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Abstract

This study explored how Deaf culture is portrayed in products of the mass media. It notes particularly how the pathological model presents the viewpoint that deaf persons are 'ill' and need to be cured of their 'medical condition' i.e. deafness. Conversely, the cultural model observes deafness as an alternative state of being. This model embraces the vibrant culture of the Deaf community and does not see deafness as a disability. Literatures point to the Deaf being portrayed quite unfavourably in the media. The study engaged in a content analysis of Deaf culture on the television shows *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven* and semi-structured interviews.

Overall, in both *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven*, Deaf culture and Deaf characters were in essence portrayed from both positive and negative standpoints.

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Chapter One

Introduction

What is it like to have a limited concept of hearing as a physical sensation? What does it feel like to not know what sound is attached to certain objects, people or elements in one's environment? How can one live their entire life without hearing the sound of music, rain or human laughter? These are the questions that constantly peruse the mind of many hearing individuals when they consider the term, Deaf. These are the questions that are often implied or overtly stated by the mass media, through television shows and films when the topic of profound Deafness or "Hearing Impairment" is discussed. However, many hearing persons are unaware that there is an alternative state of being outside of the hearing world. This world is visual, full of movement and three dimensional. It is called the Deaf world and in this world, Deaf culture can be discovered.

According to researcher Debbie B. Golos, there are various models or perspectives of Deafness. Two major models are the pathological model and the cultural model. The pathological model views Deafness as a problem that needs to be fixed. This model takes a medical standpoint and believes that Deaf individuals need to be cured via surgery for cochlear implants or through usage of hearing aids. Deaf persons need to be made 'normal'. The cultural model however celebrates Deafness and sees it as another form of human existence. It acknowledges the bold and vibrant culture of Deaf persons and the Deaf community including signed languages, Deaf art, poetry, drama and manualism in education. There are also signed stories which have been long acknowledged within Deaf communities as a foundation of Deaf culture in many countries (e.g., Hall 1989; Peters 2000; Rutherford 1993).

The cultural perspective sees Deafness as a minority culture, not a medical disability. Some persons can hear, and some persons simply cannot. Pride in Deafness, a rich community surrounding Deaf residential schools and the use of sign language are strong features of the cultural model. Deaf persons live fulfilling lives and their inability to hear is not an issue (Golos, 2010).

With knowledge that Deaf culture is a legitimate culture with its own languages, cultural artefacts and values, this study seeks to examine how Deaf culture is depicted in products of the mass media which are largely produced for a hearing audience. The topic is; a critical analysis of the representation of Deaf culture on the television shows *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven*. The research objective is to critically examine the representation of Deaf culture on these television shows using textual analysis. For the purposes of this research the method of deconstruction will be used.

Although Deaf culture is an authentic culture, in many predominantly hearing societies, Deaf culture is considered a social minority. Fisch and Truglio propound that “the media often portrays damaging stereotypes of minority groups” (2001). Many portrayals of deaf characters in the media have been negative and sometimes inaccurate. They have been showcased as ‘dumb’, ‘perfect lip-readers’ or ‘victims’ that need to be cured (Kama, 2002; Schuchman, 1988).

Postmodern scholars state that images in the media assume a hyper-reality i.e. they become more real than reality. Mental pictures of what the world is supposed to be have been created through our exposure to the media (Griffin, 2009). These images are often consistent with the norms of the dominant order in a society. In most societies, the ability to hear is valued above Deafness. “Sound is the foundation of the power struggle between the Deaf and the Hearing” (Avon, 2006). According to John Schuchman, “inaccurate images of Deaf people to mass

audiences have dominated the media". Some films have depicted Deafness as something to poke fun at (Avon, 2006). Therefore Deafness is generally devalued in the hearing world and underrepresented or re-presented inaccurately in media productions.

The goal for this study is to carefully and constructively observe how Deaf culture, as a minority culture that differs vastly from mainstream culture is depicted on *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven*. A thorough examination of oppressive and traditional Deaf stereotypes within these shows will be executed. The overall purpose is to deconstruct the content of these shows in order to gain an understanding of how these particular media producers deal with representing Deaf culture.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The ubiquitous nature of media, coupled with the advent of unparalleled technology, has presented society with agents of enlightenment whose influence extend far beyond what it has been in previous periods. Added to this very nature of media technology is it's undoubted unrivalled ability to, through cultural hegemony, affect the way varying factions, or groups within society take into account other groups, in particular the way they perceive minority groups.

Not shielded from the media's influence in its shaping of epistemologies is the deaf and Deaf culture. For the purpose of this study deaf refers to:

Those for whom the sense of hearing is so impaired as to have precluded normal acquisition of language hearing. They are not capable of learning speech through avenue of hearing; or even if their hearing impairment was acquired soon after 'natural' speech was learned, they have lost their speaking ability or have severe impairment (Anima Sen, 1988).

Further, amongst the minority group there are distinguishing features which warrant exploration.

In writing, deaf, spelt with lowercase "d" refers to audiological deafness, where individuals are seen as having a deficit. As such, this view of deafness is one which essentially upholds a pathological standpoint of deafness. Under this perspective, as Debbie B. Golos propounds, "The focus is on the ear rather than the person; the inability to hear, the inability to speak" (2010). Conversely, there is another, perhaps even diametrically opposed view of deafness, which emerges with the spelling of the word deaf with a upper case "D". This view of deafness is characterised by the recognition of the presence of a rich Deaf culture. This culture as Golos goes on to add is an "existence of a community of people with their own culture and recognises ASL as the official language of this community (in the United States)" (Golos, 2010). Of utmost

import to Deaf culture is the presence of a language through which values can be passed on from generation to generation that aids traditions being kept alive, through communication which places emphasis fundamentally on the visual. In essence, Deaf with a higher case “D” refers to, and is representative of a depiction of Deaf culture and as such a portrayal from the cultural perspective of Deafness, as opposed to the pathological, deficit perspective.

Traditionally, in the media the Deaf has been portrayed from the pathological standpoint of Deafness, the result of which is the inherent moulding of society’s way of thinking about the deaf. The consequences of this are far reaching and overarching; they extend from the media, to the shaping of epistemologies, shaping of identities, to even interpersonal and intercultural communication between Deaf and hearing and even fundamental aspects of Deaf culture.

Deaf in the Media

The media’s ability to engage in agenda-setting, where it encourages viewers to ruminate upon certain issues in particular ways, is quite known. The gatekeepers of the media tend to portray society’s minority groups in a light that is quite unfavourable. The Deaf is a minority group that is not shielded from this. Golos (2010), propounds that “many of the portrayals of the deaf in the media have been negative”, she goes on to further posit that “Hollywood has typically presented Deaf people as characters that fall into one of the following stereotypes: “supercrrips,” “dummies,” “perfect lipreaders,” or victims needing to be pitied or cured”. This representation of the deaf essentially enables society to create meaning which viewers will in turn attribute to their understanding of deafness. The process of creating meaning is even more crucial for the minds of children. “Picture books can influence how children perceive people of different backgrounds, including people with disabilities whose cultures differ from their own” (Golos and

Moses, 2011). Taking into consideration the aforesaid, one can advocate that the perpetuation of stereotypes, of knowledge which is inherently flawed and not reflective of true Deaf epistemologies, by the media does alarming harm and impinges on the shaping for paradigms.

Golos and Moses proffer that there are an unprecedented amount of benefits that can be derived from portraying the Deaf from an accurate cultural perspective, one of which is that “children from marginalised cultures can find more representations of themselves and their culture in the books they read, and even children from mainstream cultures can expand their understanding of people and cultures about which they may know little” (2011).

Golos (2010) did a content analysis to investigate the portrayal of the Deaf population in children educational television shows, namely, *Sesame Street*, *Blues Clues* and *Reading Rainbow*. In these shows the Deaf population is included, however, at times inaccurate information is perpetuated about Deaf and Deaf culture. Golos notes that the focus in the shows is more on lipreading rather than on ASL (American Sign Language). In fact, further posited is that ASL is not acknowledged. Having commented on this, Golos (2010) asserted that “It shows the language as a gestural system rather than respecting the complexity of a full language”.

Highly consequential in Golos’s study is that “None of these programs show the deaf characters interacting within the Deaf community” (2010). Various assumptions can be asserted here, these programs are children educational programs, as such inherent to them is the role of teaching children. Taking this into account, one can posit that at core of society’s institutions is the dominant group’s intent on providing false knowledge about a minority group. That the shows do not show Deaf persons within their cultures serves to perpetuate, albeit in a connotative manner, that there is not a Deaf culture. With this one can further assert that there will essentially be the creation of epistemologies which will warrant the Deaf being viewed as

outsiders without culture. This will further lead to the isolation of the minority group that will increasingly aid in the marginalisation of the Deaf.

While the preceding is the case, a limitation of the study in question is that a crucial episode of *Sesame Street* where the National Theatre of the Deaf was present was unable to be located. The title suggests that there might have possibly been the inclusion of Deaf culture portrayed from a cultural perspective. Taking this into consideration, the authority in which Golos's study may have been accredited on the issue, can be said to be affected negatively. However, Deaf under representation and re-presentation is still a great concern as the portrayal of the culture is greatly fabricated.

Additionally, scholars note that the presentation of the Deaf as beings to be pitied furthers the ideologies that are presented through cultural hegemony. Avon (2006) postulates that "Using titles with words such as "trapped," "bridge," and "locked," further reinforce the ideology that deafness is a condition to be escaped from or cured of.

In essence, the gatekeepers of the media, through cultural hegemony, perpetuate the ideologies of the dominant group within society. In this case the dominant group proves to be the hearing. As such, ideologies and myths about deafness, perpetuated by the hearing, permeate society in such a manner that false knowledge becomes a part of group and personal epistemologies.

Deaf Epistemologies

Society's many institutions all aid, at times subtly, in the enlightenment of its people. This enlightenment on many occasions adds to the bodies of knowledge which exist about the world and how the people therein come to understand it. The way societies come to understand

deafness and create meaning about it, is imperative to the construction of personal and group epistemologies.

Margery S. Miller (2010) notes within the constructivist model of epistemology, “nothing is assumed to be a universal truth and information is not objective nor viewed as being factual”. Miller (2010) further posits that people’s realities “may or may not have anything to do with an external reality that still exists”. Added to this is her noting that this is one’s personal, constructivist view of the world and as such one’s own personal epistemology. Additionally, of utmost import is Miller’s view that truth is relative and in essence individually constructed. This though, is the case as it relates to the individual constructivist model of epistemology. On the other hand is group constructivism epistemology.

With group constructivist epistemology however, something is only seen as being truth if many persons within a group acknowledges it as such. Miller (2010) asserted that something is “too far from previously held strong notions of truth, the new information will be rejected as false”.

Miller additionally postulates “If however, a new construction can adjust enough to integrate prior notions of truth or theories viewed as facts and knowledge, then both the new piece of information and the older notions can still exist and be maintained” (2010). In other words, this suggests that once knowledge challenges the group’s schema in a very unorthodox manner, it is discarded. Conversely, knowledge that resembles what had been previously constructed is assimilated into the body of knowledge.

It is for this reason that knowledge about Deaf and Deaf culture ought to be correctly dispersed throughout the media and other institutions within society. If the incorrect information is spread initially, certain attitudes and beliefs are cemented, which in turn marginalise the Deaf, have them treated as outsiders in the society in which they operate. Change from the inaccurate

re-presentations to accurate proves to be quite difficult, as it is somewhat, shifting the paradigm in which we view the world. Miller's elucidation allows for one to be aware that once concepts or ideas contradict that which has been dispersed it is disregarded. This is the case albeit there are highly reliable institutions and sources of Deaf epistemologies; such as Deaf residential schools, Deaf adults with Deaf children, and highly reputable organisations. However, this can be attributed to the cultural hegemony which operates in a subtle manner in the institutions within society, while spreading its seemingly harmless ideologies.

It is as a result of the aforesaid that society must take into account the sources dispersing the bodies of knowledge that are ever present. This practice is one that ought to be prevalent throughout all institutions within society. Peter V. Paul and Donald F. Moores (2010) posit that "there is a growing chorus of support that teachers and other professionals be aware of the epistemic foundations of their disciplines to ensure that they are critical thinkers". This according to Paul and Moses (2010) is to also ensure that they are "engaging in the use of truthful and accurate information in the classroom and other learning environments". The benefits of this will be such that it will be far reaching, particularly as it relates to the accurate representation of Deaf and Deaf culture and creation of new bodies of factual knowledge. Paul and Moores (2010) propound that a benefit of this will be that "students will become more empowered to be rational, logical thinkers, and eventually stewards of critical thinking enterprise".

Paul and Moses assertion here is highly crucial. The aforesaid is essentially proposing a questioning of ideologies, questioning of the very foundations of knowledge. Practically, this refers to questioning media content; that of writings, of all Deaf discourses to ensure that the knowledge dispersed is a factual representation of the Deaf culture.

Deaf Education

Through the restructuring of education, and how society embrace knowledge will be the emergence of not only a better educated hearing people but also of the Deaf. The education system currently reflects the bias of the hearing rather than the inclusion of the Deaf. Veda R. Charrow and Ronnie B. Wilbur (1975) posit that "Traditionally, deaf children have been regarded as a handicapped group, whose inability to hear imposed severe limitations on how they could learn". Charrow and Wilbur additionally propound that "another way of looking at Deaf children is as a linguistic minority" (1975). Charrow and Wilbur's justification for this assertion was their study which concluded that Deaf children's performance at a Test of English Language as a Foreign Language, where the performance of the Deaf students were closer to the results of students who did these tests, than hearing students who did English exams.

Charrow and Wilbur further note that the educational achievement of the Deaf has always been greatly below that of the hearing. Oralism as a means of instruction has been greatly responsible for this. Charrow and Wilbur attribute the downfall of this method to the Deaf only being capable of lip reading, in the best of circumstances, 40% of what a speaker says. Noted is that "they fill in the rest from their experience and their knowledge of English, if they can" (Charrow & Wilbur, 1975). The aforesaid in essence, is a method that is open to a great deal of error. A means of education such as Oralism for the Deaf individual is one heralded as Chute and Nevin notes because there are "hearing people who know and care little about deafness because it does not directly affect their lives" (2002). Additionally, it is as a consequence of the preceding that proponents of Oralism assert "implantation as a necessary tool for Deaf children (Patrician M. Chute and Mary Ellen Nevin, (2002). Contrary to the beckoning call for Oralism, Kannapell purports " to reject ASL is to reject the Deaf person". In essence, Kannapell speaks to

Manualism and it being the apt method of instruction for the Deaf individual. There is also a greater issue here; signed language, manualism, is a part and parcel of the Deaf way of life, as such rejecting it becomes not only a hindrance to the educational development of the Deaf person but also a rejection of Deaf culture as it is known.

With a change in how knowledge is viewed, and a questioning of the foundations of knowledge, instruction of the Deaf is one area that will come under scrutiny. A consequence of which is a revision of modes of instruction. This will aid in the improvement of Deaf education. Research into method of instruction and teaching has revealed that “comprehension is weakest when stories are presented in a print-only format. Comprehension is strongest when stories are presented in the print with pictures format” (Gentry, Chinn & Moulton, 2004/2005). Research conducted previously, depict that the understanding of literatures for Deaf children is better when there is the addition of multimedia material rather than plain text.

In essence, the cultural hegemonic nature of epistemologies has been such that the Deaf population has been marginalised. Through marginalisation there has been the perpetuation of stereotypes of the deaf, and a portrayal of deafness from the pathological, deficit model. This is a model which essentially presents deafness as an impairment to be cured from. To a lesser extent however, is the depiction of Deafness from the cultural standpoint, where the richness of Deaf culture; poetry, art, music and other aspects of Deaf life are explored.

Deaf Identity

Deaf activists argue that being deaf, not being able to hear, is not a disability but an exclusive access pass that allows members of the Deaf community to be part of a rich subculture that should be viewed as, “simply a linguistic minority (speaking American Sign Language) and are

no more in need of a cure for their condition that are Haitians or Hispanics” (Dolnick,1993). In essence, Dolnick refers here to access to the richness of the distinct visually based culture of the Deaf. This is a world that is present for the Deaf when access is gained to Deaf residential schools and when Deaf children, have Deaf parents. As such, accessibility if gained to this community of distinct cultural practices, and persons are shielded from the direct harsh sentiments of the dominant hearing world.

However, while the preceding is the case, the pervasive ideologies of the hearing are dominant, and as such continue to shape the way the Deaf see each other and see themselves in relation to the hearing. As have been previously mentioned, within the media there is the prevalence of cultural hegemony, which places emphasis on the dominant culture of the hearing. Hearing then takes the privileged position within the created binary opposition of hearing and deaf. The Deaf take on the position of other, this is apparent when looking at the mode of instruction in the education system, and also through the language dynamics, and in the creation of epistemologies of deafness. The perception of the Deaf community by the Deaf has been tainted by the portrayal in the media, particularly as it relates to misconceptions of what being deaf means and discrimination against the community. A statement which embodies this view of deafness is Samuel Jackson’s description which posits that being deaf is “one of the most desperate of calamities” (1773). The dominant ideologies in relation to deafness centres around the aforesaid, as such this colours how hearing and deaf relate to each other, which further widens the divide, with the Deaf being alienated to the outskirts of society. This in essence encourages the Deaf to view their culture and other minority cultures in an unfavourable light. Accurate representation though is one that would inherently warrant the Deaf seeing their culture as legitimate, and would encourage a positive sense of self.

Purpose and Relevance

In essence, the intrinsic nature of societal institutions as the media, religion, education and others, is such that the cultural hegemony of the hearing subtly coerce individuals to hold the dominant ideologies, as it relates to how the Deaf and Deaf culture are perceived. The purpose of this study is to unmask and truly analyse the portrayal of Deaf culture and deafness in the shows *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven and* to understand how the Deaf is viewed in Trinidadian society. The study will reveal the power structures in place through a thorough evaluation and amplification of the various contexts within the texts.

As such, the analysis will unearth meaning as it relates to the understanding of the content, within a specific faction of Trinidadian society. To expound, one's culture influences the way a text is interpreted. Taking the aforesaid into consideration, the study gains pertinence because it is only through the understanding of how this particular society understands Deaf and deafness that an assessment can then be made about the epistemologies of Deaf and Deaf culture that positive change can be heralded. The aim then is to decipher the phenomena as it relates to the Deaf and Deaf Culture within this society and encourage critical reception of knowledge.

Research questions which will be asked are:-

1. From what perspective are the Deaf characters in *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven* portrayed?
2. How are aspects of Deaf culture portrayed in these shows?
3. What is the nature of interaction between Deaf characters and hearing characters on these shows?
4. Are there any power struggles between the Deaf and the hearing?

5. How does Trinidadian society view the Deaf?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspectives in focus are those of the Standpoint Theory and the Muted Group Theory. These theories when applied to the shows *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven* as well as findings from research participants tend to shed light on the portrayals of Deaf and Deaf culture.

Initially created to take into account the vantage point of the woman in a patriarchal society, the Standpoint theory with its emphasis on marginalised factions greatly aids in the understanding of the Deaf and Deaf Culture within a predominantly hearing society.

This theory propounds that cultures are experienced quite differently by various groups. It further adds that cultures tend to be hierarchically structured. This implies that there is a dissimilarity of power between differing groups within society, which further speaks to the opportunities as well as the experiences persons are privy to. The proponents of the theory, Sandra Harding and Julia T. Wood, assert that factors such as economics, race have a role to play in shaping people's cultural identities. Noting the aforementioned, one must assert being Deaf or hearing has an astounding role in the ultimate moulding of one's way of life. Additionally, what Standpoint theorists note according to Em Griffin is that "people at the top of the societal hierarchy are the ones privileged to define what it means to be female, male or anything else in a given culture" (2011).

Ergo, it can be said as a consequence of being in a prevailing hearing society, the hearing who occupy most gate keeping positions tend to define not only what it means to be hearing but more often than not the hearing also defines what it means to be Deaf. It is this which

contributes to the continuous dialogue between the cultural and the pathological standpoints of deafness. It is for this reason that Cultural Studies theorist Stuart Hall, propounds that "concepts of representation and ideology are pivotal to the analysis of society and culture" (Rojek, 2010). Discourses such as these tend to shape the institutions in society, and the knowledge which they disperse. Keeping this at the fore, it then becomes of great import to meticulously dissect the epistemologies which are a part and product of one's culture. In keeping with Postmodernist thought, Standpoint theorist, Wood insists upon the partiality of some perspectives over others. What Wood notes is when individuals speak from the opposite side of power relations they tend to provide "a more objective view than the perspective from the lives of the more powerful" (Griffin 2011). The message at the core of standpoint theory applied to this study is that epistemologies be questioned, in addition to this, factual knowledge of Deaf epistemologies be taken from the Deaf and not the hearing, since the Deaf will provide more objective and accurate knowledge as it relates to Deaf Culture and standpoint.

In continuation, in addition to the Critical Tradition/Cultural Studies, the Muted Group Theory also offers ideas that are relevant to Deaf and Deaf culture. Developed by professor of speech communication Cheris Kramarae, the muted group theory looks at the voices of women being muted in society in favor of men. "The notion of women as a muted group was first proposed by Oxford University social anthropologist, Edwin Ardener" (Griffin, 2009). Along with his Oxford colleague Shirley Ardener, he extended his work further when realizing that mutedness can plague any group that is a low-power group in society (Griffin, 2009). "Muted group theory suggests that people attached or assigned to subordinate groups may have a lot to say, but they tend to have relatively little power to say it" (Kramarae, 2005). This theory travels beyond gender and into realms of other marginalizing differences such as race, sexuality and

class (Kramarae, 2005). Application of this theory can be further extended to the Deaf and Deaf culture. Being a marginalised group within society, the Deaf have been muted by societies many institutions, no exception to this is the media with its unprecedented reach.

Kramarae noted that language has been greatly man-made. What one can propound in this instance is that dominant discourses of language has for the most part been coined by the hearing. It is in this sense one can agree with Kramarae's statement "the language of a particular culture does not serve all its speakers equally, for not all speakers contribute in an equal fashion to its formulation" (Cheris Kramarae, 1981). Charrow and Wilbur note that for the Deaf and Deaf culture the "normal modality for language is not auditory and oral, but visual and manual" (1975). In essence, what this means in a hearing dominated society is that the Deaf are sidelined because the dominant form of shaping discourses remains largely oral and auditory.

Additionally, when the written visual is used, the form is more closely aligned to a foreign language which the pre-lingual Deaf is unable to fully grasp. A consequent of which is the inability to fully engage in efficacious dialogue. Additionally, it is this same language that creates epistemologies focused on the Deaf as disabled, handicapped and without a culture. Cultural views then are silenced in favour of the pathological standpoint. In critically exploring the representation of Deaf and Deaf culture on *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven* as well as discourse which exists in Trinidadian society it will be discovered if the Deaf world is muted or given voice in these shows and in wider society.

These two theories are in keeping with the overall aim of the critical tradition, they note that there are certain groups that are constantly sidelined and oppressed in society. They are swallowed by the dominant society and their voices are silenced because their cultural identities or ideologies do not coincide with what is associated as being "normal". Analysts of the critical

tradition align themselves with those opposed to the dominant order of society and look at ideological aspects of power, oppression and emancipation in society. The goal of critical theory therefore is to remove the ideological blinders that seek to oppress certain minority groups in society. By using these theories, this study aims to do the aforesaid by unearthing factual knowledge and challenging the very epistemic foundations of fabricated Deaf/deaf discourses.

Chapter Three

Methodology

At the core of this thesis is the aim to obtain data that will in turn aid in the creation of new epistemologies, new ways of knowing. The inherent goal is to create factual epistemologies about Deaf and Deaf culture which will advance an enduring, tenacious stance against what Margery S. Miller (2010) posits as "so-called fact that in actuality has no basis in truth whatsoever". This is particularly so for information pervading the media and public spaces. These new epistemologies will in turn challenge schemas, and ultimately positively change the attitudes and perceptions of persons by educating them about the issues surrounding Deaf/deafness. Central to these epistemologies will be emphasizing the fact that the Deaf are a linguistic minority/ cultural minority, from this aspect of Deaf culture will be brought to the fore which will aid in highlighting Deaf art, theatre and other aspects of Deaf culture.

Noting the aforesaid intent, the most suitable approach in this study is that of triangulation. This proves to be the case because triangulation allows for the exposure of meaningful information about Deaf culture and the media that may remain hidden with the use of a single methodological approach. In essence, triangulating in this study answers the "What?" as well as the "Why?" If the qualitative or the quantitative approach is chosen there will be the risk of missing information that can be greatly meaningful to bringing about social change and development. In addition to the aforesaid; triangulation results in high data validity primarily because the flaws and weaknesses of one methodological approach are counterbalanced with the strengths of another.

Having posited the preceding, it is consequential to note the methods chosen for this thesis are those of qualitative and quantitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative

and quantitative Content analysis were chosen because they are best suited to investigate and gain a comprehensive understanding about the content of messages embedded in the shows *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven*, such as their characteristics and amount, as it relates to Deaf culture. Content analysis then aids in being able to identify instances where certain messages emerged, it also aids in being able to enumerate and analyse the occurrences of these specific messages and message characteristics embedded in the texts. Additionally, the method of semi-structured interviews was used to obtain data because this method aids at obtaining deep-seated knowledge while allowing the group a structure that aided in keep the interviewers focused. This was also used to aid in having the research questions answered in a manner deemed ideal.

Using the methods previously mentioned allowed for the unearthing of meaningful data as it relates to the understanding of Deaf/deaf cultures, as it is portrayed by the media and understood by the research participants. Through the use of the following research questions data was retrieved which aided in the unveiling of knowledge as it relates to the Deaf and Deaf Culture within society:

1. From what perspective are the Deaf characters in *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven* portrayed?
2. How are aspects of Deaf culture portrayed in these shows?
3. What is the nature of interaction between Deaf characters and hearing characters on these shows?
4. Are there any power struggles between the Deaf and the hearing?
5. How does Trinidadian society view the Deaf?

Conceptual Design

Deafness, though a seemingly simple human condition contains several intricate factors and issues that should ideally be disclosed if one is to analyze the portrayal of deaf characters on the television shows, *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven*.

Glickman (1993) developed four types of Deaf identity. First is the culturally hearing individual who identifies only with the hearing culture and defines deafness as a medical pathology or physical disability. Second is the culturally marginal person, who identifies neither with the Deaf nor the hearing culture. Third is the individual immersed in Deaf culture with a negative view of hearing culture and lastly, is the bicultural individual who participates, shares and feels comfortable in Deaf and hearing environments (Cornell & Lyness, 2004).

According to researcher, Debbie B. Golos, there are various models or perspectives of deafness. The two major models however are the pathological model and the cultural model. The pathological model views deafness as a problem that needs to be fixed. This model assumes a medical perspective and presents the idea that deaf individuals need to be cured via use of hearing aids or surgery for cochlear implants. Within the last two decades, cochlear implants have been offered as a treatment option for adults who have lost their hearing and children who were born deaf or were deafened as infants (Sparrow, 2005). Increasingly operations are being conducted on children as young as two years old, in order that they may acquire spoken language at an early age (Sparrow, 2005). The Medical Center at the University of Maryland describes the cochlear implant as a device that provides sound perception through direct electrical activation of the hearing nerve, bypassing the inner ear.

There are two parts to the cochlear implant. The internal device is surgically implanted under the skin and consists of a magnet, a receiver, fine wires and an electrode array. The external

device is an earpiece made up of a sound processor, a cable and a microphone. The cochlear implant allows for reception of audio messages that a profoundly deaf individual will not otherwise receive. The sound processor interprets incoming sounds from the microphone and converts them into patterns of electrical current. This current is then transported through the skin by radio wave transmission to the receiver below the surface of the skin. The receiver drives the current to the electrode array which has been implanted into the cochlear. The current, fuels fibers of the auditory nerve and produces sound perception (University of Maryland Medical Center, 2011).

Though experimentations with ‘eradicating’ deafness began in 1790 when Volta, an Italian physicist tried to stimulate the auditory nerve by connecting electric batteries to metal rods he placed in his ears, the cochlear implant was really developed during the 1950s to 1960s. The first successful cochlear implant was invented by Graeme Clark, an otolaryngologist in Melbourne, Australia. In 1967, Clark and his multidisciplinary team developed an artificial hearing device to activate the cochlea at multiple points. On August 1st, 1978, Rod Saunders was the first person to receive the first multichannel cochlear implant (Kirtane et al, 2010).

Although the ability to hear is a positive experience, the pathological perspective holds underlying belief that deaf persons are broken or ‘not normal’. The second major model of deafness is the cultural model. The cultural model celebrates Deafness and sees it as another form of human existence. The cultural perspective sees deafness as something positive, viewing it with a capital ‘D’ signifying the bold culture of deaf persons. Pride in Deafness, a rich community surrounding deaf schools and the use of sign language are strong features of the cultural model. Deaf persons live fulfilling lives and their inability to hear is not an issue (Golos, 2010).

Deaf culture was recognized with the establishment of deaf communities surrounding deaf residential schools. For example, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc founded the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut. Clerc, who was a deaf man, was a teacher at the Royal Institution for the Deaf in Paris. Clerc believed that sign language was the best way deaf children learned and his ideas were implemented at the American deaf school (Jordan & Pray, 2010). However not everyone had such a positive view of sign language.

There are two core views to deaf communication and education, the manualist method and the oralist method. According to the PBS film, *Through Deaf Eyes*, there was a once a battle between what educators considered to be the most effective approach in educating deaf persons. During 1872- 1905 the two major opposing ‘generals’ were Edward Miner Gallaudet, who supported manualism and Alexander Graham Bell who strongly advocated oralism (Hott, 2007). The manualist method focuses on the use of sign language and is the preferred method of the culturally Deaf. The oralist method employs the use of speech therapy, reading, writing and lip-reading. During the period 1872- 1905, the oralist method won and became the dominant method for educating deaf persons. It was considered to be more “normal”. “Normal” soon became the synonym for “good” and Deaf culture began to fade away (Hott, 2007).

Several years later, signed languages began to gain respect with the discovery of hearing linguist, William Stokoe. Stokoe came to the revolutionary realization that signed languages are not spoken languages on the hands or a “crude gestural reproduction of English” but are in fact languages in their own right, with their own structures (Hott, 2007). Stokoe’s findings were first met with strong opposition but were eventually recognized and allowed for the Deaf to feel a greater sense of self-respect. The technology of the cochlear implant presents a threat to signed

languages however as the surgery allows the deaf to learn language the hearing way, thus aligning with the mentality of oralists.

The development of signed languages, such as American Sign Language (ASL), helped to establish Deaf culture. Signed languages are the definers of Deaf culture. The culturally Deaf consider themselves to be a linguistic minority and not people with a disability (Humphries, 2008; Humphries & Padden, 2005; Lane, 1992; Padden & Humphries, 1988). Deaf persons not only have their own languages but also artistic expressions that originated within the Deaf community. Though not all Deaf persons ascribe to the culture, it seems quite apparent that a culture among many Deaf persons does indeed exist.

The close examination of the representation of deaf characters on television shows *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven* requires the employment of strategic analysis. Coding is one method that can be used to further analyze the data collected. Therefore the following binaries to guide analysis will be utilized. This will allow for systematic comparing and contrasting of hearing culture versus Deaf culture, thus allowing for a standpoint to effectively view the portrayal of the deaf characters on the aforementioned television shows.

Data Collection

Content Analysis

Content analysis, a type of textual analysis, was chosen as an appropriate method for the study of the way Deaf culture is portrayed in the media. This is so because content analysis serves as a suitable technique for identifying, measuring, and analyzing the occurrences of specific messages, characteristics and themes inherent in the television programmes (*Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven*) chosen to be studied.

In this thesis, quantitative as well as qualitative content analyses have been chosen, which is in essence triangulation. Using the aforesaid allows for thorough content analysis, and ensures maximum validity of findings. The decision to triangulate was made on the basis that the research sought to gain an in-depth perspective of Deaf culture and the media. As such, there existed the need to use research methods that allowed for minimum discrepancy in the information collected about Deaf culture in both television shows selected, and to counteract the weaknesses of using either a quantitative or a qualitative methodology. In addition, the decision to triangulate eliminated the instance of a one-dimensional perspective and approach to research, that is, research that is inclined solely on addressing the “what” factor – being the types of messages on Deaf culture that are present in the media” and not focused on the “why” factor - (potential) reasons these messages are depicted and analyzing the meanings associated with the occurring messages, or vice versa.

The quantitative aspect of content analysis was conducted by selecting texts; in this case the texts, were the previously stated television show programs, that proved to be relevant to the main objectives of researching Deaf culture in the media. The texts chosen were *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven* as both texts depict Deaf and, or hearing impaired characters, and highlight dimensions of Deaf culture and interaction with other cultures. The research team collectively engaged in purposive sampling in order to narrow the sample of episodes to be analysed. The use of purposive sampling therefore allowed for the selection of episodes that were specific to the issue of Deaf culture, Deaf portrayal, and perceptions of the Deaf as they dealt with themes such as sign language, oralism, manualism, communicative behaviours, and the relation between Deaf and hearing persons.

In order to achieve, an applicable unit of analysis that addressed the objectives of the study, both thematic and referential units were used. Researchers unitized using thematic units to look at portrayals of discrimination, ignorance, conflict, acceptance and perspectives of Deaf culture and Deaf persons. In addition, referential units were used to measure the meaning attached to specific characters, communicative behaviours, issues and conflicts that were presented in both shows. Based on the units chosen, the research team identified that the unit of analysis for the study will consist of four (4) *Switched at Birth* episodes (season 1, episodes 1, 2, 5 and 6) and two (2) *7th Heaven* episodes (season 1, episodes 1, and 2). Several categories were developed and each of the researchers then engaged in an activity of classification or coding each unit into an appropriate category.

Having completed the coding of units into categories, the investigative team ran an inter rater reliability test in order to evaluate the accuracy of the researchers coding. Individuals however who had no former knowledge of the topic of Deaf culture and the media were asked to participate in the inter rater reliability test, and hence asked to try using the researchers coding scheme to code units into the various categories. The results of the researchers content analysis was then measured and compared against the results of the research team.

Qualitative content analysis was conducted as researchers sought to determine the relationships among the major themes identified in the television show programs, and hence attain comprehensive insight into the various meanings of the communicative messages, and story lines evident in each text. For instance, the researchers were able to analyze how Deaf culture and Deaf persons were portrayed in each television show, and discuss potential ideologies, and viewpoints that influenced such depictions.

Interviews

Interviews were used in addition to the quantitative and qualitative content analysis to achieve a greater degree of methodological triangulation of the research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and included both Deaf and hearing individuals as participants. All participants were chosen through purposive sampling, given that there were specific characteristics and criteria that the research team desired. Given the purpose of the study, and due to ethical factors, it was necessary to select Deaf persons over the age of 18, as well adult hearing participants over the age of 18. Deaf persons were chosen as suitable participants as the investigative group wished to gather an in-depth understanding of the way of life, culture (including language, which may be sign language and other communicative behaviours) and worldview of the Deaf community. Hearing persons were also included as members of the participant population given the need to attain a comprehensive knowledge of the way the Deaf are viewed or perceived by hearing persons as the study aimed at gaining a greater understanding of the Deaf and perceptions of the Deaf.

The investigative team recruited and interviewed three (3) Deaf persons and five (5) hearing persons in attempt to achieve a more detailed, and comprehensive knowledge of Deaf culture and perceptions of the Deaf. Face to face interviews were conducted between the hearing participant population and researchers. Face to face interviews were also conducted between investigators and Deaf persons with the aid of an interpreter. Interviews were detailed and structured in such a way that the research team attained thorough information and insight into the broad research topic Deaf culture and Deaf portrayal in the media. The research team resourced a sign language interpreter as a form of professional intervention. The interpreter was invited to participate in the study through the use of informed consent requesting their service, aid and

participation. It was also necessary that we received informed consent from both hearing and Deaf participants before proceeding with our investigative approach. Informed consent was obtained through the use of consent forms that were interpreted for Deaf participants' understanding. These consent forms were given to both Deaf participants and hearing participants before the actual conducting of interviews. Participants were required to sign documents and were informed that their decision to participate after having read the details outlined in the letter will suggest their agreement and permission to participate and thus, have the information they have provided be used in the study or research.

The participant population was sourced through convenient sampling from among the University of the West Indies population, as well as through contact with Deaf institutions such as the Deaf Organization of Trinidad and Tobago, and Deaf Pioneers. Contact with the Deaf was made with the aid of a sign language interpreter.

Chapter Four

Findings

For the purposes of this study, content analysis was conducted on episodes 2 and 6 of *Switched at Birth* and episodes 22 and 23 of *7th Heaven*. A coding manual was developed and implemented in order to facilitate valid and reliable analysis of the manifest content of each show. Categories were constructed based on themes that were identified in the literature review. The four categories included were: Pathological terms, Cultural terms, Interaction between Deaf and Hearing characters and Communication styles. Each category led to the identification of pertinent aspects of Deaf culture as they appeared in the shows. The frequency of such elements were then analyzed. The following are tables representing the findings attained during the coding process.

Switched at Birth

Table 1 Switched at Birth			
Pathological terms of Deafness	Switched at Birth Episode 2	Switched at Birth Episode 6	Total number of times
Deaf*	4	3	7
Gesture**	0	0	0
Inability to Speak	1	0	1
Deaf Voice	1	3	4
Hearing asked to talk slow for	1	0	1

the Deaf			
Hearing loss	0	0	0
Hearing Impaired	0	0	0
Cochlear Implants	0	4	4
Hearing Aid	1	0	1
Regular Person	0	2	2
Total	8	12	20

Table 1 showing the results of coding under the category “Pathological terms” for *Switched at Birth* episodes 2 and 6

It was found that the description of Deaf persons the term “deaf”, in its medical understanding, was the pathological term that recurred the most in *Switched at Birth* episode 2. Whereas in *Switched at Birth* episode 6, the pathological term that recurred the most was the term “cochlear implant”. It is important to note however, that the term “deaf” was overall the most frequently used pathological term in *Switched at Birth* episode 2 and episode 6.

Table 1.2 Switched at Birth			
Cultural Deaf terms of deafness	Switched at Birth Episode 2	Switched at Birth Episode 6	Total number of times
Deaf music	0	0	0
Deaf school	3	1	4

Deaf sport	0	0	0
Deaf community	0	1	1
Deaf pantomime	0	1	1
Total	3	3	6

Table 1.2 showing the results of coding under the category "Cultural terms" for Switched at Birth episodes 2 and 6

The cultural term that appeared the most in Switched at Birth episode 2 is Deaf school. Deaf school and Deaf community and pantomime also appear in episode 6 however on a lesser scale.

Nature of Interaction between Deaf and hearing	Switched at Birth Episode 2	Switched at Birth Episode 6	Total number of occurrences
Antagonistic relationship	0	0	0
Ridicule	2	2	4
Difference in understanding Affects relationship	2	1	3
Deaf as a diseased	0	1	1
Making special technological Provisions for the Deaf	0	1	1

Interpreter	0	3	3
Deaf adjusting communication style	9	9	18
Hearing adjusting communication style	7	9	16
Total	20	26	46

Table 1.3 showing the results of coding under the category “Interaction between Deaf and Hearing characters” for Switched at Birth episodes 2 and 6

Deaf adjusting communication styles and hearing adjusting communication styles were the two most prevalent elements that appeared in Switched at Birth episodes 2 and 6. The Deaf adjusted 9 times in each episode coded, whereas there were 7 instances of the hearing adjusting in episode 2 and 9 in episode 6.

Table 1.4 Switched at Birth			
Communication Styles	Switched at Birth Episode 2	Switched at Birth Episode 6	Total number of times
Deaf responding without seeing signing/lips	0	0	0
Sign Language	10	7	17
Gesturing	0	4	4
Deaf signing and speaking at the same	6	4	10

time			
Deaf talking without signing	10	8	18
Deaf character not watching signing/lips	1	0	1
Forgetting Deaf cannot hear	2	1	3
Total	29	24	53

Table 1.4 showing the results of coding under the category "Communication styles" for Switched at Birth episodes 2 and 6

Sign Language appeared the most in the category "Communication styles" in Switched at Birth, While Deaf responding without seeing signing/ lips appeared the least.

7th Heaven

Table 2 7th Heaven			
Pathological terms of Deafness	7th Heaven Episode	7th Heaven episode	Total number of times
	22	23	
Deaf*	2	2	4
Gesture**	0	0	0
Inability to Speak	0	0	0

Deaf Voice	0	1	1
Hearing asked to talk slow for the Deaf	0	0	0
Hearing Loss	0	0	0
Hearing Impaired	0	0	0
Cochlear Implants	0	0	0
Hearing Aid	0	0	0
Regular Person	0	0	0
Total	2	3	5

Table 2 showing the results of coding under the category "Pathological terms" for 7th Heaven episodes 22 and 23. It depicts the different terms as it relates to the medical model of Deafness.

Table 2.17th Heaven			
Cultural Deaf terms of deafness	7th Heaven episode 22	7th Heaven 23	Total number of times
Deaf music	0	0	0
Deaf school	0	0	0
Deaf sport	0	0	0
Deaf community	0	3	3

Deaf pantomime	0	0	0
Total	0	3	3

Table 2.1 showing the results of coding under the category "Cultural terms" for 7th Heaven episodes 22 and 23.

Table 2.2 7th Heaven			
Nature of Interaction	7th Heaven Episode 22	7th Heaven Episode 23	Total number of times
Antagonistic relationships	0	0	0
Ridicule	1	0	1
Difference in understanding affects relationship	0	0	0
Deaf as diseased	0	0	0
Making special technological provisions for the Deaf	0	0	0
Deaf adjusting communication styles	2	3	5
Hearing adjusting communication styles	3	3	6
Total	6	6	12

Table 2.2 showing the results of coding under the category "Interaction between deaf and Hearing characters" for 7th Heaven episodes 22 and 23.

This table takes into account the ways the hearing and Deaf characters interacted to ascertain if they were in keeping with the cultural or pathological models of Deafness.

Communication Styles	7th Heaven Episode 22	7th Heaven Episode 23	Total number of times
Deaf responding without seeing signing/lips	0	0	0
Sign language	3	6	9
9Gesturing	1	0	1
Deaf signing and speaking at the same time	0	0	0
Deaf talking without signing	0	0	0
Deaf character not watching signing/lips	0	0	0
Forgetting Deaf cannot hear	2	0	2
Total	6	6	12

Table 2.3 showing the results of coding under the category "Communication styles" for 7th Heaven episodes 22 and 23.

The following are graphs showing the results obtained from the codings of Switched at Birth episode 2 and 6, and 7th Heaven episodes 22 and 23

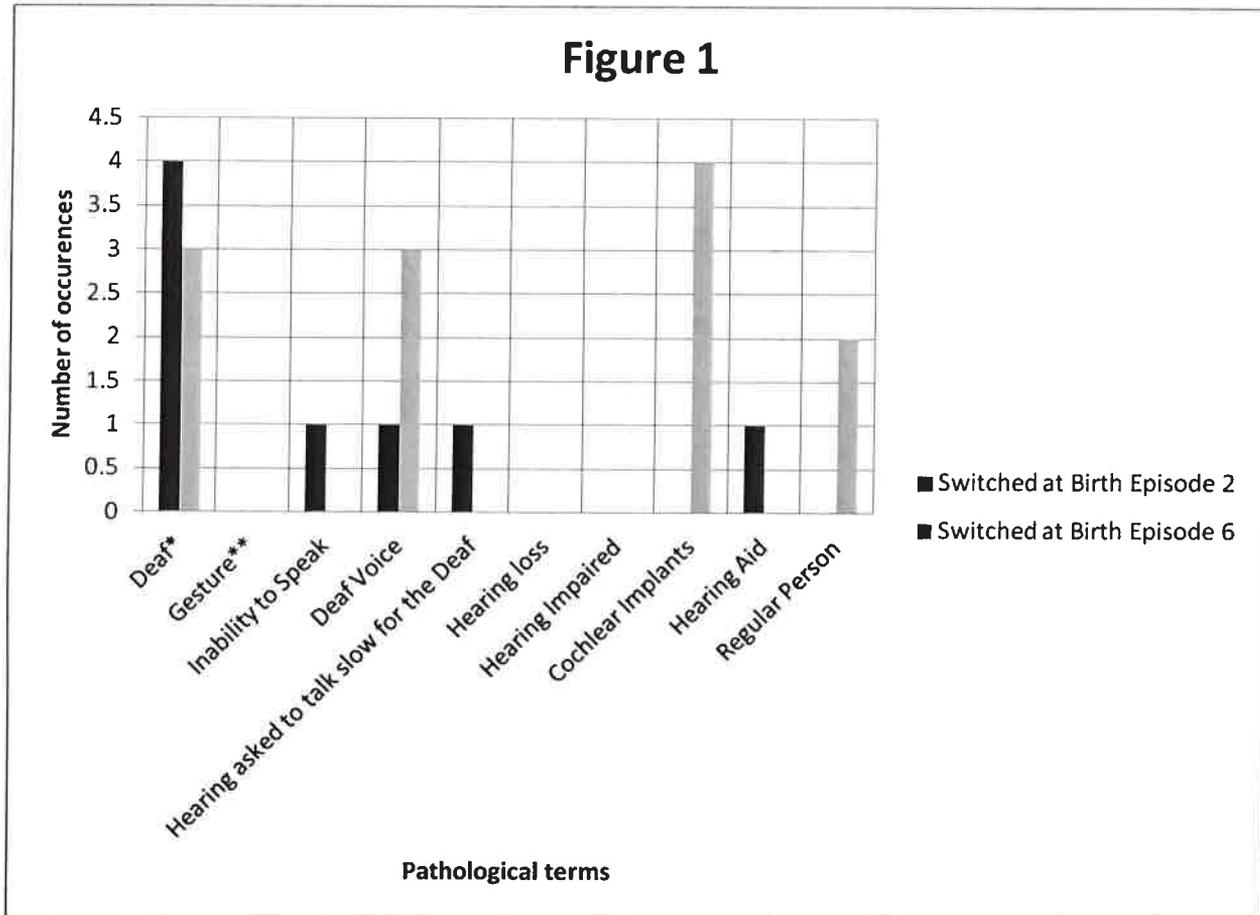


Figure 1 is a graph showing the number of times pathological terms appear in switched at Birth episode 2, and episode 6.

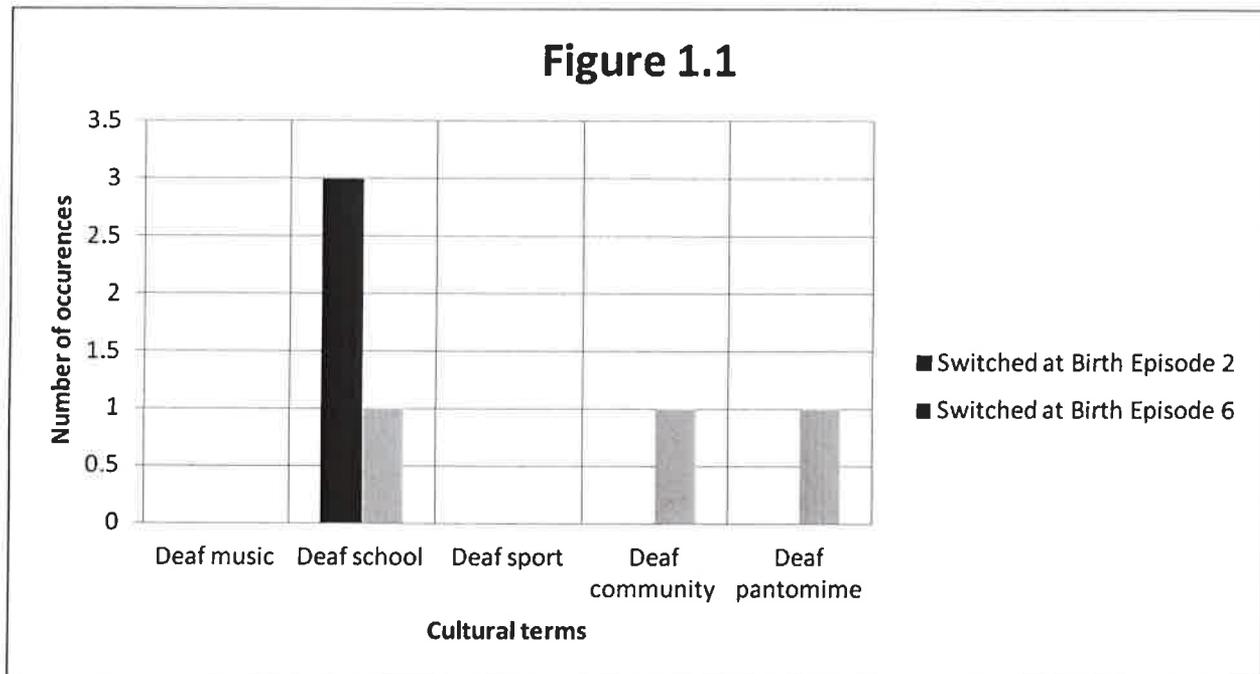


Figure 1.1 is a graph showing the number of times cultural terms appear in Switched at Birth episode 2, and episode 6.

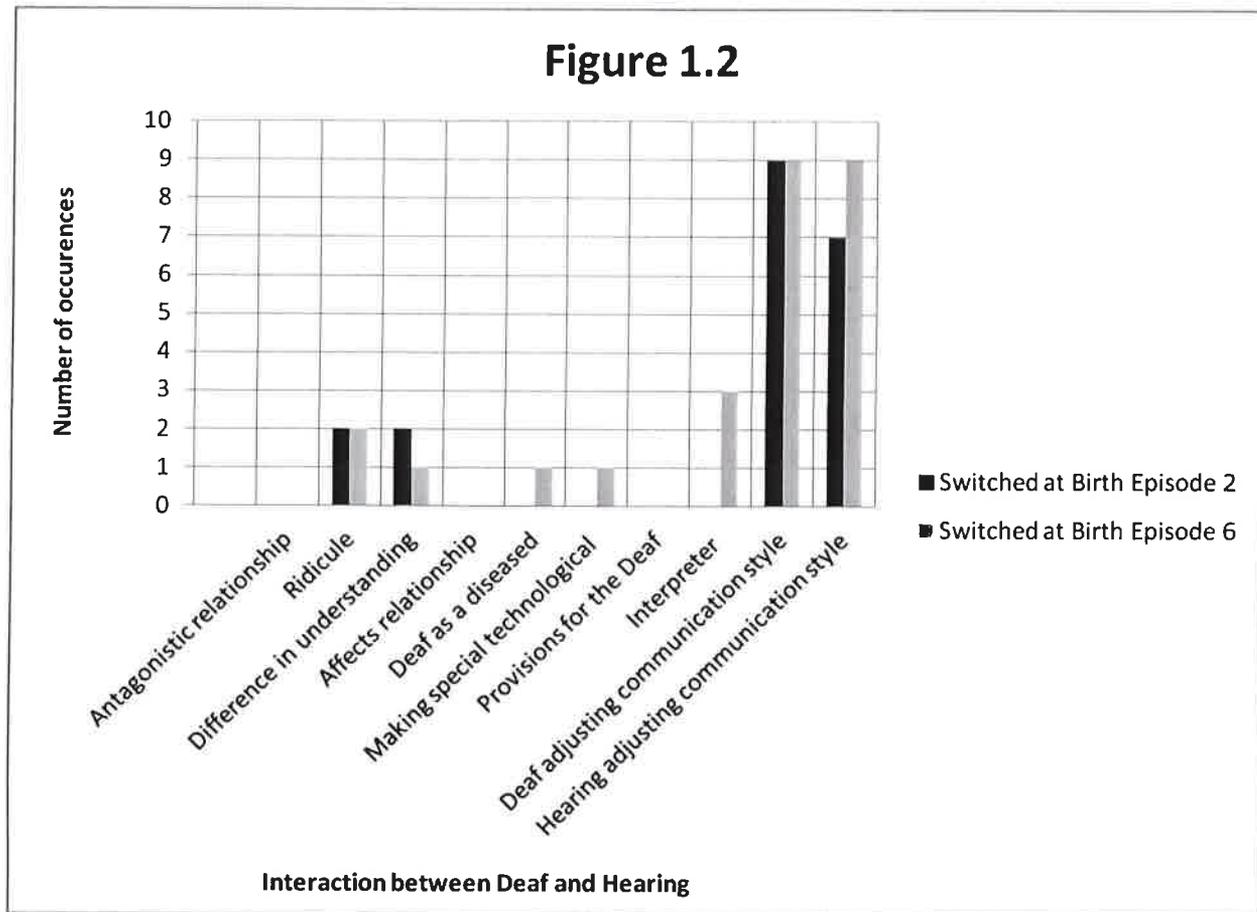


Figure 1.2 is a graph showing the frequency of different types of interaction seen between Deaf and Hearing characters in Switched at Birth episode 2 and episode 6

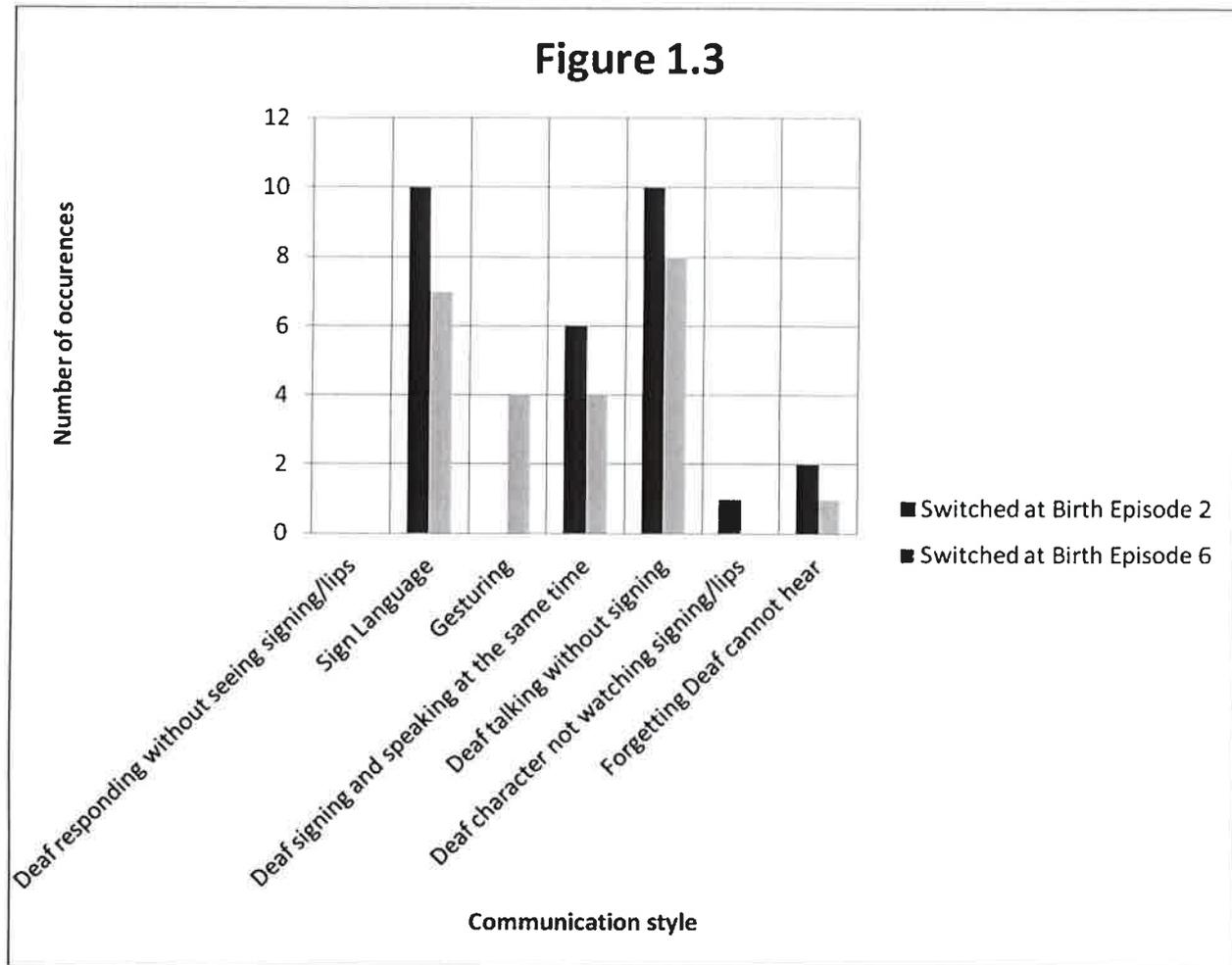


Figure 1.3 is a graph showing the frequency of different types of communication styles used by characters in Switched at Birth episode 2 and episode 6.

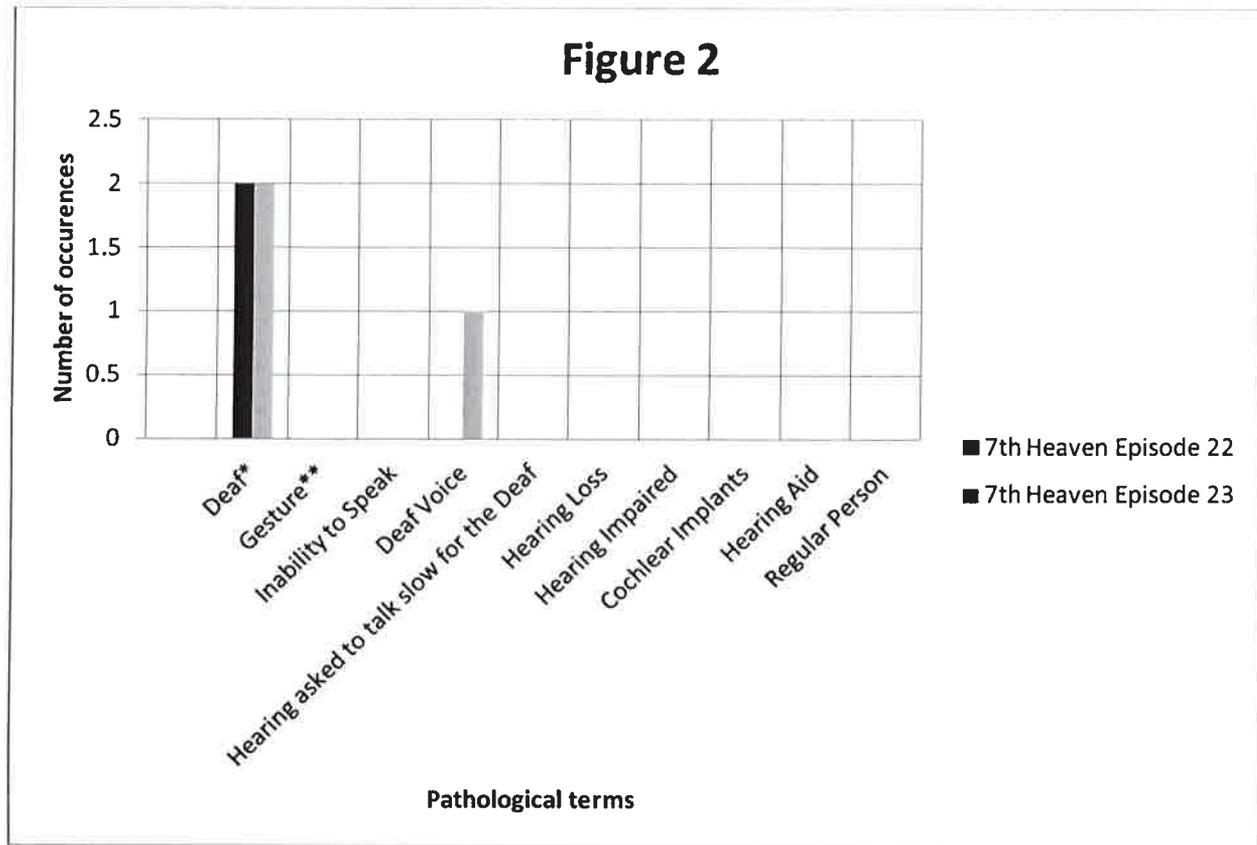


Figure 2 is a graph showing the number of times pathological terms appear in 7th Heaven episode 22, and episode 23.

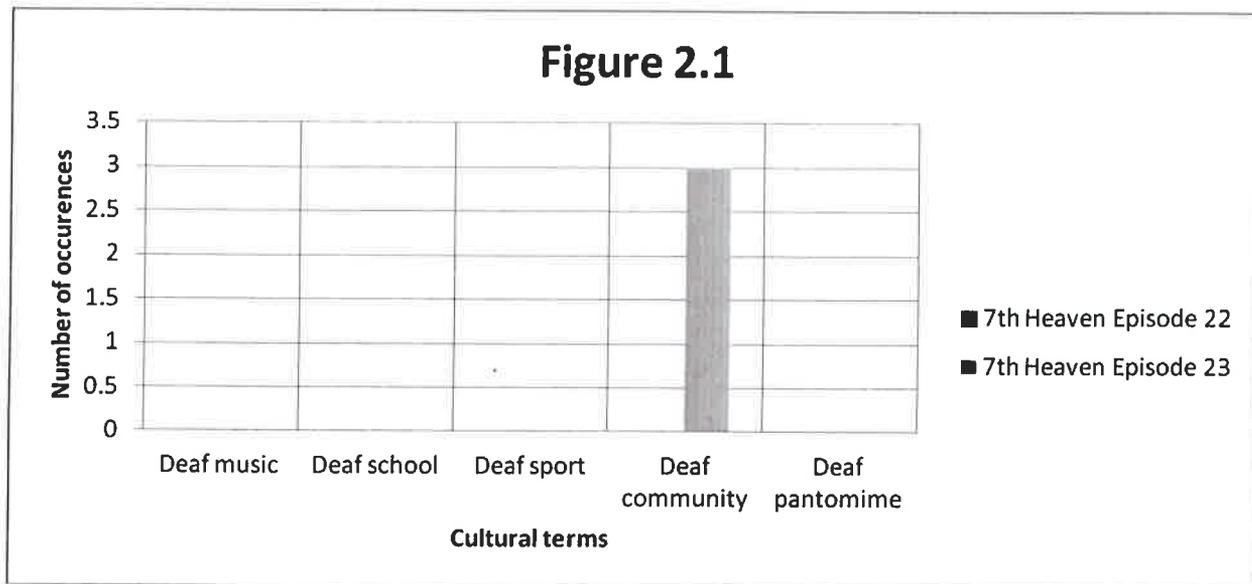


Figure 2.1 is a graph showing the number of times cultural terms appear in 7th Heaven episode 22, and episode 23.

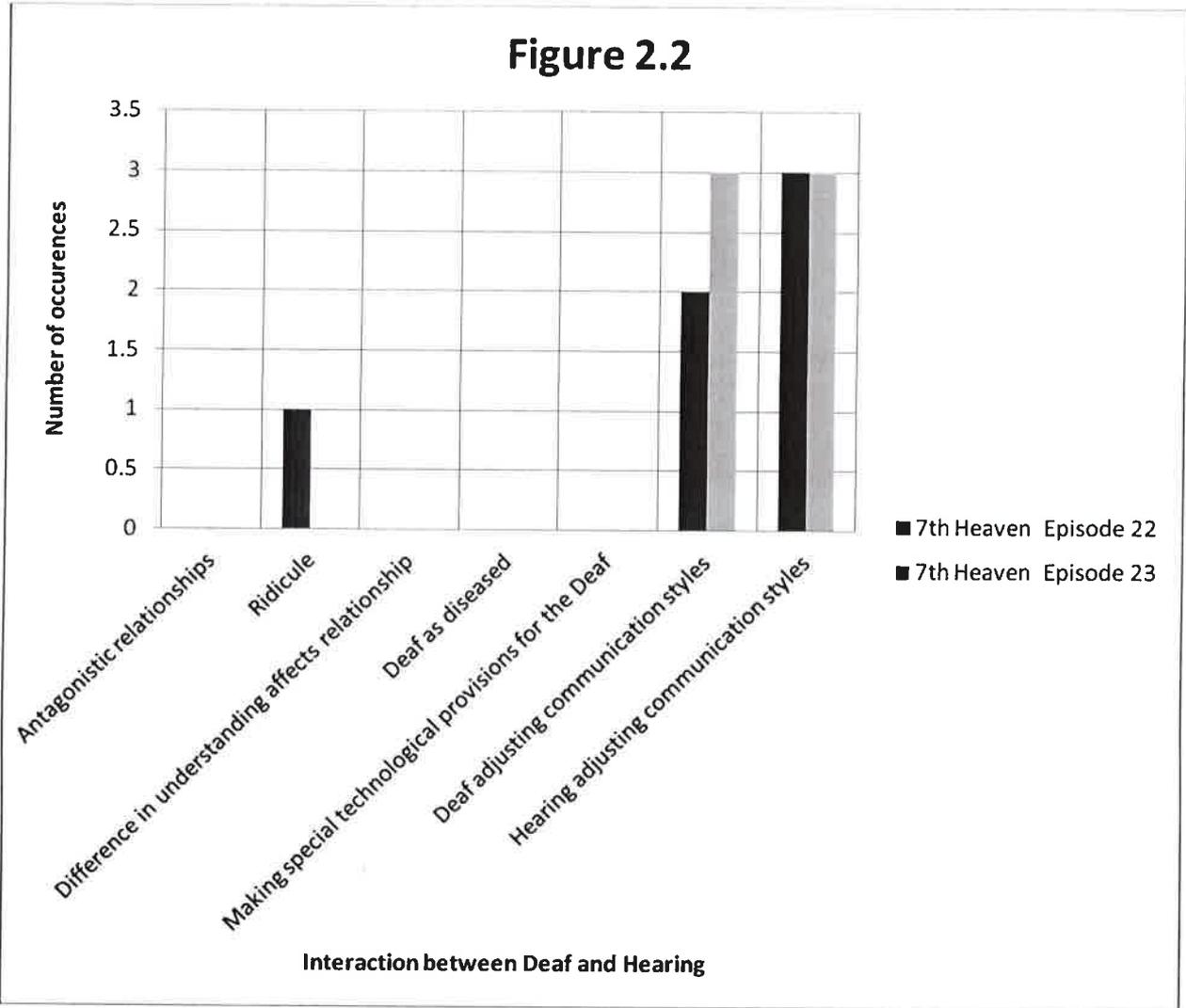


Figure 2.2 is a graph showing the frequency of different types of interactions seen between Deaf and Hearing characters in 7th Heaven episode 22 and episode 23.

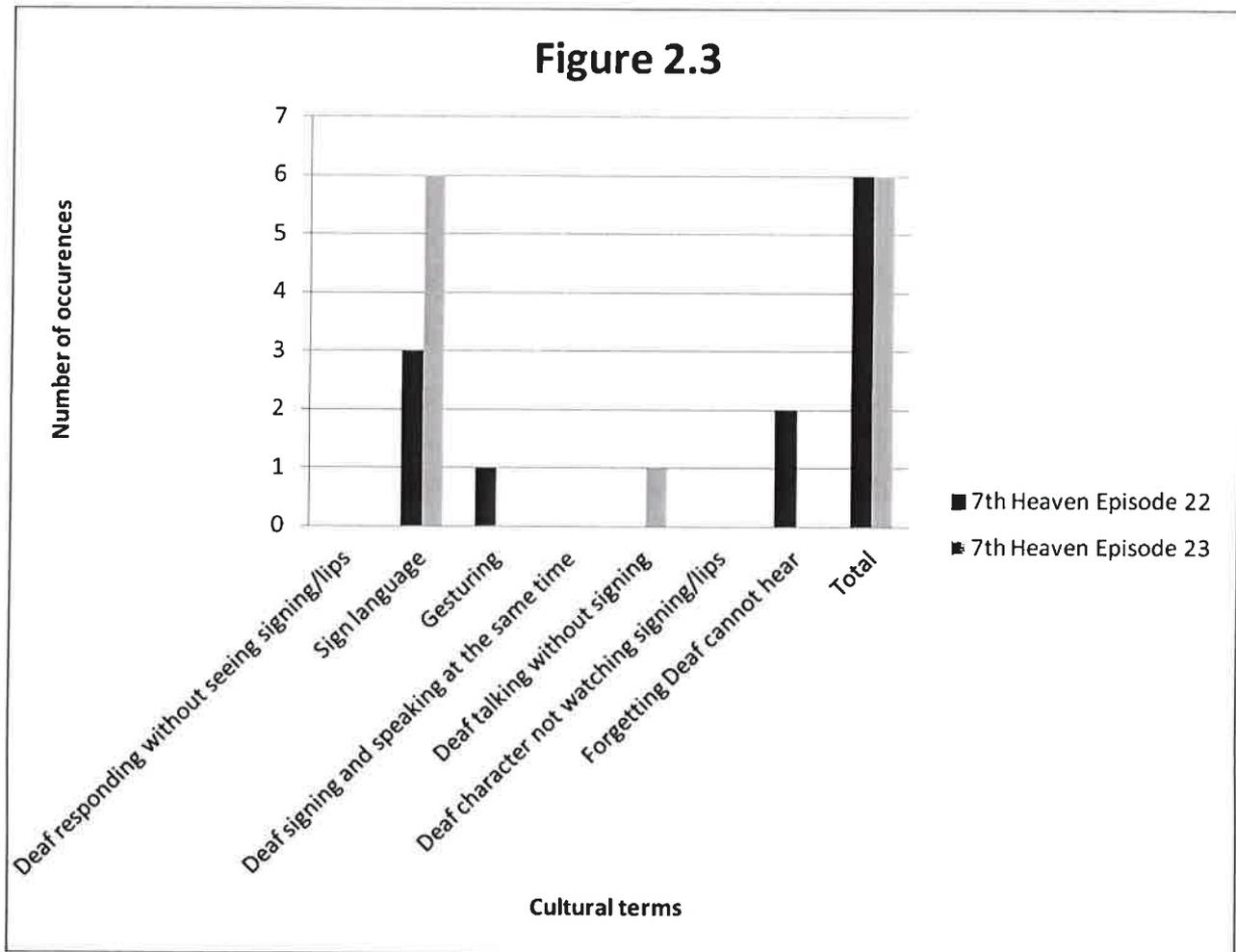


Figure 2.3 is a graph showing the types and frequency of communication styles used by characters in 7th Heaven episode 22 and episode 23.

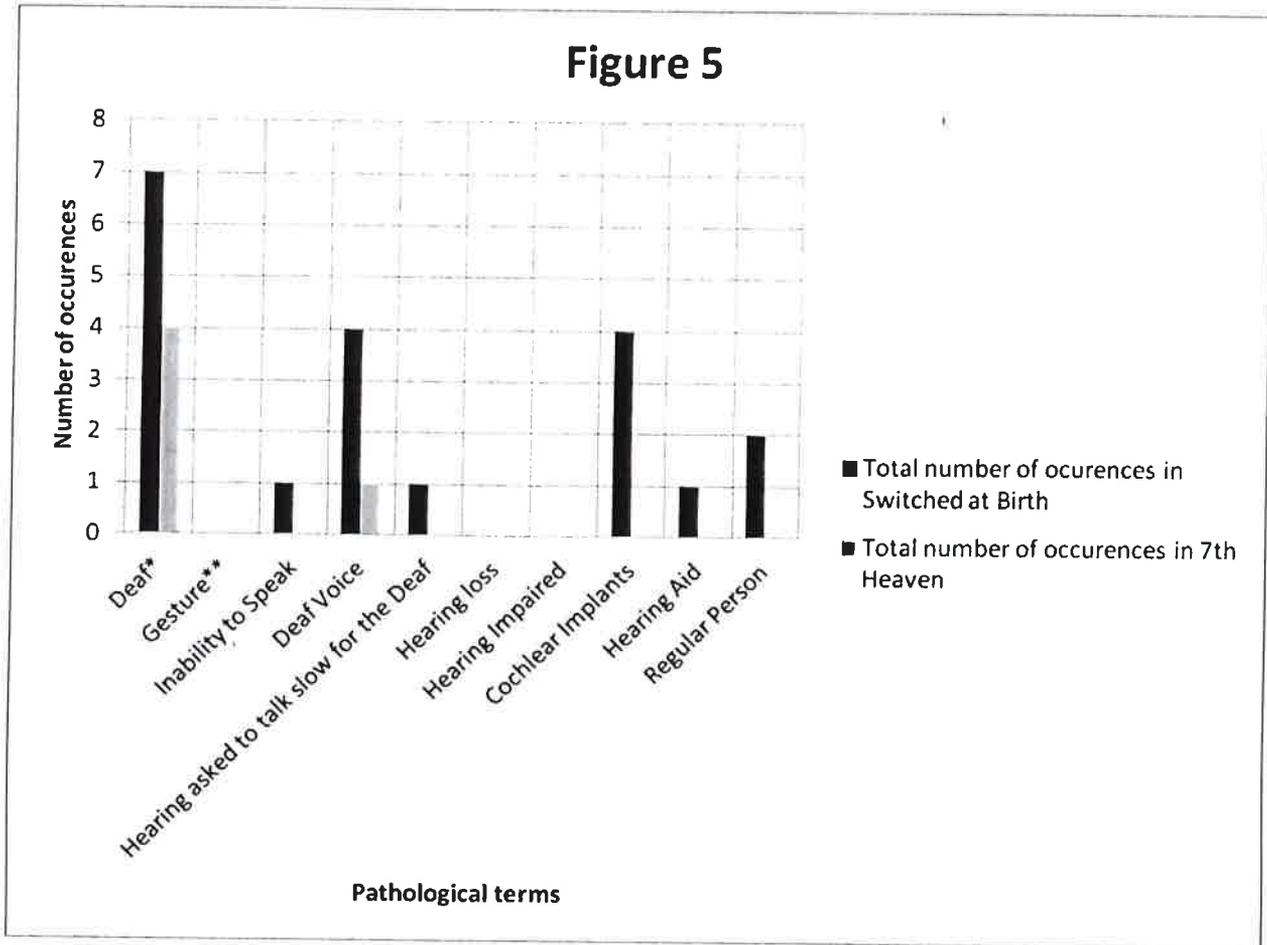


Figure 5 is a graph showing a comparison of the total number of times pathological terms appear in the Switched at Birth and 7th Heaven episodes.

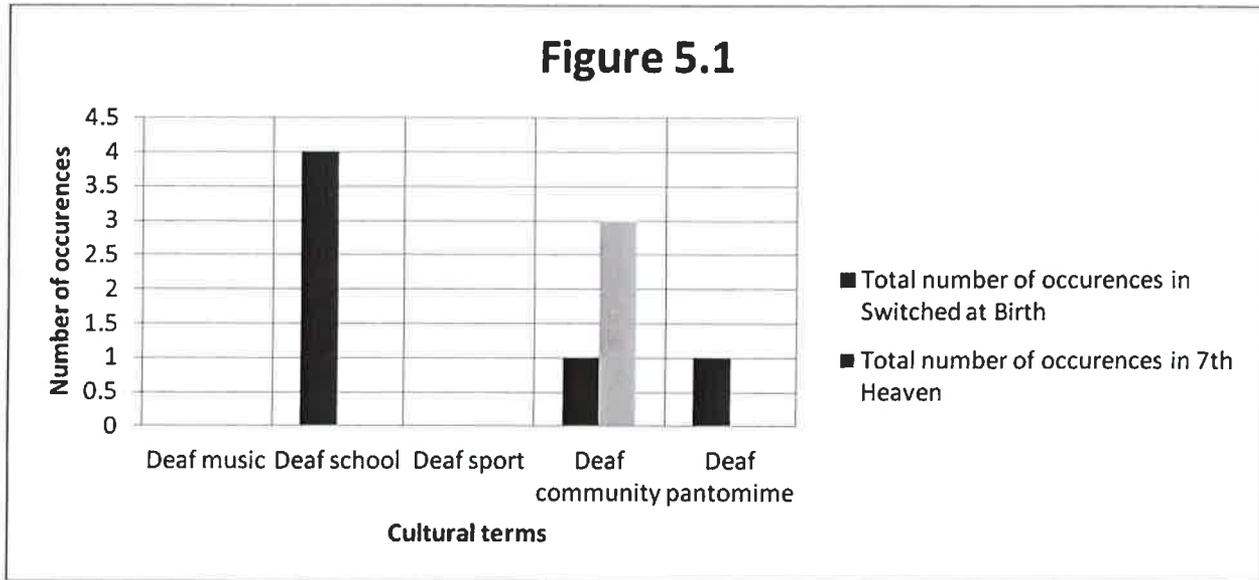


Figure 5.1 is a graph showing a comparison between the total number of occurrences of cultural terms used in Switched at Birth and 7th Heaven.

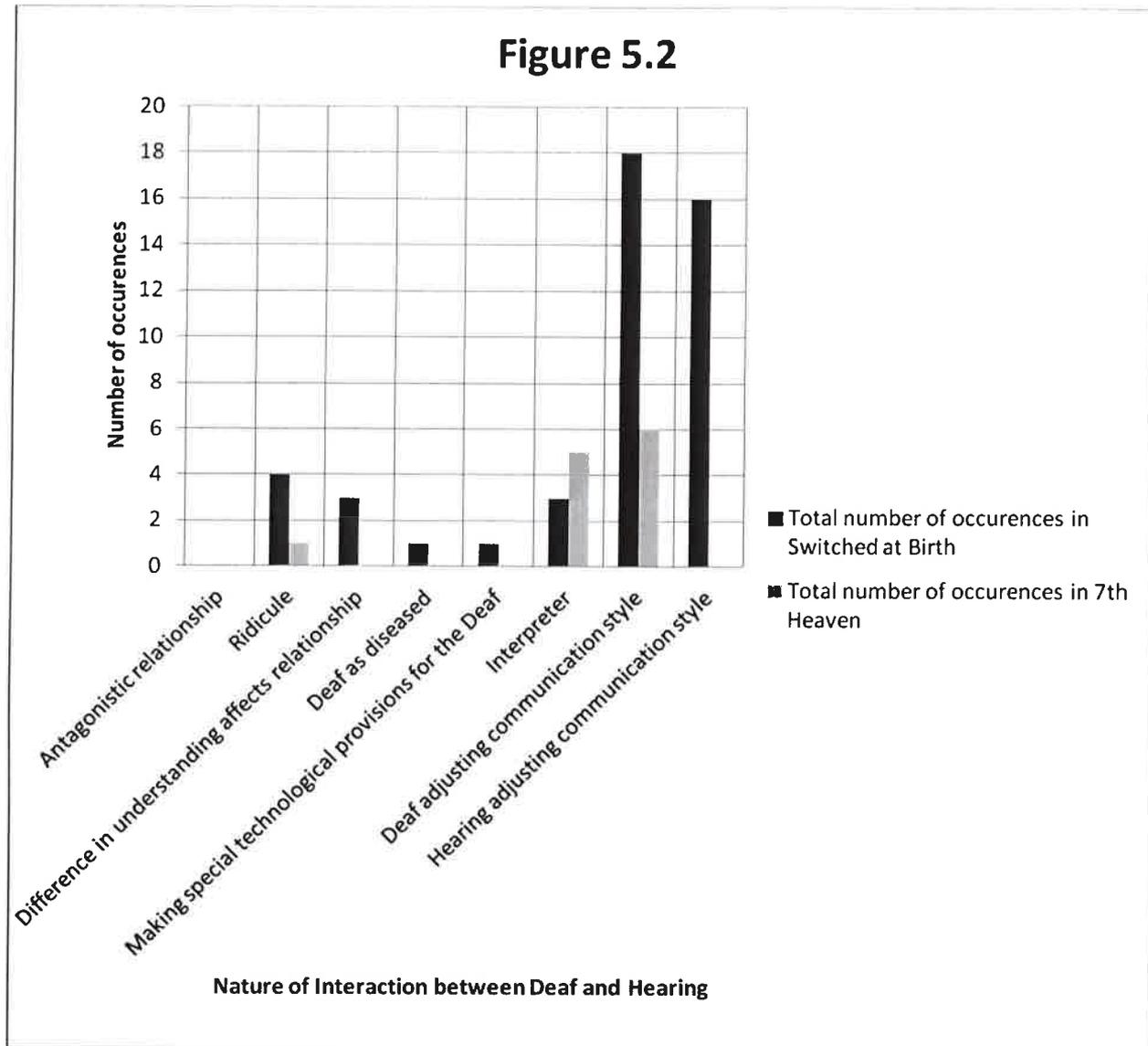


Figure 5.2 is a graph showing a comparison of the total frequency of the different types of interaction between Deaf and hearing characters as seen in the Switched at Birth and 7th Heaven episodes.

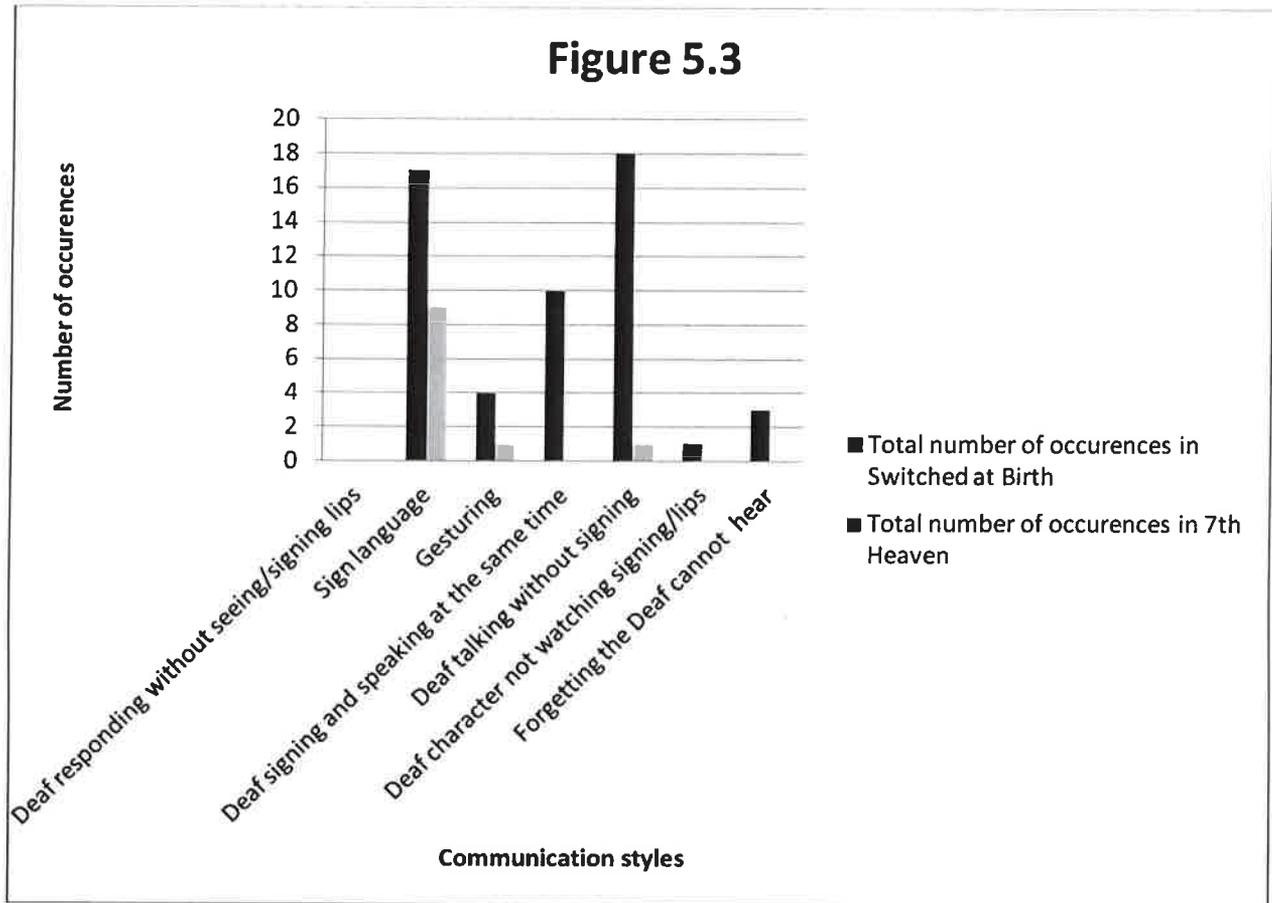


Figure 5.3 is a graph showing a comparison of the total frequency of communication styles as seen in the Switched at Birth and 7th Heaven episodes.

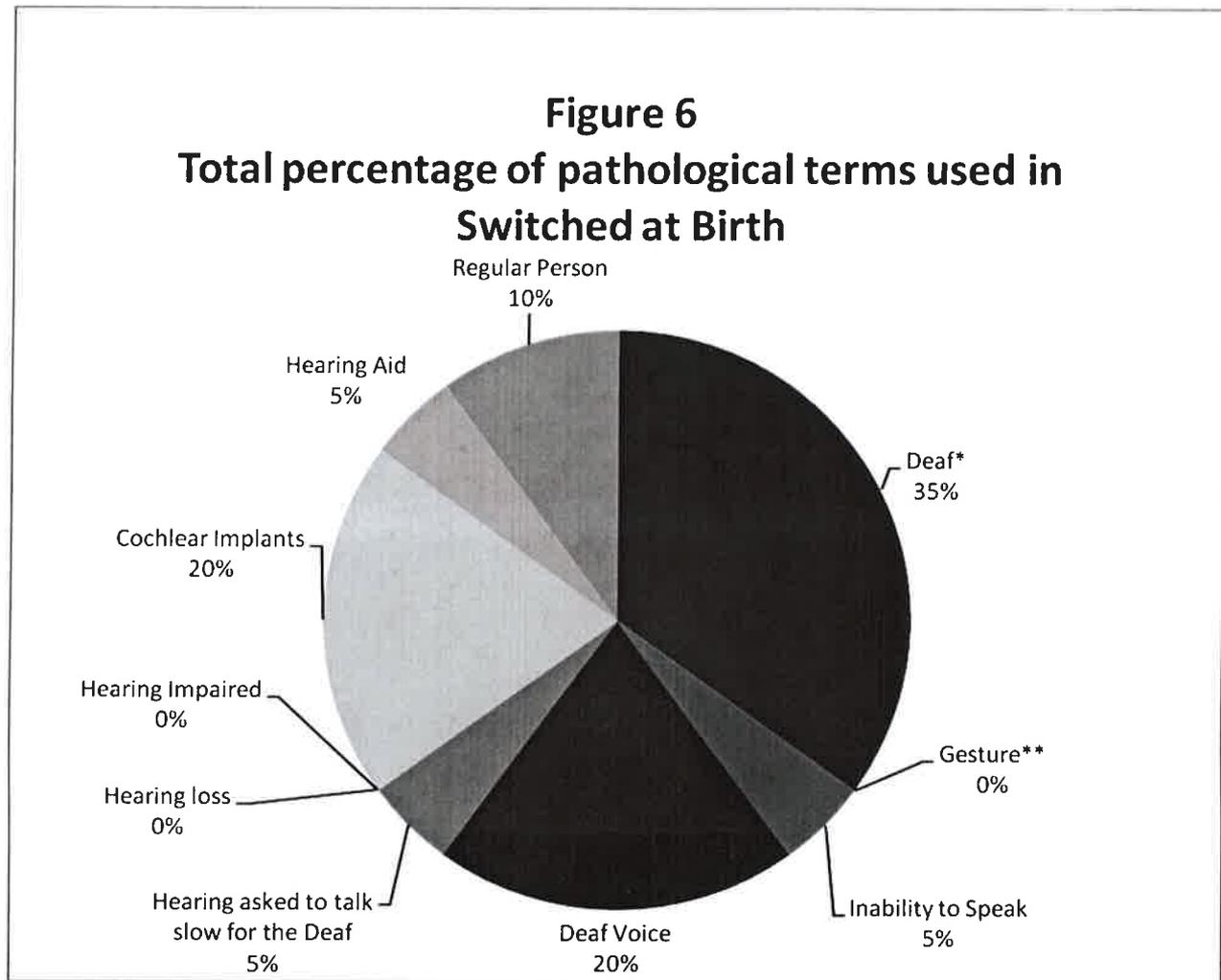


Figure 6 is a pie chart showing the percentages of “Pathological terms” used in both episodes of Switched at Birth

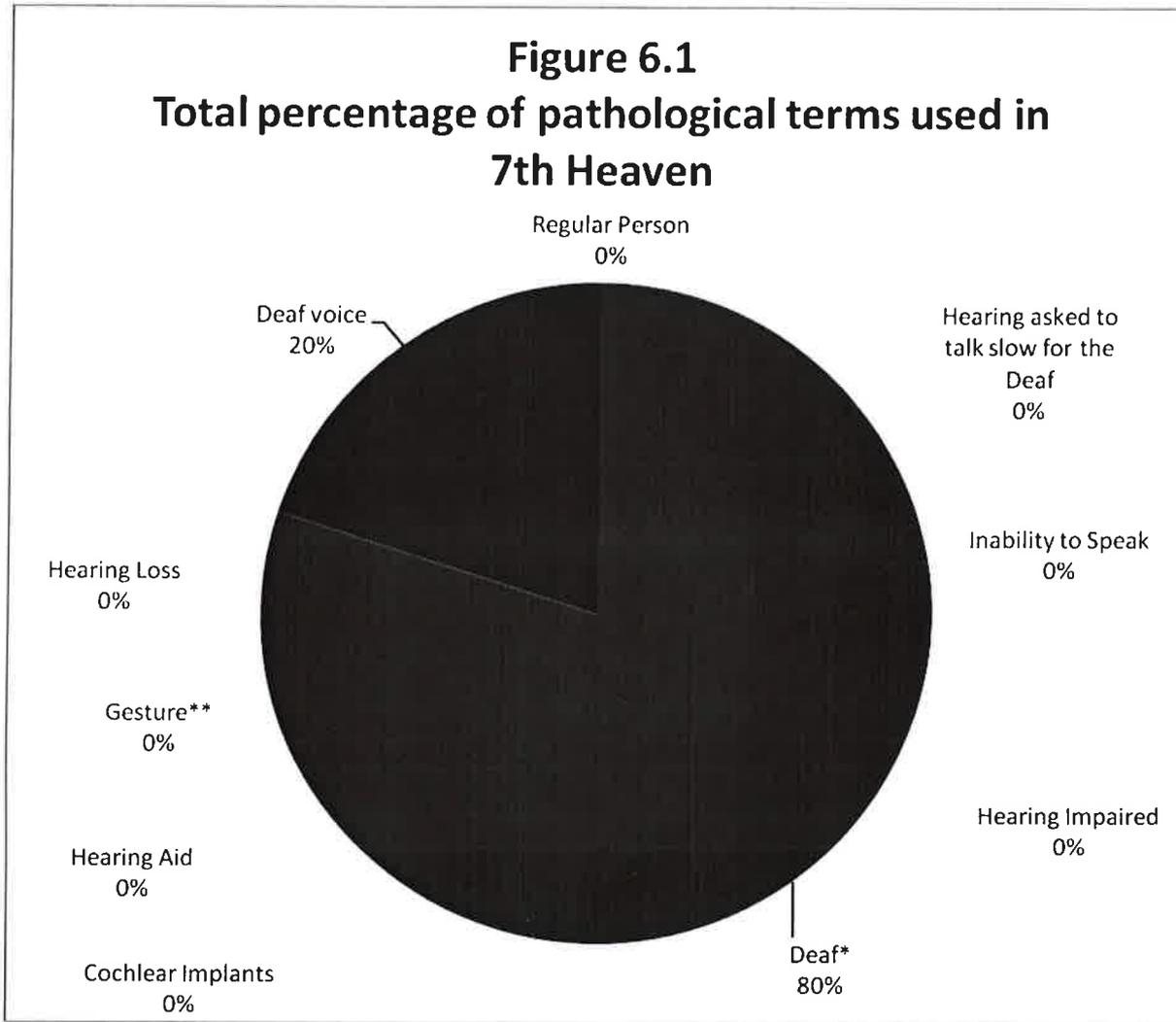


Figure 6.1 is a pie chart showing the percentages of “Pathological terms” used in both episodes of 7th Heaven.

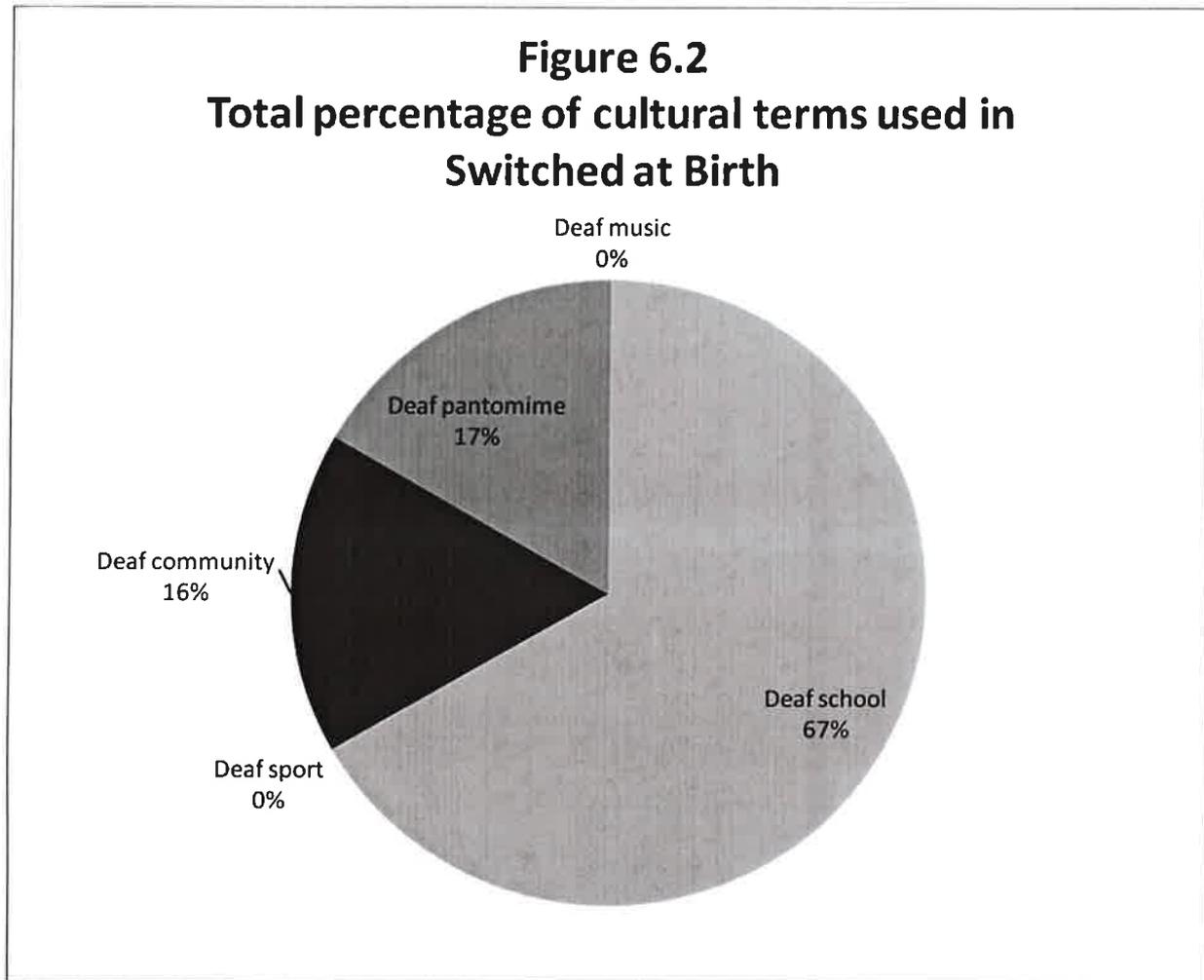


Figure 6.2 is a pie graph showing the percentages of “Cultural terms” used in both episodes of Switched at Birth

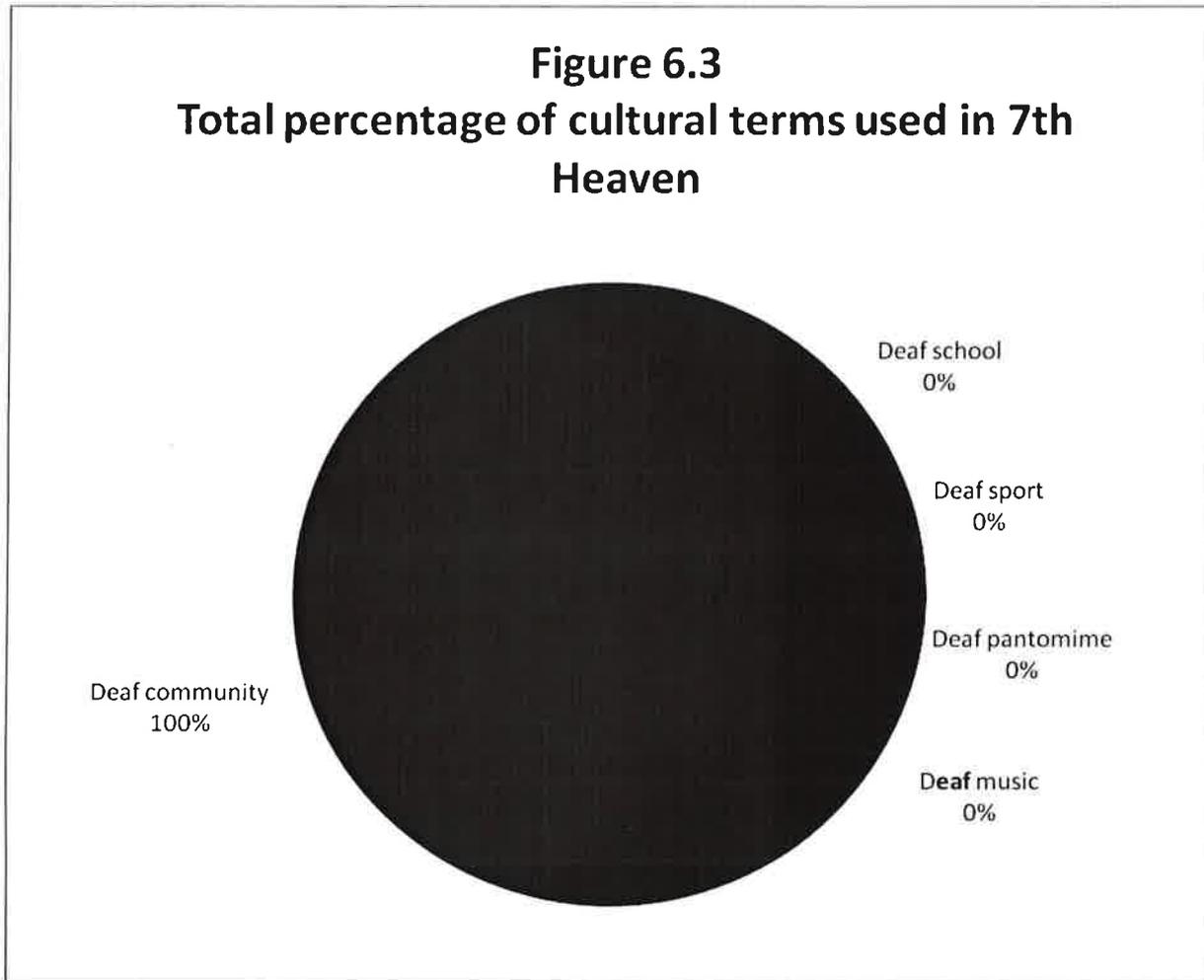


Figure 6.3 is a pie graph showing the percentages of “Cultural terms used in 7th Heaven

Chapter Five

Discussion

It is exceedingly consequential for the media and other institutions to provide society with representations of not only individuals from its dominant groups but also minorities. The repercussions of not doing this are as far reaching. A consequence of which often time results in the minority group, in this instance the Deaf, being marginalised, re-presented, and seemingly subjected. This is seen particularly through the media and other socialising agents dispersing epistemologies fraught with pathologically moulded discourses of Deafness. Having said that one can purport that the preceding is seen abundantly in the study's findings as it relates not only to the interviews but also data from the content analysis.

Coding

The findings of the present study reveal that the shows *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven* glaringly portray Deaf and Deaf culture from that pathological/ medical standpoint of Deafness more than it does present it from the cultural perspective. This is exceptionally clear through the use of varying pathological terms of Deafness. In *Switched at Birth* episodes 2 and 6, the term deaf in the pathological denotation of the word recurs 4 and 3 times respectively. This coincides with the repetition of cochlear implants which appears 4 times in episode 6 of *Switched at Birth*. These numerous manifestations of these pathological terms speaks to the gatekeepers of *Switched at Birth* engaging in agenda-setting where it is encouraging viewers to excogitate upon issues of deafness in a way that the Deaf and Deaf culture are re-presented and not depicted in a favourable light. The allusions here are to the Deaf as handicapped, disabled and in need of a cure. The mention of cochlear implantation in particular insinuates this. In essence, the core of

the discourse on cochlear implantation aligns with the belief in oralism and the view that the Deaf should be transformed into regular persons. Deafness then is appraised as being an illness, Deaf culture in keeping with this line of thought is non-existent. The preceding can be extended to the analysis of *7th Heaven* principally as it relates to the depiction of the Deaf from the medical model of Deafness.

In *7th Heaven* however the pathological reference to deaf is reiterated twice in both episodes 22 and 23. In episode 23 however, there is the presence of deaf voice. Juxtaposed, the mention of the pathological term deaf and deaf voice speaks to Deafness as a disability. Deaf voice though, takes into account the Deaf adjusting the needs of the mainstream culture, where there is the desire to hear the Deaf speak. It is interesting to note however that the Deaf only gained presence in *7th Heaven* as a romantic interest where the Deaf character only appeared in a few scenes. The aforementioned, as it relates to both shows is in keeping with Debbie Golos (2010) when she purported that many of the proposals of the Deaf in the media have been negative. These findings are consistent with her study.

Additionally, in *Switched at Birth*, in episodes 2 and 6 there is the recurrence of Deaf school, a cultural aspect of Deaf culture. In episodes 6 however, other cultural aspects present were Deaf pantomime, Deaf and Deaf community. On the other hand though there are three references to the Deaf community in a single episode of *7th Heaven*, episode 23. The references to these cultural elements though leave a lot to be desired. The reference to Deaf school, while it does show a space geared specifically for the development of the Deaf, a more suitable option would have been having the presence of Deaf residential schools. These schools aid in shaping factual epistemologies of Deafness, they further enrich Deaf culture and art. Comparing the current study to Golos's study while her study did not depict Deaf characters in a

Deaf community, the same cannot be said of the *shows Switched at Birth* nor can it be said of *7th Heaven*. Both shows depicted characters within the Deaf community. Having these cultural aspects of Deafness can do what Golos and Moses accredits media with; which is the influencing and shaping of how viewers perceive people from cultures different from their own (2011).

A possible elucidation for there being a greater presence of pathological over cultural perspectives of Deafness goes back to views of the proponents of the Standpoint and Muted Group theories. One can purport a reason for the aforesaid can be largely due to the view Standpoint theorist hold that there is a dissimilarity of power between groups and with this persons at the top of the social hierarchy define what it means to be Deaf/deaf. This is essentially the gatekeepers of media products, in particular these shows defining and creating epistemologies of deafness, which will ultimately create ways of understanding what it means to be Deaf and how society understands it. With the predominantly hearing being gatekeepers of these shows it means that the Deaf according to Kramarae have little power to add cultural discourses of Deafness.

In continuation, the study unmasked that the pathological and cultural models of Deafness further shaped the way Deaf and hearing characters interacted on the shows. Predominant in the *Switched at Birth* episodes were the Deaf and hearing characters adjusting their communication styles to each other. For both episodes of *Switched at Birth* the Deaf adjusted communication styles 9 times, in episode 2 however, the hearing adjusted 7 times as opposed to the 9 in episode 6. It is important to note however, for *Switched at Birth* approximately 80% of the times where the hearing adjusted communication styles to one suitable for the Deaf the Deaf character's mother was the one doing the adjusting. Noteworthy also is the presence of antagonistic relationships and deaf characters being ridiculed. In addition the absence of special

technological provisions for the Deaf must also be taken into account. In *7th Heaven* on the other hand, the hearing is seen to adjust communication styles for both episodes three times, there is somewhat of a variation when compared to Deaf adjusting where this is seen to occur twice in episode 22 and three times in episode 23. Addressing *Switched at Birth*, in particular the percentage in which the mother of the Deaf protagonist adjusted, one can infer that the gatekeepers are essentially enforcing the idea that one's immediate family, particularly one's mother, and not the wider community, is the person who ought to adjust oneself to their Deaf offspring. This bolsters to that end of the continuum that Patricia M. Chute, Mary Ellen Nevins (2002) notes as having "hearing people who know and care little about deafness because it does not directly affect their lives."

Additionally, this must be juxtaposed with the Deaf consistently adjusting to the hearing in all the episodes of both shows. The aforesaid alludes to the media reinforcing the idea that the Deaf should for the most part be the ones accommodating and adjusting to the hearing. The discourse on cochlear implants mentioned earlier, speaks to this. Cochlear implantation and hearing aids are used solely for the Deaf to adjust to hearing ideals. At the core of this dialogue is "the hearing community's view of implantation as a necessary tool for Deaf children" and one can extend this to Deaf adults as well (2002). Drawing on theoretical foundations, Standpoint theory gains relevance here in its assertion that people at the top of the societal hierarchy are in essence the ones with the opportunity and means to define what it means to be anything in varying cultures. The producers of these shows then through their portrayal of Deaf and hearing interactions present the viewership with their perception of how they conceive the hearing and Deaf should interact.

In continuation, the findings reveal the use of a range of communication styles in the two shows, but more so in *Switched at Birth*. In the latter, sign language recurred ten times in episode 2, and seven times in episode 6. Of import also is the presence of the Deaf speaking without signing appearing ten times in *Switched at Birth* episode 2 and eight times in episode 6. In *7th Heaven* on the other hand, sign language appears six times in episode 23 and three times in episode 22. In the previously mentioned episodes of *7th Heaven* there is the single appearance of the Deaf talking without signing, in episode 23. Focusing on *Switched at Birth*, one can propound that such emphasis on sign language refers to manualist methods of instruction. This essentially embraces Deafness and Deaf culture, it legitimises it. It is in keeping with what Charrow and Wilbur (1975) states when they note Deafness and being Deaf is not a disability but rather allows access to a Deaf community with a vibrant subculture similar to linguistic minorities. Similarly Dolnick notes that access to this community allows for the Deaf to be seen as “simply a linguistic minority and are no more in need of a cure for their condition than are Haitians or Hispanics” (1993).

On the other hand, the underscoring of the Deaf vocalising advances the ongoing dialogue on oralism where Deaf culture is not recognised as a culture but as a medical condition to be cured of. Taking the aforesaid into account, it can be asserted that there are principally two contradicting epistemologies as it relates to the ways the Deaf should communicate. Returning to *7th Heaven*, one can postulate the same standpoint for sign language in that Deaf culture gains validation. This is particularly so when one takes Kannapell postulation “to reject ASL is to reject the Deaf person” into account (1989). Additionally, the coded episodes of *7th Heaven* were relatively bereft of the Deaf vocalising without signing. In comparison to *Switched at Birth*, *7th Heaven* appears to have greater focus on manualist epistemes. However, *Switched at*

Birth displays a thriving Deaf culture throughout the episodes coded while *7th Heaven* only shows aspects of Deaf culture because the Deaf character was there for a romantic interest.

In her elucidation on Muted Group Theory, Kramarae, notes the inability of languages in varying cultures to serve speakers equally. This emerges greatly in the shows coded. This is notably so in that oralism allows for a hearing dominated culture to flourish, as it relates to the overall development of the hearing person. However, oralism does not do the same for the Deaf person. Manualism works in this regard, fostering the growth of Deaf culture. Totalled, there is the predominance of oralism over manualism in *Switched at Birth*, however, the opposite occurs in *7th Heaven*. Taking into account *Switched at Birth* and the dominance of oralism, one can attribute this to the standpoint of the gatekeepers of the show.

The preceding sets the foundation for questions of power struggles within the context of *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven* as well as beyond to wider society. Manualism and oralism speak greatly to the language system. Language bestows power to create, it allows for continuity of a culture as well as the shaping of knowledge. The power inherent in language allows for discourse formation and the eventual shaping of epistemic foundations. The dominance of oralist ways of instruction, bent on lip reading, Deaf vocalising and the overall activism for making the Deaf as close to the hearing as possible, in *Switched at Birth*, speaks to the gatekeepers engaging in agenda setting where there is shaping of viewers' perception and ultimately epistemologies, to one more in keeping with the tenets of oralism than manualism.

Interviews

Pervasive in the interviews were Sandra Harding's standpoint theory molded by the cultural as well as the pathological models of deafness. It is highly important to note however, amongst

most hearing participants, the predominant perspective shaping opinions is that of the pathological, medical model of deafness. Standpoint theorists rightly postulate that our vantage point within society gives direction to our perception of others in our social landscape. Thus, one's position and social standing determines one's beliefs and opinions. Harding postulates that oppressed minority groups in society generally have a more accurate view of the world than their mainstream privileged counterparts. This theory lends itself to be observed in the interviews conducted with both hearing and deaf participants, taking into consideration that the hearing participants are mainstreamed due to their ability to hear, and the deaf are a minority.

Samuel Jackson posits that being Deaf is "one of the most desperate of calamities" (1773). This statement epitomizes an extreme pathological view of deafness. It is important to note that some hearing participants interviewed while they may not have expressed pathological views so intently, their pathological thinking patterns were palpable in their dialogue. One hearing participant, *Juan speaking about Deafness and the Deaf noted "I don't want to call it a disability but it is considered a kind of disability. One of the things you don't want to do is stigmatize them or be kind of riff raff to their disability." Another hearing interviewee stated "When I think about Deaf is just people who were I guess in a disadvantage in terms of not having the ability to hear... And in terms of culture, it's actually the exact same culture we have but they just adjust to suit for them in terms of their disabilities." These interviewees presented the idea that something is inherently wrong with the Deaf. These findings indicate the participants' perception of the Deaf is coloured with a deep sense of pity. This is greatly in keeping with Jackson's postulation on Deafness being a calamity from which one must be shielded. Standpoint theory gains applicability here in that it shows that the dominant faction within society, the hearing, aids in the definition of Deafness and how it is seen by the wider society. It is consequential to note the

standpoint of one of the respondents, *Juan previously mentioned. *Juan is head of the news department of a prominent local television station, in essence a gatekeeper of local media. Having a gatekeeper whose perception of the Deaf takes on this pathological standpoint, points to media content that is released by his media house being coloured by these perceptions. A possible consequence of this is the views of the masses being shaped by such viewpoints thereby further contributing to the Deaf being muted.

In her study, Golos (2010) noted the negative portrayals of the Deaf in the media. She asserted that the Deaf fell into the categories of dummies, perfect lipreaders or victims. According to participants, the Deaf in local media are also underrepresented and marginalized almost to the point of obliteration. One hearing interviewee commented “well I see on certain programmes, like where I work the programmes they do, they actually have someone there on a small box doing sign languages. And even on the news and stuff sometimes you see people doing the sign languages but that’s about it.” This underrepresentation has proven to be a disadvantage for some Deaf participants interviewed for this study. A longstanding Deaf member of the Deaf Organization of Trinidad and Tobago gave some background to interpreting in the local media stating “In the past, the first time they started it was when channel 2 was still around and they would give a 5 minute summary at the end of the news, very, very brief.” He goes on to note that “sometimes the person who was signing wasn’t so good, the preparations of the studio for signing wasn’t good, at times the person would be wearing a color not suitable for the background. The interpreter was sometimes not given the news before so the interpreter wasn’t able to prepare the vocabulary to match the situation, so it was a bit of a confusing thing. The caption used wasn’t so good, half the things would be cut out and others jumbled, and the important part the (news) interviews would be missed.” Most hearing interviewees agreed that

the local media under represents and does not accommodate Deaf audiences. It led to one hearing participant even postulating the Deaf "need a voice...they need a voice". Sandra Harding's standpoint theory is then contradicted here, as from differing vantage points; the same views arose for the issue of the Deaf representation in the local media.

Numerous studies cited depict the Deaf as being either showcased as dumb, perfect lip-readers or victims to be cured or in some other unfavourable light. According to deaf participants this viewpoint is somewhat accurate. One Deaf interviewee stated "Sometimes the Deaf person in the show they look like a hearing person and they just use them for a plot, for example, (a movie featuring) Marlene Martin I looked at the show and I thought it was good when I was younger, but when I got older and I looked at it again I found that they were using her, she was not an independent Deaf actress. Hearing people would think it is a good thing but not Deaf people." Added to this, he goes on to say "they would use deaf people as a romantic interest and they enter a relationship faster than a hearing person would but in general hearing persons use the Deaf persons in the movie. They don't put them in a positive light." His point about utilizing Deaf persons as simply a romantic interest is evidenced in *7th Heaven*. In both episodes coded, the character Heather can be observed to be a minor character with a limited connection to the major plot. She exists for Matt's romantic enjoyment, his enjoyment with a 'unique' twist, this twist being her deafness.

Another Deaf participant stated that he might "be interested in movies (with Deaf characters) but they sign differently, they sign really fast and they don't concentrate on the Deaf persons as much as the hearing persons (in shows), they just show them for a short time signing and then that's it". However, he optimistically added that "he's happy to see Deaf people in movies and if they are using sign language even better". Based on interviews with Deaf participants, it is

evident that there is the desire to see the Deaf in the media in a positive light, not presented stereotypically or underrepresented. Also, one can infer from interviews with hearing participants, although they may hold pathological views of Deafness, they too express a desire to see more of the Deaf in the mass media. When asked if anything can be done to improve Deaf representation in the media, one hearing participant asserted “something can be done, I can’t think of anything right now but I know something can be done, they just not pushing it enough.” Although she never specified who “they” are, it is possible that the “they” are the mainstream hearing media gatekeepers.

Based on the preceding, one can posit that that a percentage of the hearing population is cognizant of the Deaf being muted and without a voice to shape epistemologies, which Margery Miller notes as being highly consequential in shaping realities. However, while this is so, there is great unawareness of how to go about changing this. This can be attributed to Kramarae's theory as it relates to the Deaf being unable to fashion the changes needed. Not only this, but also because there is a stark division between Deaf and hearing in Trinidadian society. The standpoint of individuals within society is a great hindrance to there being ways of paving a pathway to herald positive change in Deaf representation.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

This research paper has demonstrated how Deaf culture is portrayed in the media through a content analysis of two television shows. The topic is; a critical analysis of the representation of Deaf culture on the television shows *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven*. The research objective was to critically examine the representation of Deaf culture on these television shows. The goal for this study was to carefully and constructively observe how Deaf culture, as a minority culture that differs vastly from mainstream culture is depicted on *Switched at Birth* and *7th Heaven*. Utilizing a study conducted by researcher, Debbie B. Golos, this paper has somewhat modelled her approach in observing how the deaf are generally perceived in the media.

In order to add to the body of knowledge concerning the topic Deaf culture and the media, data for this research has thus been obtained via both primary and secondary research. Interviews were used as a primary source in order to build a valid foundation of information in relation to the perspectives on Deaf and Deaf culture. Interviews therefore allowed insight into the minds and perceptions held by both hearing and Deaf persons. In addition, content analysis was used in order to further scrutinize and identify the various aspects of Deaf culture. Secondary sources were achieved through intensive readings and analyses of literature already published on the topic and were used to guide the study as well as augment and support data discovered. Use of both forms of research served to ensure the validity of the findings and enhance understanding of the overarching theme of Deaf culture and the media.

It was thus found that there exists varying factors that come into play when considering the way that Deaf characters and Deaf culture is portrayed, represented and reproduced in the media. It can be assumed that through the supremacy of the media's gate keepers, depictions of Deaf persons are somewhat tailored in such a way as to compliment dominant ideologies. It can also be assumed that the media represents some aspects of Deaf culture but in other areas Deaf characters are portrayed from a pathological standpoint and are mere 'distractions' to the plot. One therefore cannot identify for certain that the depictions of Deaf characters in both shows are negative nor positive, inaccurate nor accurate. Instead, this study presents the view that beyond literature about the topic and the findings of this research, there still lies much to be explored.

Ethics

A human activity as research is one that warrants a tremendous amount of ethical considerations, primarily because research tends to intrude into the lives of the participants. This is even more so in this study as a consequence of the research surrounding a minority group.

Noting the delicate nature of the research, of utmost import in undergoing this thesis was obtaining ethical approval for the thesis topic from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine's Ethics Committee. Having done this, approval is currently being sought from the Faculty of Medical Sciences. However, until approval is granted consent forms to participate in the research which protect the rights of the individuals in the study will be utilised. Ethics in this study of Deaf culture and the media proves to be twofold; it centres around the participants of the study as well as the researchers.

In relation to the research participants measures will be undertaken to ensure participants are treated right. The aforementioned will be done by providing the participants with free

choice, protecting their rights to privacy, ensuring that the research benefits and not harm them and also by treating them with respect.

Research participants in the study will all be provided with free choice. This will be done by the researchers refraining from coercing individuals to contribute to the investigation. Ensuring free choice will be done by providing voluntary informed consent where research participants will be voluntarily agree to be involved in the study upon being thoroughly briefed about the enquiry. Additionally included in the consent document is that the participants can withdraw from the research at any time. The preceding will all be undertaken prior to the participants being interviewed.

In addition to ensuring participants rights are protected by making provisions for free choice, participants' rights to privacy will also be shielded. Information obtained will not be used to infringe on the privacy of respondents. Rather, their privacy will be safeguarded by honouring an oath to participants of confidentiality and anonymity which the researchers as well as the interpreter will sign. Given that one of the research methods being utilised in the study is that of interviews, names will be omitted or disguised through the use of pseudonyms. Added to the preceding, participants' privacy will also be safeguarded by ensuring the data acquired is always protected to preclude accidental disclosure which breaches the terms of the oath undertaken. Noting the aforesaid, one must propound that research participants do not always request to have anonymity/confidentiality. In such cases, if they do arise, researchers will use the names of the participants.

Recommendations

This study aims at not only reaching scholars, but also general practitioners and the general public. Practical application of this study, regarding Deaf Culture and the relationship with the hearing community is needed. The main purpose of this is to improve the understanding of the Deaf community and culture and work towards the accurate representation of the Deaf and Deaf Culture into society, to eliminate negative portrayals. What can be deduced from this study is that the Deaf wishes to be recognised as a legitimate culture in itself and not be obliterated within mainstream society.

Taking the findings of the study into consideration one must assert the need for advocacy for the Deaf as a linguistic minority within society. This will be aided by raising awareness of signed language, in particular the Trinidad and Tobago Sign Language (TTSL). Such awareness will allow for the community to be aware of the Deaf and Deaf culture and to further aid in shaping accurate epistemologies about Deafness which will in turn herald positive change.

Additionally, to push such change into the larger spheres, the Ministry of Education and larger bodies such as the United Nations ought to be provided with the information and statistics to show the reason for sign language being included in the school curriculum.

At the core of the preceding recommendations is the drive to challenge the epistemic foundations of discourses and dialogues of Deafness as they are known. The Ministry of Education, addressing the education system becomes highly efficacious to heralding such change. Alongside this though, access to Deaf culture has to be achieved in order to obtain factual knowledge to aid in new discourse formation.

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Appendices

TRANSCRIPTION FOR OLIVIA

Interview was conducted on Thursday 8th March, 2012 at 6pm

Olivia is talking about an incident between a Deaf gentleman, and a couple young boys at a cycling event. The Deaf gentleman and the boys had an altercation with regards to the Deaf person trying to communicate to the young boys that he found one of their mother 'to be attractive...

“So he [Deaf man] was making gestures and communicating with the “hearing” children... maybe from ten to about fourteen or fifteen... but the eldest is the one [whose] mother he [the Deaf gentleman] say[s] he likes so he’s [referring to Deaf man], (Olivia makes hugging gestures to show how the Deaf gentleman made gestures) and making gestures... so you understand that?”

“OK... so after, I’m there... he come and talking to me... he ask [me] if she... (Olivia whispers “Is she married? Is she married?” and does the sign for married)... hear me “yes!” and I say “her husband big!” (Laughing)... so that did not bother him... he went... (Olivia makes more gestures suggesting what the Deaf man did to show that he was attracted to the boy’s mother)... I was like “okay!”... “I tell [you] the husband big and he [is] tall!”... [And] so he [referring to the Deaf gentleman] tells me, “that ain’t nothing” and [that] he will carry her [mother of the boy] home and I say “And the husband will follow yuh!”... And I am signing that to him!”

“So apparently he told the child the same thing... and they interpret it totally different... they interpret it as... I was not there to see exactly what he gestured to them but then they... well the little one... [it] was two brothers... the little one went and tell the big brother [that] he say that he [the Deaf man] wants to carry the mommy home and what he will do with mommy on the bed.. so I am like... I ask him “How did you get to that? Because I want to know how you understood all of that when he’s not speaking [in] full sentence[s]?”... Nobody could answer.”

“So the older brother now comes and going up to him (confronting him)... now this is a deaf person! So obviously my pores raised, anger flare up, tension rose, and my mouth open wide! I was like “Don’t be stupid! He don’t know nothing you saying... so what the hell! If you want to tell him something tell me and I will tell him!”

“So in that process the mother and father see me getting on with him like that, and obviously I didn’t say it soft... so he just moved from him and he went...I was like “that’s

advantage!”... because all the time now I am hearing him talking to his friends saying oh he will hold him, and he will slap him and thing... I am like “this is a grown man! He older than me... because his frame is small and whatever... he is still flipping older than me... so if you could have respect for me... you have to have respect for him”... So I’m telling him that... I say “you can’t be going and talking and pointing up your hand in a big man face like that because you taller than him”

“So I was so mad the whole time... So I went and tell the coach... the coach then said to me...he heard the boys talking saying that the [Deaf] guy told him he want to carry his mother home, and what they will do in the bed so I said “What did he say? Because he can’t give you a full sentence, so how can you say that? What did he say to you? What gesture did he make?”

“So the mother now comes across to tell me a [that] a couple years ago, because he apparently comes to the velodrome often, he came to him and embraced him in this way...that she find was so...ugh! I said hear this “utter foolishness!”. I said “Listen, if you take the time to understand Deaf culture you will know...when a Deaf person have a friend as a hearing person they have a friend for life in that Deaf person and the Deaf person will automatically think “OK if you have a friend... I am your friend for life..you are my friend for life”.

“Now we do not think like that, but that is how they think... so every time you see a Deaf person that’s how they greet you...they embrace you..and they don’t embrace you in this kinda “oh gosh I really don’t want to do it’...you actually feel something...and its not to say its any kind of thing in it but our mind...not knowing their culture... that is how we will think...because sometimes be like... “oh gosh you had to squeeze me because my breasts rubbing up on them” (laughter) Yes! Again, I understand this is how they do it so... *that’s how they do it*...but because again...and I explained that to her...I said he didn't mean anything by it...*oh the boys were offended*... so she take that from way back when and bring it out now...and disclosing it...”

Olivia sighs and continues.

“I was like yea...but that’s not the way...that is a grown man... i think he is about 37 or 38 years...I said because he is short does not mean that it is right for them (young boys) to behave like that ...and he have a problem why it is he didn’t come and tell you? I say but... I say to myself... I say the boy is a JA ...I say because if I feeling threatened because a deaf boy want to carry my mother home ...i have to be worried about that? My mother really going home with this deaf boy? And my father better looking than the deaf boy? taller..everything! He isn’t working no where...but my mother... and I have to defend my mother so much...people eh? but i said again...its children...and they did not understand...”

Olivia immediately changes tones becoming more annoyed.

“But... the boy going flipping prestige school... at least at some point in time common sense supposed to... “

*Olivia grunts followed by a long sigh...
She continues to speak*

“But again because I understand their (Deaf) culture... that’s why I was so pissed off... and I appreciate you all taking the time...well not you (*Olivia points to Robyn*)...but you taking the time to get to know about deaf persons”

“I’m sorry if I had remembered, I would have told Gideon (a Deaf gentleman) to come”

NB Gideon is Olivia’s Deaf friend. He reads and writes. She says that he is very accommodating towards her. She says that she knows Gideon’s signs, and that he understands that sometimes she forgets signs and he finger spells and allows her finger spelling .

Olivia stated that Gideon reads expressions quickly, and that he notices when she does not understand a sign. Olivia mentioned that she interacts with other Deaf persons, particular a Deaf teen aged girl, who keeps her abreast on whats happening in the Deaf community. She signs to her but she said that the Deaf girl also reads lips, whereas she would have to sign with Gideon. Olivia expressed that if she does not sign she tends to forget, and needs to stay activate in the Deaf community because if she does not use sign language, she will lose it.

Olivia goes on to talk about the Deaf teen aged girl who is a club cyclist. This is what she says in relation to the Deaf girl’s interaction with the cycling club, and cycling organization.

“The thing is... they still treat her badly... because from going to the interpreters workshop and thing ...I remember that if you have a Deaf person in your midst...automatically if something [is] going on...you have to let them know what is going on..and they don’t let them know...so during race they will be calling out...whatever...whatever...and they will be making announcements for whatever...and nobody will interpret for her...and I look at that...from her own club..people in her own club...nobody interprets for her..they just tell her when is her time to get ready for her race, and that is it”

“yea... it is sad... I looked at that and I’m like (*Olivia gasps*) “this is actually going on?”. So when she is next to me and any announcements going on...I will try... trrrr-yyy...(*Olivia stresses on the word “try” as she does the sign for “try”*)... to interpret for her...as much as I could. Which is..I just give her the gist...”

Question - any provisions made for the Deaf in T+T?

Olivia responds

“No. no. no...they only focus on people with physical disabilities...so you see like these people in wheelchairs...all of a sudden there was this.. ramp...this Daniel guy... what was this Daniel guy name? George Daniel made the bus accessible...made the pavement accessible...but these people...look one of them wanted me to come and interpret for them...they were having something in the court...domestic between the husband and the wife...the wife deaf, the husband deaf....and she want me to interpret...you know obviously I start to say “no not me”...because to me ...I am not qualified... I am no where close to interpreting...I understand what they’re saying...[but] sometimes I miss out a big junk of what they’re saying...because of I guess common sense...common sense... you can pick up from what they’re saying...and understand but half the things they’re saying..sometimes they sign too fast, and I miss that or if they’re [finger] spelling...they spell too fast and I miss that and I’m like “OK...blank! yes ok...blank..blank..ok fine...and I’m like “OK yea... yea I understand” and that time you know...which I'm not supposed to do eh...but because I...I...I signing so long...it kind of bad...but the thing is...now is to balance my time with their time (referring to her children as she points to them)...which is the hard thing...I don’t have time... (*Olivia points out under her breath ‘anymore’*) so when I get to talk to the girl (the Deaf cyclist) there...I capitalise on that...so once ever so often...”

“No I practise..I try to practice with these numb skulls I have here (referring to her children)...I have to call them numb skulls because...one skull numb-er than the other...and you know why...and you will think...its the brighter one numb-er than the...the...not so bright one...OK you know what I'm talking about...”

“Brandon (*Olivia’s son*) doesn’t retain anything...OK i will tell him...he will ask me to translate what he...sign what he is she saying to the girl...and I’ll be like “No, you know!” he knows not as much as I know but he knows enough to make a\you a sentence and if [he] doesn’t know a word...[finger] spell! but he doesn't’ even make an effort...so that’s the lazy one...”

“This one (*Olivia points to her daughter*)..she will finger spell a whole sentence for you...and not pause so you know if its the longest word...what’s the longest word in the dictionary? that long word...that’s what she does to you and it gets me vex so I’ll be like “talk!”...that’s how we started with the Spanish one day...Spanish for an hour in the house...but if we do not know Spanish...you cannot speak Spanish right? (Laughter), and then we sign for an hour but that didn't work because if one finger spelling the whole...you cannot spell...could you finger spell all of this? well right! so she trying to finger spell a whole conversation...and I’ll be like “what?” and no pause in between so you’ll know OK “well this is one word, this is another or what”...and I am like “what?”...”

Question : any provisions made for the Deaf?

“No... well actually...they are trying now to have interpreters available in the secondary

schools”

Shemellia : Really? With that now are they going to bring in sign language classes?

Olivia responds:

“Well...they should...it makes sense ent?”

Shemellia : What are they going to interpret?

Olivia responds:

“The classes I don’t know if its one...one interpreter per child or what...I don’t know.. but the same girl (Deaf cyclist) she goes to El Dorado...I can’t remember which one...and she says that she has an interpreter...I was like “you dont think it would have been easier to just have a teacher who knows sign language?”

Shemellia: Well yeah...but with our government?

Olivia responds:

“Thats how we lack! One time, Damian (*Olivia’s husband*) was telling me when he was working St. Clair, a Deaf man came to make a report and nobody was able to take the report. With the little sign language that he (*Damian*) knew..which was the alphabet...I think he got the man’s name and whatever was wrong...”

(Long pause)

Olivia continues:

“Which is horrible...So i was saying in every Government institution or any place..the hospital and all don’t even have things for Deaf people... nothing... if you go...there are...some are way more...how they have ...not precautions ... but measures for them..you see lights... so if you know its like ...by the fire alarm...if it is it have a light...if it don’t have a light...they not doing anything...because remember Deaf people don’t speak, they dont’ hear but they see a lot so...if you see everybody running and they just sitting down there....

Olivia talking about her experience working at Deaf pioneers office, after Shemellia pointed out that at Niobe’s office (Deaf interpreter) there were flashing lights on the bells.

Olivia responds:

Well that’s understanding. The lights..they have a bell...because they.. to me, I find that it

wasn't safe on St. Joseph street there..... where the maxis stop right there...there are vagrants...there are these people looking like they coming to rob you...and then its one way in...one way out...and if I'm there by myself, and I'm seeing all these characters... I say "Hell no...all yuh not leaving me inside there but I'm running to the back of the toilet....the toilet have a thing you can jump over... (Laughter) but they have a glass door locked now so you have to pretend...pretending...oh! I mastered that skill...that's one thing you learn...how to play Deaf (Laughter) so while they'll be knocking on the door... I will be like doing my work...because I already see this shadow coming...and I'm looking to see...but I'm looking under my eyelashes to see to try and scope yuh [out]..."

"I learnt that...I had when I was doing intermediate sign language...I had to pretend I was deaf for an hour...and I really ask myself how do they...get by...*how do they get by? ...*"

(Pause) Olivia continues:

"I dont know...but it was really hard...it was! you must try it..try it! The thing about it is...I could not do it where I was working because everybody there knew... and that would be...everybody there...because I'm accustom going in those stores...and those stores there were the only places that I had time...so i was like "OK fine...I dont have an hour but I'll use the time that I have,"

"I came down somewhere and I went and buy soup by bald head..by Sylvester's bar there...the soup man...so I'm asking him (*Olivia makes gestures as she did whilst pretending to be Deaf asking the vendor for soup, and the price of the soup*)...(*She shows us , the way she gestured to suggest money by dusting her thumb along her fingers*) he understand that right? Everybody know that sign...so then he point at the cup and he tell me...so I was like "Alright, he going good so far"..."so then after he turned around so I digging in my bag...this huge bag for the money...and trying to figure out what I doing...he (vendor) gone telling "She dumb...She dumb".

Now I am there trying not to laugh because I had to write exactly what happened so I'm trying not to laugh...and I just keep giggling and he's like "she pretty eh...but she dumb boi...oh gosh!" So i was like "Alright!" I pulled out my money and I pointed at the ..I think it was the 18 once (soup)... so he come and he watch and he see the 18 oncce because he have the prices outside...so I point at it..he went and he get it...he wipe it up clean and he (*Olivia nods and smiles to show the way the vendor proudly nod and smile*)... I don't know if they feel this is a good gesture ...so I say "Excuse?" and he's like (*Olivia imitates the vendor's shocked facial expression*)... (Laughter) I said "Yes I'm hearing, this is something I had to do to see what Deaf people go through" ... I said "But! They don't like to be called dumb"... I say "Dumb means stupid." I say "So if you say they Deaf! or they mute..." I say "then its suitable."

I say "and most of them could read lips! OK so if I was Deaf you would have just insulted me there because look at how you talking to him". So he was like "Or OK."

“ I was like...and that did not take an hour... that did not take an hour...so my assignment was less...because I really could not do it for an hour...I like to laugh...so it [was] really hard...it [was] very hard...”

“I thank God I can hear, I value my hearing, but sometimes I wish I don't hear “ (Laughter)

“Yes I wish I don't hear sometimes because people say things to you that...even if they don't say things...they say things without thinking...what they say, and its get meh vex because I still have to sit down and hear it...because if I didn't hear I would have been OK”

“I spend some years with them (Deaf persons)... I always tell people...you see Deaf friends...I prefer Deaf people..being around Deaf people...than hearing people....when you do not want to hear what they are saying..they just remove your hands like that and they turn their back.. They understand. Sometimes they don't take it as ...you see how we will take things..the mall things and be offended if somebody say something? they say some things and I'm like “for real? you just say that? and then I remember ...their culture and our culture different so what will bother..offend us...would not offend them...which is sweet”

“We ...if I say “Oh gosh, you know that look ugly on you”. You'll be like “Oh gosh!” But could it not be that if you wore different colours...it will make you look differently... but we take the smallest, little foolish things, and not say ok well everybody entitled to their opinion but that don't have to affect (offend) me”

“And that's one of the things that I learnt from them but to practice it is a little challenging”...really challenging but...”

Olivia speaking about sign language.

“Its something that I find that everybody should learn...at least to a level...because you know what? if you know the alphabet, and you know little, small words, you can carry own a conversation with a Deaf person. A deaf person who understands, who's around hearing people. Let me put it that way.”

“Gideon is one of the few (Deaf) people that understands that yes there are people who are willing to link the gap and he tries, he really tries,because trust me, he tells me I'm old because I'm always forgetting. He is older than I eh but he tells me that I'm old because I keep forgetting. He'll tell me the sign, and I'll say “I know the sign” but, you know those signs that I am not using often...I really would not remember... you see all those faces... oh my goodness..I forget all those physical gestures”

“Now mind you Deaf people, they're more [arrogant] I think than us you know. I saw some

Deaf people quarrelling, and I'm like (*Olivia gasps*) "What are those signs? They never showed me those signs!" (Laughter) and no matter how much I beg them, show me these signs"

Robyn : They would not show you?

Olivia responds :

"Nooooo. I met the good ones.. Well I met the bad ones...(Laughter)but it still have the bad ones who will show you "

Robyn : Is it that Deaf persons keep certain things to themselves?

Olivia responds

"They...they ...I guess they just like us in a sense. Some of them don't see the ... a hearing person trying to communicate with them..they....they have their little Deaf thing. I didn't understand that. It took me a little while before I understand and ...and saw the people who will talk..they will talk to you but...yet you know they would not be as open. You can actually...their emotion will be different..."

"But the ones who interact with hearing people, they're different. They get free...and get ...Deaf people just love to laugh! Love, love, love, love to laugh. That is why...we hear all the negative things, about our selves, and about life...and we're so [----] up tight."

"That's why I went and learn sign language you know? I was in the mall, long circular mall, in the food court and I saw a bunch of them there sitting down ...(*Olivia imitates the way the Deaf friends were laughing heartily*)...and they [were] laughing...and I...you know how when you get a good sweet joke...how you will laugh? Oh my goodness! Well some of them vocal...if you hear them laugh, you'll be like "What's going on over there?" because I was by myself eh...and I was like "These Deaf people are having more fun than me?"..."Hell no!" and thats' why I went, and learn sign language...because I wanted to Ma-co...(*Olivia and interviewers laugh*). And because of that one moment that made an impact on my life, I went and learn sign language...I do not remember their faces but I remember them .."

"And the thing is they hang out more than you and I eh!...They hang out more than you and I. ...I say "Look at that!" They know how to treat one another* "

THERE WAS A BREAK IN RECORDING

Olivia is however, still speaking about Deaf people and Deaf culture.

"They are always together...the...my...he's an interpreter...the guy who taught me intermediate sign language...he is also a teacher... and he... he...is into Deaf...really into it.

But he's an interpreter...he teaches I think Deaf children because he teaches in the school, somewhere down south...chaguan... somewhere down...somewhere down on that side...but during the class you know they tend to give you [an] idea of what the Deaf go through. One of the main things he said, there ..there are places that hire them, they hire them and hearing person, 'I' (hearing worker) get more money than the Deaf person...and we're (Deaf and hearing) doing the same thing eh but I'm (hearing) getting more money. I'm like "You for real?" But they, they don't have any voice, now they have a...the Interpreters Association but I don't know how..."

"I get caught up with this...having children really ties you up..(Olivia laughs). So when I'm supposed to be active with the Deaf, I get more active in Cycling, in Karate, and now cricket. No I not so much active in the cricket as yet, because he (*Olivia refers to her son*) never get to play a game yet but again..."

"Those are the things that I find...they need a voice! And what this Daniel man had at once for the people in wheel chairs that spoke out for them...Because I'm not active with them, I don't know what they're doing right now...but that was one of my main peeves... "*we're doing the same thing, and just because I'm Deaf, I am getting less than the person who's hearing?*" And I find that was ridiculous...really ridiculous."

Robyn : Why do you think they do that?

Olivia responds :

"I don't know...how do you? how do..that's it! you're not going to complain! You know why? You want the work. You need the money. You NEED the money. Who you going and tell? Really who you going and tell? You can't come and tell anybody because most of the time they don't have anybody to interpret for them. Most of the time its somebody who could vocal a little bit or read lips so they what is there instructions.

Shemellia : So they pay them below the minimum wage?

Olivia responds:

"I can't..that was a couple years ago so I wouldn't remember exactly but I know the difference between the hearing and the Deaf person (*Olivia is referring to the difference in the salary that they are paid*). And that same guy...he has is own...yeah... so he has his ...he have a day with Deaf people... Deaf...all the Deaf people come and meet every second Saturday...that would have been something nice for all yuh to go to as well.

"And they tend...they go to go to the mall. They go all over the place. They go through the newspaper...whatever interesting topic it have, and he tries to explain it to them. Once... at the point, Gayelle... use to see...they interpreting the news for them. Gayelle what? Close down now right? So who doing it? Any of the TV stations doing that? So unless..."

*Olivia and Shemellia goes on to discuss the fact that **some** local Government television programmes use interpreters to translate what is being discussed, and that the television station's logo often blocks the interpreter's signing.*

Olivia continues:

“Right and that was one thing they were complaining about in Gayelle. You're a Deaf person, you have to look at this little box way down here, and trying to sign.”

Shemellia tells Olivia about the suggestion given by one of our interviewees that the box with the news reporter should be made small and the box with the interpreter should be enlarged, made to be the bigger box.

Olivia agrees with Shemellia's statement and adds the following:

“Well that will make sense...and guess what if you do it like that, you know we as the nation would, we would be viewing the sign language more and then sometimes it will click because that is what I do. Because sometimes I forget a sign and only when I hear...”Orr that's what that sign was”..then I'm going to remember.”

“Right now we don't have much...I shouldn't say we don't have much but there aren't much Deaf adults with passes. they... they kinda making headway now. Deaf Pioneers... one time this girl...she did CXC and she got a [grade] ONE in English. I'm like “In English?” And I was like “My gosh...” They don't sign in English. That's one thing eh? I must tell you that. Deaf people don't sign in English so that was my thing, trying to understand how to break up the sentence so that they could understand it without signing in “English”. Again, the people who interact with hearing people, they understand English a little bit. So if I sign in “English” to them they'll understand what I'm saying but they don't sign in “English”. She get a ONE in English. And I was like, “And I went to school, I'm hearing and I did not get a ONE in English!” This is a Deaf person come and outshine me, and I was feeling really old. That was the girl...”

“Now it had a boy, he did English... he did maths when I was there and he got a DISTINCTION! And I was like, “What the jail? Two Deaf people come and outshine you! I say “Hell no!” So they tell me well come and teach the class. I'm like “What the hell all yuh talk...?” Anytime you say that word teach...if you come and tell me talk...I will talk...but don't come and tell me teach...you see that word teach? (*Olivia squeals*) I go crazy. .I will take but don't put me on the spot like that.”

“So those are Deaf people...they're really nice. Really really nice people... if you understand them. But I think... you know what? We hearing people don't even take we damn time to understand other hearing people. So how will we understand them?”

Question : When you think about Deaf and Deaf culture, what comes to mind?

Olivia responds:

“Oh gosh, they’re happy and they...they...even though they...the happiness that they have about themselves. They’re always together. They ...I don’t know. That’s what I try to be like you know. Even though we have friends, to me... they find I was everybody friend... it had some of them I could not stand because they had stinking attitude. but I’m like “Well ok I can have a stinking attitude too! So what’s your problem?” and they helped me understand myself to a point, and how I am supposed to be with other people. I ain’t lying... you see Gideon? Gideon is my homie for liii-fe!”

“And one disability week..I don’t knowapparently they find the two of us work together well so they’re always putting me with him, which is nice for me because he understands that yes I’m willing to sign and I understand some of the things but I am old! (Olivia laughs). So we were in the bank working, doing ...Deaf Pioneers... help ...ugh.. adults with life skills, help them with Maths, English, I think social studies too but main thing life skills for the Deaf, and for hearing people to learn sign language. So they kinda bridging the gap. Ytepp usually, you will find at some point in time a group of them who..deaf people and get some skill for them to learn so they ...they did sewing some point...some point...amm...MIC took them and did plumbing with them. So we have some Deaf plumbers.”

“Right so they took all these things and we went to First Citizens bank for disability week to meet a hearing person and a deaf person to ... so people could see us communicate and to show the world what Deaf Pioneers doing. (*Aside Olivia says “I should have put on my Deaf Pioneers jersey...shoot!” but then she continues talking*) Yeah, so we were there... I think we were...I reach there half past eight because we had to set up until the bank close, I was laughing. And you know Gideon? Gideon laughs at everything! He seeing people coming in...and he understands, you can’t sign up here (above waist level) because we know we talking about the person. So they will not know we talking about them but he understands that I can’t sign up there so he’s signing (*Olivia imitates the way gideon signs below his waist in secrecy*) and he start to smile. When I catch what he saying, and he going, and the two of us laughing there...whole time. I don’t know but he’s a real nice person.”

“I’m just saddened to know that they wouldn’t get the opportunity that we...because it’s just that they’re miniature (Olivia laughs) and they would not get to experience all the things that we hearing people would. But trust me...they up to date with technology you know? Them suckers! I tell him! He (referring to Gideon) had a blackberry before me...he had a laptop! I was like “What the hell you need all of that for?” Hear him, “Keep [up] with the time!” I was like “What is your problem? What you need to keep [up] with what time?” But then they on facebook and they meet people and thing like that, and communicate as much as they could so... what to say...”

“But how they are happy...they even though I... OK fine I am Deaf ..it not keeping them back...There was one..one fine Deaf boy! when I tell you he was fine! *(There is laughter. Olivia then gestures, imitating the way she gestured to Gideon that she found the Deaf guy to be attractive. She says that Gideon asked her, “Aren’t you married?” and she replies that she can “look.” Laughing continues and Olivia continues.)* So he was fine! Before...I am not talking about now, I am talking about some years ago. I stopped [working] at Deaf Pioneers probably about three or four years now, because I was...I volunteer with them, do everything with them. Now that I’m home, I’m not doing anything. So that’s how I get to ...being around them that will sharpen my skill until I say..until I fly out, and I never went back. But I had to stop for her (referring to her daughter) but anyhow.”

“They (referring to Deaf people) keep up with the times. Some of them, you would not know they Deaf you know? You would not know they’re deaf. Tisha-Lee *(Olivia’s daughter)* and I always say that. We went to KFC in Curepe. We gone there, first we sitting down and laughing in the corner, and Damian *(Olivia’s husband)* say go in the line and wait for the chicken. So we gone in the line. Now I teach my child sign language. So this man come in the next line, and I just happen to look. I am a feet person so I just happen to look down. And I could not contain myself. *(Olivia does gestures)* Ok she understands that *(referring to the fact that her daughter understood her gesturing. Olivia then imitates the way she signs and gestures to her daughter, to instruct her to look at the man’s feet. She whispers to us what she was signing to her daughter “Watch the man shoe.” and then she continues to speak)* And two of we start to laugh. So now remember, you didn’t hear anything but we laughing.

Now I start to feel the stares. So I tell her ok...”watch it again” *(Olivia starts to imitate once again the way she signed to her daughter. She then says that her daughter signs to her the sentence “the man shoe big!” Olivia continues.)* Now it (referring to the man’s shoe) was really long eh? His toes... foot here, and the damn point was by the black line there (Olivia points to object further off in the room) and I think it was a damn yellow shoe too...and it’s a white man. And we there laughing, laughing, laughing so we waiting in the line. But the man had time gone, and everybody else too so the cashier na... he (referring to the KFC cashier) waiting ...watching me to see if I will say something... so I say *shouting* “ Yeah! I want a bucket of chicken!” and he was like “Oh my gosh! Why you people always do that?” So we find that was hilarious! So everywhere we go, we sign and then when it’s time to talk... we talk and you see everybody face like “OK?”. Yeah and I like it because this is how they (referring to Deaf persons) feel.”

“I say “I never knew that people look at them that way.” Like... they’re not stupid, and these people they really ain’t stupid you know...these suckers and them so intelligent...you could ...when I hear them...well see them sign and how they carry about themselves...half of them braver than me. It had a spelling B..half of them they damn words I can’t spell...up to now, I still can’t spell Chaguaramas..up to know I still can’t spell Chaguaramas (Laughter), but it had other words that I didn’t know but I still can’t spell Chaguaramas. So they were laughing

at me because I couldn't spell Chaguaramas (Olivia laughs). I was like "whatever!" But when you see them...it's something with being around them that makes you appreciate what you have, and to see them, how they appreciate what they have even though they're at a disadvantage. They don't look at themselves as being at a disadvantage. It's we that look at them as being at a disadvantage, and that's the sad part."

Olivia goes on to talk about the fact that she learnt Sign Language at Deaf Pioneers. At the point in time Deaf Pioneers was located on Woodford Street, Arima. She stated that from what she knew the beginners class for Sign Language at Deaf Pioneers cost \$500 for 10 weeks. Classes as she knew it were held on Mondays or Saturdays from 5pm to 7pm. She also stated that since she is no longer with Deaf Pioneers, she is not sure about their present schedule. She stated that while working at Deaf Pioneers Deaf people were usually the ones to be more friendly and excited, when compared to the hearing students learning Sign Language.

Olivia encouraged us to learn Sign Language. She told us that we should just drop in Deaf Pioneers and sign "I want a Deaf friend", (she showed us how to sign "I want a Deaf friend.") and she said that they'll work with us with that. She suggested that we try that approach and see how the deal with us. She also suggested that we should try being Deaf for an hour with company.

Shemellia asked : Are you required to sign with a particular hand?

Olivia responds:

"Your dominant hand. I had a problem because my dominant hand is my left hand so I would sign mostly with [the left hand] and then I would switch to this hand [the right hand] because that's what...I use both hands. Because I... I supposed to...I started writing with my left [hand] and I got licks to write with my right. Yeah...people don't write with their left hand so. So I use the both hands. So this (*Olivia holds up her left arm*) is my bigger arm. So you all...left hand...right handed people. The right hand will be the stronger arm. So you supposed to sign with your dominant hand. So I was forced to stop signing with this hand [left hand] and sign with this hand [right hand]. But a left handed person will sign with their left hand."

Olivia starts to speak about what she likes about Deaf people, and culture.

"And that's what I like. They're always laughing. When you see them vex, that's a different story eh. One time I saw them and oh my gosh! Signs going like Karate but, and they're going faster! I was like "what's going on there?" They was like "They're quarrelling." I was like (*Olivia gasps*) "Deaf people quarrel?" They're like "They're human Olivia!" Because I always see them jolly...so I couldn't believe that they quarrel and then they use [signs which I don't know] ..they only teach me good stuff. You see... I tell you it's only the bad signs you

tend to remember, they are the ones that stuck out!

Olivia then goes on to teach us some basic signs. She tells us

“My book book when I did the class, I wrote...I tried to write...make a dictionary so all the signs, I tried to put how I will remember them. So somewhere underneath that table have a box with my book with my signs. And if I flip through there, I’ll be like “Oh yeah! That’s how you do that!”

Olivia then responded to SAhemellia statement that she wants to learn sign online. However, Olivia pointed out that the Sign Language that they teach online is American Sign Language (ASL), and that she should learn Trinidad and Tobago Sign Language (TTSL).

Shemellia asks : Is Trinidad and Tobago Sign Language (TTSL) a combination of ASL and TTSL?

Olivia responds:

“Nope. What...the American know any word for liming?”

Olivia stated that Sign Language was good for her to learn because they speak with their face, and she speaks with her face.

Robyn asks: Do you know any causes of Deafness?

Olivia responds:

“Cause of Deafness? Accidents so this is why...this is another reason why I went and learn Sign Language because I felt...at that point in time, I was pregnant, and I would be like... my cousin was in jail and he was finger spelling because we all...everybody...we go...they adventist, so at the back of their...we have this book ...that they call the quarterly, that you’re supposed to study from everyday for a quarter, that’s why they call it quarterly, and at the back of one they have the alphabet...that’s how we were communicating...because he was in the holding cell, and couldn’t talk”