing out on education and that is the reason they do not trust the education system.

This reflection on literacy considers how essential English is in the attainment of access to information. Ned offers insight into the impact of literacy courses in changing the lives of literacy students.

Ned: The aim of literacy courses given by the IDS is to encourage deaf adults become self-sufficient which is the opposite of being dependent. For example we train Deaf people to learn and become tutors themselves. In the first place they were students of literacy and then they become tutors of deaf adult literacy courses. Thus they become active members of the deaf community.

> They become confident enough to take on roles such as board member of a team like the Women's Group, or any other group or organisation.

Making the courses accessible to students was of paramount importance, as Frank testifies. This point indicates a deep awareness of the issues that needed to be addressed.

Frank: Literacy courses are necessary because many deaf people missed out on education. In literacy courses deaf people are tutors so lessons are given in ISL. In oralism, lessons are given in a spoken language. With ISL, deaf people become educated. With spoken language deaf people tend to become illiterate.

According to Ned and Frank, deaf people who need literacy classes are those who have literacy problems. When asked to put a ballpark figure on the number of deaf people who have literacy problems Frank suggests "about 60 to 70 percent at minimum." As the two commentators argue, literacy is necessary in order for deaf people to gain knowledge and maintain independence. For many years the population was purposefully kept illiterate by the schools. If you do not know anything different, then there is no chance of their authority being rebelled against. That is, until people like Ned and Frank started asking questions to the government and institution.

8.3   Class Acts: Deaf Education in Contemporary Times

In this section an ethno-drama is composed with the student participants presented as characters to serve as a storyline in which the contents of dialogue and drama are derived from data obtained: (1) from focus group interviews and what the participants reveal about themselves in response to open-ended questions; and (2) from field notes and journal entries detailed before, during and after classroom observation.

8.3.1   The Coming of the King

Foreword: The time of the play is October 2012. The setting is St. Martin's School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children located at an urban town on the outskirts of Dublin city. The school is located in a secluded spot surrounded by high walls and an open expanse of grass, pavements and pathways. The whole campus is a model of modern development consisting of a complex of school buildings, residential houses, and a sports centre. Dormitories and living quarters are not of military or industrial school type but are furnished in a way that gives the rooms a homely ambience with cabin style beds and drawers beneath them and an individual bed light. Each dorm sleeps four people and contains individual desks

for studying and storage spaces for books and study material. This is the 'boarders only' part of the residential school campus that is not accessible to day pupils.

In the school building students have access to lockable cupboards. Buildings are securely locked with an intercom at the front door and all classrooms are locked after class ends. This is part of the health and safety measures implemented by the school authorities. There are approximately thirty students in the school. All wear school uniforms based on a distinctive St. Martin's school jumper. Approximately one-third of personnel are deaf. The school's Liaison Officer arranges one-to-one counselling and deaf awareness workshops. A Speech and Language Therapist offers training in speech and lip reading. Junior, Leaving Certificate, and Leaving Certificate Applied courses are provided to the students. There is no specific policy on language use but a child-centred approach is adopted whereby language needs are assessed for each individual pupil. In most classrooms Irish Sign Language is the language of instruction. Some teachers talk for the benefit of spoken language pupils.

This is the background of the setting

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Teacher: MR. MAGUIRE

A fiftyish (hearing) man in his 24th year as hearing teacher at the school, his signing is methodical, clear and expressive.

Deaf Students: EILEEN, JAMES, JACK, BILL, FERGUS, ANN, JOE.

Ethnographer: PATRICK

Patrick is an ethnographer. He has obtained permission from Ms O'Reilly and Mr. Maguire to sit and observe class as part of his studies.

School Principal: MS O'REILLY

The Coming of the King

SCENE:

> *A Junior Cert classroom in St. Martin's School: small, square, airy, spacious, and bright. The room contains two small windows on the right side. Directly opposite, on the left, is a large oblong oak table sprinkled with books, papers, biros and a laptop. Mr. Maguire stands a few feet away from the table facing the students. He is holding a book titled* New Galaxy 1, *a Junior Certificate English text book. To his left, on a yellow-coated wall there is a spread of posters and banners containing notes on poetry, short stories, and a variety of newspaper clippings. The centre of the room is peppered with seven student desks and chairs wooden with cast iron stands, five of which are occupied by students EILEEN, JAMES, JACK, ANN, BILL, FERGUS, and JOE. Their seats are arranged side by side, two or three feet apart and in a semi-circular fashion. The students in their seats are facing their teacher. Behind him is a whiteboard secured on a wall. Above the board hangs a clock that reads 2.15pm. Class is conducted in Irish Sign Language. Mr. Maguire moves towards his desk but stops suddenly, turns around and speaks directly to the door on the left of the room. The eyes of the class turn to the door.*

Enter MS O'REILLY and PATRICK [*carrying a pen and notepad*]

MS O'REILLY: [*signs to the class*]. This is Patrick. He is here to observe the class as part of his PhD studies at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick. Okay? [*To Patrick and pointing to an empty seat beside the students*] You can sit there. [*nods at Mr. Maguire and exits*]

PATRICK: [*takes hold of a chair, brings it across the floor and positions it a few feet from the students and sits facing Mr. Maguire and signs*] Thank you for having me here. [*glances at the students and gives the thumbs-up*]

MR. MAGUIRE: You're very welcome. [*to class*] Patrick is studying in a college in Limerick for a PhD. [*to PATRICK*] Is it in education? Can you tell the class a bit about your work?

PATRICK: Yes it is concerned with education. [*addressing the class*] I'm here to study classroom activities. I study the culture of the school. Culture is a way of life. So I observe and make notes about a way of life. I study people communicating with each other. I observe, interview and write notes. I record things by note taking. For interviews I record by camcorder. Here I just take notes and observe.

MR. MAGUIRE: Okay. [*Signing to the class*] How did the drama begin? [*at the table he opens the New Galaxy 1 and looks up*] Well, how did the story begin?

[*PATRICK is scribbling on a notepad*]

JACK: [*raising his hand*] There was an old shed and hotel.

BILL: [*to Jack*] No, it began with a fortune teller.

MR. MAGUIRE: [*walks towards BILL and taps him on shoulder*] Yes but what did the fortune teller do?

JAMES: He was walking?

MR. MAGUIRE: Okay. How did he walk?

JACK He walked with a stick. [*to James*] Is that right?

JAMES: Right [*Laughing, glances over at Patrick*]

MR. MAGUIRE: Look at me. [W*aving his hand to get Jack's attention*] Look at me. The fortune teller tells his wife, what?

JACK: He has to meet the business man? [*makes an attempt to open the text book but is told to close it*]

MR. MAGUIRE: Close your book. What kind of manner did he have?

JACK: Posh.

MR. MAGUIRE: Was he happy?

BILL: Yes, he...

JAMES: Who?

JACK: The policeman…

BILL: No, not the policeman. The Fortune…

JAMES: Yes, the fortune teller.

MR. MAGUIRE: Good. Why is the business man interested in the magician? [*Pause*]

MR. MAGUIRE: [*Writes on whiteboard the words: political agitator*] Okay, what does 'political agitator' mean?

BILL: I don't know.

JAMES: I'm the same. I don't know.
[*pause*]

JACK: Politics?

JOE: [*Face contorts*] I don't know.

MR. MAGUIRE: Political? You have a different opinion about something. It means someone involved in protests – a trouble maker. Okay, write these new words down. [*He writes on whiteboard a list of words from the narrative: turbulence, disconcerted, wringing, red-hot ideas*] What is a red-hot idea?
[*pause*]

MR. MAGUIRE: If the colour is red what does that tell you?

FERGUS: Something is dangerous….

JOE: [*face wrinkles*] What? I don't understand…

FERGUS: It means dangerous ideas

JOE: How are ideas dangerous? Dangerous is if you are driving fast.

BILL: If you have something in your mind maybe like you want to kill someone. That is a dangerous idea, right?

MR. MAGUIRE: That's right [*turns around and faces the whiteboard and students continue writing*]

PATRICK: [*looks around the room, studies the environment and notes his observations*].

MR. MAGUIRE: What does ferocious mean? Wild? Okay. Okay, now write a summary of the story. [*While students' heads are down, Mr. Maguire crosses over to Patrick*] Are you okay so far?

PATRICK: Yes. Could I have the name of the book you are teaching class?

MR. MAGUIRE: [*hands him the book*]. I hope this was helpful?

PATRICK: Yes, very much. I appreciate you giving me this opportunity.

MR. MAGUIRE: [*To class*] What…
[*Hands are shaking all around as multiple conversations ensue*]

MR. MAGUIRE: Okay. Okay. [*Waves his hand*] Pay attention. Look at me. [*Finger pointing to his face*] Right. What is the name of the story?

FERGUS: The Coming of the…

JACK: King…Coming of the King!

MR. MAGUIRE: Do you all agree? Who wrote it?

BILL: J…

JAMES: [*fingers make three shapes*] Ted. [*to JACK*] How do you spell his surname?

MR. MAGUIRE: Yes, but what is his full name?

JACK: [*fingers flicker into a variety of shapes*] Hugh…maybe I got this wrong.

MR. MAGUIRE: Spell it again, slowly.

JACK: [*fingers move like wires*] H-U-G-H-E-S. Ted Hughes.

MR. MAGUIRE: [*Smiling, looks to PATRICK*] Ted Hughes – have you heard of him?

PATRICK: Yes, I have. He was married to American poet Sylvia Plath. Is the class preparing for Junior Cert?

MR. MAGUIRE: [*Glancing at the clock*] One student, JAMES, is not sitting exams this year because he is not long in St. Martin's. [*To JAMES*] Where did you arrive from?

JAMES: Mainstream school.

MR. MAGUIRE: Fergus will do Junior Cert next year. [*Turns towards the door and speaks*]

Enter ANN and EILEEN

EILEEN: [*Surprised class is still in session. Flustered, she signs hurriedly*] Oh excuse me, I thought class has ended now.

MR. MAGUIRE: [*waves them inside*] That's okay. Take a seat at the back and wait.

PATRICK: Can I ask the class a few questions?

MR. MAGUIRE: Yes. We have five minutes before class ends.

PATRICK: Thanks. [*To the class*] Can you tell me a bit about your family? Are they deaf or hearing? How do you communicate with them?

MR. MAGUIRE: Okay. Who wants to go first?
[*FERGUS raises his hands*]

FERGUS: My parents are deaf. I have two brothers and one of them is hearing. My other brother is deaf. I have a sister who is hearing. I am here 12 years now – since 2001. I usually communicate through Irish Sign Language. My hearing brother is fluent in ISL. The family always sign so my brothers and sisters all grew up in a sign language home. I can't speak. Everyone in the family uses ISL.

MR. MAGUIRE: We will go from left to right. [*Pointing towards JACK*] Now, Jack…

PATRICK: [*shows his thumb to* FERGUS] Thanks. [Turning to Jack beside him] Is you name Jack?

JACK: Yes. [*Pause*] My parents are hearing.
[Pause]

PATRICK: Can you tell me about your family?

JACK: I have one brother who is deaf. His wife is deaf. I have a baby nephew. We all communicate in ISL and English. I lip read my parents and use signs with them. [*Pauses and looks towards* FERGUS *who nods urging him to continue*] I talk and lip read with my parents. My parents have some signing skills. I sign to my brother and his wife. My brother and his wife are deaf so we sign but with my parents I talk and read their lips.

PATRICK: Thanks for sharing that with us. You are [*checks his notes*] JAMES?

JAMES [*smiles*]: Yes. Okay, I have a big family. I have two brothers and three sisters. One sister is profoundly deaf and the other two are partially deaf. I sign to my parents and sisters. With my hearing brothers I talk and read lips. I have some hearing in both ears. I have a hearing aid but don't wear it to school.

BILL: My parents are hearing. I have no brothers and sisters. I use lip reading to communicate with my parents. My parents can't sign. I can hear speech. I wear hearing aids but not all the time.

JOE: Both my parents are hearing. My sister is hearing. I am the only one in the family who is deaf. When I communicate with my family I use lip reading. We don't sign. Yes, I can hear with my hearing aid.

PATRICK: What is the best thing about school? [P*ause*] Anyone?
[*Students look at each other*. FERGUS' *raises his hand*]

FERGUS: Sports. I play football and water polo. I love it.

PATRICK: You were in mainstream school. Is it different to what you find here in St. Martin's?

JAMES: Yes, it is different. In mainstream school I got on fine with students but found it hard to communicate most of the times. It was difficult in class because I lip read teacher all the time. Here everyone signs. So it is better. I have Deaf friends, which is great.

JOE [*laughs*]: I never went to mainstream school. I like sport too. Same answer…

PATRICK: Is there anything else other than sport?

JAMES: I'm not interested in sport. I like meeting friends here. At home I sign and here it's the same but I like meeting friends.

JACK: I like meeting friends too. Teachers are good here.

PATRICK: Do all teachers understand ISL? What about you BILL?

BILL: Teachers can sign. I can understand them in class if they talk and sign at the same time.

PATRICK: Tell me about Deaf and hearing teachers. Are they different? Which is easier to understand?

[*Some students laugh. Others looked at each other.*]

BILL: As I am oral, I like hearing teachers but all teachers are good.

JACK: [*Reflectively twisting his mouth*] I don't mind really. I like both. I understand all teachers.

FERGUS: [*Looks at* MR. MAGUIRE] I prefer Deaf teachers because I come from a Deaf family [*Reflects*] Yes. I understand all teachers. So, it's okay.

PATRICK: [*To* MR. MAGUIRE] Are the girls taking your class?

MR. MAGUIRE: Yes. You can ask questions but keep it short please. There is not much time left.

PATRICK: Thanks. [*Turning to his right*] Can I ask you questions?

ANN: [*Hesitant and looks to* EILEEN.EILEEN *smiles and nods*] Okay.

PATRICK: Can you tell me your name? Can you tell me about your first school?

ANN: My name is Ann. [*Signs tentatively*] I started school when I was five or six years of age. I didn't find the school helpful. I didn't understand the lessons. It was a hearing school. [*Pauses and glances at Eileen smiling*] I didn't really understand the subjects I was doing…. No… When my teacher asked me to do something I didn't know anything about it. I simply copied from my cousins and friends in class. I had a lot of friends as well. That's all. ..oh, I like it here.

EILEEN: [*finger pointing to her chest*] me? Okay. I started school when I was six years old. I think I was six years old, I'm not sure. I attended a hearing school. That's all.

MR. MAGUIRE [*Glancing at the clock and notices that we have run over time by ten minutes*]: Okay that's it, we need to stop. For next week homework…read for next class.
[*As students rise from their chairs MR. MAGUIRE turns to PATRICK*]

MR. MAGUIRE: How are you?

PATRICK: I'm fine thanks and you?

MR.MAGUIRE: I've been very busy correcting mock exams.

MR. MAGUIRE: When did you leave St. Joseph's?

Class ends, play draws to a close

8.3.2   Introspection

This class was engaged in a reading and analysis of the Ted Hughes story 'The Coming of the King'. The teacher asked questions to test the students understanding of the story read the previous week. The language of the class was Irish Sign Language. Compared to the previous chapter, none of the students had difficulty communicating with their teacher who was hearing and competent in ISL. The teacher demonstrated a keen awareness of Deaf cultural norms. Instead of shouting or talking to get a student's attention, he waved his hand. At one stage when he turned to the door and spoke, I assumed he was distracted by a knock on the door and made a note not to present my assumptions but rather to write about things as I saw it. One student was conscious of my presence. Overall the students appeared comfortable and at ease amongst themselves. The teacher supported their learning by engaging in enquiry, defining words and getting them to write in their own words what they had learned about the story. As class progressed, the students were attentive and active in their lessons. Their participation level increased. Two students were less forthcoming and offered little input to class session. This may be due to the presence of the researcher. Overall there was little disruption apart from the entrance of the visitors.

Personally I felt relaxed and comfortable and the teacher was accommodating towards my request for questions. My role switched from remote observer to participant in the classroom discussion. The one difficulty I encountered was in the act of writing notes and observing at the same time. In the process of writing I missed out on some conversations

since ISL is a visual language. Video recording of classroom activities were considered but the school teachers did not permit this. The teachers were happy to allow for note taking.

8.4   Reflections

The presentation of Chapter Eight could be said to consist of two different parts. The first part is the presentation of empirical data and the second provides an ethno-drama. The most outstanding notion emerging from the first is the extent of Deaf people's resistance to dominant cultural beliefs and values. As adults, Deaf people recognise the injustice of discrimination and marginalisation. From that position of awareness they attempt to control their own resources in order to transform their lives. Without such resources and strength of resolve they may continue to live with oppression around them. It is this power that has led to today's work on educational problems. Their struggle for equality and social justice were struggles for power and control, to resist and transform in order to secure self-reliance and self-representation. Why was grassroots organising a necessity? The answer is found in the narratives of their experience of oralism and the experience of marginalisation. While the club was the central site for socialisation of Deaf people it also became the cornerstone of Deaf activism. It also provided the culturally specific frame for activism to take root in the form of the IDS. By focusing on civil rights and later on preserving and reviving Irish Sign Language, the IDS became a more meaningful organisation to the community. With concentration on ISL as a cultural resource for access in relation to education and information, the IDS created a space in which Deaf people could enter into a debate on policy concerning education.

In the second part, I use a literary device to enter the context of the stories from students of a school for Deaf children gleaned from the focus group interviews and participant observation. Their accounts are presented as partial views of their lives as students I enter their narratives in the form of dialogue. The contexts of their stories emerged as themes evoked in the group interviews. This method of data analysis enables me to create dialogue that is rich with meaning. Cultural nuances are displayed. Pseudonyms are employed for the characters and the research setting. The analysis of classroom discussion brought many challenges to this researcher. The difficulty was in writing notes while keeping my eyes on the action before me. I managed to write at a time when students were busy writing notes. I took time to write and look around the class. The transcript from the interviews proved useful to present the dialogue in the classroom.

There is always an achievement in having a 'voice' that accurately represents the stories of the participants and the researcher and the researcher's intentions. Sometimes this has to be sufficient in the research. From Chapters Six to Eight the participants played a vital role in opening the door to the possibility for change by offering their stories, their points of views, and thoughts and emotions to the research. They have played a significant role in their own liberation from fear, subjugation, marginalisation and discrimination by having their 'voice' 'heard'. From their stories I have identified life themes from their experience of education and culture, paying particular attention to triggering events and memories. All of the strategies for presenting their accounts in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight have the potential to provide insight that may help inform policy. These accounts have tremendous value for future research in that it clarifies the key issues at the heart of the problem in Deaf education: that educators tend to place little value in Irish Sign Language. Reflective thinking involves seeing the hidden sentiments of Deaf narratives, seeing the wood from the trees. The task is now to reflect on all that has been discussed in the study. Throughout this study I have collected many themes such as biculturalism, bilingualism, auto-ethnographic vignettes, postmodern ethnography, language, culture, identity politics, suppression, fragmentation, resistance, self-representation and educational transformation, self-discovery and self-transformation. The challenge now is to summarise all these themes, discuss conclusions and make suggestions.

CHAPTER NINE

REFLECTIONS

CHAPTER NINE

REFLECTIONS

> Marilyn Monroe once said "sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together." Like her, I believe things happen for a reason and people change. And as she said, we can learn to let go, learn from mistakes, and when things go wrong we appreciate them when they are right. I was now at a fork in the road trying to make up my mind which way to turn. [...] I saw what was wrong with me. There was only one way to go to take the next step in the right direction. I left my old life behind me and moved on, looking to the future with renewed optimism.

At this stage in the research journey I have come full circle, from a place where it all began in Vancouver in the summer of 2010 to a time of self-discovery, a deeper understanding of the Self in relation to others (Ellis, 2004). The foreword of this study indicated how my interest in doing a PhD in Deaf education was sparked the day I witnessed the Statement of Principle read during the Opening Ceremony of the ICED Congress in Vancouver. At the Closing Ceremony, the British Colombia Deaf Association (BCDA) delegate, Wayne Sinclair, presented the New Era Accord document containing 600 signatures to World Federation of the Deaf President Markku Jokinen. The following year in 2011, the document was presented at the WFD Congress in Durban, South Africa.

Looking back, I cannot help but feel privileged now to have borne witness to the statement and the presentation of the New Era Accord. Before then I had contemplated the meaning of writing about the past but now I can look forward to the future with hope. For those who accept the statement I hope it brings healing. Although it does not take away the memory of oralism, nor does it take away pain and anger, I believe the statement validates our historical reality, that the ICED Milan Congress 1880 remains a pivotal moment in history when the anti-sign language movement was consolidated. All those years of never being taken seriously, of being ignored and being written about without due regard to our thoughts and feelings, were finally recognised in Vancouver. I believe we received recognition of an injustice carried out in the name of oralism and an acknowledgment of the effect this had on the lives of generations of Deaf people. In the light of the history of marginalisation and denial, it was long overdue. The CIDP's public apology, spurred by the findings of the Ryan Report, means we can now begin the process towards healing and true partnership.

I started my studies in October 2010 at a time when the CIDP-initiated Deaf Village Project was in operation[112]. In March 2013 the Project was consolidated with the official launch of Deaf Village Ireland[113]. A Deaf Education Centre managed by the Education Partnership Group (EPG), has been in operation since June 2011 with a responsibility to provide a resource for parents, professionals and members of the Deaf community.[114] The aim is to disseminate information and offer advice on a range of issues pertaining to the education of Deaf children and deafness in general. Since its foundation in 2007, the EGP[115] has commissioned research and produced a number of documents relating to education, teaching and policy and organised conferences. The Cabra schools are currently engaged in discussions with the CIDP on the possibility of an amalgamation of the two schools to form one single-gendered institution but to date no decision has been made on the proposal[116].

There comes a revelatory moment when research and writing is almost complete, a time when I start to reflect, consider the whole research project and wonder how I got here. Around the time of the CIDP apology, I thought about the years when we resisted against attacks on our language and against attempts to change our views about ourselves. I now recognise that Deaf people have always been a part of my journey to reconciliation and hope. Together we learned hard lessons about the impact of oralism. Together we united in our stories providing a counter-narrative to dominant accounts about our lives. Together we used our eyes for leaning and hands for communicating. Together our resilience shone through.

Intellectually and emotionally, I feel I have learned as I have travelled from the beginning to near the end of the project. I have come to a point where I realise the significance of the research work resides both in recording the memories and experience of Deaf people whose lives span more than sixty years and in the experimentation with the collaborative research method of auto-ethnography. Emotionally, I have the added benefit of intimacy gained with my research participants as a result of sharing my story and learning about the stories they shared with me. For me the time given to writing the auto-ethnography, seeing and sharing stories and to engaging in reflections have all been integral to this work. On an intellectual level, I have learned to try and make sense of the experience of oralism and audism even when I experienced conflicting emotions while writing. An intellectual

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[112] Deaf Village Ireland www.deafvillageireland.ie
[113] ibid
[114] Deaf Education Centre www.deafeducation.ie
[115] Education Partnership Group was founded in 2007 following the dismantling of the Deaf Education Advisory Committee
[116] Regina O'Connell St. Mary's School personal communication

awareness of ethical responsibilities that comes with carrying out research was achieved during the process of writing the auto-ethnography, all significant challenges faced by this bricoleur and bicultural researcher.

9.1   On Auto-ethnography as Method

A starting point in my auto-ethnography is where I have self-reflexively engaged in revealing my personal life in relation to Deaf education and culture and to the lives of others. I was drawn to Ellis' (2004: 84) idea of doing "emotionally evocative work" and believe this study successfully engaged with this concept as a framework for writing personal narrative and ethnography. In that regard I demonstrated auto-ethnography is a "workable method" for this study (ibid). My intention was to illuminate the ways in which memory of my experiences of education and culture influenced my research in preparing the research design, selecting the research site and research subjects, the selection of research topics in the literature review, and the conclusions I drew from them. Auto-ethnography is a qualitative research method that is postmodernist in construct combining ethnography and autobiography (Ellis, 2004).

The auto-ethnographic experience provided me with opportunity to reflect on aspects of my life in relation to education and culture and history: all of which I have been able to draw upon in developing the project. This kind of reflection is an academic and methodological strength of auto-ethnography (Ellis, 2004). In effect, my story offers "a sense of companionship" to my participants and to those who have had similar experiences so they would feel they do not need to stay silent about things that are important to them (Ellis, 2004: 84). As Ellis (2004: 84) states, auto-ethnography encourages people to discuss important issues in their lives. It is my hope that my story will "generate conversation" amongst researchers, students, educators, professionals and Deaf people. The hope is that it will stimulate others to tell their stories. I hope they will recognise that personal narratives, narratives of the self, self-stories, personal ethnography, autobiography, reflexive ethnography, emotionalism, narrative ethnography, have real value in academic research (Ellis, 2004; Denzin, 2007; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Muncey, 2010; Hughes, et al, 2012). I hope they will see that "narrative truth" affects us all (Ellis, 2004: 124).

Auto-ethnography as a method freed me to acknowledge my subjectivity and recognise my inability to separate myself from the research. The method enabled me to provide an intimate and open report of research and writing experience. The method gives me the scope to say directly that this is my perception of the research topic and this is my

experience of the research process. In writing about the Self in relation to education and culture, I have taken a postmodern stance in admitting my status or position, background, beliefs, values, and motivations have all shaped the research process. In auto-ethnography the researcher's subjectivity is central. In consequence, my viewpoint and value judgement are connected to the research. In writing about social experience and about culture that circulated around me growing up I make these aspects transparent in the study.

9.2   On Auto-ethnographic Writing

Ellis (2004) alludes to the idea that being emotional makes good ethnography, that the emotional experience of writing about emotion helps researchers become better ethnographers. My engagement in emotionalism led me to simultaneously tease memories and deal with emotions and my own perspectives on the past in order to reflect on the writing I produced for the study. For me writing, as a "method of inquiry," was a way of finding out about myself and about the culture with which I was connected with a way of 'knowing' and a "method of discovery and analysis." (Richardson, 1998: 345) In the search for meaning through writing I alluded to the 'journey metaphor' an idea derived from Muncey (2005; 2010). Following Muncey's suggestion, I unravelled the story in different stages from beginning to end: the first focusing on residential school life, the second on my youth, and the third on my academic journey. Back and forth I went, beginning at the time of arrival at Beech Park and turning further back to the time of birth. From there I journeyed through the different stages of life experiences. The narrative chronically told in "fragmented and layered writing" (Ellis, 2004: 38) is written as a series of vignettes for the entire Chapter Two and as an introduction to each chapter to blend the auto-ethnographic elements of the study.

I write about the memory of separation from my parents to evoke the intense emotion caused by trauma and the effect this had on me in later years. The period without contact made it difficult to connect with family. I saw other children at the school, orphaned or abandoned by their parents and thought how fortunate I was to have a family to go home to. There were children who were accustomed to having no visitors because their parents could not afford to travel from some faraway place. Writing about all these aspects of residential school life puts things into perspective. A common feature of growing up was one of anger and resentment towards my parents for feeling abandoned. My father's visits seemed to reinforce the confusion particularly when he enforced the 'no signing rule' during the journey home. I thought to myself how ironic that he was prepared to leave his son at a school where he was exposed to a culture that caused his ilk. In school I got the sense of the officially

'forbidden', a time when ISL was a 'forbidden fruit', the Tree of Knowledge of the world around me. It was in my human nature to desire to sign but free choice did not exist in the institutions I lived. Signing was 'bad' and speaking was 'good' – a concept that ties in with the modernist notion and binary opposites of 'progress' discussed in Chapter Four. Routine was my life and I lived according to residential school regulations. Summer childhood at my parents' home was the highlight of childhood. Long lasting friendships formed in school were also a highpoint in my life. A memory flashed through my mind by way of postscript: they said we communicated like animals, that in the way we moved our hands we were like monkeys.

"Well," said my friend, "a monkey could learn to sign faster than teachers." We were certain animals could understand us better than teachers.

All these things to some extent helped alleviate the painful memories of abuse but the memories linger nonetheless. Life after school began with that youthful longing for a true sense of belonging in the world. I struggled to make sense of audism that plagued my youth. I discovered through books that we had a lot at stake in our struggle for social justice. Deaf Studies taught me that we cannot remain silent about things that matter to us. All those years of being told I couldn't go to university, I finally managed to gain a postgraduate degree to add to my undergrad. The days following my father's death left me at a crossroads in life. I was confronted with a decision to either continue the self-destructive path or to make a life-changing decision. I gave up alcohol and started to rebuild my life. In all my years of dealing with the past and the abuse that stole my childhood innocence, I could never manage to forgive the meanness and cruelty. I took the chance to seek help to heal the old wounds and release resentments and bitterness. The stages of self-awareness finally began to bear fruit.

The basis of my personal narrative was on being in a state of becoming Deaf in the cultural and political sense. The narrative is underscored by binary notions of 'deaf' and 'hearing' to denote the different cultural groups I sought to belong to. I shifted from one space to another and back. This constant movement is characterised by a crisis of identity where labels of 'deaf', 'partially deaf, 'hard of hearing,' 'hearing problem,' 'hearing impaired' all ascribed in my consciousness. Each one carried different cultural identity markers. In one sense I was Deaf as belonging to a Deaf community. In another, I believed I belonged with hearing people but I never got to that place. For so long I hovered as an in-between, somewhere between deaf and hearing. 'Hard of hearing' did not sit well in my consciousness. I discarded my hearing aid. Turning inwards I became self-identified *Deaf*. Passionate about Deaf politics, I looked to the two languages at my disposal. All the while

my attachment to the language of my youth remained unchanged. I identified the English language as the language of my education. Both languages opened doors to new possibilities: hybridised I gained a bicultural identity, a crystallisation of 'Deaf' and 'hearing', a postmodern self.

The benefit of writing auto-ethnography is not only in the way it helped me confront "the contingencies of my past" (Bochner, 2012) but also in that it gave me new eyes for seeing the world. As a consequence, auto-ethnographic writing marked an important stepping stone towards self-understanding and understanding of others (Ellis, 2004). Reading the story was like as if I had announced to myself that I could pen my distress so that others would read and know my experience and emotions. Initially I found it difficult to tease memories of childhood and to write them on paper. I persisted with the task because it was important to me that I wrote the story for others to read and understand.

While I wrote from memory, I poured my emotions on paper. I read literature on the subject to help reflect on reliability of memory (e.g. Muncey, 2005). By the time I finished writing the auto-ethnography, I found my perspectives of the past had changed slightly from the time I had started doing the research. I realised my whole life wasn't full of trauma stories, that there were memories to cherish, namely the friendships formed with my peers at school that still remain to this day, and the birth of my daughter. I learned that bad memories do not always outdo the good ones. I found love in relationships and kindnesses people showed me. These are the forgotten memories that the experience of writing auto-ethnography brought to the surface. I had to trust I could create something coherent and that it was unprejudiced and fair.

To be honest it was a strange feeling to see my life on paper. Reading my life story was like revisiting St. Joseph's and Beech Park: the familiarity of the smell, sight, and touch – I recognised them all. I had a vision of the black shadow of the Christian Brothers sauntering across the dormitories. Black and white images from photographs were so prominent in my mind. I was shocked to find I could write something as personal as abuse and violence that occurred in childhood. I spent hours upon hours revising and editing. Shortly after I finished writing I had a conversation with someone I knew in the college.

"I've read your story," she said. "So, now I know all about you."

I hesitated and thought about how I should respond. "Yes," I answered, "You do know what I have written but you only know what I chose to put on paper."

I realised then that I had omitted to reveal some aspect of my life. It brought me back to discussions I had with my supervisors on disclosure issues where people in the story were

described in an unfavourable light. This brings me to the point about ethics in auto-ethnography.

9.3   On Ethics of Auto-ethnography

Writing about controversial topics in this study suggests an ethics of writing. On that basis I have been concerned with checking for potential to harm. In Chapters Two and Five I flagged the ethical challenges encountered in using this method of research throughout the writing. In my experience of doing this research I have been self-reflexively aware of how writing about traumatic episodes and about the people to whom I write about in those events raised ethical concerns. In my commitment to ethics, I took care that my writing avoided doing potential damage to other people's reputation. Part of this obligation was to adopt a self-critical approach to writing and to carefully select episodes to minimise risk. Where necessary, I replaced names with pseudonyms and ensured details in the story are left untraceable. In the process of writing and editing I removed certain elements of my story in order to remain true to the understanding that anonymity would be protected.

To the degree that I have described my father and my relationship with him, I included an account of his life to show how he came to have specific values and beliefs about communication. This is important from the point of view of representation to give as true a reflection of his character as I possibly could. I checked his personal documents, looked at black and white photos, letters that he wrote and those he received from others. It was necessary to write about my father to present a story about how our relationship was badly affected by his beliefs which were formed the day he received advice from the school authorities, a Visiting Teacher, and audiologist.

When I was admitted to Beech Park at the age of five years, I had no idea why my parents left me there. The sense of abandonment was critical in that it stayed with me for years to come. I carried with me a kind of bitterness towards my parents that festered in my mind to the point that I used it to blame them for the trauma I experienced in childhood. In the early years following the day I left St. Joseph's, helpless anger turned inwards which in turn led to bouts of depression. In all that time I never sought help for it. I used drinking and socialising as an escape from the hollowness I was feeling inside. My passion for reading gave me the escape route to avoid reality. Many of my preoccupations were on books and education and socialising. There was no room for thinking or planning the future. When reading books, I studied how writers wrote stories seeing how they used words and sentences

to express meaning and describe situations. My writing style and technique began to change from the time I entered university.

Years later when I started reading Deaf education history, I discovered the choices open to my parents were extremely limited compared to what is available now. It was around this time I came to the realisation that people close to me did not want to know what happened in my childhood unless I had something positive to say about how things were going. I thought I had no option but to stay 'silent' because I was either upsetting or embarrassing others. To appease those people I stopped reflecting back on the past. It was this compliance that made things harder for me. In reading my auto-ethnography, I noticed resilience in me to pursue my dreams regardless of what people said to me. I saw how I withstood my father's strong opinions about language and communication. My mother's democracy in the family home extended to allowing me to define my identity and to decide on how I wanted to communicate and live my life. With my father our arguments resonated with the dispute between educators and the Deaf community, the same line of reasoning was always there, that speaking was superior to signing.

The premise of my story about my father was on the impossibility of *not* signing. In reality, I was not without options and could choose to follow my instincts but deeper problems surfaced in wanting to be someone I was *not*. All through life after school I believed I was leading myself to a conclusion that was never going to materialise. To be 'hearing' was all I ever wanted to be. I used it as a yardstick to my self-esteem. When I found I couldn't reach my destiny, my confidence plummeted to my feet and with my father telling me how wrong I was about my choice in directing my life, I reached crisis point. This was a point at which I felt as if I had handed my mental faculties over to the school authorities and given them permission to programme my thoughts as they wished. Whenever I thought about education and about my future, the words *can't* and *difficult* appeared in my mind, the words of my former teachers, the words of my father, and the words I believed were true about me. I noticed the weariness in the looks of people telling me I was having foolish thoughts about going to university, that I should have known better than to ignore my limitations.

For me the ethics of writing was in discovering the power of forgiveness. With that came the freedom from the constraints of having to write about unpleasant things about people. Wherever possible, I checked with people who I describe in the story. Discussion with my family brought to light issues of disclosure. I sought their permission to include quotes. I also asked them how they felt after reading extracts of the stories that included details about them (Ellis, 2004). In the end I was granted permission, on condition I write

and present an account in a fair and balanced way. A final point about ethics concerns the writer. I have taken steps to ensure no harm comes my way. So far writing has been a positive experience and I am more concerned about my participants than I am about myself.

9.4   On Methodology

If writing the auto-ethnography was a stepping stone on my journey towards increased self-awareness, doing a critical ethnographic study on the participants marked the beginning of my realisation and understanding of others. Critical ethnography was the most appropriate design for this study because of my concern for the lack of input from Deaf people in academic research and the ongoing controversy that plagued the field of Deaf education in Ireland. While these concerns preceded entry into the field, they were reinforced throughout the research process and fieldwork. An action research component was integrated in order to work together *with* participants rather than *for* them (Thomas, 2003). In undertaking a critical ethnographic approach, I gave significant attention to the nature of power systems in education and to a study of how education ideology of oralism impacted on the lives of participants. Thomas (2003: 47) suggests that critical thinking "facilitates challenging and perhaps overcoming ideational and structural obstacles that restrict perception and discussion." My aim in engaging in critical thought was to develop new knowledge that would be likely to create change and improve the quality of education for Deaf people and thereby empower the participants. My decision to locate the study at grassroots level, that is, alongside the Deaf community, is based on the notion that Deaf people represent a marginalised group of people who experienced discrimination in their lives with little opportunity to express their views and perspectives on education and public policy. As Chapter Three demonstrates, Deaf people's opinions have rarely been sought, often neglected, suppressed or excluded from discussions and debates about policy and program initiatives. I raised concern about the on-going controversy surrounding Deaf education when non-deaf researchers fail to include the perspectives of Deaf people.

To do justice to their perspectives I have created a space for them to tell their stories, give their opinions about education, language and culture. The methodology was designed to elaborate questions that would fully include their views, give them the opportunity to discuss ('speak out') their views. I believe the opportunity to express their opinions through story telling empowered them to get involved in the research intended to create change.

Throughout the research I faced significant challenges when gathering data due to their employment situation where some participants worked in the field of Deaf education

and in the area of Deaf Village Ireland. These people had a tendency to not want to discuss their own difficulties with education due to the threat of losing their jobs. Understanding the research study represented another challenge where elderly Deaf people were concerned: some were happy to share stories but did not fully understand what was being asked and had a tendency to discuss other issues unrelated to the questions. Overall, these participants enjoyed being involved in the whole process and felt empowered by the chance to share their memories.

9.5 Theoretical Implications: Postmodernism

This research is structured and written in a way that reflects postmodern sensibilities and my own research journey – a decolonising journey – based on the lived experience. By implication, when I adopt a postmodern perspective I am suggesting there is something known as modernism in Deaf education (Lane, 1992; Wrigley, 1996; Ladd, 2003). In other words, postmodern trends of thought cannot be defined without first identifying specific modernist agendas in education (Usher & Edwards, 1994). Chapter Four identified modernist trends of thought in oralism rooted in the idea that traditional ways of life have become obsolete (e.g. Irish Sign Language and Deaf culture). Like the modernist, the oralist agenda was for order (normal) to be made through a process of modernisation (normalisation). The goal was to enable Deaf people to become integrated in society (progress). The underlying 'grand narrative' of progress under oralism is the promise of integration and to become normal (Lane, 1992). Modernism's mission for 'classification' (segregation) stemmed from a desire for homogeneity. Like modernism, oralism entails a rejection of diversity and an inherent intolerance for difference. The assumption being that so long as the concept of difference and diversity are rejected, integration becomes possible. However, 'integration' for Deaf people means full participation in discussions and conversations in the spoken language. Integration requires mastery in the dominant language and in the use of speaking and listening. As the participants demonstrate, Deaf people find themselves at a serious disadvantage when attempts are made at integration. Eamonn's story is a case in point.

The literature review presented in Chapter Three illustrates that educators are in denial that language lies at the heart of the problem in Deaf education debates. This raises questions about power, knowledge, hegemony, and marginalisation. Following Foucault, my aim was to uncover hidden meanings that accurately identified and described the reality of oralism. Oralism created obstacles to access education. In identifying those obstacles I have demonstrated the usefulness of Foucault's theories in uncovering the structural biases of

oralism that denigrated Irish Sign Language and Deaf culture. As the evidence presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight indicate, modernist/oralist ideas and theories run counter to the cultural and linguistic perspectives of Deaf people. As Postmodernism is based on the idea of recognising diversity of cultures and languages, I have, in this study, emphasised diversity, pluralism, biculturalism, multiculturalism, bilingualism and multilingualism.

Postmodernism, therefore, can be seen as an empowering and emancipatory discourse for researchers studying marginalised groups. It is emancipatory and empowering for the way it raises important questions to seek answers to those questions and to elicit more questions that heretofore have not been addressed in previous research. As Clair (2003: 15) points out, postmodern ethnographers place at the centre "language, discourse, text, or symbol systems [of the marginalised] in a privileged position beyond that of previous schools of ethnography." Postmodernism opens the way for the disempowered to challenge unchallenged hegemony. In locating the study within the postmodern framework, I have created the possibility for a Deaf space and for a critical dialogue.

Elsewhere I discussed developments that led to the creation of a Deaf Village Ireland (e.g. Chapter Three). I believe postmodernism alludes to the feeling that change was upon us, that circumstances in the Cabra schools gave rise to a postmodern age. The dominance oralism has dissipated since the beginning of the early 21st century with the re-introduction of ISL and the increase in number of Deaf teachers employed by the schools. Technologies of today has changed the way Deaf people communicate with each other and with the advent Deaf Village Ireland boundaries of school and the Deaf community are not so clear as in former years[117]. In the current climate there is diversity of communication needs in Deaf children admitted to Cabra schools, where some children use spoken language, other Irish Sign Language and some use a combination of both[118].

9.6   On Deaf Education: key issues and conclusions

Through this research I set out to undertake a literature review on Deaf education in Ireland guided by the research question: what are the main issues that are a cause of controversy? I presented in Chapter Three an exploration of the history of the Cabra schools and employed this approach as a starting point to incorporate national and international literature on the major schools of thought on Deaf education methodology. Through the process of reviewing

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[117] Deaf education came under the remit of the CIDP and the Deaf Village Project led to the establishment of Education Partnership Group with responsibility to oversee plans for an amalgamation of the two schools. To date discussions are on-going.

[118] Personal communication with St. Joseph's School principal via email correspondence

literature I kept in mind the research questions as I considered the various philosophies pertaining to the research topic. The purpose was to identify the various socio-political factors that defined and shaped the history of Deaf education in Ireland. The process raised two significant themes in the following way: on the one hand, I identified the signed language approach to education and, on the other, I discussed the co-ordinated campaign against signed languages in favour of oralism which was eventually consolidated by resolutions passed at the ICED at Milan in 1880. The clash of cultures between the two ideologies remains at the heart of the debate concerning teaching methodology.

Much in the literature on Deaf education has been concerned with the search for a more appropriate method of teaching deaf students (LeMaster, 1990; Griffey, 1994; Kyle, 1994). These arguments emerged as a result of growing dissatisfaction with the learning outcomes of deaf school-leavers (e.g. Conrad, 1979). Yet debates are often dominated by demands that Deaf students should be given the opportunity to acquire the language of the majority (Griffey, 1994). In that context, questions concerning methodology and communication are used to divert attention away from the heart of the problem: language (Kyle, 1994). The desire to assimilate the students into the culture of the majority remained the ultimate goal of the educators.

Since the Milan Congress, educators adhered to the notion of superiority in their knowledge and expertise in educating Deaf children (Lane, 1992). The views and opinions of Deaf adults were devalued and dismissed. These claims have been cited in Chapter Three and supported by comments from the participants in Chapters Seven and Eight. When educational outcomes are not as expected, educators search for cause but their focus tends to be on teaching methodology, on how to change the method, rather than on use of language and language comprehension in the students. As a consequence, discussions on Deaf education tend to get lost in a myriad of ideas about techniques and perspectives. The Total Communication approach was proposed as a solution to address educational problems but, as Crean (1997) points out, it created more problems than it solved as Deaf children continued to achieve low literacy levels and poor educational attainment. The need to provide literacy classes is the dominant theme of Chapter Eight, which indicates the extent of the problem with education amongst the Deaf population of Ireland.

As Chapter Three illustrates the choice of appropriate teaching methods and different communication needs remain the important points in policy discussions. Discussions now tend to be more child-centred rather than system orientated. Teachers now teach a class of students with different communication needs which gives teachers a degree of flexibility to

decide how the class should be taught. In my experience of doing field work, I found that the Cabra schools operate with a good understanding of Deaf culture and the students' experience of education is a consequence of this background. In some classes ISL is used while in others teaching is through spoken language. On the basis of the information gathered during field work, there appears to be no clear direction with regard to language policy- whether or not they operate a sign bilingual policy was not obvious to me. Each student is assessed independently to determine communication requirements because student needs are said to be diverse.

9.6.1 Oralism

While the period between 1940 and 1997 was a time of immense change, the cumulative effects of experiencing cultural alienation, fragmentation, and dislocation have been highlighted in Chapter Seven. While it is debateable the extent of the impact of oralism, it is clear from the narratives presented in Chapter Two, Six, Seven, and Eight that it has had enduring consequences. Nora, for example, was kept apart from the oral students. She developed feelings of envy towards them for their ability to speak (Chapter Seven p. 193). In primary class Anna struggled in class when her teacher taught through speech and later she worked hard to help other students who were struggling with lessons. Yvonne was subjected to training in speech which she hated because she struggled to master speech (Chapter Seven p. 197). David reports being punished for not wearing hearing aids and was forced to conform to foreign norms and values. He also worried that he might lose his ability to speak. As a consequence, Deaf students felt teachers were more interested in changing the way they behaved and in improving on their speech development than nurturing their identities, culture and developing their education. The practice of excluding and marginalising Irish Sign Language in the educational curriculum of the Cabra schools has had adverse consequences. Many of the participants report in Chapter Seven that without recourse to ISL they laboured under intense pressure to lip read and follow instructions in class. Yvonne's story about her experience of speech training in class is a case in point (Chapter Seven p. 201).

9.6.2 Conclusions

The answer to the research question is found in the evidence presented in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight which suggest that language remains a key issue in the lives of Deaf people and is at the heart of a discussion about Deaf education methodology. The main verdict amongst a collection of participants is that Irish Sign Language should never have been

removed from the curriculum. Evidence points to the fact that the language remains part of their identity and is the most accessible cultural resource in education. Thus the argument favouring ISL as a first language of instruction is compelling. Empirical evidence suggests that Deaf teachers play a key role in the literacy success of Deaf students and the literature review demonstrates the value of ISL in the pre-oralism era when the Cabra schools achieved international recognition for excellence in teaching literacy. This point was raised by Griffey (1994) the leading figure responsible for restructuring the education system in 1940s. There seems little doubt that ISL is the key solution to barriers to education for Deaf children. Whether or not ISL can enable Deaf children achieve literacy success is another question. One may turn to the pre-oralism era for evidence supporting the view that ISL is the answer to literacy problems. LeMaster (1990) finds that Deaf adults educated before the advent of oralism displayed a higher level of literacy skill than the younger generations of Deaf people.

Griffey (1994) observes that in the pre-oralism era Deaf students had access to education and curriculum because they had access to a culture. This approach to teaching seems to resonate with the Freirean model of education in which the culture and identity of the student is regarded as paramount (Friere, 1972; Ladd, 2003). The educators elicit the things the student already knows and shows their relevance to the new things that have to be learnt. For example, in Chapter Six, reports from participants – Robert, Celia, Daniel, Nora, Simon, Yvonne and Eamonn – indicate that in the schools they attended "everyone signed" i.e. teachers, staff, Catholic Church members and students (Chapter 6). Every new recruit was encouraged to learn Irish Sign Language. Daniel's story about observing people's conversation in signs best epitomises the culture of the school. Robert's story about learning in a class taught by a Deaf teacher is revealing where he describes how he was taught sign language using a chart of hand shapes painted by a Deaf artist (Chapter Six p. 186). From the chart he learned religious words and applied the signs to the different colours and animals. Each sign was linked to the lessons provided in class. The stories from the participants also reveal the strong presence of Catholic religion in their lives. This is nothing new in the context of society in Ireland at a time when the Catholic Church had already been a part of the cultural matrix of Irish education.

9.6.3 The case for sign bilingualism

In Chapter Three it was noted how scholars argue in favour of sign bilingualism (Swanwick and Gregory 2007; Baker, 2010; Svartholm, 2010). Several reasons put forward by researchers include: recognition of signed languages as full and true languages, poor

educational attainments due to failure of oralism, positive outcomes reported on bilingualism in relation to spoken languages, research that find Deaf children of Deaf parents tend to function better than Deaf children of hearing families, and finally researchers find that sign language is the preferred language of Deaf communities around the world (Swanwick and Gregory 2007).

Failure of oralism has been documented in these pages and provides a legitimate supporting argument for the sign bilingual approach. Conrad's (1979) findings have been consistently cited in academic research (e.g. Kyle, 1994 and 1998; Crean, 1997; Swanwick and Gregory, 2007; Baker, 2010). There is evidence in the literature that linguists gave validation to Irish Sign Language as a true language (e.g. Leeson, 1996 and 2002; Burns, 1995). Matthews (1996) and Mathews (2011) and many scholars maintain that ISL is the preferred language of the Deaf community in Ireland. One argument favouring the sign bilingual approach is found in Kyle (1994), who states that Deaf children of Deaf parents tend to achieve better educational outcomes than Deaf children of hearing families because they have already acquired a sign language prior to starting school. Typically they have "native competence in natural sign language and several years of experience conversing about the world with adults and peers" (Johnson et al, 1989: 4). Johnson et al (1989) also report that ninety per cent of Deaf children born to hearing parents are at risk of experiencing language delay because they are faced with communication in a spoken language, a language modality that is totally inaccessible. Deaf children fall well behind the level attained by hearing children from within the same age group.

Since oralism is "exclusively orientated towards monolingual acquisition of the spoken and the written language" (Pust, 2005: 1843). Deaf children are at a high risk of language delay since the curriculum is presented in a spoken language and the curricular material becomes inaccessible. Liddel & Erting (1989) argue that problems associated with literacy usually continue where spoken English continues to be used exclusively and problems continue because educators insist that Deaf children can acquire spoken language by seeing and hearing and will eventually become integrated. Johnson et al (1989: 4) point out that it seems "unrealistic to think that a person who does not know a language and who cannot receive it in the form presented could learn much from someone trying to communicate in that language." Baker (2010: 369) eloquently argues that Deaf children "cannot acquire a spoken language easily or quickly because they have limited hearing abilities." These points of views are shared by the participants and this researcher and by

many writers and researchers including Kyle (1994 and 1998), Leeson (2002), Burns (1995) and LeMaster (1990) to name a few.

One incentive for advocating the sign bilingual approach is the idea that Deaf children should acquire competence in a first language in order to support the second language acquisition. On that point I propose the Swedish model of Deaf education be investigated as a starting point in a discussion about introducing sign bilingualism in Ireland. Svartholm's (2010) report on Deaf education in Sweden is convincing. The report discusses the history of sign bilingualism in the country and outlines evidence of educational successes compared to the results found using traditional oral approach. For Svartholm (2010), literacy levels are raised where teaching is conducted through Swedish Sign Language as the first language of instruction. Swedish Sign Language successfully supports the learning of Swedish. According to Svartholm (2010), the goal of sign bilingual programs is the need for Deaf children to attain a level of reading and writing appropriate to their age, develop a positive sense of personal identity, be able to communicate in two or three languages in different contexts and be competent learners with a capacity to learn languages. Mashie (1995), in a study of Deaf education in Denmark, finds that evaluations carried out on sign bilingual programs conducted in the Lund School for the Deaf in Sweden reveal successful outcomes in language learning. She argues that bilingual Deaf children function better than monolinguals because there is adequate access to education and knowledge about the world. Furthermore Svartholm (2010), reveals that sign bilingual children can separate a sign language from spoken and written languages.

9.6.4   Implications for the sign bilingual approach

While there seems to be a lot to be said in support of sign bilingualism, a number of issues need to be considered to make it a success in Ireland. For a start, parents play a key role in this development (Swanwick, 2009). Since the majority of Deaf people come from hearing families, the issue of language and culture becomes significant. While hearing families tend to use spoken language, which is not accessible to most Deaf children, parents are often confronted with the notion of communication. As they will normally be monolingual, parents may not be willing to learn ISL. Acceptance of ISL as a true language may also represent a significant challenge for parents. The advent of new born hearing screening in conjunction with advances in amplification technology such as cochlear implantation all have implications for the choices parents make concerning language (Mathews, 2011). Parents may be reluctant to opt for the sign bilingual approach since they may believe it defeats the

purpose of cochlear implantation – the development of speech and listening skills (Swanwick, 2009).

Chapter three discusses the difficulties encountered by the Model School for the Deaf Project (MSDP) established in 2000 and funded by Department of Education and Science (DES). The MSDP provided a sign bilingual education program based on the Montessori model of education for preschool Deaf children. The school was in operation for a number of years before closing in April 2007 due to low numbers of enrolment. Leeson (2007) cites lack of awareness as a key factor in this development while Mathews (2011: 149) points to the work of Visiting Teacher Services (VTS) as being highly influential in providing parents with information on schooling options. VTS remains the most significant service available to parents of Deaf children and the first point of contact for information following early intervention. Mainstreaming policies arising from legislation including the Education Act 1998 have had a significant impact on the decrease in Cabra school enrolment (Mathews, 2011). The EPSEN Act, 2004 and NCSE policy on inclusion grants parents the option of sending their Deaf children to mainstream schools (Mathews, 2011 and 2012). The underlying assumption that Deaf children should be educated in the same way as hearing children still prevails as it is assumed that teaching Deaf children in that way would provide them with equal opportunities for education (ibid). The advantage of mainstreaming is seen in the "potential it gives to normalising" Deaf children "through spoken language acquisition." (Mathews, 2011: 136). All these factors and the risk of falling enrolment numbers have implications for the development of sign bilingual programs.

Whether or not parents will be keen to learn ISL is a matter for debate but it remains an important aspect of providing a sign bilingual program for Deaf children. Kyle (1994) stresses the importance of encouraging parents to learn a sign language at the same time as their deaf child. Central to this is the idea that gaining competency in ISL at school entry age is an important prerequisite to ensuring the success of sign bilingual education. Early acquisition of ISL precedes entry into a school that provides a sign bilingual program. Finally, one telling point in this discussion is the language competency of educators. It is important to take into account the fact that success of sign bilingual programs is dependent on a number of factors, one of which includes sign language competency in teachers (Kyle, 1994 and 1998).

POSTSCRIPT
On the Road, Moving On

Towards the end of my field work on a warm day in June 2013, I returned to the scene of my childhood, the old St. Joseph's School ground in Cabra, now a 'bicultural landscape' called Deaf Village Ireland. I drove up to the place for one final look around as an ethnographer. My first point of call was the new St. Joseph's building – just a stone's throw from the village arena. There I thanked several people for their support in allowing me to conduct field work around the school, the participants for their willingness to get involved in the study and those who recommended other potential participants. I thought back to the day I began the field work at the school, remembering how I thought educators would scorn at my presence in the school but now realised how naive I had been for thinking that. Everyone in the Cabra schools has been courteous and friendly towards me. I felt welcomed. If there was any residue of anger towards the school, I never showed it, much to my surprise and delight. All I felt was a strong sense of sad nostalgia for what should have been and what might have been. Neither did I complain for things which have changed since the time I was a student of St. Joseph's. I saw no evidence of restriction to self-expression on the students as had been my experience. The people I met signed freely. Varying levels of competencies were evident in teachers.

For me, *Deaf* has been transformed significantly with advances in technologies changing the way we communicate with each other and more people are using cochlear implants. With technology making contact and connection simpler and easier, we are no longer dependent on a single centralised location as a meeting point as had been the case back in 1980s and early 1990s. It seems to me our identities have been shifted, negotiated and renegotiated where the term 'Deaf and Hard of Hearing' is currently in common usage as a way of identifying people with diverse hearing losses and cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Mathews, 2011). An all-inclusive term, it seems to resonate with the postmodern perspective of recognising diversity and pluralism.

When I entered the old St. Joseph's building I realised a positive outlook was cultivated in me, derived from the act of writing and in writing from memory. Inside the hallway I opened another door and made my way up the stairs. The ground floor, once occupied by a play hall, is now used for offices by DeafHear.ie. The entire first floor, formerly quartered by classrooms for profoundly deaf students, is now the offices of the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) and Irish Deaf Society (IDS). The top floor above, the one-time space for classrooms catering for partially deaf students and a chapel at the far side,

is now converted into a Deaf Heritage museum centre. Inside the heritage centre I discovered a well-stocked resource of books, artefacts, photos, newspaper clippings, and documents. The centre was just in the throes of opening its doors to the public. I was greeted by the chairperson, a former student-resident of St. Joseph's who kindly showed me some of the books and photos at his disposal. Reading and looking at black and white photos gave me kaleidoscopic visions of the past and a patchwork of overlapping memories (Muncey, 2005 and 2010). Going through the photos, I stopped and stared at an old newspaper clipping showing a group of students dressed in casual clothes. I was not in the picture but I remember the photographer arriving at the school. A charming picture it was of unsmiling faces. On closer examination I recognised a few people and suddenly remembered the day it was taken. All the memories came flooding back. The chairperson introduced me to someone I had never seen before with a sign-name. After we shook hands, his fingers did a 'river dance' spelling his English name. With the two men I was rarely stuck for information from the archives stored in the Centre.

Outside I walked around the old school ground. I could not help but notice the strange sight of the old building juxtaposed with the modern buildings. The evolution of the Deaf Village Project was an incredible process beginning in 2008. Every person I met in the area seemed to have been affected by it. When the decision was made to demolish parts of the whole St. Joseph's School building some of the past pupils decried it, declaring it should be well left alone as a monument of our history. Early in the previous year, a couple of processions were arranged for formers students to return to St. Joseph's for one final look around. The groups were made up of past pupils, friends, and interested observers all of whom followed reverently down the school yard into the building. Outside cars were parked in line close to the swimming pool building. At the time it seemed strange that such a large 19th century construction could be demolished over one hundred and fifty years hence.

Standing outside the entrance of the Deaf Village centre I now surveyed the clearing where the demolishing job was completed, thinking not so much about history but memories of friendships formed during childhood. Crossing over towards the empty compound a few hundred yards from the entrance door, I thought of the wide-eyed nine year old boy standing at the periphery of the school yard that day in September 1972. In my mind the scene is played. Hundreds of boys were scattered around the place. There was laughter as all eyes turned to the boy on the bicycle. I saw him turning left and right trying to evade the chasing pack of boys. The scene in my memory shifts to night time and the whole dormitory is lit by a blue florescent bulb. In my mind I see a gathering of boys sharing stories with the pale white

light shining on our hands and faces. Walls around the room spun and spun, pale blue, cold and lonely. Turning to the spot where the manual school was housed, the mood changed as if I was haunted by some terrible memory. Black shadows sauntered towards me and disappeared like phantoms. I felt profound sadness, unsure as to why I was feeling this way.

I knew what Ellis (2004) meant when she said history could be understood emotionally. My connection to history was derived from my emotional attachment to the landscape around me. It was here that my identity was formed. I wondered now what is meant by 'Deaf Village' and what is its connection with my memory? Looking at the way things were, I felt a strange sense of loss, the pain of poignancy that goes with seeing how fragmented things seemed to me. The sense of belonging I once knew is long gone. All that's left is a memory. The past lives on only in the mind, shifting and changing like a shadow of the present. It was at this point I felt something of an epiphany, a process where I felt profound anguish at seeing a scene of childhood altered out of recognition to a realisation that I lost not only a place, but also that sense of continuity which maintains the connection between past and present. It is that awareness, of going through memory, and revisiting the past that helped me take the steps further on the road to recovery. Without this self-awareness and understanding I believe I'd continue to feel 'colonised' by unpleasant memories. The kind of release I felt was in the way the mind was being liberated from the mental constraints of fear, repression, denial, and inferiority.

After a morning of wandering around the place, it was time to hit the road. Walking towards my car I got the sense of not having lived in this place before, as if I had never lived in a building with a multitude of rooms and corridors. Leaving the village, I wondered: what if I took a different fork in the road? What if I was a hearing person? This account of being the "other" self would no doubt result in a story quite different from the one I had written. I tied that thought with my decision to go off some place and devote more time to working on my auto-ethnography for publication. Consciously I made a note to file away this dream for the near future. As I ventured out in the road, I got a sense of déjà vu, of having being down this path before. Reflectively I thought of how I managed to string together a series of sign posts along the way; from education to (*D*)eaf) culture, identity, (sign) language, (post) modernism, (auto) ethnography, (self) reflexivity, personal narrative, the bricoleur, bilingualism, outsider/insider, emotionalism, memory, and belonging. Moving on and continuing in my de-colonising journey as I write this thesis, I feel inspired by a new vision of hope for a future rooted in freedom of expression, respect for difference, and equality

between Deaf and hearing people, a future in which we can all work in true partnership. I know I will always remain partial to the Deaf world and to the language of Deaf people.

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Gatekeeper

Date and Name and address of institution

Dear Sir/madam,

My name is Noel O'Connell and I am a deaf PhD student at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I am a former pupil of Mary Immaculate School, Beech Park, and St. Joseph's School, Cabra. The research supervisors I work with in the college are Professors Jim Deegan and Anne O'Byrne.

As part of the research process, I will be conducting an ethnographic study to learn more about deaf people's experience of education. Current deaf students and past-pupils will be asked to participate in the study. The study entails ethnographic interviewing and on-site observation for a period of six months. The study is entirely focused on deaf people. I would like to engage your students between the ages of 14 and 18 years of age in a focus group interview. A maximum of 8 students is sufficient for this project and 5 deaf teachers will be selected for one-to-one interviews. I would also like to engage in observation of classroom, recreational and leisure activities of your students and deaf teachers.

It is possible that your institution and the participants will not benefit directly by participating in this study. However this study should provide your students and staff with a valuable opportunity to think and discuss their experiences and their future aspirations. My own participation in interviewing and observation will only be for the purposes of this study. Wherever appropriate I will take care to protect the participants' privacy by replacing their names with pseudonyms. Only my supervisor and I will have access to data collected on site. In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule, research data will be destroyed three years after completion of the research project.

Please find attached an abstract of the proposed research, a copy of a letter of approval from Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee and a Garda Clearance certificate. If you would like more information about my research I would be happy to meet with you for a detailed discussion. Please contact me by e-mail at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Noel O'Connell

noel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie

APPENDIX 2

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS UNDER 18

Dear Participant,

My name is Noel O'Connell and I am a deaf PhD student at Mary Immaculate College. I am a former pupil of Mary Immaculate School, Beech Park, and St. Joseph's School, Cabra. I am writing to you to ask if you would like to participate in a research project. Please take a moment to read the information on the project. A form of consent is attached. If you wish to participate sign the consent form. As you are under 18 years of age your parent / guardian has also received an Information Sheet and Consent Form.

What is the Project title?

Research Study on the Impact of Education on Deaf People's Identity

What is the project about?

Presently I am doing a study of deaf people's experiences of primary and post-primary education. The study is taking place at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick. I am working with Professor Jim Deegan and Anne O'Byrne in the college. We both feel very strongly there seems to be very little research and information regarding deaf people's experience of primary and post-primary education.

I feel that few people have asked deaf people what they think of their experience of education. Deaf people have not been given space to talk about their education. I would like to gather this information, record it and bring it together as a valuable source for others.

I am looking to interview deaf people to find out about their experiences of education. I am hoping to give them a chance to give their views on their educational experience and to explain how this has affected them in adulthood.

What would I like to know?

I would like to gather information about deaf people's experience of language, communication, access to education, their relationship with teachers and school staff, their relationship with their peers and their families.

What happens during and after interviews?

I hope to gather information by interviewing deaf pupils in post-primary school. Groups Interviews will take place in the school they are attending. I will interview them in groups of seven or eight pupils.

Each member of the group will have a chance to give their views and discuss their experiences. A flexible approach will be used in the group interview. This means the group will discuss their experiences in their own way and in their own terms. I may ask questions to make sure things are clear and allow you to give more details as you wish.

Each group interview will be conducted in Irish Sign language. The interview is expected to last for about sixty minutes and will be done by camcorder.

After the interview, I translate recordings from Irish Sign Language to English in print form. The prints recordings of the interviews and video recordings will only be used by me and for this project. It will not be used for anything else or for any other reason.

I will then send the transcript back to you for approval.

Why am I doing the project?

I am particularly interested to see the impact of the education system has had on deaf people's identity and their place in society. I am interested to know their thoughts and understanding of the world, their family, social lives and education.

What are the advantages of this research?

It is hoped that information gathered from deaf people involved in this study will give educators a better understanding of the impact of education on their lives. The aim is to improve education quality and provision. It is also hoped that it will help inform best practice in education and add to knowledge in the field of deaf education.

How will anonymity (privacy) be kept?

All information will only be used for the purpose of this study and will not be shared with another person other than this researcher. The contents of the interview will only be used for this researcher. It will not be used for any other purposes. If you wish to remain private, your name can be changed to a different name to protect your privacy. In that case, complete confidentiality will be given. In order to ensure that information provided to me cannot be traced back to you, transcripts will returned to you for validation.

The results of the study may be published in peer-reviewed journal article, book or thesis form to be made available to the academic world and to the deaf community. However the participants involved will **not** be identified. It will be published in a form that gives due regard to cultural and other sensitivities.

You have the right to withdraw

Your privacy will be assured and you are free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason.

How will information be used?

Information from this study will be part of my research practice. I will share findings with my PhD supervisors from the college.

What will happen to data after research is done?

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule all data will be kept for the length of time required to complete the research project plus three years and will then be destroyed.

Contact details:

If you have any questions or issues about this study at any time you can email or text me
Noel O'Connell PhD Student noel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie Mobile text number:

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

MIREC, Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road Limerick. 061-204515 Email:
mirec@mic.ul.ie

PARTICIPANT (UNDER 18) INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read and understood the **Information Sheet for Participants Under 18**

I understand what the project is about.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.

I understand that my information with be kept confidential.

I understand that information from this study will be used in research papers which may be published.

I have read this form completely and am happy to take part in the study on education experience and its impact on deaf people's identity.

Signed: _____   Date:_____

APPENDIX 3

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title

The Impact of Education on Deaf People's life and their Identity

Who is doing the project?

My name is Noel O'Connell and I am a deaf PhD student at Mary Immaculate College. I am a former pupil of Mary Immaculate School, Beech Park, and St. Joseph's School, Cabra. I work with Professor Jim Deegan and Anne O'Byrne in the college. We feel very strongly there seems to be very little research and information regarding deaf people's experience of primary and post-primary education.

What is the project about?

Presently I am researching issues about experiences of primary and post-primary education.

I feel that few people have asked deaf people what they think of their experience of education. Deaf people have not been given space to talk about their education. I would like to gather this information, record it and bring it together as a valuable source for others. I am looking to interview deaf people to find out about their experiences of education. I am hoping to give them a chance to give their views on their educational experience and to explain how this has affected them in adulthood.

I would like to gather information about their experience of language, communication, access to education, their relationship with teachers and school staff, their relationship with their peers and their families. I would also like to gather information on their experience of life after school in employment and social life and their relationship with society and the deaf community.

Each interview is expected to last for about sixty minutes and will be recorded by camcorder. After the interview, I will translate recordings from Irish Sign Language to English in print

form. The print recordings of the interviews and video recordings will only be used by me and for this project. It will not be used for anything else or for any other reason. During the interview your child can sign about their experiences in their own way and in their own time. I may ask questions to make sure things are clear and allow them to give more details as they wish.

Why am I doing the project?

The objective of the study is to provide answers to the following research questions:

In what ways has the education system (e.g. oralism and mainstreaming) impacted on the identity of deaf people?

What can theories on power and knowledge teach us about deaf people's experience of education?

I am particularly interested to see the impact of the education system has had on deaf people's identity and their place in society. I am interested to know their thoughts and understanding of the world, their family, social lives and education.

What are the benefits of this research?

It is hoped that information gathered from deaf people involved in this study will give educators a better understanding of the impact of education on the lives of deaf people and perhaps improve education quality and provision. It is also hoped that it will help inform best practice in education and add to knowledge in the field of deaf education.

What would your child be involved in?

The study involves doing interviews of deaf people. Deaf people will be asked to discuss their lives in relation to family, school, college, friends, society and the deaf community. Interviews can take place in the school they are attending or in their homes. Interviews are normally of one hour in duration and can take place at a time and location that suits the person to be interviewed.

Each interview will be recorded by camcorder. A flexible approach will be used in the interview. This means your child can discuss their experiences in their own way and in their

own terms. I may have to ask questions for clarity or to encourage you to explore in more details. I will translate recorded interview from Irish Sign Language to English text. I will then send the transcript back to them for validation purposes.

How will anonymity (privacy) be kept?

All information will only be used for the purpose of this study and will not be shared with another person other than this researcher. The contents of the interview will only be used for this researcher. It will not be used for any other purposes. If your child wishes to remain private, their name can be changed to a different name to protect their privacy. In that case, complete confidentiality will be given. In order to ensure that information provided to me cannot be traced back to your child, transcripts will returned to them for validation.

You have the right to withdraw

Your child's privacy will be assured and they are free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason.

How will information be used?

Information from this study will be part of my research practice. I will share findings with my PhD supervisors from the college. The results of the study may be published in peer-reviewed journal article, book or thesis form to be made available to the academic world and to the deaf community. However the participants involved will not be identified. It will be published in a form that gives due regard to cultural and other sensitivities.

What will happen to data after research is done?

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule all data will be kept for the length of time required for the research project to be completed after three years and will thereafter be destroyed.

Contact details:

If you have any questions or issues about this study at any time you can email or text me Noel O'Connell PhD Student noel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie Mobile text number:

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

MIREC Administrator

Mary Immaculate College

South Circular Road

Limerick

061-204515 Email: mirec@mic.ul.ie

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I give my consent for my child_____ to participate in the research titled *Deaf People's experience of education* which is being conducted by researcher Noel O'Connell PhD student at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I or my child can withdraw consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as my child's, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

1. **Reason(s)** for doing the research: to investigate deaf students' experience of education, of language, communication, access to education, their relationship with teachers and school staff, their relationship with their peers and their families.

2. **Benefits:** there are no direct benefits to my child. However it is hoped that my child's participation will help the researcher learn more about access to education, education quality and provision.

3. **Procedures**: While the research project is taking place in Mary Immaculate College, interviews will be held on campus in the school where my child attends. Interviews will be conducted in groups of seven or eight pupils. The researcher will be collecting data using a variety of instruments and techniques such as group interview, observation, document analysis, video recordings and field notes. I understand that the researcher might be asking my child to participate using a combination of these data collection instruments and techniques.

4. **Risks/Discomforts**: There are minimal risks for participation in this study. However my child may feel discomfort when answering questions about personal beliefs.

5.　　**Confidentiality**: All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data will be kept in a secure location and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed data will be destroyed.

6.　　**Questions about the research**: If you have questions regarding this study you may contact If you have any questions or issues about this study at any time you can email or text me Noel O'Connell PhD Student noel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie Mobile text number:. If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact: MIREC, Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Limerick 061-204515 Email: mirec@mic.ul.ie

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Signature:_____ Date:_____

APPENDIX 4

ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title

The Impact of Education on Deaf People's life and their Identity

Who is doing the project?

My name is Noel O'Connell and I am a deaf PhD student at Mary Immaculate College. I am a former pupil of Mary Immaculate School, Beech Park, and St. Joseph's School, Cabra. . I work with Professor Jim Deegan and Anne O'Byrne in the college. We feel very strongly there seems to be very little research and information regarding deaf people's experience of primary and post-primary education.

What is the project about?

Presently I am researching issues about experiences of primary and post-primary education.

I feel that few people have asked deaf people what they think of their experience of education. Deaf people have not been given space to talk about their education. I would like to gather this information, record it and bring it together as a valuable source for others. I am looking to interview deaf people to find out about their experiences of education. I am hoping to give them a chance to give their views on their educational experience and to explain how this has affected them in adulthood.

I would like to gather information about their experience of language, communication, access to education, their relationship with teachers and school staff, their relationship with their peers and their families. I would also like to gather information on their experience of life after school in employment and social life and their relationship with society and the deaf community.

Each interview is expected to last for about sixty minutes and will be recorded by camcorder. After the interview, I will translate recordings from Irish Sign Language to English in print

form. The print recordings of the interviews and video recordings will only be used by me and for this project. It will not be used for anything else or for any other reason. During the interview you can sign about your experiences in your own way and in your own time. I may ask questions to make sure things are clear and allow you to give more details as you wish.

Why am I doing the project?

The objective of the study is to provide answers to the following research questions:

– In what ways has the education system (e.g. oralism and mainstreaming) impacted on the identity of deaf people?

– What can theories on power and knowledge teach us about deaf people's experience of education?

I am particularly interested to see the impact of the education system has had on deaf people's identity and their place in society. I am interested to know their thoughts and understanding of the world, their family, social lives and education.

What are the benefits of this research?

It is hoped that information gathered from deaf people involved in this study will give educators a better understanding of the impact of education on the lives of deaf people and perhaps improve education quality and provision. It is also hoped that it will help inform best practice in education and add to knowledge in the field of deaf education.

What would you be involved in?

The study involves doing interviews of deaf people. Deaf people will be asked to discuss their lives in relation to family, school, college, friends, society and the deaf community. Interviews can take place in the school they are attending or in their homes. Interviews are normally of one hour in duration and can take place at a time and location that suits the person to be interviewed.

Each interview will be recorded by camcorder. A flexible approach will be used in the interview. This means you can discuss your experiences in your own way and in your own terms. I may have to ask questions for clarity or to encourage you to explore in more details. I

will translate recorded interview from Irish Sign Language to English text. I will then send the transcript back to you for validation purposes.

How will anonymity (privacy) be kept?

All information will only be used for the purpose of this study and will not be shared with another person other than this researcher. The contents of the interview will only be used for this researcher. It will not be used for any other purposes. If you wish to remain private, your name can be changed to a different name to protect your privacy. In that case, complete confidentiality will be given. In order to ensure that information provided to me cannot be traced back to you, transcripts will returned to you for validation.

You have the right to withdraw

Your privacy will be assured and you are free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason.

How will information be used?

Information from this study will be part of my research practice. I will share findings with my PhD supervisors from the college. The results of the study may be published in peer-reviewed journal article, book or thesis form to be made available to the academic world and to the deaf community. However the participants involved will not be identified. It will be published in a form that gives due regard to cultural and other sensitivities.

What will happen to data after research is done?

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule all data will be kept for the length of time required to have the research project completed plus three years and will thereafter be destroyed.

Contact details:

If you have any questions or issues about this study at any time you can email or text me Noel O'Connell PhD Student noel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie Mobile text number:

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact: MIREC Administrator Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Limerick. 061-204515 Email: mirec@mic.ul.ie

ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read and understood the **Participant Information Sheet (Adult)**

I understand what the project is about

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.

I understand that my information with be kept confidential

I understand that information from this study will be used in research papers which may be published.

I have read this form completely. I am 18 years of age or older and am happy to take part in the study on education experience and its impact on deaf people's identity.

Signed: _____   Date:_____

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Rather than being standardised (as in survey interviews), I will adopt a flexible approach in ethnographic interviewing. This approach enables discussion to go in unanticipated directions (Creswell, 1998). Some of these informal interviews may be followed up with discussions where clarification on various points was sought.

I aim to approach the interviews with a small number of broad questions and aimed 'to go with the flow' of the discussion. The issues discussed may vary depending on the stage in the process during which the interaction between interviewees and myself can also vary. By way of an interview guide I have developed topics of categories to be explored which I will share with the participants (See table below).

Topic	Objective
Family background	To gather empirical data to establish participants relations with family and how or when they first made contact with deaf children and learnt sign language.
School Experiences	To gain an insight into their own perceptions and experiences of education. The aim is to take into account relations with teachers and curriculum and how this impacted on their lives.
Post-school Experiences	To gain an insight into their experience of society and the deaf community and see which group they find identification and affiliation with in terms of language and culture

Sample of Descriptive Interview Questions

1   Tell me about your family

2   Describe the circumstances surrounding your parent's discovery of your deafness and the advice they were given and the professionals

3   Describe your relationship with your family in terms of communication

4   Describe your first school and your first day.

5   Describe your overall experience of deafness in that school

6   Tell me how your relationship with the children and teachers in the school

7   Tell me how you communicate with children and teachers in terms of language and assistive technology

8.   Describe your work experience

9.   Describe your relationship with colleagues in terms of communication and social interaction

10.   Looking back as an adult describe what impact (if any) education has had on your identity.

11.   How do you describe yourself: as deaf, Deaf or hearing?

12   What would you change about the education system?

13.   How has sign language and oral language impacted on your life?

14.   How would your friends describe you?

There will be direct questions to seek clarity on some points or to enable the participant to elaborate. I will also include example questions, grand tour questions, hypothetical type questions, experience questions and specific questions. All these questions cannot be predicted in advance of the interview which could go in unanticipated ways. They will emerge during the interview depending on direction of the narratives and stories. The above table will be used as a guide in the interview direction.

APPENDIX 6

BODY-MIND MAP

Deaf Education

Identity Language d/Deaf Culture

Family Researcher
Ethics History
Emotion Lip-reading/ Speech
Memory Narrator

Self (auto) Residential schools

CIDP

Auto-ethnography Critical Ethnography

Vignettes Field notes
Personal-cultural
Bilingual Research questions
Emotion Literature review
Bicultural Identity J. Creswell (2007)
Qualitative Res

Writing Bricolage
Carolyn Ellis Bricoleur Foucault
(2004) Deafhood Self-reflexivity Resistance
Critical thinking Power systems

Postmodernism

Oralism

Irish Sign Language English Sr. Nicholas Griffey

Data analysis ICED Milan

Interviewing Technology Audiology Audism

Participant Observation Crean (1997)

Field notes Research participants ICED

Vancouver

Theory

Sampling

Data collection Access

Research Design

Key to Journey Lines

Yellow – Postmodern line
Green - Carolyn Ellis Line
Red- Memory Line
Blue- Ethnography Line
Light Green - Oralism Line
Pink- Data Line
Purple- Education Line