Service Organisations and Sexual Diversity: Sensory Impairment, Subcultures and Representation

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2010
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Synopsis

The research deals with how blind or d/Deaf, Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite and Transgendered (QLGBT) citizens are recognized or not by their advocacy and service organization. QLGBT persons with sensory difference or impairment are largely excluded from QLGBT lives. Even for those persons who have access to broader worlds substantially off-limits for persons with sensory difference or impairment, being ‘who one really is’ may not be an option in those environments daily lived. Representation, acceptable stereotypes, dominant constructs, self-acceptance, community bonding and the establishment of truly representative organizations are issues in this research.

Disability, being Queer blind, d/Deaf, and disabled are 'normal' even if not 'average'. Sexual diversity and sensory difference are normal in the realm of human and animal lived experience. The research has investigated how organisations can assist stakeholders to enjoy or at least survive in their multi-faceted identities. www.netsurvey.com.au was a specially created website designed to interview people who are Deaf, an Australian first in the field, now being emulated. A long and extensive publicity campaign brought self-selecting blind and d/Deaf persons to the research. Ambitions of the research included: painting a picture of what was happening to persons who were marginalized in marginal situations, opening up the topics of sensory difference and diverse sexualities to further study and debate, providing a forum that might augment the voices of persons who seek recognition, catalyzing activism and increasing focus on the issues.

Key words

Declaration

I certify that this thesis is my work and it has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge of my belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signature...........................................................................

Warwick Ashley Abrahams

Date.........................
Acknowledgement

Thanks, in order of appearance, to Guy Ramsay, Jeni Warburton, Paul Chantrill, Margaret Shapiro, Gail Pritchard, Kym MacFarlane and my three Examiners. You helped 'fit me into the box' that I needed to inhabit if I was to produce anything creditable at all.

The intellect and enthusiasm of my supervisor, Dr Fiona Kumari Campbell sustained me through several part-time years. Confidence expressed by my Associate Supervisor Dr. Jane Fowler, help from Associate Professor Jayne Clapton plus goodwill conveyed by Professor Lesley Chenoweth energised my efforts. Gary Jaynes of the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Melbourne was welcoming, efficient and helpful. Apart from sincere and humble thanks to all respondents whom I consider co-researchers, I recognize the pivotal assistance of Amanda Tink, Ross de Vent, Tony Nicholas and many others who may prefer to remain anonymous.

Fundamentally, thanks are in order to persons who invented and improved computers, modern library systems, the internet, jet engines, telephones, facsimiles and aluminium ladders. Without them it may have been difficult for me to work while attempting university studies. The accomplishments and genius of a few have enabled the journeys of many.

A minority has its own kind of aggression. It absolutely dares the majority to attack it. It hates the majority – not without a cause, I grant you. It even hates other minorities – because all minorities are in competition.

Terminology

**Ableism**
[A] network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a diminished state of being human.

Campbell, 2001, p. 44; Campbell, 2009, p. 5.

**ABS**
Australian Bureau of Statistics  www.abs.gov.au

**ACCC**
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission  www.accc.gov.au

**ASA**
Australian Shareholders' Association  www.asa.org.au

**ASIC**
Australian Securities and Investments Commission  www.asic.gov.au

**ASL**
American Sign Language. Most persons are surprised to learn that the USA, UK, Australia and even New Zealand have differing sign languages for Deaf persons.

**Audism**
“the corporate institution for dealing with deaf people....by making statements about them, authorizing views ... describing... teaching ....governing where they go to school....the hearing way of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the deaf community”.

Lane, 1999, p. 43.

**Auslan**
In 1988 a dictionary of Auslan was published and in 1991 the Commonwealth government recognized "that Deaf signing people constitute a group like any other non-English-speaking language group, with a distinct sub-vulture recognized by shared history, social life and sense of identity, united and symbolised by fluency in Auslan".


**BCA**
“Blind Citizens Australia - Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) is the united voice of blind and vision-impaired Australians. Our mission is to achieve equity and equality by our empowerment, by promoting positive community attitudes, and by striving for high quality and accessible services which meet our needs”.

www.bca.org.au

**Bicultural – see under Deaf identities (below)**
In the research context persons who negotiate hearing and Deaf cultures.
**Binary homosexuality**
Under this concept one is gay or straight, lesbian or not – without variation and nothing in between.

**Borg, The**
Originating from a phrase and notion “Resistance is futile” in the television and media phenomena “Star Trek”, The Borg exercise pan-universal dominance.

**CripQueer**
A person who is characterized by disability and being Queer – that is, non-heteronormative (qv).

**DA**
“Deaf Australia is the national peak organisation for Deaf people in Australia. It represents the views of Deaf people who use Auslan. It is a true consumer organisation - only Deaf people have the right to vote on Deaf Australia business and to be elected to the Board...Deaf Australia is committed to promoting and preserving sign language as the official and indigenous language of the Deaf community. Deaf Australia believes that Deaf people belong to a linguistic minority group and are disadvantaged by a lack of access to communication, education and services”.

[www.deafau.org.au](http://www.deafau.org.au)

**d/Deaf**
Little ‘d’ deaf persons may use hearing aids or have acquired deafness and might not use sign language. Big ‘D’ Deaf persons may have been deaf since birth, use sign language and perceive being Deaf as a unique Culture.

**Deaf identities** (Leigh and Lewis, 1999, p. 5):

- **Culturally hearing**: hearing norms are the reference point for normality, health and spoken communication... deafness is viewed through the lens of medical pathology as a situation to be rectified.

- **Culturally marginal**: do not fit into either hearing or Deaf societies... may often state they do not... belong in either society.

- **Immersed in Deaf culture**: positive and uncritical identification with Deaf people. Hearing values are denigrated and the Deaf world is idealized. Anger at hearing people will often be expressed.

- **Bicultural**: ability to comfortably negotiate hearing and Deaf settings.

**DeafWorld**
Sometimes found in the literature split as ‘Deaf World’ but amalgamated in the research, it denotes an exclusive and excluding territory into which only Deaf persons - but not little ‘d’ deaf or hearing persons – have access.
Deafness Forum of Australia, The - “Established in early 1993 at the instigation of the Federal government, the Deafness Forum is the peak body for deafness in Australia. We now represent all interests and viewpoints of the Deaf and hearing impaired communities of Australia”.

www.deafnessforum.org.au

Disableism
“a set of assumptions and practices promoting the differential or unequal treatment of people because of actual or presumed disabilities”.

Campbell, 2008, p. 152.

Disability
In this work a background notion prevails that ableism creates disability (see Bibliography, Campbell, F.K.). Withstanding that, blindness and being d/Deaf comprise lack of sensory perceptions such that persons find themselves in marginal positions. Being placed in marginal positions is a process of disablement which produces disability.

Ecologies
The research considered using this word instead of ‘environments’. In the sense of studying “living organisms in their surroundings”, (Oxford English Dictionary, 1971), “ecology” can evoke the presence of politics, facilities and features, just as “environment” might – the “conditions under which persons live”; but the former seems more aligned to investigation, whereas the latter seems somewhat passive.

Elites
When used by Paddy Ladd as ‘subaltern elite’ it derives from post-colonial studies (see Antonio Gramsci and Gayatri Spivak) regarding persons of elevated status who operate outside the hegemonic power structures. They are often causative, active persons. The nonprofit arena also has elitist, sometimes familial structures.

Expedient and (in)convenient authenticity
Opportunistic identity: self-enactment and self-revelation are usually negotiated and nuanced dependent upon environment. Is it safe to be who you are, or is it appropriate to perform a different identity? Are you really all of the different identities that you perform?

Ghetto
The space allowed by dominant social constructs for persons prevented from fully participating in the discourses comprising life. The western capitalist world provides numerous possible sub-realms of habitation.

Hard of hearing (HoH)
“all people who have a hearing loss and whose usual means of communication is by speech. It includes those who have become totally deaf after acquisition of speech”.

World Federation of the Deaf, Tokyo, 1991. wadeaf.org.au
**Heteronormative**
Since the notion was named in 1991, it has nuanced according to the discourse. In this thesis, heteronormativity is tacitly conceptualized as a dominant power construct; an implication is that heterosexual activity and ostensible commitment is perceived as acceptable by a majority of persons, and that other activities, lifestyles and relationships are stigmatized. See the *Bibliography*: Butler, Duggan, Rich, Stryker, Warner, Wilchins.

**Hypermetrope**
Long sighted person

**Masquerade**
Dissembling disguise, perhaps ‘passing’ as what we are not. This may involve us in ‘expedient inauthenticity’.

**O and M training**
Orientation and Mobility training is among our first needs when we go blind. The O and M trainer can have intimate access to our lives, families, friends and households to effect this process. Their gaze (which we cannot observe) can be intimidating and render us powerless to protect our privacy.

**Oralism and Oral method**
Instruction of d/Deaf persons to communicate by lip-reading, breathing and mouth-based patterns of speech production to the exclusion of sign language.

**Orbiting**
Herein: the alternation of appearance/activity, and disappearance/inactivity by subcultural or neo-group participants.

**Organizations**
- *FPO* - For profit organization, Plural: *FPOs*
- *NFP* – Nonprofit or Not-for-profit organization. Plural: *NPOs*.

**QLGBTI**
Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite, Transgender, Intersex. The sequencing may be political; placing 'Transvestite' before 'Transgender' is not significant. 'I' for 'Intersex' is largely omitted from the text as no Intersex persons were encountered during the research.

**Queer Theory**
"has accrued multiple meanings, from a merely useful shorthand way to speak of all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered experiences to a theoretical sensibility that pivots on transgression or permanent rebellion". Seidman, 1996, p. 11.

**Quir**
A political strategy to engage in oppositional language, a reaction to the word ‘Queer’, emphasising the inadequacy of terms that are intended to be definitive and all-embracing; an attempt to reduce divisional politics and provide a unifying term accepting of variation.
Rebuttal, The
An electronic magazine website and blog: http://the-rebuttal.com

Subaltern elite
Paddy Ladd, 2007, pp. 267-296, claiming status as a Deaf researcher according to nine criteria, pp. 279-280; and subalternity due to the existence of invisible ruling discourses (p. 278), the repression and damage consequent; his desire to formulate alternatives, plus the range of his experiences: such as being Deaf, working class and formerly a hippie.

SuperCrips
a new stereotype of people with disabilities ... the ‘supercrip’, a disabled leader who overcomes her or his disability and achieves great things ... This stereotype, while appearing on the surface to be more positive, actually, is in some ways, more dangerous. It suggests that people with disabilities can succeed at anything if they try hard enough. If they fail, it is not because of social or structural barriers or the prejudice of others, rather, it is because of a lack of tenacity, effort or courage.


Natalie Martiniello characterized the Supercrip notion “as hero by hype” – that it is associated with a belief that life with a disability is likely to be incomplete and typified by ‘lack’. Supercripdom renders persons with disabilities as ‘other’ as much as portraying disability as a form of lesser self-worth (“disability as pity”). It is linked to the idea that disability in one area is complimented with superior abilities in another such as the mistaken belief that people who are blind have enhanced hearing.

Confirmed 8/10/2011.

Third Sector, The
The voluntary or nonprofit organisations of a society that are neither business nor government, but which ostensibly cater to notions of unmet subcultural needs.

TTY
The TTY is a machine providing a method for Deaf person to communicate. For non-d/Deaf persons, one can phone a TTY service and voice messages are conveyed into print or text. The use of SMS has to some extent replaced this method.

Usher’s syndrome
A genetically transferred syndrome from which deafness and blindness result, usually in a protracted process.

VA
Vision Australia: “a living partnership between people who are blind, sighted or have low vision.”

www.visionaustralia.org.au
Syntax

In this research the word 'but' is used approximately 29 times to start a sentence: of which about 21 times occurs in quotes from interviewees, once from a primary text (Duberman). My justification for use cites: Fowler (2002, p. 60) whose dictionary has been in reprint since 1926; Peters (2004, p. 84), whose *Cambridge Guide* approves use of 'but' as a "conjunct" to signal an "imminent change of tack" which may be "vital" to a proper reading of the text; and the *Chicago Manual of Style* (2003, pp. 193-194) which characterizes prohibiting 'but' starting sentences as being a "superstition" that is among the most "groundless", "unsupported" grammatical notions handicapping students. Garner (2003, p. 43), advocates 'but' to commence a sentence, rather than 'however': *"But for the quick turn; the inlaid however for the more elegant sweep".*

Capitalizing of the ‘v’ in ‘Voice’ occurs when a source has capitalized it. The initials of the terms Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Transvestite, Transgender and Intersex are usually capitalized; for brevity the ‘T’ represents both the hobby of Transvestism and the Transgendered state of being: therefore QLGBTI. Due to no respondents declaring themselves as Intersex, the “I” does not usually appear.
Introduction

In Australia few studies have been conducted on the lived lives of blind and d/Deaf persons and no studies at all have been produced in regards to sensory perception and diversity of sexualities. My observation and experience from the early 1980s at lesbian and gay venues, plus reading published materials (including that in limited circulation amongst members or subscribers) and reviewing internet sites, had generated confusing images of exclusivity and marginalization in conjunction with attempts at group or community formation. Marginalized persons in peripheral places wished to connect with their peers, but where and how, with what outcomes? Exclusion is inimical to citizenship, and persons in 'double minorities' - blind and/or d/Deaf and sexually diverse - wished to establish independent groups of like-minded souls to socialize and deal with such issues. This research delves into the swirl of complexity comprising that picture and is unique in its position and its analysis, being ignited from partisan observation of identity differences comprising broader and putative subcultural communities (Arnold, 1970; Brewer, 2007; Cohen, 1970; Gelder, 2007).

The early image gained from initial research became diffuse and slipped away like a mirage because situations morphed. How could I paint a definitive picture of these issues? Establishment of groups for marginalized persons seemed tentative, they functioned for relatively brief periods – not beyond a few years and without enduring cohesiveness or public profile. In following up texts I met with blind and d/Deaf persons who mostly claimed sexual diversity and who were generally creative, feisty, humourous, interesting, intelligent and resourceful. Some expressed interest in helping persons of diverse sexualities connect to each other
and their respective advocacy and service organisations. Historically, it is organisations that are the supreme method, the *sine qua non*, of accomplishing human endeavor (Andreasen and Kotler, 2003; Bropdy, 2005; Limerick, Cunningham and Crowther, 2002; Robbins and Barnwell, 2002; Young and Steinberg, 1995) specifically here, nonprofit organisations (NFPs). What roles could organization play in empowering their minority stakeholders? Fulfillment of organisational mission statements depends upon leadership (van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). From interviewing and gaining *netsurvey.com.au* replies from CEOs and Board members, organizational interest (or otherwise) in dealing with exclusion and sexual diversity was gained; thus a depiction of real-life interplay between theoretical problems gleaned from literature and the lived experiences of diverse stakeholders who self-selected to contribute has been assembled.

The research has engaged with subcultures that "are not male nor necessarily young" (Halberstam, 2003, p. 319). While Halberstam’s "epistemology of youth" and notions of embedded stylistic resistance in cultures oppositional and "disruptive" (p. 314) to dominant constructs are notionally appropriate to the research cohort, her conception of "queer culture-makers" having "stretched out adolescences" (p. 313) could be interpreted as inappropriate and condescending. It is problematic for the majority of QLGBTI persons who attempt to engage quietly as citizens in and with broader communities if notions of sexually diverse subcultures are to be inferred from media representations, parades and the activities of persons placed in the extremes of sociological constructs. Elton John is not representative of gay males who play the piano and the QLGBT Sydney so-called 'scene' of perhaps twenty thousand people attending venues or Mardi Gras and performing diverse sexualities at them is not where and how the possible 2-
400,000 of Sydney’s QLGBT population are spending their Saturday nights. The research is inspired by the Yosso (2005, p. 69) view of socially marginalized persons possessing unrecognized "cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts" that contribute to social capital, who by rejecting social constructions counter deficit thinking being legitimized (Yosso, 2005, p. 73).

Blindness and d/Deaf histories as well as society and its investment in group histories are important to this study but human narratives can be characterized by discretion, dissembling, elision, stereotype and outright fraud. Historians, in dealing with those who dominate successive social constructs may not depict the lived realities of society’s subjugated cohorts. By comparison, subcultural histories may provide insight into the grassroots lived, economic, political and social environments that masters of dominant social constructs might not want to experience, and if they did partake in those subcultures, they may not want it known. Sexually diverse environments may not be ‘average’ but in the millennial range of human experience are certainly ‘normal’. Subcultures may be experienced by dominant constructs as problematic yet exist due to discrimination and the exclusion engendered by cultural perceptions of values and status (Butler, 1993a, p. 311), with identity displays self-enacted by the subcultures despite retaliatory threats.

It is not an overstatement to say that wars have been waged by institutions, governments, the police, the legal, medical and psychiatric professions against disabled people as well as against queers, gays, transvestites, transgender and intersex persons (Altman, 1993; Biesold, 1999; Charlton, 1998; Ferrell and Griego, 2008; Lingiardi and Drescher, 2003; Preves, 2008), also against lesbians
(Rich, 1993) and bisexuals (Weinberg, Williams and Pryor, 2002). These gender and diversity wars, persecutions of non-conformist subcultures and individuals (Becker, 1950, 1973; Butler, 1993b, 2005; Goffman, 1959, 1963, 1974), are not over and legacies of individual and group injustice, pain and memory are neither extinguished nor avenged.

A feminist approach to Otherness outlined by Rich (1995) includes the wish that Otherness will be turned into “a keen lens of empathy” (p. 400); that there will be a politics brought into being based on a “heartfelt understanding of what it means to be Other”; that there will be Pride in being Other that is not merely a “cloak” against the “contempt and suspicion” felt by broader society, but one that helps a “fight for survival”. Yet pride is “tricky, glorious, double-edged” (p. 401). Rich wants to know where Othered persons can feel “safe” and the nature of that safety (p. 402): would it be the “safety of the mother’s lap” or that of “the barricaded door” which will not be opened to any “beleaguered stranger”? Even in “community” (p. 403), Rich sees multiple conflicts and divisions as well as a “Disneyland” of historic ignorance and denial. Feminist theory alone is not equipped to deal with these issues (Alcoff, 1996).

History is constructed from narratives of lives, and more understanding needs to be gained of the injustices done to persons who are characterized by sexual diversity and disability. Seeking out narratives to inform the construction of history may of itself not produce knowledge that is factually correct. Campbell maintains that there is a “hermeneutical precariousness”¹ for the research cohort because their lives may be replete with extraordinary levels of contradictions.

¹ Expression used by F.K. Campbell in private conversation 8 June 2011.
These contradictions may be part of persons making sense of who they are: they may experience exclusion and inclusion simultaneously (Campbell, 2008). One must then make sense of multiple readings of multiple contexts, searching for discontinuities rather than patterns (Butler, 1990). Because persons characterized by disabilities have been denied causative function as citizens in society (Abrams and Hogg, 2005; Allan, 2005; Armstrong and Barton, 1999; Bauman, 2008), because they have been rendered as ‘other’ and ‘not normal’, there has been denial of voice, citizenship and sometimes denial of qualities implied by the loaded adjectival word ‘human’ (Clear, 2000; Corker and Shakespeare, 2004; Davis, 2003; Downs, 2006). The research thus contributes to valid depiction of human history by including persons who are blind, d/Deaf and of diverse sexualities into the range of what is ‘normal’ in human behaviours, existence, lifestyles and states of being. There may be little that is ‘average’ but all is ‘normal’ - the substantial use of which word could be replaced by ‘average’ (Appendix Nine). The conduct of lives and organisational processes are not immune to processes of linguistic Othering.

The electronic age has brought new avenues for citizens to organize, form groups and claim rights to participate (Bennett, 2008) - beyond their advocacy and service organisations. In those organisations as well as broader society marginalised persons may be labelled and badged with identities that not only exclude, but also ignore the “swirl of intersectionality”\(^2\) that marginalised persons can inhabit and which this research investigates.

\(^2\) Expression used by F.K. Campbell in private conversation 8 June 2011. See also The Bibliography herein, Delgado and Stefancic, 2012.
To build research theory and arguments this thesis is divided into two parts with a total of six chapters. **Part A** comprises four chapters and its theme is **Pictures of Difference and Sexual Diversity: Identity + Organisations**. Chapter One assembles the bodies of knowledge and the methods required to extract information and arguments therefrom. It is about the knowledge and the concepts upon which the research draws and the methods employed by the research to produce a snapshot of situations at what may be a transitional point in time. The phenomenological moment is informed by lineages of attitudes, circumstances, cultures, events, legislation, practices and processes to which the genealogical forebears of current research participants have been subjected. To deal with the normalcy of being d/Deaf, blind and of diverse sexualities the research consulted what could be conceived as four bodies of knowledge, although the fact that they overlap and intersect makes clear division factually inaccurate, but meta-alternation between theories effects useful consolidation.

The first issue to be investigated is that of **Identity Formation** which comprises Chapter Two. The categories of knowledge drawn upon include disability and queer theories, deviance and subcultural theory. The research sought to understand persons characterized by sensory differences as well as diverse sexualities within their organisational environments. Chapter Two attempts to draw together the elements which ignite, promote or subdue identities. Inhabiting culturally diverse realms of discourse, bodies are bound to multiple identity formations, the establishment and maintenance of which include multiple relationships with subcultures.

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3 For an explanation of the Foucauldian sense of genealogical landscapes and experience of historical lineage, see Walschmidt, 2005.
Chapter Three deals with *Crip, Disabled and d/Deaf Identities* - the corporeal and sensorial realities of being different in some way, being characterized by the broad ‘average’ population as ‘other’, being excluded or exceptional, always being (re)constructed as *The Stranger* (Baumann, 1996; Hughes, 2002), creation of blind and d/Deaf identities, the role of auto/biography, the politicisation of identities and how we are manipulated, even if by osmosis.

Having a sensory difference, being blind or d/Deaf, places one into multiple discourses about disability and culture and into identity arguments that arise from such discourses or identities thereby imposed, and which advocacy and service organisations mediate. Yet organisational mission statements can portray a simplicity and purity that may not reflect the daily lived experiences of stakeholders or organisational process. The research has explored how persons of diverse sexualities who are d/Deaf or who have blindness as a characteristic negotiate their identities in these different realms of discourse. In organisations, the processes that neglect existing or potential internal divisions can foster the advent of subcultures or neo-groups - acceptance of which is a dependent variable. Chapter Four considers organisations as phenomenological because whilst organisations may have the same charter over a period of time, organisational actors adapt and interpret missions and mores to the extent that activities and programs under different boards and leaderships may be quite disparate. Advocacy and service organisations have impact not only on the lives of organisation members and employees but also upon the lives of persons not involved directly in the organisation. This is because those organisations have been endowed with, or acknowledged as having, rights to represent particular
constituencies, to expend resources on their behalf in particular ways and express voice. Chapter Four examines these organisational environments.

The theme of Part B is about Interpreting Diverse and Elusive Images, not just responses to and outcomes of the research. It is about meanings in what people have said, what themes have been emphasized, and respondent involvement in the questions that have generated contentious issues. Therefore, thematic identification and grouping of themes informs the analysis. Historically, treatment of d/Deaf persons and of blind persons ignored diversities, the dissimilarities experienced, the corporealities lived, and attitudes formed (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000). Chapter Five examines responses from persons who are mostly sexually diverse, who are blind and who are d/Deaf, including persons who experience Deaf culture and DeafWorld. A thematic analysis is conducted via nine pervasive themes that were layered over the research canvas by responses gleaned from the research cohort. Chapter Six then brings data informed by texts and discourse together with analysis, imagining ways forward. Prospects are inferred from considering the texts, discourse and the information that has been collected in what have essentially been a number of phenomenological case-studies. During this process, further speculation has arisen about what prospects ‘minorities within minorities’ might have to achieve meaningful citizenship – a reason why the research has sought to clarify what have so far been mere glimpses of Othered Lives.
Chapter One

Epistemology, Methodology and Context of the Thesis

This section establishes theoretical perspectives for the research and provides an overview of the context in which they manifest. The research questions and methodology derive therefrom. Theory that arises has been inductively developed by “constant interaction with the data” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 33). To that extent, theory produced will be “grounded in the actual data collected” not developed conceptually then tested. The field is contemporary but a broad understanding of earlier lived histories is relevant due to the historical damage inflicted on persons antecedent to the current research participants.

To trim expectations of Foucauldian relevance, the research takes the view of Snyder and Mitchell (2006, p. 134) that there is a “glaring lack of direct analysis about disability in Foucault’s work”. While Abnormal (2003) deals with eugenics and disabled bodies Foucault does not deal with myriad voice in discourse and multiple participations, yet those forces of control may be experienced by individuals as “illusive, decentralized, immanent in the discourses” from which it is “impossible to fully escape” (Sullivan, 1996, p. 64). It remains appropriate to be aware of historical changes in power relations in culturally specific discourse (Carlson, 2005, p. 148; Allan, 2009, pp. 281-297). The research critically explores issues connecting cultural contexts with disability, their representations and cultural constructions (Barnes, 2003; Tregaskis, 2004; Turnbull and Stowe, 2001). Siebers (2008, p. 6) ventures into notions of ableism when arguing that

Disability marks the last frontier of unquestioned inferiority because the preference for able-bodiedness makes it extremely difficult to embrace disabled people and to recognize their unnecessary and violent exclusion from society.
This study provides insight into "cultural realm[s] of belief, ideology, ideas, knowledge, theories and logic ... communicated and shared within groups which act toward the presumed real world of objects, people and events in terms of it" (Lindesmith, Strauss and Denzin, 1977, p. 87). That is to say: provide insight into the worlds of QLGBT4 people who have sensory difference or impairment and into the processes of their advocacy and service organisations. Actors in organisations may have insight into their organisation’s objective reality because cultural worlds are created through "consensual validations of experiences that have subjective origins" (Lindesmith, Strauss and Denzin, 1977, p. 87).

In attempting to tie the various threads of discourse, environment, theory and the research scenario together the research negotiates systemic societal constructions that have placed blind and d/Deaf persons apart from the life and lifestyles of the dominant social construct (Kelly, 2008; Ladd, 2008; Murray, 2008; Padden, 2008) into somewhat separate, restricted existences. QLGBTI persons may also not be understood, appreciated or accepted as associates, neighbours or friends of the average citizen (Boucher, 1999; Chang and Apostle, 2008; Whitney, 2006; Weeks, 1991, 1996 and 1997), and while being lesbian, gay or bisexual may be tolerated by segments of society there is not broad acceptance and integration of lesbian and gay lifestyles. Citizenship is not granted to marginalized persons by the broad population and its institutions. The thesis explores whether organisations consider that contexts for their service delivery paradigms (provision of facilities, programs, and/or support), imply that the identities of some constituents are best left out of the organisational picture.

4 Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite, Transgender but not Intersex persons as no Intersex persons responded to the research.
Disability studies can inform educational practice by advocating a thorough analysis of the social constructions of disability and the role of cultural institutions ... in these constructions.


Respondents could feel constrained by elusive decentralized forces of fluctuating relevance to which labels could be applied such as: ‘family’; ‘social milieu’; ‘friends’; ‘expectations of others’; ‘self-appraisal’; ‘work opportunities’ - although persons who are not d/Deaf or blind or of diverse sexualities might also argue similarly alienating experiences. An initial scan of opinions from persons who self-selected to participate in the research suggested that peak organisations for persons who are blind and d/Deaf provide environments that are to some degree alien for QLGBT responding stakeholders which is not to say they are not employed in them or do not wish to work in them. Respondents included current, former, intermittent and potential members and employees of the organisations or persons who have received services from the organisations. The peak service organisations have in a sense been gatekeepers of opinion and activity in their respective realms. However times are changing and the potential irrelevance of many of society’s former gatekeepers is an issue (Penn and Zalesne, 2007; Anderson, 2007): there are now different ways of sharing and participating in the future. There is a marked trend to an affinity based culture with tribal groupings - people who assemble and talk without filters or the traditional gatekeepers (Watters, 2003). Therefore the research sought opinions from blind and d/Deaf persons who self-selected to respond via an internet questionnaire (see Appendices Three, Four and Five) or in semi-structured interviews, as well as seeking opinions from representatives of organisations providing advocacy and services (see Appendices Two and Five). The research aimed to promote dialogue
between all stakeholders in order to lessen exclusion and marginalisation while yet maintaining organisational viability and validity (van Kinppenberg, 2000).

Historically blind Deaf and QLGBT persons have often experienced life as embattled and marginalized as well being cast into unlikely groupings. For example: the blind and Deaf being notionally made subjects of Asylums for Blind and Deaf (Buckrich, 2004) - persons linked in Otherness by dint of ‘difference to the average’ in their sensory perceptions, by dint of cultural divergence based on linguistic difference (Baynton, 1998; Emerton, 2006; Lane, 1992; Maassen and Binczyk, 2003). Similarly, QLGBTI persons are linked by notions of deviance, living ostensibly transgressive lifestyles replete with oppositional meanings (Armstrong, 2002; Blasius, 2001; Lehring, 2003; Tatchell, 1996), interpreted as deviant to those purportedly lived by persons in dominant hierarchies.

Hierarchies of sex sometimes serve no real purpose except to prevent sexual variance. They create victimless crimes, imaginary threats, and moralities of cruelty.


The study is exploratory, attempting to build on the existing body of literature by relating theoretical frameworks concerning marginalized groups to organisational processes that impact upon them. Marshall’s “Goodness Criteria” (1990, pp. 188-197) are being used as a research prompt sheet (see Appendix Eight).

**Difference and its location**

disability is defined as medical fact ... Disability is located in the person who is its bearer.....To be a person with disability is to deviate from the ‘normal’: to be a deviant who needs to be helped and managed.

Campbell (2009, p. 13) considers it essential that we "unthink disability and its resemblance to the essential (ableist) human self". At one with Overboe (2007, p. 26) that disability is always conjured by ableist discourse of normalcy, Campbell (2009, p. 14) is ethically or emotionally unimpressed by

... the numbers of disabled people standing in line to join the queue of the enhanced. These are the disabled people who live out their lives from an ableist standpoint where disability can only be viewed from the perspective of negative ontology. The anti-disabled disabled are at worst norm junkies and at best norm emulators.

Campbell, 2009, p. 73.

Does this joining “the queue of the enhanced” apply if you have intra-ocular lens implants to correct your cataracts, an artificial limb adapted to your stump after an accident, if you have myopia corrected by spectacles or if you need and use a wheelchair? Not taking medication if one is schizophrenic or to ameliorate glaucoma? The research is going to argue instead for individual choice and in regard to assistive medication or technologies, ‘do or acquire whatever it is you need in order to get by’ and for observer acceptance of choices that others make. The research has interest in why choices are made and roles that advocacy and service organisations might play in formulating those choices. That some choices may be judged invalid by observing or partisan third parties is the experience of the research cohort and researcher.

The research is located within the purview of critical disability studies, dealing with what McRuer (2006) terms “compulsory able-bodiedness”, and it rejects binary sexualities; thus notions of homo- and hetero-sexualities are at issue. The research considers diversity and disability are normal states of human existence. This is a self-naming political strategy just as ‘DeafWorld’ is the research term for a “political, self-naming cultural strategy distancing people from definitions of
incapacity and dysfunction” (McRuer, 2006, p. 9). Similarly, we note the label ‘Crip Queer’ has been adopted by disabled activists who feel that they are -

disenfranchised from the stories of our own lives, censored by bias and public opinion, silenced by oppressive institutions from within (the family), or from without (church and state). When this happens we risk becoming nonpersons. We end up in a kind of Gulag Of the self, where we ourselves don’t know who we are.


Advocacy and service organisations stake out parts of a picture that forms a niche of the Third Sector, which Lyons examined to determine whether it functions within notions of civil society or economics (2001, pp. 204-212). Third Sector organisations provide service, catalyse social change (2001, p. 204) and are the major means of giving voice and bestowing identity upon marginalised persons. The nonprofit sector in Australia is vast but research into and information about it relatively skimpy. There have been no recent studies of organisations for persons who are blind or d/Deaf or how social capital might accrue to stakeholders with disability and sexual diversity. Thus the research seeks to examine lived experiences of respondents via disability and cultural studies as well as social, political and organisational theories in order to understand the tensions in such a swirl of intersectionality and overlap. The Third Sector and the corporate world are experiencing change as are organisational actors. A post-corporate world of collaborative individualism with enlightened CEOs dealing positively with diversity (Limerick, Cunnington and Crowther, 2002, pp. 203-4, 238-9), wherein individuals and groups are recognized and empowered by means of a variable and equalizing [sic, p. 204] treatment has not eventuated. The strategic management to produce such dream organisations would construct

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5 Lyons (2001, p. 31) estimates almost 600,000 employees.
6 Lyons (2001, p. 218) posits some of the data as merely anecdotal.
strong organisational identities from mission statements tied to values (Limerick, Cunnington and Crowther, 2002, pp. 144-174). Out of such a mission statements and values culture, structure and strategy would evolve to underpin systems of organisational action. In the arena of diversity and disability, organisations need to perceive, accept and adapt to more diverse elements.

From the moment a child is born, she/he emerges into a world where she/he receives messages that to be disabled is to be less than, a world that where disability may be tolerated but in the final instance is inherently negative.


Prior to 2009 discourse about disability had largely been predicated on the underlying compulsion that ableist regulatory norms should be emulated (Campbell, 2009, p. 3). ‘Normal’ does not signify ‘average’ but ‘socially assumed’, ‘socially imposed’ or ‘considered socially desirable by powerful, colonising forces’ that bolster regimes (Chouinard and Grant, 1996) of compulsory ableism with which few if anyone can hope to comply. That is a place where there is an

imagined shared community of able-bodied/minded people held together by a common ableist homosocial world view that asserts the preferability and compulsoriness of the norms of ableism.

Campbell, 2009, p. 4.

Because the research deals with some of the many topics that can be located under the banner of ‘diversity’, participants are persons who may not conform to behaviours, thoughts or lifestyles considered 'average' in either the obvious or discrete aspects of their lives.

Internalised ableism means that to emulate the norm, the disabled individual is required to embrace, indeed to assume, an ‘identity’ other than one’s own. I am not implying that people have only one true or real essence. Indeed, identity formation is in a constant state of fluidity, multiplicity and (re)formation.

The research is interested how persons of diverse sexualities cope with and respond to circumstances, and how organisations can survive and prosper while formulating and enacting inclusive agendas.

1.1 Research Questions
This section presents the research questions and attempts to explain how the epistemology interacts with the context to shape them. There are political and cultural investments in asserting existence of cohesive representative subcultures. Advocacy and service organisations have vested interests in staking claims for validity - social, cultural, political and financial capital then accrue. Thus the research ought to find out:

- What happened to the groups that formed with intentions to represent QLGBT subcultures? Did they become subcultures or transient ‘neo-groupings’?

- Are there any intimate participants able and interested to objectively document group and organisational histories?

- Does the existence of and attempts to organize groups for persons with sensory difference or impairment reflect in any way on the broader blind and d/Deaf environments, their advocacy and service organisations?

- Is there a valid goal to build connection between persons of diverse sexualities from d/Deaf and hearing environments and between blind persons of diverse sexualities and similar sighted persons?

Groups for people of diverse sexualities have been formed by people in Hearing environments. Ancillary questions invoked by the foregoing include:
• Are sustainable groups possible for people of diverse sexualities in d/Deaf and blind environments? Are they necessary?
  o If groups are formed, can they expect to receive acknowledgement from appropriate peak organisations?
  o Do discrimination and exclusion have a role in the governance and management of advocacy and service organisations? Are they pre-conditions to effective governance?

• Are there any ‘safe spaces’ for research participants?
  o Are there problems in the Australian Third Sector that more specific government regulation and control could address?

**Researching in twilight**

Publicly available information shows that subcultural groups at least for sexually diverse d/Deaf persons exist in the United States7 and have existed in Australia, but such groups seemed to atrophy or never become effectively operational. There was an ephemeral aspect to extant information. The methodology had to deal with issues including: the geographical spread of potential respondents; personal and political feelings in regard to discussing the issues on the part of all stakeholders; environments that are sensitive and politically charged (Sherry, 2000); and finding appropriate means of securing useful aggregate and anonymous data. The tools were therefore ever-evolving, modified in the field and included in-depth, semi-structured interviews as well as the specially constructed website: www.netsurvey.com.au.

7 ‘Blind gay USA’ brings a Google search (interalia): [www.afb.org/message_board](http://www.afb.org/message_board), care of the American Foundation for the Blind. May 2010 to June 2011 has few postings, but the AFB into 2010 retains a gay link on its website. The same search for Australia yields no ‘gay’ advocacy or service organisation link or connection.
1.2. Methodologies
The research deals with the lived experiences of a small number of respondents over an extended period with prolonged engagement of the researcher (Creswell, 2003, p. 16). Some respondents have on-going relationships with their advocacy and service organisations or attitudes towards them. The researcher experienced on-going interaction with some respondents and came to consider many among them as friends. The problematic aspects of this are discussed under Possible limitations to and strengths of the study. The researcher attempted to maintain a degree of distance from the e-mail discussion list that developed as an outcome of the research process so as to not be perceived as ‘reaching in’ to the independence of respondents and to not be perceived as trying to manipulate attitudes, topics or outcomes. However:

Constructionist assumptions have methodological implications in that social researchers are not distinct from their subject matter ... their interaction with their subjects is itself a key part of the sociological enterprise.

O'Dowd, 2003, p. 41.

The research questions interrogate stakeholder concerns about power, policies, choice, grievances, attitudes and perceptions. Thus there is an element of social constructivism which has concern for cognitive processes and the meaning-making activity of individual minds (Lincoln, 1990, pp. 67-86). However the research applies a “natural science” model of qualitative research (Ezzy, 2002, p. 52; Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp. 221 et seq), dealing with interviews and organisations with an outward gaze to the world of inter-subjectivity and social constructions of meanings and knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2000), which is the “interpretive model” of qualitative research (Ezzy, 2002, p. 54) concerned with social constructionism. The methodology deals with what animates service
organisations: "social practices by which communities develop a basis for warranted belief and action" (Schwandt, 1990, p. 258-276), and not on the nature of 'truth'.

Methodological tools employed under the research design to enable accumulation of data included: semi-structured in-depth interviews over which interviewees took substantial but mediated control to impart autobiographical experiences; phone calls, emails, and e-mail list correspondence. For d/Deaf persons an internet survey www.netsurvey.com.au (Appendix Three), was specifically constructed, assisted by input from d/Deaf persons who were also interviewees, with Auslan videos incorporated. As Lane (2002a, p. 80) has counseled:

Researchers must turn preferentially to the deaf community for advisors and collaborators in research design and implementation, for assistance in data collection and analysis, and for guidance in interpretation of results.

A number of face-to-face interviews were subsequently conducted with self-selecting Deaf persons. These interviews were facilitated by Auslan interpreters who had received interviewee approval, aided by the experienced and high standard of researcher interview enunciation that facilitated interviewee lip-reading. The researcher has also undertaken an introductory course in Auslan and finger spelling but has no proficiency (Appendix Seven). Immersion in ontological and cultural grounding has been essential.

[T]hough blindness and deafness are in many ways ontologically distinct, they do in fact have a commonality across their difference in embodied [sic] social practice – they are both trying to liberate their versions of reality.

Corker, 2000, p. 7.

*Research in the field* had to retain awareness of gendered notions such as “Deaf gay men are culturally different from hearing gay men” (Luczak, 2004, p. 209)

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and in such instance consider any possible gendered exception or universality. While social identity research “stresses the fluidity between individuals and groups” (Operario and Fiske, 2000, p. 29), according to Hogg and Hains (1996, p. 295) a cohesive group is one in which the process 

of self-categorization has produced, through depersonalization ... intragroup conformity, intergroup differentiation, stereotype perception, ethnocentrism, and positive intermember attitude.

Thus intragroup conformity implies that members may be liked as embodiment of the group, not necessarily as individuals. The societal origins of human behaviour rely on the social processes of individuals and groups (Operario and Fiske, 2000, p. 30) from which we must discern and interpret meanings. Symbolic interactionism is the school of sociology that emphasizes the importance of socially created meanings in everyday life (Escoffier, 1998, p. 128) and a phenomenological approach comprises attempts to understand issues (Creswell, 2007) from the points of view of those persons or organisations being researched (Crotty, 1998, pp. 95-8). Thus plurality of methods is required to deal with issues encountered, not essentialist purity.

For an individual to want to gravitate to a group there are likely to be negotiated notions of similarity in play. For an organisation to encompass individuals, or absorb or acknowledge groups of individuals, or to evolve out of one or more groups of individuals, there would need to be elements of similarity and attraction. *The Similarity-Attraction Paradigm* (Berscheid and Walster 1969; Byrne 1975) posits that interpersonal attraction is determined by personal and group attributes and that these qualities or values will define and determine social integration (Brewer, von Hippel and Gooden, 1999, p. 339; Tajfel, 1978, p.
13). According to this paradigm (Byrne, 1997) similarity\(^9\) is a determinant of social integration (Miller and Prentice, 1999; Hogg, 1992). Organisation and group membership satisfaction will depend upon how people cooperate, which determines groups and organisations performance. Inter-group relations are also an important aspect of organisation success because the diversity, spread and depth of IORs (inter-organisational relationships – see Terminology) are factors in organisation survival (Hage and Aiken, 1970; Hall, 2002, pp. 201-235).

These multiple issues present themselves ideally as pristine phenomena and any previous researcher acculturation is an issue to be considered (Crotty, 1998). Examination of respondent experiences was achieved by extensive and prolonged engagement to discern and understand patterns of meaning and relationships (Creswell, 2003). While the most suitable qualitative process is phenomenology applied in an hermeneutical manner, there is also a deal of textual analysis. The research thus comprises two basic stages: 1. 'Stocktaking' or scoping of the research and: 2. Personal interviews - face-to-face as well as via the internet.

**Stage 1 – Stocktaking – Research Scoping**

**Blind and d/Deaf identity formation and organisations**

The first investigation was a 'stock take' to assess extant material, both textual and semiotic. Organisations have charters, aims and interests, journals, newsletters, press releases or broadcasts over television, brochures, internet websites and other publicly available materials which may provide idealized or superficial information. Information from similar organisations (Australia and overseas) was examined to provide comparisons and leads for further

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\(^9\) Defined as the degree to which group members are alike in terms of personal attributes or other characteristics.
investigation. Borne in mind is Strati’s (2000, p. 18) belief that "An organisation must marshal the consensus of actors able to sustain it".

The literature shows attempts to alleviate and overcome 'outsider' status. Current phenomena were examined to consider how and if improvements to the circumstances of subcultural groups might parlayed among advocacy and service organisations. The collection of data was on-going into the stage of writing-up.

**Stage 2 – The Personal Interview**
The second stage of the research was to conduct semi-structured interviews with persons willing to share their thoughts and experiences: those who self-selected as persons being either blind or d/Deaf and who also self-described as QLGBT., Sensitive to issues of politics and privacy, the research does not disclose if any organisational representative is considered to be or self-discloses as QLGBT. The research infers from respondents’ subjective understandings and those inferences need to be linked to the structural positions within which those individuals are located (Porter, 2002, p. 57). Any set of norms or procedures that shape and grant meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) give rise to events or definitions that all impact on perceptions of social reality, which may be "ideological and saturated with values" (Manning, 2002, p. 80). Thus even an impartial semi-structured interview or re-interview process can be tantamount to a complex social setting and potentially intimidating or alienating.

**Laws and regulations**
In early conceptions of the research it was thought that regulatory environments (www.facs.gov.au/disability/eds/index.htm) such as provisions of the Commonwealth *Disability Services Act 1986* could be important. However in the
years since the gazetting of the Act there have not been the expected lived improvements in the lives of stakeholders (Goggin and Newell, 2005), nor has there been encouragement of client and consumer participation in accordance with the moral imperative of the Act (Clear, 2000). The research therefore places the legislative and regulatory framework as a notional protective envelope for stakeholders against the worst assaults but unable to influence human nature.

**Interviews face-to-face**
The semi-structured interview process undertaken with blind persons and with Deaf persons who requested face-to-face interviews is controlled to a great extent by the interviewees. Respondents were advised they may terminate the interview at any time. Other control can be exerted by deflecting questions, answering tangentially or off the topic, or answering a question not asked. A similar process occurs with the web-based questionnaire. Of the approximate 65 responses there were about half a dozen ‘false starts’ as well as more than a dozen useful responses from four overseas countries, mostly the USA. Questions were sometimes ignored, queried or answered in a jocular dismissive fashion. The website, not being totally in Auslan, could not obviate misunderstandings, as evidenced by some replies or explained via subsequent e-mail or interpreter assistance in personal contact. Interviewing persons who are blind and who are d/Deaf presented disparities which may be no different to those experienced conducting interviews in the general population. However the following was noted:

**a. Content**
The amount of time spent with interviewees has no equitable ratio to the amount of material gleaned, usable or otherwise.
**b. Environments chosen for interviews**
Environments were chosen with interviewee discretion so respondents could exert some control over aspects of interviews. Rejecting a proposed place for a first encounter may provoke suspicion or insecurity. After an initial meeting if the venue is inappropriate then a second meeting could be requested at a more suitable venue.

**c. Question variation and time expiry**
In semi-structured interviews that take place in what is tantamount to social occasions the interviewees have greater control of the conversation flow. They may also resist venturing into certain areas of dialogue or questioning. By their nature, semi-structured interviews include a deal of gossip and privileged information but if this was recorded it was discarded for privacy and security reasons. A deal of time may expire due to extraneous trivia. This may include the getting of food and drink, interruption by cafe staff or passers-by and other distractions due to the social nature of the scene.

**d. Mood influencing content**
A light and diffuse mood may relax both interviewer and interviewee but may also contribute to trivializing the content or inhibiting the depth of response. The process that allows an interviewee to relax on first meeting in the presence of an interviewer might also serve to turn interviewee focus away from issues that have perplexed or concerned them.

**e. Results**
Potentially there is less comparable data from one interview to another. Also, no indigenous persons presented themselves for interview; yet as reported by Medew (29 September 2009): “Indigenous people are six times more likely to go blind than other Australians”.


Sampling
The research reached out to persons of diverse sexualities who are blind and d/Deaf to self-select as respondents (see Possible limitations to and strengths of the study). In order to contact persons who are blind and QLGBT, the convener of the short-lived blind LGBT group that was called "Blind Out and Proud" (Appendices One and Two), agreed to provide my contact details to the membership list. Response from that led to a number of interviews\textsuperscript{10} and some of those participants suggested or encouraged other persons to contact me. This was a protracted process as the cohort is widespread, of low-incidence and its individuals are not in regular contact with each other. I also joined an international blind QGLBT chat-room, disclosed my full intentions and got a limited USA response. The research catalyzed the establishment of a Victorian-based internet chat line for blind people of diverse sexualities, ultimately named Ozblinddiv, with over twenty people of diverse sexualities subscribing to the list. A majority of blind persons self-selected to be interviewed either in person or by telephone (see Appendices Three, Four and Five).

For reasons produced by the theoretical perspectives the research sought views from persons currently or previously involved with BCA, VA, TDFA and DA (see Terminology). Cooperation was received from past CEOs of these organisations and from current CEOs and Chairpersons of BCA, VA and TDFA. Due to issues of their internal organisational politics and external organisational relationships it has been a research choice to aggregate that data. Organisational representatives

\textsuperscript{10} Interview accounts are local accomplishments constrained by, sensitive to and understandable in terms of a local interactive context. They are potential indicators of the socially dominant modes that constitute, shape and provide reasons for various objects of knowledge. They provide indications of people's beliefs and meanings or of the social practices and conditions in their environments (Alvesson, 2002, p. 126).
informed the research about their experiences of organisational change, the role of IORs, impact of organisations on subcultural identities and their advocacy and service provision. The research is sensitive to challenges organisations face and while presuming that not all stakeholders are happy with organisations, contemplates that not all organisations may be pleased with the behavior or characteristics of their stakeholders.

Regarding geographical response from blind persons, the research infers the dominance of persons from Victoria may be due to the headquartering there of VA and BCA, perhaps engendering greater politicization of issues and more involvement of (potential) stakeholders. The attention given to respondents in the interview process does not necessarily empower or provide respondents with any service, partly because researcher interpretation is implicit in the process.

**Blind persons responding to the research**

In-person and e-mail interviews are listed below. Repeat meetings and interviews were counted as one interview. Twenty-seven persons responded as being blind with three persons not identifying as sexually diverse. An e-mail interview was conducted with the USA respondent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blind Responses</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>Vic</th>
<th>Other states, territories</th>
<th>Australia Totals</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M Queer Gay</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Queer Lesbian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender M2F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transvestite</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Bisexual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Bisexual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Straight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Straight</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – blind persons responding to the research.
d/Deaf persons responding to the research

Fifty-four persons responded as d/Deaf. It was not always possible to attribute state origins. Table 2 also demonstrates the broad geographical reach of the internet questionnaire. Responses from d/Deaf persons via the internet survey are from the inception of www.netsurvey.com.au in 2007 until its 2009 withdrawal. "Other" countries included Canada and Europe. In-person interviews facilitated by sign language interpreters followed on from respondent-initiated contact via the website. There were 54 complete responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deaf Persons</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M Queer Gay</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Queer Lesbian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TransgenderM2F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transvestite</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual M</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Straight’ M</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>‘Straight’ F</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Deaf</td>
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Table 2 – d/Deaf persons responding to the research.

In September 2007 I joined the Australian Association of the Deaf (AAD – now DA) and its chat room, disclosing my full research purpose without getting any on-line response at that time. I explored the BBC “Ouch” pages and chat-rooms without material response. Reading Deaf blogs, I found one where my ‘gaydar’ sensed the blogger might be Queer or gay due to certain frames of reference. His blog was suffused with intelligent vehemence and humour. I sent my proposal idea to him and he gave it some space in his blog, which did not evidently lead to significant response from a wider public. However it led to collaboration with him on the development of a web-site questionnaire. As the blogger lived in the

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11 Instinctive, sometimes accurate 'insider' belief that another person may be ‘Gay’. 
Sydney region I have traveled twice to meet him and corresponded by e-mail. His suggestions have been modified by me, other collaborators, the internet technician and web host. The result was www.netsurvey.com.au. Questions have been refined during this process. A guiding idea is expressed in Marshall's (1990, 1999) 'first day in the field' suggestion for pilot interviews to test and confirm methods and questions. The response to the questionnaire was unexpectedly large even though it may not have been totally accessible to Deaf persons unfamiliar with written English. I filmed a number of explanatory Auslan videos, inserting them into the website survey to provide explanation of the research and what was appropriate for a respondent to do in order to complete the survey.

A few Deaf persons selected to be interviewed with the assistance of an Auslan interpreter of their choosing, provided at my expense. Many persons who are Deaf experience English as a foreign language that has degrees of obscurity, so questionnaire replies, transcripts and e-mails that represent responses from d/Deaf persons are not always expressed in grammatical English. I have completed an Auslan introductory course, but cannot sign. Choice of interpreter was not simple because discretion is a critical and personal issue. The netsurvey website, devised because face-to-face interviews were problematic, was ‘soft-launched’ then withdrawn for improvements prompted by respondent reactions. An advertisement was placed in TDFA magazine. Over the next months the website was more intensively re-launched (see Appendix Three). AAD [now DA], made no editorial mention of it. While BCA and many d/Deaf organizations publicized the research, AAD/DA remained aloof.
My research was mentioned publicly at the 2008 BCA national conference I attended in Melbourne. I was interviewed by a BCA CEO on the radio program *New Horizons* (2 October 2008, program 55 broadcast 13/10/08, 4RPH - Radio for the Print Handicapped), who publicized my contact details. I made presentations in Melbourne at two seminars concerning persons who are characterized by disability and non-heteronormative sexuality. I retained membership of the four organisations (BCA, DA, TDFA, VA) and attended various of their functions. An incomplete record of this process is contained in related e-mails which partially comprise the research diary. The process over three years has included more than a hundred hours on the telephone.

Particularly sensitive issues in reporting occur where the present and/or former organisational representatives are of diverse sexualities themselves. The researcher may have hear-say awareness of that possibility or be privy to personal disclosures. This research is concerned primarily with ethical responsibilities owed to respondents and therefore the research contains discretionary fragmentation of information acquired in order to preserve anonymity or inject obscurity of response/origin. Interviews were used to understand organisational notions and attitudes as well as how these latter might translate into action, and were informed by textual materials with inconsistencies between texts and interview responses being relevant. Organizational languages are important (Tietze, Cohen and Musson, 2003). Topics included IORs which are "factors in organisational survival" (Brody, 2005, pp. 393-399). Networking of organisations is often about "identity, power, politics and financial survival"

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Cursory textual analysis indicated that fundamental issues impacted upon the well-being, life-style and individual survival of respondents (including gendered performativity with its consequences for identity, Butler, 1993a; Salih, 2002), such that the research should be located in Health (hence participation in the Griffith Institute for Health and Medical Research Conference December, 2007). Grbich (1999) deals with qualitative research in health so I attended ACSPRI courses conducted by her (and others) to sort out queries concerning research design, coding (Holton, 2007) and to become familiar with Grbich's Iterative Mode of data analysis (1999, pp. 231-233). The research conducted an active hermeneutic with respondents; this included a contemplative assessment of the researcher's own attitudes, perceptions and biases (see Possible limitations to and strengths of the study herein). A specific journal to note additional information, personal feelings, potential themes and responses was not kept, but e-mails, research notes and such were retained, some printed out and others as computer files, including sound files. All interviews were transcribed privately by the researcher. I 'did all five' of the options suggested for author voice (Grbich, 1999, pp. 236-237): introducing narratives; providing third-person summary; weaving in and out of the text as another entity; engaging the narratives in on-going rhetorical conversations; and displaying questions to preface responses.

In accordance with Grbich (1999, p. 100), my first transcripts contained all speech, hesitations and nuance; I realized that via computer voice software utilised by blind persons, presentation of an accurate transcript could be
interpreted as a personal slight, niggly reinforcement of a respondent’s performed
idiosyncrasies or even ridicule if one was hypersensitive. It has been a
methodological choice to leave out “ums”, “ers”, throat clearings and such. I only
had accuracy in mind not parody or patronisation. "Essentials of interview
information" was the aim (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002, pp. 199-224; Mason,
speech problems, peculiarities and/or identifying descriptive data with
consequent potential for embarrassment. Interviews were anyway intended to
provide material for aggregate data not for identifying individual views, and any
quotes used are de-identified unless permission has been given or the quote is
already published in prior sources and part of the public domain. Few persons
anyway took up the transcription offer but a number of respondents are
interested to have access to the completed thesis.

In one instance, having interviewed a Deaf respondent to the internet survey with
an agreed Auslan interpreter, a transcript of interview was provided which
resulted in a second interview being requested by that same interviewee again at
my expense with the same Auslan interpreter to clarify discrepancies of meaning
apparently parlayed by the interpreting process. Thus for one respondent the
research had three interview replies (including that via www.netsurvey.com.au).
This was a welcome happenstance in regard to method and achieved deep insight
but was included as just one response. Interview environments were variable with
many being in semi-public spaces such as cafes with degrees of extraneous noise.
In some instances this rendered totally accurate transcription extremely arduous.
As the bulk of interview material accumulated I spent considerable time
contemplating and researching ideas about interview transcription. Crotty (1998, p. 7) provided a frame on which to construct eclectic methods:

Ethnographic enquiry in the spirit of symbolic interactionism seeks to uncover meanings and perceptions on the part of the people participating in the research, viewing these understandings against the backdrop of the people’s overall worldview or ‘culture’. In line with this approach, the researcher strives to see things from the perspective of the participants. It is this that makes sense of the researcher’s stated intention to carry out unstructured interviews and to use a non-directive form of questioning within them.

The total of these parameters excused me from detailed noting of my own exact words and allowed me to omit speech characteristics.\(^{13}\) Transcription speed increased substantially.

1.3 Rigour and ethics in data collection
Because the findings of the proposed research are descriptive in and of themselves (Krefting, 1991, p. 220), representing a series of individual and organisational perspectives that may produce common themes, the notion of transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Lincoln, 1990) is not an issue as generalizations will not be made about the findings: situational uniqueness can give rise to conclusions that are not transferable. The thematic analysis searched for commonalities or divergences, and assumptions are drawn therefrom (Tuckett, 2005).

If the "essence of credibility" is the "authority of the researcher" (Krefting, 1991, p. 220) residing in familiarity with the topic, grasp of theory, versatility of approach and investigative skills based on learning and experience, then the researcher is qualified. Contemplating the notion of reflexivity has informed upon

\(^{13}\) Assumptions I bring to the methodology and the research will be evident in the research text as well as under Possible limitations to and strengths of the study herein.
the interplay between researcher and researched, which includes a): how the vocabulary and framework of the researcher shapes context and interpretation, and b): 'memory': any after-construction, production or projection of uncertainty or bias in the process of writing up. Triangulation of data sources and methods has been two-fold. Firstly, the cross-referencing of research materials to the proposed interviews; and second: the investigation of two groups having sensory impairment who are of diverse sexualities: blind persons and d/Deaf persons. Triangulating data from internet questionnaire responses and from live interviews was not difficult but there were differences between the two, because of interviewee control, and also due to varying interpretations of written English. Contacting the widely dispersed pool of respondents was problematic, plus I was a part-time candidate; so the second-interview time-frame was elastic. Ethical approval was granted in May 2007 and again in November 2007 after I requested variations following consultation with persons in the potential interviewee cohort. Confirmation into the research was recommended on 18 March 2008.

**Ethical considerations**
The research involved blind persons who became members of a purposely created on-line contact group. However not all members of that on-line group contributed to discussion and some members never wrote to the group. The Ozblinddiv e-mail list was only open to persons admitted to the list by the moderator. Such persons have rights to imagine that their correspondence is restricted to readers within the list because their identities are at least somewhat disclosed by their e-mail addresses. To avoid 'guessing' by persons in the realm of the research, views are mostly de-identified, de-dated and with reference to other individuals excised. As with any qualitative research, decisions in these respects
may be subjective, selective and motivated. If all views are taken into account and argued, inferences may be processed into assessments and qualified judgements. Hence this research delves into alternative implications based on the observations accumulated from extant materials and interviewee responses from persons who did not necessarily fit into discrete categories, but who might inhabit one or more of the following approximate divisions.

Blind persons comprise the first category of persons interviewed (table p. 26), and the second category comprises d/Deaf persons (table p. 27 and Appendix Ten). There were persons who started to respond to the internet survey who then abandoned their attempt but who anyway submitted their partial responses. Such responses were discarded and not counted. A third category of respondents comprised those d/Deaf persons who having seen the website and the questionnaire, elected to be interviewed in person with the aid of an Auslan interpreter. These persons may or may not have completed the questionnaire, or felt they had more to say or that their responses needed clarifying in-person. A fourth category of persons are those who may be d/Deaf, blind or partially sighted and who may not present as sexually diverse. Any respondent may have held administrative positions in advocacy and/or service organisations. They may appear in web-based and other published materials, or anonymously through interviews, and have telephone or e-mail exchanges with the researcher. Any information given 'off the public record' has not been recorded, to obviate chance of hear-say that could be used as political or social currency in various environments.
Appropriate guidelines for researching online groups are (Brownlow and O'Dell, 2002, pp. 690-691, reproducing Sharf, 1999, pp. 253–254):

- Before starting an investigation and throughout the duration of the study the researcher should contemplate whether or not the purposes of the research are in conflict with or harmful to the purpose of the group. Conversely, the researcher should consider whether the research will benefit the group in some way, for example, helping to legitimize the group’s function.

- The researcher should clearly introduce himself as to identity, role, purpose and intention to the on-line group or individuals who are the desired focus of the study.

- The researcher should make a concerted effort to contact directly any individual who has posted a message that he wishes to quote in order to seek consent.

- The researcher should seek ways to maintain an openness to feedback from the e-mail participants who are being studied.

- The researcher should strive to maintain and demonstrate a respectful sensitivity toward the psychological boundaries, purposes, vulnerabilities and privacy of the individual members of any self-defined virtual community, even though its disclosure is publicly available.

In face-to-face interviews participants are usually asked to sign an ethics statement and are given opportunity to ask questions about the research. Mann and Stewart (2002, pp. 222-226; Brownlow and O'Dell, 2002, pp. 691) suggest that a statement about the research could be "sent by e-mail with a consent form as an attachment". The appropriateness of e-mail consent for blind or Deaf
persons may be problematic. A website explaining the "purpose of the study with information about the researcher" is also recommended by Mann and Stewart (2002, pp. 40, 59), and that was considered the most suitable option for persons who are d/Deaf and for persons who are blind to access via the voice reading and production computer software if they were users of the internet (three were not) to get information about the research. The ethics process suggests that the participants "post back the completed consent forms" (Brownlow and O'Dell, 2002, p. 691; Mann and Stewart, 2002, pp. 48, 222) to the researcher. This was considered presumptuous and likely to be of rare or nil occurrence over the interview cohort.

Ethical problems in online environments may approximate those experienced in qualitative research that is face-to-face. Because the research comprises interviews with persons commonly termed as ‘disabled’, other ethical problems are posed. A difficulty is to break through habitual packaging of words and ideas, (all quotes in this paragraph are from Gamson, 1995, pp. 87-88), which involves a "self-presentation dilemma invoking choices in attitude and persona". These choices are between the interviewer as a knowledgeable outsider, a knowledge-pursuing outsider, a newcomer, a learner perhaps with a "self-conscious emphasis on the role of academic researcher", an outsider who has “no stake in 'good' answers but only in honest ones", or else giving the impression there's something on offer in return: an exchange of "information commodities". Reaction to this may be alarm at the subterfuge and potential manipulative duplicity implied but genuine reciprocity of information and analyses is likely to be appreciated by respondents.
**Dealing with diversity of response elements**
The lens for the research had to be multi-focal. Participants inhabit multiple minorities as well as mainstream lives. Quasi-ethnographic immersion means relatively intimate involvement. Interviews are then more akin to social conversations with a give-and-take sentiment underlying the conversational exchange: intimacies disclosed are on a two-way basis; e-mail exchange may be less guarded in both directions. Phone conversations may tend away from research issues to matters of a personal nature.

Each reader may bring varying emphases and connotations to reading of label-words and concepts such as to the acronyms and terminologies listed under *Terminology*. Any tendencies a reader has towards negative essentialism may invoke arenas of misunderstanding. For example if a reader considers ‘Gay’, ‘Lesbian’ or ‘Transgender’ as wicked states of existence, ideas of participation in society let alone inclusion may be anathema. A reader may believe that ‘Gay’ signifies ‘danger to children’, or: ‘indulges in public sex’. Others may see the terms QGLBT as absolutes, exclusive or as scales of measurement. Questions such as: ‘to what extent Queer/ Lesbian/ Gay/ Bisexual/ Transvestite?’ and: ‘to what extent blind, to what extent d/Deaf?’ - are not invalid. Their answers may be linked to the nature and formation of identities and groups.

It will be expected that organisational spokespersons interviewed may be adept at creating public relations images: elites or their representatives have vested interests in keeping their audiences in mind because those audiences are consumers of public-relations products (Gamson, 1995, p. 89). Practical issues include: how to gain access to interviewees - easier if the research process is useful to the interviewee; also: establishing rapport and protecting “research
results from revision” (Ostrander, 1995, p. 137). Access to independently sourced information (perhaps documents on public record) may be essential in a process that includes challenging given responses: elites do not require the researcher to be deferential, mainly knowledgeable.

The research has not involved respondents that were or are in management or other organisational positions in risks greater than that of everyday living because in talking with the researcher they were doing no more than required by their professional and employment status. Information from any one organisation was not communicated to any other without their informed consent and anyway, inter-organisational assumptions and conjecture was rife in all communities with which the research dealt. Raw interview material is being kept for no more than five years after granting of the doctorate, in accordance with Griffith University Ethics Manual, Book 23, Section 12.0: Privacy and data storage. All research information is stored in a locked fireproof filing cabinet. E-mails and other internet exchanges and re-submission of interview transcripts from personal interviews are included as comprising informed consent. The absolute letter of the University Informed Consent parameters has been problematic as far as presentation to persons who are blind are concerned, for obvious reasons, and also to persons who are d/Deaf as English is not a primary language for Deaf persons nor necessarily a second language. The researcher feels that parameters of Informed Consent for persons who are blind and Deaf should be negotiated with organisations representing the interests of persons who are blind and Deaf to avoid claims of colonialism and patronization (Lane, 2002), in the spirit of, as Thompson (1996) proclaimed: “Nothing about us without us”.

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**How analysis of the research was conducted**

A thematic analysis was undertaken across the following areas:

- Smaller circle concerns: journeys through identities and sexualities: families, friends, associates and self.
- Concerns about advocacy and service organisations: what is wrong, what is right, and what could be done better.
- The nature of claims made by organisations to represent.
- Perceived attributes and deficiencies in representations of identity made by organisations.
- Respondent concerns about problematic areas of their lives upon which organisations may have impact: education; belonging; communication, meeting others; religion; iconic figures.
- Organizational concerns: interorganizational relationships - IORs; whether QGLBT issues are problematic for organisations and stakeholders.
- Generation of identities and implications, if any, for all stakeholders and their relationships to broader environments.

From such information a sense of organisational positioning and operational needs was gained and myriad insights into the concerns of research respondents. Ethnographic opportunities such as activities and meetings were attended. Because the ‘ongoing’ aspect of the Grbich method (1999, p. 232) was maintained a written summary of themes every five or so interviews was not made. Conditions fulfilling Grbich's method of examining research themes (1999, pp. 233-234) included: occasional specific language and responses relating to themes from which it has been possible to generate propositions; and: placing the discovered propositions across other themes and typologies to reveal more
complex associations of critical importance. Codings were for broad themes, concepts, strategies, relationships and propositions.

In the subjective mode of analysis (Grbich, 1999, p. 235) the researcher’s radical consciousness must be invoked to deconstruct the power differences between a researcher who may be in "a centred position of high involvement" (p, 235) and the issues, persons and organisations that are subjects of the research. The co-researching aspect by some research respondents due to their immersion and interest has reduced researcher authority. Persons who have permitted me to name them include Ross de Vent and Tony Nicholas. Tony was an identity of the d/Deaf scene before the research. Ross became an identity due to his personal decisions, the research and his participation. Both have utilized aspects of the research as an advocacy topic and contributed to the research structure and findings with which they may not agree.

**Multi-methods and their impact - meta-alternation**

The research investigated and traversed realms of lived complexity. This has required a flexible approach because research respondents have been dealing with the imposts of dominant cultures as well as the values and mores of subcultures that may not be entirely appropriate but yet be the nearest approximation to respondent diversity of voice – for example: a person of diverse sexuality becoming d/Deaf-blind belonging to an organisation for Deaf persons which does not openly acknowledge or accept persons of sexual diversity. Because the average citizen lives and works in environments from which blind and d/Deaf persons are often excluded or marginalized, blind and d/Deaf people can exist as subcultural elements in mainstream schools and then in the societies that
possibly find it cheaper and easier to function without catering to persons with sensory impairments. Physical exclusions are focal points for legislative and regulative battles. Adding diverse sexuality as another minority lifestyle characteristic to that of different or impaired physical characteristics can pose questions of attitude and legitimacy to advocacy and service organisations.

The conjunction of organisations, sexuality and so-called 'disability' is where identity politics, organisation, queer and subcultural theories can be examined. Due to the intersection of multiple issues, there is no single body of theory available to deal with them (Creswell, 2007; Creswell and Clark, 2007) but perhaps two methodologies. The first possibility is bricolage (Kincheloe, 2005; and McLaren, 2005), which as a central feature has: 1): rigorous effort to identify what is absent in observed or presented evidence; 2): imagining what was never there and the world as it could be - in order to develop alternatives to what are existing oppressive conditions. Plus there is: 3): in instigative aspect, conducted in a way that promotes a will to act, with promulgation of the idea that there is far more to the world than may be self-evident; 4): intense reflexivity is required: the researcher's social location, personal history and consequent ways of seeing are deeply interrogated. Therefore the research decided more appropriately upon on the other possibility: mixed methods in data collection - texts and interviews (Creswell, 2003); and meta-alternation (Campbell, 2003; Kellehear, 1993) across body, disability, identity, organizational, Queer and subcultural theories.

**Review of procedures**

Almost all personal respondents were contacted at least a second time after they each had time to consider the content of their first interview. Deaf persons who
responded to the website\textsuperscript{14} and who asked for further contact were interviewed in person, as previously noted. Apart from confirming, elaborating or corroborating information obtained in the first interview, the second was to give respondents opportunity to correct any misunderstandings or misinterpretations and allow the researcher to ask additional questions that may have emerged. Being a member of various organisations, the interviewer subsequently met some respondents on a social basis for casual meals, social outings or at conventions.

There are gaps in public understanding of what happens in service and advocacy organisations and to their subcultural stakeholders. Some of these gaps in knowledge have been filled and the process has given insight into how organisations may deal inclusively with their own minority group stakeholders.

To some extent social gatherings with participants (which lasted varying periods of time because they comprise exchanges of views and information) can be tantamount to informal focus groups. In such situations the presence of a researcher might also constitute face-to-face participant observation but the processing of multiple informed consent materials is likely to inhibit research. Denzin (1999) did not obtain consent before conducting on-line research and copiously quoting from it, nor did he "reveal himself as a researcher" (Brownlow and O'Dell, 2002, pp. 691-692). Obtaining personal consent from individuals before using their quotes empowers participants. Submitting transcripts gives participants opportunity to validate interpretation of what they have contributed but these processes are not always practical or possible. Contributions being aggregated into data can negate personal focus and depersonalize and

\textsuperscript{14} www.netsurvey.com.au
decontextualise information which helps to avoid identification. That can be appealing to participants if anonymity is sought. De-identifying may take immediacy and poignancy from particular utterance but will inhibit identification and impart anonymity.

1.4 Strengths and possible limitations of the study

Limitations to any study can originate with the subject, researcher, the body of theory or methodology, or in the analysis of the data. Interviewees can be politically sensitive and indulge in politically-guided story-telling, acting in ways deemed appropriate for impression management, so even a good interview may not result in knowledge - although indication of "beliefs, meanings, cultural conditions and social practice" might be achieved (Ostrander, 1995, p. 150).

 Appropriately framed questions (Appendix Five) elicited information on the philosophical, theoretical, political and practical commitments of those involved. In any organization, existence of political and altruistic ideologies and aspirations will affect the nature of organisational processes. Interviewees may have expectations of, interests in, and commitments to the research process but demonstrations or expressions of fair-dealing by the researcher may not necessarily garner similar response from all participants.

Knowledge gained from interviews is initially inferred: processes of interpretation take place, voluntary or otherwise. The reality in which we live is a cultural construct with our representations of it serving as filters for our relationships with the world (Melucci, 1996, p. 7), and personal interpretations may be transferred onto the contexts of others. Management elites or spokespersons may have the best working knowledges of their organisations while that of clients or service-users may be particularized to their own needs. Some respondents were
past and current personnel of advocacy and service organisations likely to continue using services or involved in advocacy with the organisations. At varying times these organisations via their representatives may believe what the organisations self-publish is sufficient information. In such instances management or board members from past eras may feel less defensive or inhibited while maintaining continuing if peripheral interest in processes that previously consumed their time. Current representatives may not be interested to deal with issues they consider tangential or even immaterial to immediate organisational goals. Some responses may be characterized by suspicion of investigation, tacitly informing the research of recalcitrant mindsets.

However, suspicion on the part of interviewees may be allayed by frank exposition of the research and its purpose with explanation of the ethical parameters. Ethics of utilizing the internet are multi-faceted (Brownlow and O'Dell, 2002; Bergmann, 1993; Webber, 2008; Willett, 2008; Herring, 2008; Stern, 2008). Solove (2007, p. 94) points out that "even desirable norms can be enforced to an excessive degree" and that internet shaming of individuals may be permanent (pp. 37, 95, 189), whereas shaming of organisations is not (Solove, 2007, p. 95) - because they can reinvent and re-present themselves to their stakeholders and image-consuming audiences. Solove believes (p. 74) that the internet makes gossip more permanent and widespread, so research has to ensure that it does not add to such a chain of possible future reference. Of particular importance is Solove's observation (p. 170) that "privacy can be violated by increasing accessibility to information already available" and that privacy "is a matter of degrees, not absolutes".
The research results lack representation from urban or regional health departments or care facilities that daily encounter d/Deaf and blind persons, and random sampling was inappropriate. No indigenous blind Australians were involved and perhaps no indigenous d/Deaf persons (replies to the internet survey could be anonymous). There may be a cohort of persons who are isolated and need representation. With funding and time this research could be extended to embrace Indigenous Australia. However, this study has the benefit of manageability, with its tight focus on a small number of clearly definable respondents, their perceptions, knowledge and experiences. In-depth understanding was gained of organisations and issues from respondent perspectives and the research has blazed trails as an exemplar of innovation and possibility.

**Insider research**

The researcher does not consider there is a "fundamental dichotomy" in the notion of insider/outsider research (Sherry, 2002, p. 141; Zavella, 1993, p. 53). The researcher as well as persons, organisations and issues subject of the research dwell in dominant social constructs in which our experiences are multifarious but not totally without cultural commonalities. Caution was required regarding accountability to those whom the research is studying due to ethical and personal issues that could arise. The researcher appropriately deconstructed his own identity, preconceptions and prejudices. As identities may be "produced" in varying ways for varying audiences (Connolly, 1991, p. 64) a researcher should be self-aware in case s/he is producing or enhancing an identity in order to manipulate research results or subjects. Sherry (2002, pp. 17-21) discusses possible bias, the exercise of power by "subtle coercion" and difficulties with
anonymity as being ethical problems confronting researchers who are personally immersed (Smyth and Holihan, 1999). When sensitive issues are broached there are risks that issues previously discrete may be revealed or that private arrangements for particular purposes could be brought into wider gaze.

The researcher is a mature-age vision impaired Queer male and ethnically a Jew (non-practicing) reasonably described as a ‘bear’ type homosexual and out to all his family\(^{15}\). Anti-gay and anti-Semitic experiences that I encounter every year do not foster hope that the institutions of Australia’s dominant social constructs, its education system and cultural parameters are likely to provide peer, school, institutional and other environmental and cultural support sufficient to grant me full and equal citizenship.

Personal history of the researcher includes myopia from infancy then later chemical, medical, surgical and technological intervention to preserve or save my sight, continuing to through the present. Intervention allowed me to pursue economic and social careers as a sighted person with intermittently resolved but on-going and current threats to my vision. The researcher credits retention of his sight to: a) having funds to travel overseas when suitable surgical intervention was not available in Australia; b) being Australian at this time in history which now facilitates access to world-class ophthalmologic professionals; c) having developed a pro-active role in retaining vision; d) maintaining contact with professionals in the field even when no drastic imminent threat presented; and e) luck in that eye procedures performed have not been catastrophic failures even if not always totally successful. This is removed from the realities of total blindness.

\(^{15}\) I believe that researcher positioning and notions of insider research oblige this personal disclosure.
In the researcher’s immediate family there have been significant persons with hearing loss (including my father) who had surgical interventions to preserve their hearing but no cochlear implants. As a sexually diverse person with sight problems, the researcher is relatively adept at operating in two or more worlds: sometimes making bridges and other times selectively dissembling, invoking tacit denial of membership of any world that may be ‘inconvenient’ to the environment being lived at a particular moment. Getting older and gaining financial independence, arriving at a point where prejudiced persons cannot deprive me of work, accommodation or financial security, has freed me from dissembling. When asked if one is homosexual there may be no ‘true’ one-word answer (Lance and Tanesini, 2005), because the question is posed within the asker’s frame of reference so the questioner should define their mindset and prejudices before any response is provided. Similarly the reader is asked to think about her/his prejudices, because due to multiple bodily and emotional states, environments, histories, social constructions and histories experienced, it is impossible to approach these issues values-neutral. I self-disclosed to research participants by conversations, emails and www.netsurvey.com.au.

**Other possible limitations**
Lowry (1960, p. 30) appears to be the first to deal with gender and blindness when she observed that images of blindness conceived by the non-blind were masculine, particularly in connotations established by using a cane or dog for mobility. At that time in the United States the female-to-male blind employment rate was a ratio of 1 to 5 (Wolffe and Spungin, 2002), which may account for aspects of visibility in and observation by a broader community. Blindness and feelings of gendered social inadequacy have also been mentioned by: Mintz,
Authors in DeafWorld do not seem to have gendered issues as topics, but the researcher (male) keeps in mind that gender and dominance imply psychosocial issues of power and devaluation. It is noted that the CEOs of important advocacy organisations for Deaf persons and also for blind persons have often been and are currently female, that iconic figures in both arenas have often been female. This is not to say that issues of exclusion, prejudice, tokenism, stereotyping and 'the glass ceiling' do not exist. Focus of textual research material has to some extent been on masculinity, men, maleness, homoeroticism and male homosexuality. Origins of that may be cultural and historical. Possibly, for more female response, an empathic female researcher might elicit more female and less male participation. Therefore the research looked for universality in themes.

Thematic analysis of data can be inhibited by vast quantities of material having dozens of themes with few correspondences. Processes of data reduction to achieve concise analysis increase the existing risks posed by subjective choice (Tuckett, 2005). During organizing, coding, theorizing and even reading there may be areas of ‘slippage’ where distortions become embedded in the research.

**Strengths of the study**
The research deals with exclusion and marginalization. Although not presenting d/Deaf and blind persons as belonging to disadvantaged ethnicities, there are similarities to be considered. Blind and d/Deaf persons do not have the opportunities to participate in broader society to the extent of average Australians yet they have been neglected by research. The lives of persons who are blind, d/Deaf and of diverse sexualities have historically been circumscribed in ways not endured by average Australians, and self-exploration of potential may not be
options. This research questions those constructs as well as the environments in which they have developed. The subject has never been dealt with in this manner: information on advocacy and service organisations for people with sensory impairment or difference in regard to their Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite and Transgender stakeholders is minimal. It is timely to involve these organisations in dialogue about their attitudes and to gather perceptions of their stakeholder members.

**Chapter One** has dealt with the following:

- Difference and its location.
- The research questions.
- Methodologies employed.
- Painting pictures in twilight – the initial elusiveness of imagery.
- Stage 1 of the research – Stocktaking – Research Scoping.
- Laws and regulations.
- Blind and d/Deaf identity formation and how organisations are involved.
- Stage 2 – personal interviews and how they were conducted.
- The factors that impact upon face-to-face interviews.
- Sampling - Blind and d/Deaf persons of diverse sexualities responding to the research.
- Dealing with diversity of response elements.
- Rigour and ethics in data collection and particular considerations.
- How analysis of the research was conducted.
- Multi-methods and their impact - meta-alternation.
- Review of procedures.
- Possible limitations and strengths of the study, including Insider research and advantages or otherwise.
**Approaching the Identity gateway**

The methodological environment of the research has been introduced and explored. Bodies of knowledge have been assembled and the methodological approach explicated. The next chapter, Chapter Two examines the identity formation processes undertaken by research respondents and their organisations. With a multi-faceted background of theory the research explores manifestations of those identity inputs to understand how marginalized persons relate to their advocacy and service organisations and each other; to appreciate if and how identity constructs may be influenced by advocacy and service organizations; to learn how stakeholders in groups and organisations might hope to achieve their journeys to citizenship, status, mission goals and the accumulation of positive social capital for all concerned and broader society. A research intention has been to foster goodwill and cooperation between all stakeholders to engender cohesive, understanding, as well as mutually respectful social and academic environments.
Chapter Two
Identity formation

This chapter is about how we might become who we are, as well as *who and what are doing that to us* – making us who we are. Whether we stay aligned to these acculturated identities depends on issues which this chapter explores. Identity formation is a dependent variable. Identity is the foundation of ‘community’. ‘Community’ community can be an aspiration more than it will ever be a reality, or it may be an altar before which alternative, idiosyncratic and deviant identities can be sacrificed or pilloried. Identity fluidity undermines stereotypes and aggravates the unimaginative as well as theocratic fanatics.

Rummens (2003, p. 21) conceives identity as comprising three processes. The first of these is the cognitive development of self-identity, of self-image and includes self-labeling. It includes reaction to the impact of in-group bias, affirmation and denial, personal history, origins and cultural affiliations. The second is identity construction which is about social identities and thus places emphasis on politics, ideologies and the impact of cultural forms. Finally comes negotiation of identities which has regard to the self and its interaction with groups of others: identities may be assumed, ascribed or achieved by both individuals and groups; the importance of power (or perceptions of it) in these negotiations may be evidenced by the lack of correspondence between individual identities and that of the group. The research acknowledges Rummens’ idea of *plural identities* (2003, p. 11), that identities are complex and fluid. This includes the notion that various identities can be mutually non-influential or intrusive and overlap; that identities can intersect when they "inform or influence” (p. 17).
People may have “central core” identities (p. 16); or individuals may experience bombardments of influence from enveloping circuits of possible identity profiles. Diversity is a "critical aspect of identity research" (Siebers, 2008, pp. 3-6) because it puts emphasis on inequalities that preclude or inhibit access to civil society and social resources such as "power, status, privilege, economic, political and social advantage" (Rummens, 2003, p. 18). Deployment, experience and use of identity may be problematic and life’s exigencies may prompt dissembling to maintain or gain advantage:

By a person's 'identity' we mean the set of social statuses in which one expects to pursue one’s purposes, gratify one’s lusts, solve one’s problems, find fellowship and support.


We might 'have' an identity, 'choose' an identity or 'be given' an identity all at the same time. Maslow (2003) conceived the quest for identity as a life-long process. Being in a minority makes "the social identity salient" (Worschel, 1998, p. 55) and has bearing on the kind of social interaction that occurs, so “personal and social identities” (Rummens, 2003, p. 24) are concerned with comparisons and positioning in the sociological domain.

The performance of identity comprises notions of the body as well as presentations of emotion and relationships and representations of the self as depicted via image, layering of identities in story and "shaping of identity through language" (Thomas, 2007, pp. 186-194). Identities have multiple possibilities and constraints, but ultimately identity can be about personal enactment as one experiments with interpretations of malleable and fluctuating notions of useful and permitted authenticity. Identities can overlap due to the
intersection ... of personal and community discourses... which... generate a ‘culture clash’ of vocabularies, slang, behavioural norms, codes of dress, cultural forms, styles of humour, and political interpretations. This uneasy blend thwarts unequivocal loyalty to any single community.

Escoffier, 1998, p. 27.

Escoffier (1998, p. 64) believes limits and differences of individual experiences in groups are inevitable, with political action splitting groups and social movements; and that “Class, religion, race, generation” plus the lack of an harmoniously unified individual internal identity, produces the “transgressive experience through which we discover the limits of our membership [of any group or even culture], our real heterogeneity.”

Empirically, an identity is an "organisation of one's social life in the future" (Stinchcombe, 1986, pp. 124-125). This identity and life may be attacked by unemployment, retirement, loss of capacity due to old age, brain damage, crippling injury and by extension, other disability. A result being that "a person's fate passes psychologically out of his or her hands" (p. 125). Social categories impose differing sets of conditions according to status which includes class, education, sex, age, race, ethnicity and religion (Lowry, 1960; Way, 1998; Wolffe and Candela, 2002; Wittenstein, 1995; Yeadon, 1991). For each category there is differing access to services, employment and training. Blindness resulted in social deprivation and because of that, persons who were blind might "refuse to identify themselves as blind" (Lowry, 1960, pp. 33-34).

There is compulsion to be whatever is defined by a majority as “normal” (de Swaan, 1990, p. 1): "whatever becomes a possibility for many turns into a necessity for everyone". That process may be psychically damaging, alienating
oneself from personal identity and fulfillment. In *Identity Politics* alienation is one of the fundamental problems with society (Armstrong, 2002, p. 18):

People are estranged from society and from themselves. They lack sources of meaning and are blocked from expressing themselves in an authentic manner.

‘Authentic’ is viewed askance and variously. Halperin (1995, p. 95) interprets Foucault as arguing an individual’s "true self" has a stable sexuality that "amalgamates identity and desire”. However, the Hall and Wolfreys’ (2002, p. 65) interpretation of Foucault is that an individual personhood (subjectivity) -

- is created through an internalisation of discursive categories and the interests and biases that they reflect.

Thus political changes in discourses are required to correct alienation and create collective, affirmative identities. The implied fluidity hints that interview respondents could present varying forms of public personae depending on the political environment. Despite prevailing tendencies to read Foucault into everything in this instance it serves no purpose because the persons self-selecting to participate in the research are by no means ‘docile bodies’.

The embodied perspective of disabled persons ... is the necessary ground for realizing the agency of the disabled subject, and it must be a fundamental part of any curriculum in disability studies. Otherwise, the pervasive cultural studies model, with its strong Foucauldian commitment, its tendency to view the body as no more than the site of contested cultural discourses, renders the question of the disabled subject as unapproachable.


This research reviews traditions of identity research (as per Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin, 2010[^16]), by connecting self, group, situation and social movement. It incorporates Stryker’s recontextualized and "modified interactionist" (2008, p. 19) frame whereby persons have "potentially as many identities as there are

[^16]: Paper published July 2010 in the *Annual Review of Sociology*. 
organized systems of role relationships in which they participate”; where we humans operate as “disciplining agents on each other and ourselves” (Hall and Wolfreys, 2002, p. 65). Oppressive power engendering reaction, change and empowerment (Foucault, 1998) is relevant at least for the historic medical and psychiatric treatment of divergent sexualities (Lingiardi and Drescher, 2003). However the research principally concerns individuals imbued by one or more identities seeking peers for validation and companionship who attempt to embrace organisations and groups.

[O]ne holds on to a group identity, despite its insufficiencies, because for most non-mainstream people it’s the closest they have ever gotten to having a political home – and voice. Yes, identity politics reduces and simplifies. Yes, it is a kind of prison. But it is also, paradoxically, a haven. 


Thus "identity categories are socially produced and culturally variable" (Thoits and Virshup, 1997, p. 107) with societies constructing multiple categories such that individuals "acquire multiple social identities". Notions of the self and society are "created, sustained and changed through the process of symbolic communication" (Thoits and Virshup, 1997, p. 108), communication meanings and the messages conveyed being found in audience reactions. Therefore individuals or groups who share similar understandings of symbolic communications may socially bond, feel empathy and understand any diametrical opposition, like an outlaw confronting a sheriff (Thoits and Virshup, 1997, p. 108) providing an agglomeration of symbolic identities and actions. Symbolic interactionism stresses the notion of societal mutual interdependence (Thoits and Virshup, 1997, p. 109): identities accumulate with society providing "shared language and meanings". "Multiple role identities" may be arranged on an ad hoc basis (Watson, 2002) portraying a performed self in accordance with any
benefits, negative responses or reprisals that may accrue (Thoits and Virshup, 1997, p. 110\textsuperscript{17}).

**Lifestyles rendered Vagabond\textsuperscript{18}**

The research has noticed how individuals collect into loose categories and that persons may dwell passingly in identities (Bauman, 1996), influenced by their lived-body experiences. For examples: a student, a gay student, a gay student in boarding school, one who is also Deaf, then in addition to all that: having a disability. In the sense that dominant structure do not grant legitimacy or citizenship, person may inhabit unconventional, even itinerant lifestyles, sometimes characterized by covert flouting of usual restraints. Considering such as 'itinerant camps of persons', the research means those individuals in various relationships with other individuals, groups and organisations, the relationships not necessarily static but maybe titular and intermittently definitive of the groups as perceived by member stakeholders. People can anyway dwell in sequential identity camps, moving on when they have fully explored that identity or merely tested it. This can be done alone or under the auspices of groups, organisations and institutions. People may be assigned to identity camps against their will by the comments or unilateral decisions of others. History is replete with masquerade (Dutton, 1995; Halperin, 1990; Pascoe, 2007; Simpson, 1994; Thomas, 2007) in which persons attempt to clandestinely fulfil themselves in multiple realms of passion and lifestyle perhaps to be revealed by auto/biography or betrayal.

\textsuperscript{17} This notion is akin to that of McCall and Simmons, 1978, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{18} The phrase is lifted from Ken Gelder's (2007) chapter "Subcultures: a vagabond history" in *Subcultures: Cultural histories and social practice*. 
2.1 Fluidity of identities

Identities - the bases of community formation - are "multiple, unstable and regulatory" (Seidman, 1996, p. 12) in that they act to regulate behaviours and mores, a view that undermines lesbian/gay theory and politics (along with their notions of identity), while also presenting "new and productive possibilities". The notion of 'collective community' may be an illusion, even delusional and motivated. Queer "deconstructs collective community" (Hall and Wolfreys, 2002, p. 82) and is arguably as a significant a marker of sexual identity as gender (Walters, 2005, p. 13). The marking of sexual identities as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite and transgender, and the stereotypes they may convey (Duggan, 1992, 1998) can be tenuous. Does a homosexual act by a married man or woman represent bisexuality, repressed homosexuality or simply recreation? Because it casts aside pejorative notions from hetero-normative constructions of history and Queer theorist conflict, the term "Qwir" is arguably useful (Kentlyn, 2007, p. 66; Minning, 2004) for persons who wish to describe their identities if they are not always just one, specific and limiting, discrete identity (see Terminology) - which makes statements such as the one below problematic:

When a man forecloses on admitting he's gay, he gives up striving for authenticity.


The preceding quote from Downs implies denial of identity fluidity, denial of potential to change over time and circumstance. The notion of homosexuality arises in various discourses but it is not a universal and finite conception (Sullivan, 1996, p. 58). There is no continuum across the ages but the discourses

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19 As per the book by Sue Joseph, 1997: *She’s my wife: he’s just sex*.
20 Kentlyn appropriates ‘Qwir’ from an essay by Heidi Minning (2004) in Leap and Boellstorff (Eds) “much the way as some feminists have used the variant spelling of wymmyn, to signify a rupture with the word’s original meaning whilst still finding it useful as a descriptor of a segment of the population".
involve power relationships externally framed and imposed as well as between consenting or dissenting parties. Thus ‘Queer’ and other terminology are deficient for everyday use in that constant comprehensive definition is required. The research could denote diverse sexual identity states as being ‘qwir’ but accedes to respondent self-description. Demonstrating the difficulty in universalizing word meanings Donna Rose, the first and only transgender board member of a USA Human Rights Campaign wrote in her resignation letter to that campaign group board:

Transgender is not simply the "T" in LGBT. It is people who, for one reason or another, may not express their gender in ways that conform to traditional gender norms or expectations. That covers everyone from transsexuals, to queer youth, to feminine-acting men, to masculine-appearing women. It is a broad label that cannot be confined to a specific silo of people. It is anyone who chooses to live authentically. To think that the work that we are doing on behalf of the entire LGBT community simply benefits or protects part of us is to choose a simplistic view of a complex community. In a very real way, the T is anyone who expresses themselves differently. To some it is about gender. To me, it is about freedom.

‘Gender’ is of limited descriptive use, just marking a possible identity-journey starting point, but Australian law saw it as definitive and sacrosanct: until 1972, performers with male ID documents working at the Kings Cross drag show Les Girls were obliged to change out of feminine garb before leaving the premises (Johnston and van Reyk, 2001; Wotherspoon, 1991). Halperin (1995, pp. 61-62) maintains that “queer identity need not be grounded in any positive truth or in any stable reality ... it is an identity without an essence” (Hall and Wolfreys, 2002, p. 67). As well, 'Queer' is useful because (Armstrong, 2002) it rejects white, middle class, male, sexually conformist, politically docile notions of 'gay' that pervade the media, and does not endorse the commercialism or the easy binary

21 This website requests subscription, but subscription attempts in March 2010 failed.
of straight/ gay that is implied. Ambisexual pop icon Michael Stipe (Tillmans, 2006, p. 298) considered there to be “a line drawn between gay and queer and for me, queer describes something that's more inclusive of the grey areas.” It should not be imagined that 'Queer' is always instantly recognizable or visible, although fetishists, transvestites and transgender persons may achieve high visibility. The merits of visibility are arguable. Visibility “sells papers, ruins lives” (Baaden, 1991), yet Armstrong (2002) equates greater visibility with greater status. Visibility does not confer elevated status upon punks "anarchists, prostitutes, bearded ladies, hippy radical faeries ... people with disabilities ... all those who don’t fit in and aren’t represented by mainstream gay culture" (Manning, 1996, p. 98), all of whom have doubtful places in gay political and commercial agendas. Rayside (2001, p. 35) noted that the "institutional and partisan settings in which lesbian and gay activists operate profoundly shape the social movement itself" as well as shaping inter-group relations and opportunities for progress.

Our unhappiness as scared queer children doesn’t only isolate us, it also politicizes us. It inculcates in us a desire for connection that is all the stronger because we have experienced its absence.Kushner, 1997, p. 191.

'Queer’ not Q-u-i-r enough?
For a Queer such as Simpson (1996, p. xiii), “gay is self-serving project of self-justification”, but for others who infer implications of broad community and brotherhood “gayness” can override considerations of merit (Manning, 1997, p. 98). However, "existing barriers of gender, status, race and power" may remain within an overarching apparently possible identity. Queer politics basically may be the politics of the non-normative (Johnston, 2000; Walters, 2005), but the

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22 "Past gay invisibility has provided a blank slate ... that is rapidly filling up with notions that have more to do with marketing than reality", Gluckman and Reed, 1997, p. 4.
normative models of identity "cannot perform the representative work demanded of them" (Jagose, 1996, p. 58-61).

... we must never lose sight of the fact that on a worldwide basis, a majority of people are unable to live openly queer lives or to explore alternative gender roles or different relationship and family structures due to harsh material conditions.


[T]here is no question that gays and lesbians are threatened by the violence of public erasure.

Butler, 1993b, p. 311.

**What’s ‘Deviance’ got to do with it?**

Deviance is a consequence of the social responses of others (Weinberg, Williams and Prior, 2002; Smith, 1993; Walschmidt, 2009) not intrinsic to a behaviour or personal characteristic. Persons who do not conform to a community’s perceptions and impositions of some tacitly agreed presentation (including appearances and performances) may acquire stigma in the sense used by Goffman (1968) that one is afflicted with or has acquired a "stigmatizing reality" (Escoffier, 1997, p. 126); or the label of deviancy as concomitant of "perceived states of being, actions and behaviours" (Becker, 1973, pp. 1-24; Pascoe, 2007, p. 10; Scott, 1969, pp. 29-35). This scenario is one in which the observed and possibly passive protagonist is rendered into an alien state, their citizenship and essence being devalued – or worse: they are persecuted, institutionalized or obliterated.

Any transgression of gender norms established within heteronormative culture immediately results in an inscription of a deviant sexuality.

Higgins, 2006, p. 87.

[H]omosexuality and disability clearly share a pathological past.

McRuer, 2003, p. 79.

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23 Goffman configured deviancy also as a matter of choice – for example: choosing criminality; ‘stigma’ may comprise perception of an imposed social construct.
Progression of an observed person towards deviance may depend upon the observer not accepting a person's disabled body or perceived disabling feature. An observer's personal or communal apprehension labelled 'potentially deviant' may be applied to the observed person. If the observer then perceives behaviours that are interpreted as falling outside those considered average (but termed 'normal') by a majority of persons inhabiting a dominant power ethos, then the label of deviancy may be confirmed and imposed. The observed person may then join or move into a group of similar persons – perhaps for emotional and peer support. A deviant subculture may develop therefrom but the idea of deviancy lurking in subculture group processes (Abrams, de Moura, Hutchinson and Viki, 2005; Hogg, Fielding and Darley, 2005) is also apposite to the research due to intra-group perceptions of deviancy. An example from the research is the experience of a lesbian blind respondent being socially rejected by a group of heterosexual blind persons. Such an attitude hints at further reasons why there is no such group as 'the blind'. The lot of persons who are d/Deaf is similar. In the 19th century developmental era of modern medicine, “normal” functioning of the five senses has been of prime concern (Branson and Miller, 2002, p. 39) and “diagnosis produces the pathological" (p. 38). Similarly, although there is no easily definable group of QLGBT persons, establishment of deviancy is used to justify various institutionalised government and theocratic processes (Adler and Adler, 1997; Weinberg, Williams and Pryor, 2002). Regularisation of the legal pursuit of homosexuality into the Western 20th century co-opted medical and psychological sciences in various criminalisation processes, with deviant bodies being arrested and "physical, emotional and mental developments" attributed as the domicile of deviant personal states (Lehring, 2003, pp. 34-71).
In such scenarios, unremitting observation was the paramount method of control (Foucault, 1991, 1994) for those institutions having and wanting to maintain and extend power, to determine whether there was deviation from "an idealized norm" (Branson and Miller, 2002, pp. 38, 39). Power suppressed passions and cultural expressions (Curra, 2000; Wrigley, 1997).

The social aspect of deviancy becomes clear when someone perceives another person as departing from accepted norms, interprets the person to be some kind of deviant, and influences others also to regard the person as deviant and to act on the basis of that interpretation. As a social phenomenon, then, deviance consists of a set of interpretations and social reactions.


'Fence-sitting' deviant biculturalism and the danger of visibility may not be an option in the era of "binary" everything, which only presents limited states of being as acceptable (Corber and Valocchi, 2003, p. 4). Curra (2000, p. 27) points out that "retrospective interpretation" of a spoiled identity (Goffman, 1963) is a tool in the social re-construction of that identity, accompanied by scrutiny and reinterpretation of biographical detail. This can be the instance for persons who are 'outed' as being of diverse sexualities. Motives may then be assigned to their past actions as part of the process that Becker (1973) described as definition of a person by their deviant identity alone.

In the life-style masquerades of the broader community, the deviancy of Queers, Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transgender persons is a hackneyed 'given' (Goldie, 2008). It should not so be – we are 'normal' people, just not 'average'. The research is interested in group excoriation of individual deviancy, including the schisms, rejections and exclusions within so-called QGLBT, blind and d/Deaf 'communities' that may overlook ‘difference’ if we oppress ourselves.
2.2 QLGBT identities – little match, less mix

[T]ransgender, bisexual, two-spirited, queer or questioning. Those terms refer to identities that are marginalized when they are not ignored outright in “the gay and lesbian movement.”

Chasin, 2000, p. xviii.

Vision has a role in providing access to lesbian and gay communities. While homosexual youth have "difficulty establishing identity and self-esteem" (Ferrell and Griego, 2008, p. 329) those who also have visual impairment may be excluded from participation in gay and lesbian social and political events partly because is difficult for blind persons to discern substantially visual signals – not so with d/Deaf persons. Blind persons may not be able to negotiate the nuances of compartmentalised homosexual environments (p. 334). Thus sexually diverse blind persons may need to dissemble to avoid discrimination in blind environments but may not be meaningfully accepted into QLGBT environments.

[T]he same time that the gay movement became national, it revealed itself as split along several different axes – race, gender, class and agenda.

Chasin, 2000, p. 171.

Ferrell and Griego (2008, pp. 322-323) believe lesbians and gays experience alienation with "immobilizing introspection" plus anger and frustration displaced to non-major issues. Thus gay identity politics assisted the creation of a gay consumer demographic buying happiness (Weir, 1996). Being immersed in grief due to loss or perceived lack may render one docile rather than politically activated because it may be felt, as with Blackman (1997, p. 30) that there is "no grouping with which one can ally". For bisexual persons, alienation was exacerbated by the AIDS epidemic: it produced

a stream of attacks on bisexuals as the source of infection of a "pure" heterosexual community ... From the perspective of a political movement built around promoting gay identity, the very existence of bisexuality and transgenderism seemed threatening. These
phenomena seemed to undermine the solidity of lesbian and gay identities. Bisexuality and transgenderism drew attention to experiences of gender and sexuality that did not fit neatly within the categories of gay and straight.


Thus liberationist identities cannot be universal and Queers anyway reject restrictive identities. In such scenarios while fundamentalist Christians "shrill, paranoiac, combative and separatist" (Weir, 1996, p. 28), rally around God, non-activists gays may be characterized as rallying around consumption and sex. Trying to combat such notions, Bawer (1993, p. 176) argued for political strategies that would enable homosexuals to live in “a world of stable homes and committed relationships” not one of “sexual anarchy and political radicalism” and felt that too often “gay activism doesn’t mean self-sacrifice, but self-indulgence; in addressing the general public, they seek not to illuminate, but to inflame”. Trying to create an idealized world (Mass, 1997), with stable homes and committed relationships to which activists like Bawer (1993) and Kramer (1978, 2005) aspire is capitulation (Butler 1990; Foucault, 1998) to hetero-normative expectations, including "adoption and re-enactment" of imposed social constructions (Wilchins, 2004, p. 127). This is portrayed by Smith (1992, p. 202) as "The responsible homosexual versus dangerous gayness".

Dangerous gayness was exemplified by Peter Finch as an ageing doctor in John Schlesinger's 1971 Sunday Bloody Sunday when he kissed his much younger, lover (Murray Head) on the lips. The film’s protagonists betrayed masculine identity stereotypes: the notion that males interact romantically was shocking, the tutting and incensed walkouts were intrusively memorable. Women may get away with kissing each other in public, but the same between men cannot be tolerated. Alvarez maintains (2008, p. 123), that masculinity is gauged by
appearance, behaviour, voice and bodybuilding - anything that produces increased musculature is typically considered to augment masculinity. Sickles (2004, p. 39) describes how the Charles Atlas body building ads in *Esquire* magazine engendered “a confusing concoction of envy and lust” providing material for masturbation fantasies prior to the onset of his disabilities. Western 'cultural time' has eroded some audience embarrassment at accurate portrayals and reflections of at least physically attractive sexual diversity but *mainstream* films and literature where protagonists who are incidentally crips, blind and/or d/Deaf kiss and romantically interact are rare. Tripp (1987) notes the societal structures (and strictures) that make the conduct of homo sex problematic:

> Homosexuality would certainly be an easier subject to describe and to analyse if it were confined to the people who practice it. 
> 

The sexual identity formation modelling of Cass (1984) was of little use in considering the subject cohort. That Cass (1984, p. 144) supports identity arising out of interaction with and notions of the beliefs of others, that there is a process of acquisition of homosexual identity requiring change to previously held images (1984, p. 145), was not supported by interview response with blind persons. Neither was commitment to self-imagery particularly prevalent (p. 151). Also, in the responding cohort Cass's 'see-saw' increased pride in being homosexual as inversely proportional to the discredit of things heterosexual (p. 152) was absent. Interview respondents either felt they were being true to themselves – authentic - or not, and that also encompassed expressions of ambi- or opportunistic-sexualities. Cohort identification seemed somewhat as expressed by (homosexual writer) Sedaris (1997, pp. 99-100):
We had long ago identified one another and understood that because of everything we had in common, we could never have been friends. To socialize would have drawn too much attention to ourselves. We were members of a secret society founded on self-loathing.

Moreover, the conduct of social activities and relationships must have a "location base" (Lee, 2002, p. 155). QLGBT persons may not be able to establish locales, places of being, unless they are in large cities with easy transport. Blind persons particularly might anyway be excluded from such particularized environments. Irvine (1994, p. 240), in bravely attempting to theorize queer communities, argues that

The inability to conclusively demonstrate shared symbolic systems among lesbians and gay men speak not to the absence of cultural status[,] but to the inadequacy of theory that totalizes culture.

For social organisation of gay and lesbian persons to have a “shared experience of transgressive sexuality” (Irvine, 1994, p. 238; Nardi and Schneider, 1998, p. 578), implies a shared understanding of experiences. While oppression based on deviant characteristics and the resulting secrecy can put persons in similar environments and provide dissimilar persons with common points of reference, that will not of itself create 'community', and if we are not (Secomb, 1999, p. 8)

stable gay and lesbian identities but instead a process of becoming enacted through our performativity then it appears impossible to organise together as a group or community with a common identity and a common purpose.

Lee (2000, pp. 149-165) argues that "essential ingredients" for a "gay community" are lacking and that what is sometimes perceived as being "community" is actually an "ecology". The existence of gay bars, travel agents, gay-friendly resorts, bookstores, beaches, gyms and so on do not constitute a notion of "place" nor a "vocabulary of shared attitudes and experiences" sufficient to form a community. Some "territories" such as beaches will be arenas of "distancing"
(Lee, 2000, p. 155), where non-gays will be in one area and gays somewhere removed. People will discover or develop "cognitive maps" available to visitors who are ‘in the know’ – or on the web. However, for marginalised persons pushed further to the margins, where are the gatherings, neo-groups, subcultures or communities that truly nurture and embrace difference?

‘Community’ – a euphemism

Community is a place where options are decided by others who think they have that right.

Clapton, 2009, p. xxv.

The references in media and convenient expression of 'community' do not make for gluing together of the dissimilar (Vromen, 1999, p. 61). Wotherspoon (1991, p. 204) discussed the nature of gay community and says that "The majority of Sydney's homoerotically inclined men would still rarely – if ever – come into contact with this subculture", being that subculture which catered for "only a small minority" of the city's homosexual population. Which raises the problem of voice: who would speak for any 'community' and what were the concerns?

Desire for community often channels energy away from the political goals of the group, and also produces a clique atmosphere which keeps groups small and turns potential members away. A more acceptable politics would acknowledge that members of an organization do not understand one another as they understand themselves, and would accept this distance without closing it into exclusion.

Young, 1995, p. 245.

There are finely divided and problematic aspects of factionalism that can unreasonably demand definitive allegiance. Somewhat like brands, or clubs requiring membership, subcultures may assume a commonality or homogeneity. Persons may imagine they inhabit subcultures but might just be utilizing the language of the dominant construct or majority to badge their occasional gatherings (Campbell, F.K., 2009). There can be more flux than notions of
community or subculture imply (Rummens, 2003): neo-groups or gatherings of people, with instrumental assumptions of commonality to establish status, to demonstrate affinity and allegiance, or to exclude. But we proceed from respondent notions of inhabiting other cultures or subcultural groups.

2.3 Subcultures – are we there yet?
Subcultures are, according to Gelder (2005, p.1) "non-normative, and/or marginal through their particular interests and practices, through what they are, what they do and where they do it". Conditions conducive to the gestation of subcultures are manifold (Irwin, 1970, pp. 106-107). If people are not interacting with each other over a protracted time period, if commitment and congruence of aims are lacking, if there are no distinctive values and ‘outsiders’ are indiscriminately included, then it is unlikely that a subculture will substantively form and prevail. However, if the reverse of these three 'ifs' is true then a subculture may congeal (Arnold, 1970; Gordon, 1970). Group identification can reduce uncertainty about "beliefs, attitudes, feelings and behaviours" (Hogg and Mullin, 2000, p. 269). In the early stages of group development, securing the group identity must be promoted as an aim for all group members. Lee (2000, p. 160) points out that Goffman (1974) and Plummer (1975) consider that the dominant heterosexual culture provokes "in response" the emergence of gay subcultures.

This fails to acknowledge the intrinsic 'normality' of homosexuality and its average pervasiveness in human lived experience across the centuries; a fact against which the imposition of compulsory heterosexuality has had to fight by enlisting institutions at its command: the medical and psychiatric professions,
religions, parliament, law and police. Creating modes of control, sanctions, and punishments (Lingiardi and Drescher, 2003; Wilson, 2008) has been facilitated by socially constructed opprobrium, proactive discrimination and the tacit sanction of individual and community vigilante violence. Under such circumstances politicised communities developed, thrived, were located in contentious territories, achieved cultural and legislated goals, produced heroes and victims, then those communities largely disintegrated – and/or died (Eisenbach, 2006; Hekma, Oosterhuis, Steakley, 1995).

**Transmissable cultures, non-conformism and the intergenerational divide**

Research participants negotiate a range of discriminating environments and persons of cultural and sexual diversity and disability are ‘normal’. Thus they may opportunistically and from various motivations discriminate against other culturally and sexually diverse and disabled persons, as well as self-exclude. There are attributes that assist cultures to transmit across time but fragmentations that afflict notions of stable community and culture.

Cultures ultimately comprise individuals who are acting with degrees of cohesiveness circumscribed by acknowledged parameters. A feature of a culture is that there is a legacy constructed and modified over generations (Schwarz, 1997; Smith, 2001). One may be Othered by exclusion from an actual culture, a subculture, or the ephemeral culture of a neo-group. Culture may be handed on via: performance of tradition; cultivation of mores and styles; whittling away of expressions and symptoms deemed extraneous or damaging to the dominance of that culture; exclusion of those othered from cultural norms; and establishment
by a select few of barriers to prevent any overwhelming of their organisational control (Brewer, 2007; Gordon, 1970; Irwin, 1970).

**d/Deaf, blind, vision-impaired, QGLBT – diversified, cultured and passing it on?**

Lane explained (1999, pp. 16-17) how sign language is the medium through which "the wisdom, values and pride" of one generation of Deaf persons are passed on to the next, and that sign language “reinforces the bonds that unite the younger generation.” Padden (2006, p. 81) points out that inherited deafness is "more frequent than inherited blindness", that blindness is more likely to be acquired later in life and that of "all children born today 62% of them are deaf from genetic causes" resulting in frequency of deafness over generations, even if intermittent. That may not make for a ‘transmissable culture’, because most d/Deaf persons are "born to hearing parents" (Lane, Hoffmeister, Bahan, 1996, pp. 24-41) just as it is axiomatic that most QLGBTI persons are born to ostensibly hetero-normative parents. Thus, rather than parental transmission of Auslan it is mainly acquired from other sources – schools or peers. Lane believes that the “audist establishment” (1999, p. 82), the dominant culture, is unaware and uninterested in what it does not anyway recognize as a culture; unconcerned with Deaf cultural heritage and the “embodiment of that heritage”, sign language, with mainstreaming being “attempted assimilation” (Branson and Miller, 2002, p. 219; Kavale, 2002; Webster, 1998).

More than 90 per cent of deaf children are born into hearing families; thus, fewer than 10 per cent of deaf children have even one deaf parent.


With Deaf children not having a 'native language', language acquisition will be from peer relationships, especially if those peers have Deaf parents. Otherwise,
learning may be from "older deaf survivors on the streets" (Wrigley, 1997, p. 21); although Wrigley hints that the language and information acquired may be packaged in processes of abuse due to the impoverishment of Deaf persons in dominant societies. Deaf children immersed in hearing environments and cultures are still likely to "remain marginalized among the hearing" as well as being unable to communicate with other Deaf (Lane, 1999, p. 135-143). This "falling between two cultures" produces "Deaf people without a Deaf community" (p. 143). Lane (p. 254) affirms that Deaf people wish to promote the interests of Deaf children, and that DeafWorld policy must collaborate with hearing parents of Deaf children in that regard (p. 255). There is evidence that TDFA offers collaboration, but DA claims to represent Australia's DeafWorld.

Non-heteronormative CoDA (Miller, 2004) may not be able to expect parental empathy (Phelan, 2001). The group Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), is some evidence of trans-generational cooperation to achieve the best possible outcomes for non-heteronormative children, but intra-familial schism is rife. Between gay generations, it has been asserted that little contact exists:

There is very little, if any, interaction between groups of younger and older gay men. Unlike the traditional nuclear heterosexual family in which young and old make up daily life as well as holidays, modern gay lifestyles in middle age revolve much more around friends, co-workers, and lovers of a similar age group.


Personal researcher experience does not corroborate the assertions of Alvarez, and ageism is anyway not solely a feature of diverse sexual environments. However, as a secular Jew I have experienced marginalisation at Caucasian gay gatherings. Amusingly, the most recent pejorative comments have come from an
Anglicised Malaysian fellow and two alcoholic Australians of Irish Catholic descent. At a Jewish gathering I could be excluded for having an Asian boyfriend.

**Subcultures and organisations**
The relationships between organisations and subcultures arise in their establishment and motivation. Groups strive to develop identities separate from those of other groups and distinct from the identities of individual members (Worschel, 1998, p. 65). Only in that way can group identity outlive the members (Cohen, 2005, p. 55). Cohen (2005, p. 56) observed that the cultures in which all of us conduct our lives are in constant flux, but we participants in cultures are nonetheless “powerfully motivated to conform”. The way new cultural forms emerge is for a number of "cultural actors in the dominant cultural model" with "similar problems of adjustment" to achieve "effective interaction" with each other although solutions to problems “may not yet be embodied”. Emergence of new group standards (Cohen, 2005, p. 59) and a “shared frame of reference, is the emergence of a new subculture”.

**The uses of subcultures**
An aim of persons negotiating new associations with their peers may be establishment of “new norms, new criteria of status” (Cohen, 1970, p. 104) with the intent of demonstrating merit in respect of their shared characteristics. In that way (Cohen, 1970, p. 105), "the new subculture represents a new status system sanctioning behaviour tabooed or frowned upon by the larger society". Subcultural members may habitually need to "scout the terrain" (Gelder, 2007, p. 18), to check whether or not proclaiming membership might be hazardous to their personal safety, reputation or status. Subcultural identity is something
formulated away from home and family but which compensates for this lack by organizing new, alternative kinds of sociality.


Broader society may use perceptions of subcultural belonging to intimidate or repudiate persons individually or en masse - a substantial disincentive to subcultural membership.

**The life of subcultures**

Subcultures are behaviour systems (Hollingshead, 1970). Persons in continuous association evolve "behavioural traits and culture mechanisms" (Hollingshead, 1970, p. 22) with a body of social relations being built between group members differing from other groups and peculiar to group members. Hollingshead maintains (pp. 24-25) that to understand a subculture "characteristics peculiar to the subcultural system need to be discerned" in terms of: what values and behaviour patterns establish individual relationships with the group; how the subcultural system comes into existence; what is likely to sustain it from generation to generation; what may cause it to fade away; and what is the relationship of the group to society at large?

Gordon asks (p. 34): how do subcultures access the material and status rewards of the broader culture? If the nature of the subcultures is reflected in the personality structures of individuals in the group, how does this happen and how is it expressed? Is there a subcultural personality structure? While noting that we are prone “to assume uniformities which do not entirely exist” (p. 35), Gordon asks how elements of the subculture are manifested in the dominant culture. Also, what are obvious manifestations of belonging to the subculture? What are the experiences of those who are deviant to the subculture? What happens to an
individual participant in a subculture if that person gains increasing status, materially as well as in broader social recognition?

**The internet and subcultures**
The internet has allowed persons with disabilities or difference to communicate without being burdened by "negative sociocultural meanings that are bestowed upon disability and difference" (Lupton and Seymour, 2003, p. 262). Bodies that are "profoundly coded with the discourses of embodiment: being a body rather than having a body" (p. 261) may be removed from dialogues conducted over the net and alternate physical realities assumed or implied.

Affinity groups are alternative nodes of communicating, socializing, networking as well as being arenas for power games that pose different scenarios for hierarchical development, and environments that may be beset by bullying used as a tool for advantage, denigration and exclusion. In this scenario affinity groups are not bounded by geography because unified politics can disseminate and yet remain intact over such a fragmented geographical spread (Buckingham, 2008; Ellerman, 2007; Gackenbach and von Stackelberg, 2007; Joinson, 2007). Conventions, maintenance of a website, discussion forums, an e-mail list, promotion of e-mail interaction between subscribers can all foster a substantive community experience. However, that community experience may not be translated into validated organisational representation that can negotiate with dominant power constructs or organisations which control resources.

Those organisations may not wish to devote any of their scarce resources to issues of diversity nor to an exploration of minority tastes and concerns. The internet has facilitated exploration of minority taste, having infinite 'shelf space' for
difference (Noonan, 2007) and for difference to be explored (Xenos and Foot, 2008; Rheingold, 2008; Levine, 2008; Montgomery, 2008). Friendships can be reinforced by identification via particularities - such as being QLGBTI and d/Deaf or blind - rather than on stereotypes (Weber and Mitchell, 2008). This technologically driven world is no longer a "melting pot" with persons forcibly or fictionally assimilated – it may be more like a "permanent collage" (Haythornthwaite and Neilsen, 2007; King and Moreggi, 2007).

As far as Putnam was concerned (2000, p. 170) the internet provides "simulacra of most classic forms of social connectedness and civic engagement". Putnam (2000) described decline in things dubiously measurable: social capital and 'Civic America'. Despite trolling through ‘the usual suspects’ (which include education, work, divorce, town planning, government), Putnam failed to isolate the essential factors. Via circumstantial evidence he described symptoms but no culprit. The ‘chief symptom’ which Putnam places as culprit, is television which in recent years has helped at least homosexual persons understand they are not alone – starting with Number 96 and latterly with Queer as Folk, Dante's Cove, The L Word and Modern Families. This is not the TV that will "privatize our lives" (Putnam, 1996, p. 15) which can be disassociated from human agency and nature, but is instead affirming some of the diversity of lived experience. Putnam depicted some social constructions that have become unworkable or uninteresting life-style clichés for a proportion of the population. Relative wealth, education, changes in perception of morality, ethics as well as legal and moral sanctions all foster the development of new emotional sensibilities, freedoms and associations. New wealth fosters the development of new recreations – at least in modernised sections of various societies. Creation of new
‘urban tribes’ (Watters, 2003), is an aspect not countenanced by Putnam in whose scenario multi-faceted Human Nature is fettered by ancient psychological, social and theological constraints. But the internet and new media have brought uncountable millions together, informed and coagulated public sentiment, rallied support for causes - positive and negative. Putnam argues that physical presence equals possible generation of civil society, but on-line and electronic communication do not, cannot. For Putnam, a bowling alley equals potential for civil society, but his once-feted work does not acknowledge the internet’s potential for recombinant individualism creating new interpersonal bonds.

[I]n every system of domination, the dominant group knows only about themselves, while the members of the subordinate group know about their own lives as well as the lives of the dominant group members.


Human beings have a latency to detach as circumstances and societal developments allow. "Latent identities" may be exercised to exert a "persistent strain on social system stability" (Gouldner, 1970, p. 247) and individuals are not "products" of a particular system, but "working" those systems to advantage and self-enhancement when opportunity presents. Members of a particular stigma category will have a tendency to come together into small groups ... [A] category... can function to dispose its members into group formation and relationships, but in total its total membership does not thereby constitute a group.


People participate in a series of population segments (Gordon, 1997), all of which may have their expectations as to behavioural norms which may conflict or be mutually apposite. In this environment a "stereotype of the acceptable face of disability has been crucial in the disability culture wars" (Goggin and Newell,
Blind author Michalko (2002, pp. 9-11) considers sightedness as "a culture with customs, folkways and gestures – with its own language".

However, re-definition of subcultures in the so-called 'disability field' is problematic, as ostensibly subcultural identities are used to garner resources and to establish pride and cohesiveness (Thornton, 1997). Difference, disability or impairment makes it a more difficult task to control one’s own 'impression management' (Tregaskis, 2004).


**Blind, not hetero, and the internet**

The internet for blind persons, with appropriate text-reading equipment, is a resource tool unprecedented in the history of service provision. There are

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24 Corbett applied the social model of disability to the "gay and lesbian community" (1994, p. 323) to examine dual oppression drawing on the writings of both LGBT and disabled authors and academics.
manifold technical issues with which a user of these developing technologies has
to contend, often frustrating for those of older generations or who have endured
late-age onset of sensory deprivation. For recreation of all kinds – emotional,
physical and sexual - there are myriad sites, even non-violent erotica with audio
description. The research has provided the only Australian internet site for blind
persons of diverse sexualities to chat, on application to the moderator.

A USA on-line group for blind homosexuals over the research period had no
female participants. In 2007/2008 the content was increasingly banal – crudely
and lamely licentious or salacious: without wit, lacking erudition and with limited
frame of reference. The moderator and a couple of respondents reacted
aggressively to criticism or comment and subscribers fell away.

Since being formed in 1996 with 13 persons the USA's Blind Friends of Lesbian
and Gays (BFLAG) membership had reportedly increased so that it was felt
mutually advantageous if BFLAG became a special-interest affiliate of the ACB.
This was formalized at the 2000 BFLAG convention in Louisville. BFLAG
spokesperson Hill believed that blind people who are sexually diverse cope with
unique difficulties, more due to their blindness than their homosexuality (not

Our experiences with hate crimes, for example, are unique to us, not
as gay people but as blind people ... In a gay population, two tenths
of one percent may be blind. But, in a blind organisation, probably
10 percent of the membership is gay.

Hill claimed that BFLAG could address issues which are uniquely important to
people who are both gay and blind - such as making gay and lesbian-specific
publications available in accessible formats; that the visibility of blind people
would be increased within the USA gay community; as would visibility of the
ACB. The ACB board unanimously accepted BFLAG. Hill maintained that in 2000, a third of BFLAG's new members came to the ACB for the first time, indicating that persons who were not heterosexual, but blind or vision impaired, would join an advocacy organisation if they felt they were accepted, not just tolerated. www.acb.org appears to demonstrate a precedent for the formation of a Queer blind subcultural group affiliated with a major advocacy and service organisation for blind persons. Thus the United States (population about 310 million) has just one group under the auspices of a major 'blindness organisation'. That subgroup, now called Blind Pride, in turn has obligations and sanctions, posting behavioural mores for members on the website.

Persons who are characterised by Deafness and blindness make substantial use of the internet, especially YouTube. However GLB blindness has less internet profile than GLB Deafness and representation of Transvestite and Transgender blind persons is almost zero, Intersex representation is unknown.

**d/Deaf, deafened, HoH (Hard of Hearing) and the internet**

We're seeing a shift from mass culture to *massively parallel culture*. Whether we think of it this way or not, each of us belongs to many different tribes simultaneously.


Deaf persons do not live in one community or one geographic location, but Deaf persons show characteristics common to minority group membership (Kyle, 1986, p. 273). Deaf persons may have multiple identities and experience the disadvantages of multiple-victim status. They may also inhabit and experience cross-subcultural antagonisms similar to those described by Renteria (1993) –

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25 The characteristics are: attitude, commitment and use of a community language.
26 [http://transabled.org](http://transabled.org) has multiple dialogues and references.
Society rejects me for being Deaf, The Deaf community reject me for being a Lesbian, The Lesbian community reject me for not being able to hear them, The Deaf Lesbian community reject me for being into S & M, The S & M community reject me for being Deaf, Society rejects me for being Chicana. The Hispanic community reject me for being Lesbian, Patriarchal society rejects me for being a woman. I am rejected and oppressed, even by those who cry out readily, against rejection, oppression and discrimination. When will it end?

In early 2009 the *Deaf Gay Chat* function established by USA Transman Renteria (on [www.deafqueer.org](http://www.deafqueer.org)) was down several weeks. Response to my querying e-mail was that it should be back on line ‘soon’. By June 2009 the website advised that the chat line would be, in effect, suspended indefinitely due to rewriting the costly software required to maintain it. As well, in April 2010 the last postings on [www.deafqueer.org](http://www.deafqueer.org) were from June 2009. Meanwhile, 2010 in Australia the non-discriminatory (you could be 'little d' deaf and participate), *Deafies Forum* finally died after two resuscitation attempts over the preceding two years. Where is the subculture? Ladd (2007, p. 176) maintains that "contemporary definitions of subcultures do not fit the reality of Deaf existence". To this end, the internet allows users to form "hybrid discursive identities" which exist in a "complex heteroglossic" set of social practices" (Thomas, 2007, p. 179). In these dynamically interactional worlds there are struggles for power, popularity, self-definition and understanding of personal sexual development (p. 180). Anderson believes (2007, p. 191) the internet has an ability to foster subcultures: "we're not so much fragmenting as we are reforming along different dimensions".

**The transportability of overseas examples**

Most websites for sexually diverse minorities are *post-modern* in the sense that they state an idealized conception of what they might be and might do if funding

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27 Heteroglossic: “Distinct varieties coexistent within a single linguistic code”.
and other environmental and social factors are in place, such as the partially functioning website of the ALSO Foundation for sexually diverse Australians (http://also.org.au), as well as Renteria’s USA Deaf Queer Resource Center. In the USA, to establish social connections:

[Deaf gay men] hosted ‘eye’ parties back in the days when it wasn’t as acceptable to be out ... They never said the word ‘gay’ ... but they pointed to their eyes discretely to indicate that a certain person ... might be ‘one of the family’.


On the internet in the USA an extensive Deaf Gay scene is self-reported, including the Deaf Gay and Lesbian Centre in San Francisco. Many other groups that have an internet presence seem to be defunct or non-operational, their web-sites sometimes not updated for years. From 2007 until mid-2009 Dragonsani Rentaria’s *Deaf Queer* (www.deafqueer.org) came intermittently alive for big events such as the RAD convention. A cursory glance at four USA Deaf gay websites found three out of the four defunct. Although subject to internecine problems (as read on www.deafqueer.org) the fourth website was active in 2008 (www.rad.org) -

The Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf (RAD) ... [created 1977] ... to establish and maintain a society of Deaf GLBT, to encourage and promote the educational, economical, and social welfare [sic]; to foster fellowship; to defend our rights; and advance our interests as Deaf GLBT citizens concerning social justice ... RAD has over fifteen chapters in the United States and Canada.

Deaf organisations in the USA run a parallel queer universe, including a *Mr Deaf Leather* competition, mimicking the precursor *Mr Leather* competition that was not known to particularly discriminate against Deaf persons, but not known to cater for them either. Perhaps ‘not catering for’ is tantamount to discrimination? Similarly, a *World Deaf AIDS Day* is observed on December 4. But since July 2008 HIV and AIDS (in the West) have been somewhat absorbed into the
broader mainstream of infectious diseases with the advent of new drug therapies. The AIDS calamity was a catalyst for outreach into ‘gay communities’.

There are numerous internet sites devoted to matters of interest to persons who are both Deaf and Queer, including Deaf Queer representation on Facebook. In 2000, the President of the USA’s Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf (RAD) claimed there was "a lot happening that most people don't know about – It's our own world" (Freiss, 2000). Since then, evidence is that a lot less has been happening subculturally on an organisational basis, with attendees at RAD biennial 'odd-year' conferences falling from around five hundred attendees early in the decade to about 100 in 2009. The RAD website has been renewed in this time and is not archived but a search can begin at www.deafqueer.org. The International Deaf Leather Forum (www.internationaldeafleather.org) is virtually dormant.

**Australia: politicized, multicultural and irredeemably fragmented**

In Australia there is evidence of three associations for and of GLBT Deaf persons existing in the past: The Australian Deaf Gay Lesbian Association (ADGLA) was the national body of the Deaf Gay and Lesbian community in Australia. Briefly with branches in Sydney NSW, Prahran Victoria, and North Perth WA, ADGLA intended to hold a national conference for members every two years. There was enthusiasm: Pausacker and Carswell (1980, p. 14) for the short-lived magazine *Gay Community News - GCN* - deemed the NSW Deaf Society as:

> so supportive [of gay Deaf persons] that any problems, whether they were of a psychological or financial nature, were solved by the [gay Deaf group of about 25 persons] itself – that it could almost be compared to a close-knit yet extended family.

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28 This was extracted from an unarchived and now-defunct website for the ADGLA. The DGLA and ADGLA as group had become defunct by the end 2003.
Yet the article goes on to describe how the Adelaide gay Deaf group of three persons was "fairly much underground". Records of the putative gay Deaf organization attempting to form in Queensland show that gay Deaf persons elected to remain anonymous because they were "afraid of repercussions and discrimination" from the broader straight Deaf community.29

Apart from external hostilities, the internal differences or boundaries between 'deaf' and 'Deaf' (Valentine and Skelton, 2003, p. 456), are problematic and fluid. Berbrier (2002), as well as explaining the differences, tried to assert commonalities between Deaf Culture and Ethnic Cultures, a notion currently argued on the internet (www.deafculture.com) at great length. Notions of Counter-tribalism and Post-subcultural neo-tribalism (Bennett, 1999; Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003; Weinzierl, 2000) are evidenced in the animosity between two Australian d/Deaf organisations: Deaf Australia (DA) and the Deafness Forum of Australia ([T]DFA). DA seems aggravated by expressions of dissent from their absolutism regarding Cultural deafness rather than wishing express d/Deaf pan-democratic voice. This was evidenced in part by closure of its web-based discussion forum. While DA may have been wary not to facilitate the posting of potentially libellous and actionable comments (constituents can be feisty) a disclaimer or moderator could have secured DA immunity. The Rebuttal website (www.the-rebuttal.com, April 2007, not archived) provided insight:

Deaf Australia [DA] has removed its members forums for the second time ... Hence the establishment of The Rebuttal ... This is a better option ... It allows us a measure of independence and control ... I don’t think [DA] should be in the game of hosting forums ... their advocacy work is going to conflict with the laissez-faire nature

of forums ... The other aspect ... is that it raises the question of the relationship between Deaf/deaf people, Deaf/deaf organisations, technology, and information sharing ... I’m not convinced that Deaf/deaf organisations ... are doing that credible a job of harnessing the power of the internet ... Too often the internet is used to bolster long standing hierarchal power structures ... reinforcing the idea of exclusive clubs ... the internet makes it easier for Deaf and deaf people to share information, independently of organisations ... However, engaging with organisations is still as problematic as it ever was.

Therefore groups, or neo-groups that are putative subcultures are rendered adrift from possible moorings to advocacy and service organisations, amplifying the notion of such subcultures are ‘vagabond’. The vagabond paradigm includes organized social worlds that may have their own languages (or at least points of reference), self-interested rather than class conscious, deviating from home and family, linked more to chances of mobility than to a particular home, impoverished in some respects extravagant in other: "in some ways secretive while in other ways all too visible" (Gelder, 2007, p. 21).30 Visible on Christian fundamentalist fair-day stalls at Deaf Week, October 2007, were posters warning of a lurid, devil-infested Hell; it seemed that a substantial conservative element was being indulged, but there was no stall acknowledging the homosexual Deaf persons who were at least obvious to me.

No government speaks out against those among the 480,000-plus Western mental health professionals who still consider homosexuality to be “deviant” (Nakajima, 2003, pp. 167-168). Organisations such as Exodus International (Exodusinternational.org), strive to change homosexual orientation through therapy, implying that the sexual orientation of QLGBT persons is a disorder or mental illness, with inability to change one’s sexual orientation being a personal

30 Which could be any organisation’s nightmare: Mardi Gras in the Boardroom.
and moral failure (Fisher and Akman, 2002). Transformational ministries characterize homosexuality as sinful, exacerbating marginalisation, harassment, harm and fear experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual students (Huebner and Davis, 2007). Yet it has been an offence to try to explain homosexuality in schools to spare at risk youth from persecution (Kaufmann and Lincoln, 1991). The internet has at least provided experiential corroboration and comfort.

The Internet, subcultures and QLGBT persons

Every attempt to define what it means to be a lesbian or gay man is partial and incomplete and misrepresents.


In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Ratified in 1974 after protest, it was only after 1986 that the DSM - the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - did not include homosexuality. By 1998 the American Counselling Association (ACA) resolved that it opposed portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons as being mentally ill. In 1999, the ACA became proactive, supporting information against reparative therapies and notions that homosexuality was not normal (Capozzi and Lingiardi, 2003). Race, ethnicity, gender, religion and disability and sexual difference are arenas for construction of negative identities with stigma. Being of diverse sexuality and having sensory difference can make support difficult to find, except from the internet: a space that has allowed for exchange of ideas and opinions (Dunne, 2001, p. 61).

The world will always be divided between the haves and the have-nots, those who have access to the privileges of internet connections, and those who don’t.

Thomas, 2007, p. 186.

There are poignant aspects to internet expressions of longing. Young Australian gay teen Jake Lyandon maintains he has “found a family” by uploading his frank videos to *YouTube* (his label, *Imaginations Video*, 20 October 2010), and that *YouTube* is “a place (he) could go to talk to people and not feel alone”.

**Composite subcultures and the internet**

Bob Guter’s self-hatred and dislike of being seen in the company of other persons with disability (2004, p. 224) was the genesis of his creating the on-line magazine and de facto community *Bentvoices* (now defunct) - a place for disabled gay men to write about their lives. Guter explained -

> We who are accustomed to being medicalized, analyzed, evaluated, counted off by statistical standards, are tired of being passengers. We are determined to drive this vehicle that is our lives. We do so in *Bent* by the simplest means: telling our stories.

**Telling stories: autobiography and biography, diverse sexualities**

The telling of stories is a significant medium for the communication of ideas and values of culture as well as the transmission of the ‘memory’ of a body of people ... Stories help us make sense of the world and the way in which we interpret the ‘nature’ of things and interpolate ways of difference.

Campbell, 2003, p. 2.

The internet enabled widespread storytelling - including the sharing of intimate personal details - amongst those privileged to have access to it. Autobiography is a political as well as literary act. Plummer (1995, p. 82) dubs ‘coming out’ as the “most momentous act” in the life of any lesbian or gay person, being "pivotal rebirthing stories" (p. 52), now told “in their millions”. The personal trajectory is then from suffering, secrecy and a sense of victimisation towards, survival, recovery, possibly therapy and politics. Plummer (1995, p. 5) imagines this

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33 Samuels (2003) establishes important gradations of 'coming out', in that 'to whom' 'when' and 'what circumstances' constitute a multiplicity of coming out occasions.
“textured web” of stories "emerging everywhere through interaction: holding people together, pulling people apart, making societies work".

Persons may Come Out to end the effort of making "impossible deals with themselves and others" in regards to expectations (Kennedy, 1975, p. 117): after the potential storyteller has become sensitive to her/his difference then comes awareness of "stigma and ban" (Plummer, 1995, p. 88). While some stories are individual, others are: "politically oriented towards seeking collectivist change" (Plummer, 1995, pp. 56, 58); painting pictures for posterity; charting modes of desirable behaviour to emulate and mistakes to avoid: stories can be used to proselytise, for propaganda, to exculpate and to seduce.


The internet, autobiography, self-depiction and gossip
People with disabilities have been represented as evil, bad, helpless, passive, requiring protection, lacking drive and determination, unlikely to form friendships or marry with able-bodied persons (Kaufman, Silverberg, and Odette, 2003), The general public lacks contact and experience with disabled persons and is not often presented with stories about them unless those persons have been media personalities in former lived identities, such as Christopher Reeve (Johnson, 2003), or achieved the status of media personality in heroic narrative.34 Autobiography enables visibility, invokes re-examination of stereotypes and dominant constructs while providing alternative,35 but they may not lead to

34 Such as Sir Stephen Hawking, who has appeared or been portrayed in productions including The Simpsons, Futurama, Family Guy, Red Dwarf and Star Trek.
35 Problematic when societal intimidation and its consequent generation of passing, lack of self-knowledge and denial of self are issues (Phelan, 2001; Shah, 1993).
acknowledgement, acceptance or validation. Reinforcement of existing dominant hierarchies might ensue, especially if the impressions portrayed are not perceived as desirable. Publishing one's story may not be a way of connecting to a potential peer group. Laying claim to one's sexuality "risks subjugation to regulation and control" (Martin, 1993, p. 276), akin to Butler (1993a, p. 309) that "being 'out' must repeatedly produce the closet in order to maintain itself". 'Coming out' and personal disclosure might bestow recognition but no guarantee of community or peer group acceptance. The group by whom you are accepted may not be one in which you wish to fraternize.

The athletic concerns of older gay men are very much like those of younger ones: looking leaner and more muscular, attracting mates, looking good.


Ultimately, for younger Queer men having a disability or not, much of the gay world presents as a meat-rack\(^{36}\) (Alvarez, 2008; Dutton, 1995; Fries, 2004; Manning, 1996; Simpson, 1994 and 1996) to which accessibility is codified. For women with disabilities venues and opportunities seem even more limited (Chouinard and Grant, 1996; Goggin and Newell, 2005; Meigs, 1990; Scherer, 1993; Tregaskis, 2004; Vash, 1981).

**Unacceptable identity - Suicide: writing oneself out**

Familial rejection has been shown as a "predictor of negative health outcomes for lesbian, gay and bisexual young adults" (Ryan, Huebner et al, 2009, pp. 346-352). To ameliorate the consequences that might ensue, Ryan et al suggested measures to help rejected LGB young adults. These included: identifying and making available counselling and support programs in the LGB and broader

\(^{36}\) A fit male is the rack from which the meat (genitalia) hangs: life expressed as search for homo-aesthetic and sexual sensations.
communities; involving parents and advising them about resources such as on the internet, to help them understand their children and modify parental behaviours; alerting them to the possibility of suicide attempts or ideation; identification of role models for both the parents and the children. Miner (1999) asserts that suicide ideation and attempts are commonplace for persons with Usher syndrome (see Terminology), but that patients in therapy rarely volunteer information about that ideation or attempts.

**Silence still = Death**

Persons or a group perceived to be homosexual experience the “real stigma” (Pollack, 1999, pp. 208-210) of devalued status and of comprising threats to hetero-normative society (Clare, 2003; Malebranche, 2006; Sandahl, 2003). Isolation, fear, shame and self-hatred may result. Up to thirty per cent of teenage suicides are of gay youth (Pollack, 1999, p. 209). GLB youth have increased risk of suicidal thinking and behaviours - from 3.5 to almost 14 times those of heterosexual youth, caused by societal reaction to homosexuality. Another major cause of suicide (De Leo, Hickey, Meneghel and Cantor, 1999, p. 343) is potential total loss of sight – which increases the emotional stressors for persons of diverse sexualities progressively losing their sight (Sheldon, 1993).

**Chapter Two was about the method, or science of knowledge + context + identity, its formation and its real-life connections**

The topics traversed in this chapter included:
- Identity formation and fluidity of identities, also comprising lifestyles rendered vagabond.
- Queer is not Quir enough, but why bring up Deviance?

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QLGBT identities – oppress yourself, save them the trouble.

‘Community’ – a euphemism, but have we arrived at ‘Subcultures’ yet?

Transmissible cultures, non-conformism and the intergenerational divide.

d/Deaf, blind, vision-impaired, and QGLBT - Diversified, cultured and passing it on? Where do love, belonging and acceptance reside?

Subcultures and organisations.

The uses and lives of subcultures, co-opting the internet and being co-opted.

Blind, not hetero, d/Deaf, deafened, HoH (Hard of Hearing) and the internet.

The transportability of overseas examples.

Australia: politicized, multicultural and irredeemably fragmented.

Composite subcultures and the internet.

Telling stories: autobiography and biography, diverse sexualities - the internet and auto\biography, self-depiction and gossip.

Unacceptable identity - Suicide: writing oneself out. Silence still equals Death.

**Chapter Two** has considered marginalisation that may generate groups and subcultures; it also presented identity formation processes that were undertaken by, or imposed upon, persons who are of diverse sexualities, shown how identities may be fluid rather than fixed, and that identities are subject to frames of (re)presentation and interpretation. Attempts to construct identities may be generated or inhibited by innate predispositions, genetics and happenstance. Injury or senility may obliterate the multiple motivated selves we (re)present to various audiences. Notions of binary and opposed sexualities, hetero/ homo, "normal and abnormal" (McRuer, 2002, pp. 90-91) can contribute to identity performances that do not comply with whom we feel we are, or whom we want to be. Performance (at a time) of any projected self may generate by-products of disgrace or even death (Corber and Valocchi, 2003; Escoffier, 1998; Hodkinson, 1987; Preves, 2008). Performance of homosexuality by Matthew Shepard brought him torture then death, similar to that inflicted by Nazis on male homosexuals.
(Heger, 1997). Nazi and other fundamentalist ideologies survive: ableist and fascist social constructions provoke inculcated rejections of persons who are characterized by what are perceived as unacceptable physicalities, emotional attitudes, sexual inclinations, or natal endowments deemed lesser. The broad mass of (in)humanity may not care to deal with reducing such discriminations, and histories of the world may be about the elimination of species rather than evolution towards some universal goodness and state of grace.

**Conundrums lingering after the investigations in Chapter Two**

- QLBT identities are shaped and trimmed by the discourse and language ordained in dominant cultures for convenient analysis. How much have we inhabitants of these identities been swept up in the cultural designs and language generated by imposed lifestyle parameters?

- Marginalised people gathering for a cause are unlikely to constitute a subculture. We could belong to neo-groups, gatherings that are motivated or opportunistic, surviving along with reaction to the impact of the group-generating issue. Marginalised persons gathering for social reasons cannot constitute a subculture. The group will change, morph and fade.

- Who can inherit or partake in a culture? And what is there to inherit? How do we get permission to partake, and how can transmission be effected?

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38 The memoirs of ‘Heinz Heger’ warrant further elaboration. After World War Two the stigma of being homosexual remained for at least twenty years, even in Europe, such that homosexual victims of the Nazis (not having been allowed freedom when the concentration camps were liberated), after completing their prison terms sought no media attention. David Fernbach who wrote the *Introduction* asserts (1997, p. 9): “It could only add to their sufferings if they publicly advertised themselves as convicted ‘criminals’. With no open gay movement to support them, individual initiatives of this kind were all but impossible. For more than two decades after the end of the war, only a handful of homosexual voices were heard, always anonymously, to testify to the torment that they and their fellow-suffers endured.” In 1972 an Austrian, Josef Kohout (from a Catholic family) had his internment memoirs published under the pseudonym Heinz Heger. These were the inspiration for Martin Sherman to write the play *Bent*, which was later made into a movie. The ‘Heger’ book and introduction was translated into English in 1980, but the 1997 The Gay Men’s Press Bibliotek (publisher) version (see the Bibliography herein) does not name the translator.
A problem with joining subcultures, gatherings or neo-groups is how to get out and about and find them. How can cyber-space be made local for widely dispersed persons over vast geography?

Cyberspace depictions of what is available in the USA for d/Deaf and blind persons seem to be misleading – perhaps there is not as much happening there as the internet seems to portray, but at least the USA publishes a deal of Queer Deaf autobiography. What about older and younger blind persons? How does one encourage them to speak about themselves?

These are not research questions to be answered, but splotches of interest appearing on the picture being painted by the research. Every picture tells a story.


[W]hat does storytelling in general have to do with being queer and disabled? The point is painfully simple: Although [sic] all of us have stories and all of us are capable of telling stories, we can also be disenfranchised from the stories of our own lives, censored by bias and public opinion, silenced by oppressive institutions from within (the family), or from without (church and state). When this happens we risk becoming nonpersons. We end up in a kind of Gulag of the self, where we ourselves don’t know who we are.

**Chapter Three** next provides a framework for understanding persons characterized by sensory differences and diverse sexualities – termed *Crip, Disabled and d/Deaf Identities*. It looks specifically at Crip identities, exclusion, exceptionality, identity parameters for persons who are blind, d/Deaf and diverse, plus how they are often constructed out of full citizenry and participation. Identity is fundamental and therefore glimpsed through all of these chapter-pictures, like the basecoat of a painting, so overlap can be expected.
Chapter Three

Crip, Disabled and d/Deaf Identities

This chapter explores fundamentals of Crip Identities which have battled to survive and develop in dominant social constructions. This thesis does not deal with the sometimes supposed historical elevation of infinitesimal numbers of disabled or different persons to the status of seers, prophets and other exceptional niche characters. It is about some marginalized persons who may aspire to develop their identities and lives without manipulation. Disabled and different persons have historically been lassoed into discrete corals such that there are sites of questioning and conflict. Minority experience of social identity production has been grim: for dominant constructs that manipulate our lives “kill them!” has been a solution to The Problem of Us rationalized over time. That is why this chapter is important: marginalised or ‘different’ persons have been considered as kind of ‘sub-species’ to the ‘normal’ range of ‘humans’ – with such dictated status having framed third-party identity management, exclusions and maltreatment, just as we average unthinking persons may accept or assume entitlement to bestow experimental status on rats or monkeys, or choose not to know about it. Such notions contain totalitarian, despotic or fascist elements.\(^{39}\)

Nazi fascism is evidenced by totalitarian power, racial purity and simplistic rationalisation of argument which ultimately appear unsustainable in modern worlds of neo-tribes (Watters, 2003). While, Deaf, blind, QLGBT and disabled persons are at greater risk of being in compromising situations regarding personal dignity, status and physical well-being than other citizens, events in Nazi

\(^{39}\) P.J. O'Rourke asserts (2004) that fascism is a “pointless” ideology (Peace Kills, p. 15, Sydney: Picador) with power as its principal object; homogeneity is a didactic aim.
Germany from the 1930s into the 1940s marked a nadir from which the ghost still clings. For a start, current "myths of security and acceptance" of lesbians and gays (Ferrell and Griego, 2008, p. 322), are regularly dispelled by hate crimes, assaults, bullyings and resultant attempts at suicide by homosexual youth (p. 321). The "social stigma" of vision impairment and the inability to visually interpret social situations comprise a "double whammy" (p. 321), with history of institutionalized violence against homosexuals traceable to Europe and Nazi extermination programs (p. 320). The Liberationist movement (Eisenbach, 2006), was developed to scuttle victim status and mitigate against any future Third Reich. However, the 2011 United Nations report on “Discriminatory Laws and Practices and Acts of Violence against Individuals based on their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” shows that the situation is still grim.\(^{40}\)

Rose (2007, p. 57), however takes a somewhat technical view of the Nazi World War Two “administration of death”: it is part of a nuanced and changing biopolitics which incorporates thanatopolitics, “a politics of death” as a “first principle” (p. 57), and eugenics as “the second great biopolitical strategy” (p. 59 - in the context of a biopower described in 1978 by Foucault, 1998), just part of a biopolitical view of history. The lack of engagement with the Nazi systematic slaughter of disabled persons has been a "symptom of the failure of Western education systems" (Snyder and Mitchell, 2006, p. 102), which the research attempts to slightly redress. Eugenics was unfortunately not intended to rid the world of murdering beasts but to legalize or rationalise their activities. Similarly, parents may be able to ‘engineer-out’ a presumed disabled or homosexual gene in

\(^{40}\) UN General Assembly Human Rights Council, 19\(^{th}\) Session 17 November 2011, Agenda Items 2 & 8 - A/HRC/19/41.
their prospective progeny or else commit timely abortion having been forewarned of Queer or other genes that may threaten ideals of lived existence. Thus QLGBTI persons have historic persecution in common with disabled, blind and Deaf people as well as the prospect of incipient future marginalisation.

3.1 Exposing the ghost of Nazism

Only about seventy years have passed since Deaf, blind and disabled persons of Nazi Europe were stigmatized and doomed, being irrelevant and inimical to the Nazi fundamentalist view of the world (Brueggemann, 2008). Nazi social construction of society established disabled persons as threatening the purity, sanctity and uniformity of supposedly heteronormative, supposed Aryans (Naphy, 2006, p. 252), the latter being socially constructed as medically and genetically acceptable (Friedlander, 1995). Teachers of Deaf persons in Germany's special schools actively turned in their pupils, and other members of the German Deaf Association, for abortion, sterilisation, experimentation and death (Biesold, 1999). The principal organisation of and for the Deaf in Germany (the Reich Union of the Deaf of Germany - REGEDE) collaborated with the Nazi regime, informed on its constituents and promoted the notion that deafness was hereditary.

The Jewish deaf were the first to be turned in, not from pro-Nazi hearing persons, but from the Nazi deaf. Biesold, 1999, p. 134.

In 1933 the German National Socialists enacted a sterilisation law to prevent birth of offspring with hereditary diseases, including blindness and deafness.

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41 In the Queensland criminal code, if the foetus has a disability, one can get a late-term abortion – on the basis of parent distress, not on the condition of the foetus. There is different conditionality in termination times throughout Australia. If a gay gene is ever discovered, perhaps the Queensland code will be tested.
German eugenics was supported by a broad range of doctors, psychiatrists, medical professionals and carers. In an orderly fashion, these ‘normal’ people delivered for mass murder the congenitally blind and Deaf as well as people with 'deformed bodies' because whoever was not ‘curable’ could be killed (Friedlander, 1995, p. 154); hospitals served a three-fold purpose: research, therapy and killing (p. 157). Nazi 'racial hygiene' prevailed as the epitome of economic, political and social rationalism, so it was ‘common sense’ to ensure that only 'life worthy of life' would be permitted in the modern German Reich (Gallaher, 2001). Many among those to be killed were utilized for medical and psychiatric experiments (Gallaher, 2001, pp. 135, 156). The Nazi Holocaust process was perfected by developing extermination methods on disabled people (pp. 216 et seq).

Killing disabled persons continued after German total surrender (Gallaher, 2001). Eugenics and/or Nazism are mentioned in the resources by Bauman (2008), Baynton (1998, 2008), Branson and Miller (2002), Davis (2008), Lane with Hoffmeister and Bahan (1996)42, Murray (2008) and Vaughan (1999). Ladd produced a voluminous history of the Deaf, but merely mentions (2007, p. 31) “Millions of Germans only had a dim idea of what was taking place in their countries [sic], in their name”, and compares cochlear implants to genocide. Heger recalls (1997, p. 32) being treated as the “scum of humanity who had no right to live on German soil and who should be exterminated” because he was homosexual; yet men having power in concentration camps could have teenage Polish or Russian ‘dolly boys' as bed-mates because that sex activity was typified as opportunistic and situational, akin to calls of nature and without apparent emotional attachment. After World War Two, persons imprisoned as

42 Lane (2008), dealt with eugenics but does not mention the Nazis in other solo works.
homosexuals by the Nazis had to serve out their entire sentences. Sexually diverse persons with disabilities have inherited environments charged with these attitudes, often rendered ostensibly less threatening by median that is perhaps ignorant of history now removed several generations, plus academic, cultural, political and scientific filtering (Alvarez, 2008; Escoffier, 1998; Rose, 2007; Warner, 1999).

3.2 Crip Identities

By the force of circumstance, the disabled person is a potential expert in the motor and sensorial domain. And it is not by chance that the social is aligning itself more and more with the handicapped, and their operational advancement: they can become wonderful instruments precisely because of their handicap [sic]. They may precede us on the path towards mutation and dehumanisation.

Baudrillard, 1988, p. 52.

In celebrating disability, Baudrillard (1988) shocks with his welcome of ‘mutation and dehumanisation’, that alienation is a fecund, dramatic state in which to exist (p. 22); that ‘exile’ (p. 50) was a place of aesthetic, comfortable, critical distance - “the orphan-like serenity of one’s own world”, and that ‘deterritorialisation’ (p. 50) did not constitute exile: because one can be displaced but remain part of a

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43 Halberstam, J, 2011, The Queer Art of Failure, Durham: Duke University Press, canvases homosexual complicity in Fascism and Nazism, pp.147-247. However, such ostensibly bizarre and illogical alignments are common. See: Luongo, M., (ed), 2007, Gay Travels in the Muslim World, Binghamton: The Haworth Press; Whittaker, B., (2006), Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in The Middle East, London: Saqi Books. Many male homosexuals, sexually passive by inclination or so rendered by age, travel to potentially deadly Islamic countries for sexual encounters with local males, who are rarely if ever ageist, and who are quite often eager for sexual encounters with any foreigners. Visitors might supply cigarettes, clothes, cash and even greater gifts to their ‘individual tour guides’. (Older single women from liberal cultures also often frequent these destinations and can cohabit more openly). For an overview of subsectional angst expressed by various homosocial persons about aspiration (or otherwise) to any kind of lesbian, gay or queer ‘community’, see particularly (in the Bibliography): Aldrich, Altman, Isay, Eisenbach, Kramer, Malebranche, Preves, Rich, Robinson, Simpson.
metastasizing, and certainly 'vagabond' world. In these respects Baudrillard prefigures the rise of internet groupings, with the likes of Facebook metastasizing through the body of a society and culture - an analogy for the cells of difference and perhaps dissent, fragmenting and spreading – surreptitiously to undermine and to perhaps overcome the fabric of the host’s existence.

Although all of us have stories and all of us are capable of telling stories, we can also be disenfranchised from stories of our own lives, censored by bias and public opinion, silenced by oppressive institutions from within (the family), or from without (church and state). When this happens we risk becoming nonpersons. 


From McRuer (above) the notion can follow on that persons of diverse sexualities who are d/Deaf or blind or disabled could inhabit various identities of which only the most visible might be engaged by others. Perceptions and presentations will depend upon environments, perceived threats and what Brewer (1991) called optimal distinctiveness: what is thought to be the most appropriate way to present group and ingroup differentiation. When persons self-categorize while cognitively processing their individual motives, (or reluctances) to identify with various social groups at different times, numerous and successive processes of self-categorisation may be engaged (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell, 1987; Turner and Oakes, 1989), which renders that identity fluid or adaptable.44 But maintaining a “stable self-concept” (Sherman, Hamilton and Lewis, 2000, p. 81) throughout decisions that may be inevitable, selective or opportunistic, could be rendered problematic.

44 The research is not trying to fit respondent identities into the four models of LGB identity formation: “Interactional”, “Milestone issues”, “Social constructionist”, “Staged/linear” (Cramer and Gilson, 1999, p. 23).
Brewer and Weber (1994) believed that persons in a distinctive minority may exhibit ‘ingroup’ assimilation while persons immersed in majorities often aspired to exhibit or announce contrast to that majority. Sherman, Hamilton and Lewis (2000, p. 93) perceive a whole spectrum of identities as being drawn upon for passing evocations of beneficial identities. Such choice depends upon values attributed to groups and identities, and to what extent collections of individuals are perceived as unified groups (Campbell, 1958; McConnell, Sherman and Hamilton, 1997). Politically, perhaps “[i]t is the end of identity politics and the beginning of dismodernism – disability as an unstable category” (Davis, 2002b, pp. 1-32). We may find it expedient to shift between identities.

**Periodic, beneficial identities**

As a corollary to the ‘vagabond’ and fluid identities visited in Chapter Two, the assumption of at least one periodic beneficial identity is a human behavioural characteristic. While internal processes may guide social behaviour, “macro-level contextual issues” mediate that behaviour (Operario and Fiske, 2000, p. 30), establishing ingroup and outgroup differentiation (Worchel, Morales, Paez, Deschamps, 1999). Studying the formation of group stereotypes - such as evoked by the terms ‘blind, d/Deaf, Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite, Transgender’ - is the realm of entitativity (Sherman, Hamilton and Lewis, 2000, p. 80), which comprises the inputs and characteristics that make an entity cohere and be distinctive: entitativity comprises entitlement to be named as having existence. ‘Optimal distinctiveness’ (Brewer, 2007; Brewer, von Hippel et al, 1999; Tajfel, 1981; Worchel, 1998), maintains that individuals wish to establish identities that allow independence as well as integration with some larger group, such that survival and prosperity is balanced with distinctive individuation. Thus
notions of social identity and cognition, entitativity and optimal distinctiveness inform observations in regard to stakeholders in the Third Sector.

**Disability theory**

McRuer's assertion (2006, p. 207), "everyone will be disabled if they live long enough" is axiomatic but not the full picture. Boswell recounts (1988, p. 298) historical perceptions of disability, burden and role of the church:

> [I]f they have any who are lame or crippled, deaf and dumb or blind, hump-backed or leprous, or who have any defect which would make them less desirable in the secular world, [the parents] offer them as monks wards with the most pious of vows ... so that they themselves are spared having to educate and support them, or because this redounds to the advantage of their other children.

In the fictional and factual worlds negative depictions of and imputations to disability are based on prejudice with deep roots; ableism (Campbell, F.K., 2009), and its development along with vidual media and the health industry has served to entrench those roots more deeply. However -

> Like pornography, disability continues to elude efforts to define it. Johnson, 2003, p. 46.

Nelson's scope (1994, pp. 5-9) of seven major media stereotypes of disabled persons is applicable to other marginalized groups, such as QLGBTI:

- **Pitiable and Pathetic** - disabled persons were victims of a tragic fate, and thus worthy of charity.
- **Supercrip** [that is to say: 'supercripple'] - with media and popular focus on the heroic struggles and extraordinary feats of a few.
- **Sinister, Evil and Criminal** - the person identified by the physical trait as somehow less than human, a favourite stereotype character for authors, playwrights and cinema depictions.

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- **Better-Off-Dead** - the sight of serious physical disability is conceived as an unpleasant reminder of mortality and vulnerability, representing alienation from society and lack of self-determination, as per the Nazi German 'life unworthy of life'.

- **Maladjusted** - the person is their own worst enemy, with insights regarding their lives being better provided by non-disabled outsiders.  

- **Burden** - the implication being that family, friends and society have an implied duty to meet their needs, with the disabled person depicted as a prop to emphasize the giving nature of others.

- **Unable to Live a Successful Life** - disabled persons seldom being depicted in media or seen in normal places conducting their daily lives.

Nelson observed (1994, p. 10), that where disability is positively portrayed in the media, the disability is the central focus of the life of the person concerned, (Thorne, 1980), rather than an incidental aspect. When portrayal of character is negative, disability is not the focus but utilized as a tacit, negatively descriptive factor (Nelson, 1994, p. 5-9). According to Malloy and Vasil (2002, p. 663):

Disability can be defined as a disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by those contemporary social organisations which take no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream social activities.

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46 Davis, 2002b, points out there is a whole literature in psychology regarding disabled persons being maladjusted. See also Campbell, F.K., (Forthcoming - projected publishing year: 2012), “Stalking Ableism: using Disability to expose ‘Ábled’ Narcissism”, in D. Goodley, B. Hughes & L. Davis (Eds), Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. When parties appealing for justice appear to engage in 'stunts', such as LG persons demanding marriage by 'kiss-ins', observers may find their empathy over-ridden by perceptions, faulty or otherwise, of narcissism that directs the pushing of packaged objectives to which institutions, broader society and industrial enterprise are required to cater instantly. Observers may not perceive nor have interest in the exclusions experienced, so campaigns may need to make inclusive processes more appealing by education.
**Mostly wanting to be ‘ordinary’?**

According to Michalko (2002), Disabled people battle for others to see past whatever the disability to the ordinary person. But 'normalcy' may not be an option, as de Swaan believes (1990, p. 1) that being ‘normal’ is hard work: "whatever becomes a possibility for many turns into a necessity for everyone".

There is compulsion to be whatever is defined by a majority as 'normal': a generation of identity that is socially constructed, dependent on "temporal, cultural and situational" factors (Campbell and Oliver, 1998, p. 15). In the 1960s, disabled people were confronted by

... a range of dependency-creating services or nothing at all, and a plethora of disability organisations which spoke in our name but neither represented us accurately not met our needs.

Campbell and Oliver, 1996, p. 45.

3.3 **Sustaining the creation of multiple, artificial ‘normalities’**

The struggle for 'normality' can add to the oppression experienced by persons who are not ‘average’, and that "ideology of normality" may anyway comprise "identification and pursuit of goals chosen by the powerful", a situation unrecognized by "professionals and their victims" (Oliver, 1996, p. 104; 1990, p. 90). These circumstances can operate within an organisation as well as without, with persons being “disabled” by the industry that ‘cares about them’, by the organisations who conduct advocacy, who provide services and (re)presentation.

We can speak but often have no one to talk with. We're unsure of our purpose, what the future holds. The old order is crumbling everywhere and there is a pervasive 'lowgrade depression' and sense of despair. We feel out of control, that we’re living in the state of stuck [author's emphasis].

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47 UPIAS: 1976, a letter to the UK Guardian newspaper by Paul Hunt invited disabled people to form a group to deal with issues of disability. After about two years of discussion, UPIAS - The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation - was launched in 1972 as a disability liberation group, placing the notion of disability in a social context - a catalytic event for the disability movement.
The phrase ‘out of control’ in the above quote from Sherer (1993, p. 168) – or being sidelined to positions of no control, immobilised and ineffectual - bespeaks persons who feel that they are being ‘manipulated away’ from causative lives and gainful interaction. Charlton (2000, p. 84) charts **seven features of daily life for persons with disabilities**: invisibility, lack of support services, control by charities, hierarchy of disabilities, vulnerability to violence, inaccessibility and the chasm between urban and rural life. These devolve not only from neglect and omission but from sometimes tacit, even well-meaning manipulations interwoven into lives which otherwise may have been poised to establish other trajectories. There are four pervasive dimensions to the process of manipulation which underpin processes of marginalisation: mainstreaming, devaluation of categories, undesirable bodies inhabited by non-conforming identities, and motivated or fraudulent (mis)representation of inconvenient non-conformists.

*M engulfing the lives of people who are disabled and/or diverse*

1. **Mainstreaming**

Disabled persons experience loss of “territorial rights ... one lives in a little world” (Hull, 1990, p. 164), and disability studies perpetrate notions of difference (Watson, 2002), not ameliorated by the practice of mainstreaming, which puts blind or d/Deaf persons into the company of persons not their peers (Kavale, 2002; Charles and Coombs, 2003; Soto, 2003). 48

Mainstreamed life didn’t help me retain credentials and credibility within the disabled world.


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48 A blind research respondent concurred: "That's how I also feel about my educational experience" - personal e-mail communication, 22 July 2008.
Ladd describes his mainstreamed education from age four as “traumatic both emotionally and socially” (p. 277), growing up “in isolation from other Deaf people”. That mainstreaming renders persons into exclusion due to lack of peers construes mainstreaming as an apartheid-type of social construction. Professor Merv Hyde of Griffith University (Dapin, 2004, p. 34), described mainstreaming for Deaf students as "an inclusive educational experience that can be an excluding social experience". Mainstreamed education is “bleeding Deaf schools to death” (Ladd, 2007, pp. 441-442). Sacks (2000, p. 188) asserts:

> There is nothing quite equivalent, in the hearing world, to the crucial role of residential deaf schools, deaf clubs, etc.; for these, above all, are places where deaf people find a home. Deaf youngsters, sadly, may feel deeply isolated, even estranged, in their own families, in hearing schools, in the hearing world; but they can find new family, a profound sense of homecoming, when they meet other deaf people.

From www.bca.org.au - BCA Parent News of August 2011 about problems found with mainstreaming of blind children:

Key problem areas reported to Blind Citizens Australia include inconsistent delivery of expanded core curriculum such as the teaching of daily living skills and mobility; poor, and in some cases, no access to classwork and materials in accessible formats, including Braille; overwhelmed teachers leaving students alone in classrooms due to poorly communicated integration strategies and a child being taught Braille maths by a teacher concurrently learning Braille maths.

The mainstreaming picture is not clearly definable, due to wide variation in conditions and experience. Barnes (1996), describes a complex family situation that he in large part ascribes to his problematic legal but partial blindness, compounded by circumstances produced when d/Deaf and blind children were institutionalised together. He declares that his problems have all been “socially created” (p. 37), due to his experiences of segregated education:
The logic of putting children who have difficulty communicating physically because they cannot see with children whose impairment makes aural communication difficult in a residential setting has never ceased to amaze me. Like many disabled people with similar schooling experiences, I deeply resented this imposition of 'difference'.

The point of this is the manipulation and restriction of choice and the need to develop strategies to overcome the disadvantages to which one has been subject.

**Manipulating the lives of people who are disabled and/or diverse**

2. Devalued categories

Mainstreaming has accomplished what Wolfensberger (1998) advocated: lack of opportunity for disabled persons to fraternize with peers (Augusto and McGraw, 1990; Augusto, Hatlin and Sacks, 1992; Campbell, 2008). This is not contravened by the fact that blind and d/Deaf persons may choose to mix with people who are neither blind nor d/Deaf and experience lives differently lived. Any desire to 'mix-out' may be a wish to seek adventure and change, not about self-devaluation of individual or collective identities. Devaluation can be individual, or collective and societal - because social devaluation is universal.

> [I]t is found in all societies at all times. There is no corner of the world, no province - no matter how isolated - that does not have its devalued classes. The only thing that varies across societies is whom they devalue.


Whatever his other crimes, Wolfensberger perceives devaluation of others as a "reality about human nature" which is not temporary and won't be obliterated by time, education, increases in material wealth, evolution or revolution: it is "built into the human identity" (p. 6). Societies will seek to identify and devalue those persons who violate their value systems, and blind people are first on Wolfensberger's list of those who violate what appears to be in some respects a world-wide orthodoxy (pp. 8-9). These "ways of being" are in conflict (Campbell,
2009, p. 94; Wrigley, 1997) such that contesting parties exclude alternative ways of knowing as well as excluding meanings given to different kinds of personhood. We may absorb these messages and devalue ourselves. Due to lack of understanding, dislike, fear and *mutual attribution* of lesser values to others than to our own ways of being, (McIntosh, 1996; Plummer, 1996), we may all commit and experience rejection and exclusion.

**Manipulating the lives of people who are disabled and/or diverse**

3. **Undesirable bodies inhabited by non-conforming identities**

Formidable powers are ranged against non-conforming identities, including the corporeal realities of identity: bodies being "social symbols which give off messages about a person's self-identity" (Shilling, 1993, p. 5). They are also "malleable entities" which can be shaped and honed (1993, p. 10). Mintz (2002, p. 2) claims that blind persons exhibit a "profound desire to escape the confines of the body through the performance of 'normalcy'" and that disability narratives often "aim to prove that identity is not a function of the body", as well as attempting to "separate a 'higher' self from the lowly disability". Broad society usually capitulates to the prejudice that reads just the body (Kendall and Martino, 2006, p. 9). A socially constructed body is an unfinished biological and social phenomenon which is transformed by entry into, and participation in, society.

However, the phenomenology of the individual body and its lived experience cannot be discounted (Thomas, 1999b; Shilling, 1993). Turner argued (1996) that the process of identity formation is not merely a social construction but includes corporeal realities. Enduring medical, physical, emotional, psychological and situational factors may depress, oppress and exclude as corporeal experiences, not simply as social constructions. Persons afflicted may try to adapt, or induce
and organize adaptation of the environment; people often dissemble or attempt to 'pass' but still experience powerlessness while on-going contingent processes evolve, accompanied by formation of successive situational identities. Some of these identities are ratified by prevailing power structures, some are not. For example, muscularity and maleness are not associated with disability, but

muscle is associated with maleness. To a great extent the male musculature is part of the social mask that illustrates our manhood.


The fabric of a person's personal identity is constructed via societal discourse, organisations and experiences of bodily realities (Butler, 2005; Gregory and Hartley, 2002; Leigh, 1999; Likely, 2007; Rimmerman, 2002; Schweik, 2009; Temby, 1998; Williams and Bendelow, 1998).

**Manipulating the lives of people who are disabled and/or diverse**

**4. Ersatz**

Organisations may make use of a dis- or never-empowered constituency to promote or achieve ends of those whom they disempower, while purporting to represent (Chambers, 1996) because cultures arise (p. 41) "as a consequence of the production of difference" [sic]. It is differentiation which produces groups. Cultural identities are ideological constructs (Chambers, 1996, p. 28): "power-laden representations" via which cultural identity is assigned (p. 28) that may deny "broader community membership", generating questions (p. 26) of authenticity and representativeness. For out-group members a cultural-sameness marker then has a "disqualifying function" (p. 28). Value-loaded comparisons can become important aspects of a person's self-image; the assignment to persons of

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49 Inferior and deceptive substitute.
negative, oppositional representative functions can facilitate power structures and justify enforcement of norms via which persons may retain pivotal roles in social realms (Chambers, 1996, p. 29). The problem remains for individuals to achieve what Tajfel (1988, p. 9) emphasizes as imperative for minority group members: achievement of positive self-image and self-respect; because "having to live with a contemptuous view of oneself, coming from inside or from other people, constitutes a serious psychological problem". In organisational power structures there are conjunctions of gender and sexuality, identity politics and behavioural mores which will impact upon individual futures. Constituents in organisations for blind persons and d/Deaf persons may inhabit various sites of exclusion and / or exceptionality and a representative organisation will be equipped to cater for its membership in accordance with the mission statement. The nature of exceptionality is set out below, and then three sites of habitation explained: CoDA, cochlear implantation, and the exceptionalities that nourish intergroup hostilities, which can be death to IORs while they define identities.

3.4 Exceptionality
Persons may be exceptional in their environments and have supercrip or star status – such as a disabled athlete or lesbian television personality. Exceptionality could also render persons ‘Other’ and cause their exclusion – for example: a Deaf person who is transgendered, who would like to practice Catholicism in a Deaf congregation: exceptionality can lead to embarrassment - or transient inclusion and trophy display. Or one might be exceptional and marginally included, such as a homosexual child of Deaf adults – CoDa – whose parents do not approve of the child’s homosexuality, but who often rely on the abilities of their hearing child. Alternatively, we can be exceptional and invisible,
or combinations of the above, depending upon the fluidity of our identities and the environments we negotiate.

**Bicultural and in-between - CoDA**

Miller (2004) recounted his 20th century picaresque as a CoDA - child of deaf adults - with hearing paternal grandparents. The grandparental generation felt alienated from their Deaf progeny, the author’s parents, and the grandchild-author (Miller) endures peer bullying, harassment and ridicule (his “adolescent hell”, pp. 98, 100), because of attitudes towards his parents’ deafness and perceptions of his role as an interpreter for them, because he is perceived by his peers as ‘other-worldly’. CoDAs may find that their d/Deaf parents present their children with particular issues that are not experienced by non-CoDA contemporaries and school mates (Hoffmeister, 2008; Miller, 2004). These issues can include fairly haphazard or primitive parenting methods (Miller, 2004, pp. 46, 60, 100). Apart from periods of social isolation from other children, the CoDA may feel alienated from the parent, yet be in a situation wherein the parent makes dependent demands, explicit or tacit. The Deaf parent may resent ceding aspects of "control, mediation and interpretation" to the hearing child (Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996, pp. 374-375). The gulf between parent and child is linguistic and experiential.

**Cochlear implantation – polarizing d/Deaf culture**

The smashing of a hearing aid with a sledgehammer opened the July 1990 *International Symposium on Sign Language* was opened (Edwards, 2005, p. 909). Worse than hearing aids, Wrigley claims (1998, p. 210), the cochlear implant has effected cultural alienation of Deaf persons, the context being colonial appropriation of native bodies. Campbell (2009, p. 80) argues that the
cochlear implant was "made possible through a deferment to, and a harnessing of, negative ontologies of Deafness (and disability)", and that "the deployment of the inherent preferability of 'hearing' as social capital was invoked". Galloway (2009, pp. 224-225), has lived going Deaf:

I've cried over my deafness and the inability to handle the cards I was dealt. I've fallen into depressions for which I've been hospitalized. At times, I abused drugs and liquor. I've flown into jealous rages and resented my friends who had become successful or moneyed or simply happy in their lives, and attributed their success solely to the keenness of their ears ... Contrary to many of my deaf and disabled peers, I think the particularities of my deafness are disabling, that disability itself isn't a badge of honor any more than it's a curse of the gods, and that the cure for what ails me is not genocide, and I want to be cured ... Hearing would have added two inches to my height, slimmed my thighs, and given me much needed fashion sense, letting me grow up into the sunny little devil I was meant to be instead of some morose ingrate.

In 2009 Galloway had useful hearing with digital hearing aids, but was keeping her options open for a cochlear implant if the technology improved. Gruesome as the implanting of the device may be (Ladd, 2007; Lane, 1999, 2008; Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996), it is a product that one can complain about to a range of local and international regulatory authorities. What of pacemakers surgically implanted for heart beat irregularity; kidney, liver and lung transplants? I have disclosed my own multiple medical and surgical interventions and neither reproach nor advocate the cochlear implant, nor Cochlear Limited as a Company. TDFA also expresses neither reproach nor opposition. DA is opposed to implants. The literature is replete with anti-cochlear implant polemic (Ladd, 2007); yet in 2008 alone, individuals have invested heavily in the device. Apart from the cost of

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50 Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) information shows Cochlear Limited in 1998 had sales of about $88 million dollars - the share price then about $5 each. 2008 sales revenue was about $695 million. At a price of about $25,000 each (Campbell, 2009, p. 83), that is about 27,900 people receiving the device in a year. Cochlear claimed under 19,000 insertions for that year, indicating other sales and services rendered.
the surgeries, a cursory glance indicates that for the ten years since 1998, total sales of product exceeded three billion dollars. That is a lot of customers who have apparently not complained. To the retort encountered ‘perhaps they were children’: anecdotal evidence is that ten per cent of 2002 recipients were children, but with the advent of improved devices and increased demand, this proportion may triple.\textsuperscript{51}

[T]he Deaf community would be advised to accept implants as part of the Deaf scene, concentrate their efforts on campaigning for good signing to be introduced from diagnosis, and on maintaining contacts with such children and their families throughout childhood.

Kittel family, 2001, p. 65.

Campbell asserts (2009, p. 81) that implants are offered as a "cure", but other aids, devices or implants - contact lenses instead of spectacles, or implanted for cataracts; hip replacements; heart pacemakers; the cosmetics of a breast implant after mastectomy; small plastic ball to replace a cancerous testicle – are all supplied to \textit{ameliorate} symptoms or to \textit{pass}. So if you get up out of your wheelchair, can see, you are not 'cured' but you may feel less impeded in what you wish to do; maybe you can communicate in ways other than just the frames of reference to which you have been habituated, no longer bounded by silence or indecipherable noise. One may develop new tribal allegiances with possibilities to experience change and different states of being, retaining only tangential commitment to a past life and to those who were one's companions in it. Whatever the instance, emotional resonance will accompany new lived bodily experiences or surgical enhancements. Certainly, the cochlear implant is an

\textsuperscript{51} By 2010 there could be about 120,000 people with cochlear implants. Cochlear products are in demand despite setbacks. The Company has about 56 million shares issued. In January 2012 they were regularly worth AU$60 each, valuing the company at about AU$3.36 billion. Manufacturing is done in NSW, Australia.
artefact of an ableist society. So are tactile ground surface indicators, the wheelchair, the motor vehicle that has been altered to for persons who are *vehicularly challenged*, and even disabled parking permit labels – all are ableist artefacts.

Artefacts are intrinsic to every society. The telephone arguably catalysed the *ecstasy of communication* (Baudrillard, 1988) but its promoter, Alexander Bell is a DeafWorld anti-hero (Lane, 2002b). A protagonist of the USA’s social eugenics movement, Bell could sign and his wife was Deaf. The issues are not simple. Deaf persons fear a variation of eugenics: that persons and forces abound who wish to exterminate DeafWorld (Branson and Miller; Ladd, 2007; Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996; Padden and Humphries, 2006). The non-involved world is usually unaware of Deaf culture and its antipathy or virulent horror of cochlear implantation. The degree of inter-group virulent hostility between different sexual diversities, disabilities and minority cultures is also shocking, as evidenced in the following *New York Times* article by Solomon.

> Cochlear implants remind me, more than anything else, of sex-change surgery. Are transsexuals really members of their chosen sex? Well, they look like that other sex, take on the roles of that other sex and so on, but they do not have all those internal workings of the other sex, and cannot create children in the organic fashion of members of the chosen sex.

Solomon, 1994; Campbell, 2009, p. 79.

That excerpt is from *Defiantly Deaf*[^52], which seemed balanced and empathic until the abusive, biased, degrading and inflammatory extract above. *d/Deaf* persons may only be seeking *amelioration of a characteristic* – their deafness (see Appendix Six for a USA “cochlear implant internet group for LGBTQ persons”).

**Intergroup hostilities that exclude**

Solomon denigrated male-to-female transsexual persons (but not Transmen, female to male transsexuals). His targeted, judgemental selectivity implies that 'the equipment' for creating children and the ability to act with it is an intrinsic, essential part of gendered identity. On such reasoning, *non-heteronormative people* are doomed to live out *imposed gender roles*. Perhaps persons concurring with Solomon's reasoning would also agree with Liberal Party Senator Bill Heffernan who in Federal Australian Parliament bestowed demeaned value (2007) upon Australia's then deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. He judged her as having "no idea of what life is really about" due to her not having children: the reproductive act bestows authenticity not only of gender experience, but 'Life' experience. Thus the question: 'Exceptionality – what is it?' A Heffernan disciple may respond: *whatever aggravates me and is beyond my frame of p/reference. I do not accept your State of Being: you are weird.* Tolerance would acknowledge that gender is constructible. Renée Richards, male-to-female transgender tennis player in her autobiography (Garber, 1993, p. 321) writes of her *purchase* of authenticity and *transition* to a feminized state of being:

> The Maserati I picked up in Modena was a reconditioned model. Previously owned, the car had been lovingly rebuilt by the craftsmen who had originally made it. The guarantee was the same as if it had been new. My automobile seemed a perfect reflection of my personal state. I too was reconditioned or at least on the way to being so.

Across earlier centuries the nature of exceptionality and the five senses was debated (Rée, 1999) with Descartes, Kant, Locke, Molyneux and Voltaire being just a few of the philosophers engaged. The "co-ordination and interplay of the..."
senses" in the production of individual worldly perceptions and knowledges was of particular interest (Rée, 1999, pp. 327-342). Near the turn of the 20th century the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (Rée, 1999, pp. 342-345) argued that our thought processes were divisible into "sensuous" and "categorical" perceptions: the former having a dimension that we can never fully adumbrate, the latter comprising notions of objective reality, such as ‘time’. All however, require successive and continuous series of perceptions including perceptions about our processes of perceiving. Are our experiences constructed by how we interpret information that we imbue from the five senses, if we have those five senses? Does our placement in an 'outer world' of human and broader physical interaction result in myriad, perhaps uncountable micro-sequential phenomenological occurrences? (This is my own extension of Rée, 1999, p. 324, dealing with perceptions of Husserl).

Ahmed (2006) takes Husserl’s Ideas (1931) into the world of Queer experience and geography. She describes individuals operating in different perceptions of space, some of which enfold other spaces, others which exclude (Valentine, 1996). Ahmed (2006, p. 19) has moved at “middle life” into lesbian spaces from her previously experienced spaces of heterosexual behaviour, yet inhabits both worlds (p. 20). From her description, one may imagine the journey of a “queer subject through straight culture” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 21), individuals negotiating potentially hostile environments. Plummer maintains (2002, p. 43):

Human sexuality is overwhelmingly a matter of symbolism ... Human sexuality is thought about, fantasized about, talked about, written about and scripted into action. It is enmeshed in the dialogues of theology, philosophy, medicine, literature, law morality, psychiatry and the sciences. However biological and 'animal-like’ its foundations may be, human sexuality is assembled and comes to life through these languages.
**Differences imbued with symbolic importance**

Curra (2000, p. 5) maintains that "symbols and the language systems of which they are part provide a universe of discourse and meaning for humans". Symbolic resources such as status and validation are not usually accorded to population segments financially dependent on the dominant culture. Neither are those resources bestowed upon those peoples who have been accorded lower status by the dominant culture (Lemert and Branaman, 1997; Goffman, 1959, 1963).

[Humans are] the 'symbol-using' animal ... overwhelmingly much of what we mean by 'reality' has been built up through us by nothing but our symbol system.


**Elephants painting abstracts**

Literature and media assist in establishing the stereotypes that assist in constructing the status of citizenry (Goggin and Newell; Tremain, 2005). Nelson (1994, p. 10) maintained that anyone’s disability may be depicted as the "central focus of the life" of the person concerned, rather than an incidental aspect. However, when the portrayal of character is negative, the disability is not the focus, but utilized as a tacit, negatively descriptive factor of the individual (1994, pp. 5-9). Possessing them may avert or incur discrimination by institutions, other organisations, as well as by individuals in, and segments of, the broad population. Type and severity of impairment or difference, economic and social status, as well as race or ethnicity, sexuality, gender and age may affect not only the 'lived body' experience of disability, but the impact of social constructions of disability. Stigmatized individuals may not define themselves as different to other human beings, while at the same time others around define them as "set apart" (Goffman, 1963, pp. 108-109). There may be a sense of 'having it both ways': 'I'm normal: so treat me the same; I'm special: so give me access to more resources'
is elusive enough to be termed a code. To make sense of their dilemma, stigmatized individuals (often with assistance of professionals), seek to forge a doctrine or code that while presenting themselves as 'normal as anyone else' yet encourages different treatment where it is acceptable or desirable. These codes may differ, but anyway provide platform and politics, plus instructions how to treat others, with "recipes for attitudes" regarding the self (Goffman, 1963, p. 111).

The history of anti-homosexual bias illustrates the point that it is extremely difficult to separate a scientific theory from the cultural matrix in which theories are formulated.


**Three aspects of the excluding process**

The picture that emerges, for this particular study, reveals three salient aspects to the excluding process:

- Exclusions imposed by social constructions of validity, which include those imposed institutionally by cultures, mores, behaviour, legislation and regulation that derive therefrom;
- Excluding physical environments (Rose, 1996; Mystik, 1996); and,
- Self-regulatory notions that derive from both the foregoing, with environments and circumstances for performance of personal authenticity being delineated, prescribed or proscribed.

The net effect is to create circumstances for performance of multiple, alienated singularities, multiple expressions of identity, multiple variations on and expressions of identity themes. The exclusions encountered in the research are layered, multiple and diverse. Knowledges, modes of communication and perceptions are accorded hierarchy and status according to cultural constructions (Burr, 2003; Schwarz, 1997; Smith, 2001).
Exclusion and identity are inextricably related (Rose, 2000). Politicized notions of identity can exclude, marginalize and 'other'. The use of stereotypes may lead to discrimination against and exclusion of subcultures (AHURI, 2002, p. 4), and organisational disempowerment of their members. Regarding the empowerment of clients, long-serving president of the USA's National Federation of the Blind (NFB), Kenneth Jernigen claimed that real participation has limits (1991, June 5): that clients should not administer agencies, but be given meaningful choices, have access to information and be encouraged to join organisations to balance and check agencies or work in conjunction with them. Jernigan's vision implies an anointed elite administering an agency, indeterminately associated to and influenced by other organisations: a Shumpeterian elite theory of democracy (Etzioni-Halevy, 1997, p. 82): the "effective range of political decision should not be extended too far." An implication being that the few who govern organisations are not typical of the passive, apathetic, ill-informed masses who are governed: "mass sentiments are manipulated by elites more often than elite values are influenced by sentiments of the masses" (Dye and Zeigler, 1997, pp. 155-157).

Exclusion, the media and literature
Adaptation to exclusion by 'othered' persons

There is a process whereby disabled persons self-construct identities for organisational adaptation. It comprises two stages (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, pp. 67-68): 1): when a disabled person understands the values and beliefs of mainstream society and what it is like to be viewed abnormally, and: 2): when disabled persons learn they are viewed that way, discovering the consequences. Thus disabled persons become socialized into acceptance of disadvantaged positions as persons falling short of constructed societal standards, lacking role
models against which to construct identities. After ascription of disabled identities, persons with acquired impairment have to re-evaluate conceptions of self. The result may be alienation from cultures "increasingly geared to the myth of non-disabled normality".54

Shakespeare (or whomever it was writing under that name) rendered the deformity of Richard III analogous with cruelty, lack of empathy and ruthlessness.55 Theatrical productions have indulged that device – or slander - for hundreds of years to receptive audiences, and it has become ‘truth’, with rational debate now pointless due to a lack of acceptable protagonists.

Media plays a central role in culturally embedding the profound sense of otherness that many people with disabilities experience

Goggin and Newell, 2005, p. 35.

If culture is constructed by discourse (Foucault, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2003) then oppression of disabled persons may be linked to the development of cultural systems. The negative cultural stereotypes pervading literature and media (Chambers, 1996, pp. 63-66) are constructions that identify the impaired and disabled as dependent and passive. This 'docile bodies' approach suggests that disabled persons "need professional advocates to articulate their interests" (Chambers, 1996, p. 65). Under such reasoning, medical reasons for exclusion from the mainstream of society have been deemed appropriate, with consequent invisibility or sentimentalisation, "identity impositions" and "stereotypical constructs" (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, pp. 70-71).

54 Distilled from Oliver and Barnes' 1998 adaptation of Goffman (1963, pp. 112-139).
Socialisation of stigmatized people - see Clare, 2003; Scabill, 2000.
55 See the Richard III Society - www.Richardiii.net
Characterization of persons with impairment as having lesser status in the prevailing social construct (Barnes, 2003, p. 9) results in "economic, environmental and cultural barriers": due to identities constructed and assigned, societal roles are devalued. But where professionals have designed programs for disabled persons, empowerment evolves only if beneficiaries are the key actors (Rappaport, 1984, p. 4). Disabled persons counter the medical model of disability with querying models of social construct, seeking changes in their social, political and economic environments, but "[v]ery few disabled people have ever been present in positions of authority" (Drake, 1999, p. 187); government support goes substantially to "privileged but unrepresentative groups" (p. 194). Groups claiming legitimacy garner economic, symbolic and cultural resources (Hall and du Gay 1996; Abrams, Hogg and Marques, 2005).

Disabled voice may be marginalized by organisational expression (Clear, 2000) with bureaucratisation and managerialism dominating organisational culture, with bureaucracy socially (re)producing "immoral indifference" (Hughes, 2002, p. 581). When the 'othered' person or notion of 'the stranger' is socially constructed (Phelan, 2001), that representational stranger may also be expunged (Bauman, 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1997) in favour of useful and malleable stereotypes via which we communicate (Abrams, 2000, p. 210-211; Abrams, de Moura, Hutchison and Viki, 2005, pp. 172-173; Vescio, Hewstone, Crisp and Rubin, 2000, pp. 123). Accessible stereotypes facilitate convenient access to individual summoning of adopted personal and societal prejudices, or "other subjectively interpreted information" (Lepore and Brown, 2002, pp. 141-163). Media and personal communication seeks to establish kernels of commonly accepted 'truths', often based on misinformation and prejudice that establish
tradable identifications and basis for discourse. Stereotyping may be denigrated academically, but assignments or adoptions of so-called cultural identities are "sources of pride and the basis of an emancipatory politics" (Chambers, 1996, p. 29). The process (pp. 30-35) is one of mediation: an individual is placed in position of cultural mediator or "mediating other" with respect to communities of differentiated communicating subjects whose cultural status is constructed by the "mediating cultural other".

Existence of this "mediating other" defines and qualifies communicating parties. The mediated other, essential in the communication of the communicating parties, can be excluded from genuine communication: they may be allowed to "make noise" (p. 33) by comment or protest, but not effectively participate:

The so-called cultural other is an ideological construct, by means of which specific discursive communities, within culture, are produced.

Chambers, 1996, p. 34.

The Mediated Other is the 'excluded third': mediation depends on exclusion (Chambers, 1996, p. 35), and the discursive community becomes constituted as a culture by producing an 'Other' as mediator: a group to which are ascribed characteristics of a separate identity. So the (p. 36) "political problem" remains: can persons participate in organizing their lives, or is their identity and disposal of it the focus of discourse between others?

**Exclusion, the media and literature**

**QLGB adaptation to exclusion**

[I]n Europe..., psychoanalytic institutes are reluctant to accept gay and lesbian candidates.

Lingiardi and Drescher, 2003, p. 4.
Isay (1996, p. 3), a psychiatrist married with children when he realized or acted upon his homosexuality, observed that into the 1980s most psychiatrists “held tenaciously to the idea” that normal development led only to heterosexuality. He claims (p. 6) that being homosexual does not require sexual activity, and that to become “gay” or “homosexual” one must label oneself (p. 7). Isay battled to establish a "normal" model for male homosexuals with the American Psycholanalytic Association from 1983 until approval in 1991 (1996, pp. 158-172). By 1992 the Association agreed that:

[H]omosexuals, like heterosexuals, had the emotional health, psychological insight, and ability not only to be psychoanalysts but to analyze and train other analysts.

In The Celluloid Closet (1987, pp. 3-59; and movie, 1996), Russo argues that lesbians and gays from the late 1920s into the 1970s were increasingly rendered as persons whose "mannerisms were risible, their morality and motives suspect or lethal". The reductionist process that delivers stereotypes for media and public consumption suits establishment of in-group cohesion (Abrams, de Moura, Hogg and Hains, 1996; Hutchison, and Viki, 2005), power structures (van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003) and delivery of services (Billis, 1993; Bryson, 1994), in accordance with the interests of key stakeholders (Speckbacher, 2003). Then arguably from 1969 (Eisenbach, 2006), a revolution was underway, producing the liberationist model of gay identity that was essentialist, maintaining that the established social order was fundamentally corrupt (Jagose, 1996). It demanded "a comprehensive analysis of political, economic, cultural and social structures" (Rizzo, 2006, p. 213), and was influenced by Marxism, placing the causes of homophobia with the middle class and capitalism: because oppression, sexual repression and imperialism are all tools and expressions of exploitation by one
class of another. Revolution required 'coming out' - a rejection of splitting public identity from private. However, the founding of any movement on identity "provided an impetus for fragmentation among these uneasy alliances and encouraged the development of ever more particular agendas" (Rizzo, 2006, p. 216). A period of activism ensued, and as Chasin has described (2000), various commercial cultures arose and developed.

The AIDS crisis that grew from 1981 brought together activism and commercial cultures, as the latter could not survive without the former (Rizzo, 2006, p. 220). More recently, the ethnic model of identity developed, embracing establishment of various identities as legitimate minority groups that might achieve official recognition and secure citizenship rights for a subculture rather than attempting destruction of a prevailing social order or power structure. Such non-conforming or "non-normative" (Gelder, 2007, p. 3) groups are considered to have six basic "cultural logics". The first is related to work and the status that accompanies employment; the second is about 'class' and transcending it; the third: about claiming or utilizing territory rather than owning it - "place expression"; the fourth (pp. 3-4) stipulates removal from home and family; the fifth implies excess and exaggeration; the sixth is reaction to banalities of conformist pressures, identity impositions and response to alienation.

**Identities and conflict**

**Othering – the minority experience of queerness and disability**
The medical and legal professions have waged intermittent war on crip and queers in efforts to punish, 'rehabilitate', 'redeem' or 'normalize' what may be perceived as their fearful, disgusting difference. Homosexuality, "deemed pathological", disqualified one from psychoanalytical training (Roughton, 2003,
The Hon Justice Michael Kirby explains in his forward to Goggin and Newell (2005, pp. 9, 10) that fear of difference is an infantile disorder ... Diversity is threatening to people who suffer from this disorder ... This is so whether the challenge of difference comes because the other has a different skin colour, an unusual religion, a distinct sexuality different from the majority, sits in a wheelchair, or manifests some other genetic disability or difference ... not long ago (and it still exists in many lands) ... to be homosexual was defined as a terrible ‘disability’.

That terrible disability led to people being shunned, made outcast, burnt alive, stoned to death or subjected to electroconvulsive therapy. Being perceived as doubly-different, doubly-devalued (Guter, 2004, p. xviii) makes one a curiosity as well as object of negative action and reaction, if not "invisible and helpless" (Gonzalez, 2004, p. 53).

Each culture has created, over time, different ways to look at homosexual people and different ways to include or exclude them from social and public health policies.

Lingiardi and Drescher, 2003, p. 2.

As queer crips, we’ve been isolated from society at large and even from one another, by underemployment, institutionalization, poverty, and internalized cripophobia. All of these factors have not merely discouraged us from telling our stories, they have brainwashed us into believing we have no stories to tell, The result is far more insidious than being unable to find ourselves remaineder at the local bookstore. What happens is that we, ourselves, fail to construct our own narratives. Feeling we are wordless, it becomes easy for us to believe we are worthless.


Guter looks to a time when persons having bodily characteristics that challenge norms can collectively establish some new kind of identity politics amid the grief and rueful humour that accompanies such a process. However, other disabled persons consider their disability as an alien state (Johnson, 2003).

For Foucault (1990, pp. 141-144; 1992, pp. 249-252), erotic and societal relationships are made "the product" of motivated discourse, propelled by
institutionalized powers that promote notions imbued with assumed authority; socially constructed ethical imperatives are designed to coerce or subject groups and individuals into convenient, tractable, useful and even profitable conformity. Foucauldian analysis depends on "supervised, fleshless, passive, docile bodies" (Carlson, 2005, pp. 148; Hughes, 2009, pp. 78-92), applicable perhaps to the institutionalized docility and passivity implied by historical placement of blind persons in workshops and lodgings (Buckrich, 2004; Shaw, 1999; Wilson, 1996). But a phenomenological viewpoint argues for an active embodiment, with 'bodies' - our points of view on the world - as the starting point. For Hughes (2009, p. 87), bodies are “the subject and object, the perceiver and perceived”. For Kodmur (2004, p. 123):

[My parents] explained they wanted me to have some disabled friends. At the time I was coping with all kinds of social awkwardness and disappointments trying to make able-bodied friends. I guess I felt that returning to the world of disabled people would be a defeat.

3.5 Body Theory
The body is my being-to-the-world and as such is the instrument by which all information and knowledge is received and meaning is generated.

Grosz, 1994, p. 87.

For Grosz the body is a phenomenon experienced, for Coupland and Gwyn (2003, p. 2) the body "mediates the relationship" between self-identity and social identity, and Baudrillard (1988) has argued that there is an end to bodily identity as we have known it. However, for Browning (1996, p. 149), our bodies are the “final focus” of our personal authority. The era of the “[p]sychological body, repressed body, neurotic body, space of phantasy, mirror of otherness, mirror of identity” (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 49) is ending in change: “there are no more
individuals, but only potential mutants” (pp. 51-52), because having a "handicap" [sic] opens up:

a veritable terrain of anticipation, an objective experimentation on the body, the senses, the brain, in particular in its relation with computers; computers as a productive, immaterial force, and the handicap as an anticipation of future work conditions in an altered, inhuman and abnormal universe.

Dutton maintains (1995, p. 169) that the body is a “fundamental resource” in deriving identity and meaning from our social environment. The body provides us with “the most direct clue to our place in society and the roles we are expected to perform” (p. 169). Persons will be “profoundly affected by their corporeal nature” (p. 170) and “will need to devise a personal and social strategy to deal with the fact”. And according to this edit of two paragraphs of Baudrillard (1998, p. 129):

In the consumer package, there's is one object finer, more precious and more dazzling than any other ... That object is the BODY ... [sic] ...The body is a cultural fact.

Disability Studies of itself "perpetuates notions of difference" (Watson, 2002, p. 524) while for disabled persons, disability is necessarily part of everyday: thus perhaps viewed as ‘ontologically unimportant’, with identities self-constr ucted in such a way so as to negate impairment as an identifier. However, people live in communities where observations and value judgements are conducted by all inhabitants – be they fully participating citizens or not.

Bodies, of course, do not emerge out of discourse and institutions; they emerge out of other bodies.

Frank, 1996, p. 49.

3.6 Social identity and its connections

Identities may be socially defined by behaviours and perceptions produced by discourse, but it is possible that the realities exist "beyond language and the network of social and political forces involved in the process of defining normal
and abnormal behaviour” (Molloy and Vasil, 2002, p. 664). Language bestowing social identity on blind and Deaf persons was medical and, if persons were also non-heterosexual perhaps included DSM-IV\textsuperscript{56} classification. Molloy and Vasil (2002, 661) claim that “once a diagnostic label is attached ... there is a risk that all ... characteristics are filtered through this diagnosis”: behaviours viewed as symptoms of whatever was diagnosed as the medical or psychiatric conditions.

The lived body and individual personal journey should be incorporated into disability narratives as adjuncts to the social construction model (Corker and French, 1998; Corker and Shakespeare, 2004; Thomas and Corker, 2004; Turner, 1996; and Shilling, 1993. However, individuals may not wish to project themselves outside medical discourse: they may choose to define themselves by blindness or by being Deaf, and they may resort to personal tragedy narratives (Molloy and Vasil, 2002, p. 663) while getting along with disabled life as it unfolds within a dominant social construction that provides disability benefits.

**Identities and culture**

Identities define, locate, characterize, categorize and differentiate self from others.


Persons with acquired impairment can experience medicalisation, deprivation and notions of inadequacy (internal oppression) which contribute to identity construction. After ascription of a disabled identity (which is accompanied by mourning for the loss of previous abilities and awareness), conceptions of self have to be re-evaluated and persons may now be excluded from aspects of their

\textsuperscript{56} The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* text revision: also known as the DSM-IV-TR, published in 2000.
previous lives (and the lives of others) in their social construct. Subsequent attempts to participate in broad society may catalyse low self-esteem, resulting in alienation from a dominant culture that is "increasingly geared to the myth of non-disabled normality", whereas disability is a normal state of existence. But for disabled persons within the dominant culture, "feeling good about oneself because of, rather than in spite of, one's disability is not presented as an option" (Barnes, 2003, p. 49) but *self-perception management* may be employed in a process of self-alienation, to “pass” and not self-identify as disabled.

If non-dominant groups or persons behave as if belonging to a dominant group, it is "tantamount to self-denial" (Bell and Berry, 2007, p. 23). Hiding or denying ones identity, 'passing' to avoid a "stigmatized identity" (Watson, 2002) results in biographical narratives constructed via the sidelining of impairment or the restructuring of "what normality is" (p. 519). Persons may then perceive themselves as being both different and ‘normal’ - negating difference because it is self-perceived as demeaning (p. 521),

Individual identity becomes a social identity, subject to intra- and inter-group relations (Pickett and Brewer, 2005; Tajfel 1978, 1981). Social identities will produce socially constructed behaviours. Where a group of individuals consider themselves of similar social status, party to similar emotional experiences, having "similar reactions and responses" to issues involving group members (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 15), they will feel party to a shared social identity. With a high level of in-group similarity group attraction is increased which improves group performance (Linville and Jones, 1980). This may result in perceptions of group

57 Curiously, Olney and Brockelman also use the second of these Barnes phrases on p. 49 of their article in *Disability and Society*, Vol. 18, No 1, Jan 2003. Who wrote it first?
distinctiveness, which for an individual maybe fulfil that desired psychological state –

in which the in-group has an identity that is perceived by the group members as being both distinct and positive vis-à-vis relevant comparison groups.

Taylor and Moghaddam 1994, p. 78.

Thus psychological processes associated with social identity can lead to solidarity and conformity within a group and discrimination against other groups. Although group members may not perceive group distinctiveness as positive (Taylor and Moghaddam 1994, p. 78) conformity to group mores may prevail, the group social identity may remain solid, and discrimination against other groups or individuals a rallying point. Tajfel (1981, p. 114) opposed the "individual bias" of social identity theory (Abrams, 2000; Jenkins 2002) arguing that individuals attach emotional significance and cleave to social categories to identify themselves as well as others, anticipating benefits or deficits that might accrue.

Sectors of humanity inhabit contesting frames of knowledge constructed from competing identity discourse (Miller, 1993; Lemert and Branaman, 1997) so the value of being in an "ingroup" can be assessed by appraisal of or social comparison to negative values of an "outgroup". These notions are conducive to organisational construction and management of identities in processes that are collective attempts to improve perceptions of group legitimacy (Tajfel, 1981; Thoits and Virshup, 1997). Peak organisations may have vested interests in treatment of issues (Melville and Perkins, 2003; Mulgan, 2001) impacting upon stakeholders (Reicher and Hopkins, 2003, p. 208), thus research respondents may query organisational legitimacy and intentions. Persons with average sensory perception have more access to broader presentations of self and tools of
interaction than do blind and d/Deaf persons. Late onset ‘sensory lack’ can sweep identity foundations away, leaving persons adrift and lonely.

3.7 Blind persons and identity perceptions
Culturally, the message of "life with a disability is not worth living" has been transmitted "tribally" for eons (Bruno, 1999, p. 856). A study of blind college students and vision loss (Roy and MacKay, 2002) observed an "inner felt experience of angst or powerlessness may be belied by superficial outer confidence", with adaptation "largely confined to outward behaviour" (p. 263). Vision impairments also "negatively affect the course and outcome of ageing" (Heyl and Wahl, 2001, p. 746). Parker (2003, pp. 259-260) believes that there are issues fundamental to the human psyche involved with sight dating back to its physiological evolution "merely" five hundred million years ago: the advent of vision is the essence of evolution and higher development. This elemental aspect, and that sight is a privilege from which achievements and benefits may accrue, contribute to the psychic impact of blindness and the fear and favour with which it is considered. The world became divided into the activities of predator and prey, placing sight elemental to survival not due to other senses or the intellect, but the acuity of vision and capacity to act upon advantageous interpretation, securing communal position.

Construction of identity is a process (Melucci, 1996, p. 159) that for blind and vision impaired persons has not so far generally enabled increase in the social capital and social inclusion of blind persons. Scott (1969, p. 32) argued that USA blindness agencies were instrumental in establishing notions of the blind individual; that blind people are attuned to an “elaborate, rigid stereotype” of their identity which their advocacy and service organisations constructed
incrementally. Scott advocates (p. 108) a “restorative approach to rehabilitation that trains a blind person to live independently” wherein the behaviours and attitudes of blind persons are learned in a variety of personal and organisational contexts. He implies (pp. 109-110) that lack of financial security may keep clients of blindness agencies docile but compliance, dependence, docility and loss remain as pervasive ideas in the broad public psyche.

Carroll (1961, pp. 14-79) described the effect of blindness as not just akin to dying but in fact ‘a dying’ "The Sighted Man Dies" (pp. 11-13). When blindness comes it marks the death of sighted life that comprised the person’s identity. Relationships are lost, ways of doing things 'die' and must be re-learnt, relationship to one’s environment 'dies'. The blind person then born may achieve a satisfactory life but experiences losses of psychological security, basic skills, communication, appreciation, occupation, financial status and "whole personality" (Carroll, 1961, pp. 14-79). Individuals may self-define by what we are not, as well as by what we own, achieve, buy, our relationships and work.

The unemployment rate of blind persons in Australia is unknown, but it is estimated (www.bca.org.au and www.visionaustralia.org.au) that about sixty-three per cent of blind persons wanting work have no work at all (Horin, 2007). Bolt (2005, p. 146) believed that blind or vision impaired women in literature are infantilized to such a degree that desire for them by the sighted can only be paedophilic in nature. However, in a broad examination of texts depicting castration congruent with blindness and vision impairment, he discerned that men are portrayed as suffering crises of identity and that male blind and vision

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58 Carroll refers to 'death of the man' –not 'woman' or 'person' - recalling Lowry's assertion (1960, p. 30) that blindness had a masculine image.
impaired persons are more likely to suffer from doubts about their gender and sexual efficacy than women. Carroll (1961) also believed blind male impotence was similarly fostered by feeling of dependency and disempowerment.

Vernon observed (1999, p. 393) that blindness resulted in a "loss of self-esteem", and for women: their femininity was "totally negated". It is not clear whether Vernon is thinking about stereotypes of femininity, but there seems to be a quality of mourning for loss. The literature reveals rejection experienced (Ayliffe, 1997; Doogue, 2008) and "psychic rage" against restrictions imposed by “care” (Torey, 2003, p. 140). Blind men may have less access to boisterous male pastimes. In 2009, Guide Dogs for the Blind Victoria hosted an occupational therapy program for blind males called 'Adrenalin', in which blokey, masculine activities take place: barbeques; bush walking; sports. Anecdotal evidence is that homophobic sentiments have been expressed by a sighted occupational therapist during a program designed to give esteem to blind (but not sexually diverse) males: an echo of male group 'poofter-bashing' being perpetrated. The blind participant of diverse sexuality who recounted this instance is not 'out' to other group members and did not wish the matter to be pursued further at this time for doubt about the response: perhaps not just gossip, but intermittent retaliations and ostracism. So far, blind persons have not been broadly envisaged as comprising part of a future continuum for development of the human species, as per the startling impression conveyed by Baudrillard (1988, p. 52), watching

... the blind playing a ballgame ... [They] display SF-like behaviour, adjusting themselves ... by ear and the animal reflex, which will soon be the case for humans in a process of eyeless tactile perception and reflex adaptation evolving in the systems as in the interior of their brain or the convolutions of a box. Such are the blind, and the handicapped; mutant figures, because mutilated and hence closer to commutation, closer to the telepathic,
telecommunicational universe than we others ... all-too-human, condemned by ... lack of disabilities to conventional forms of work.

Baudrillard’s imagery, pitying those “all-too-human” average persons who are not “mutant”, contrasts to depictions of blind persons as interesting but anodyne, as in Rebecca Maxwell’s *Blind and Busy* — good average citizens with nary a quirk, going about their business.

**Perceptions of blindness identities and sexualities**

Persons are socially conditioned to define themselves in accordance with "externally imposed criteria" (Dutton, 1995, p. 373) socially constructed by dominant ableist worlds. Apart from lacking access to notions of potence and causality, Vaughan (1998) believed that persons blind young will lack broad perceptions of beauty and that not to acknowledge blindness as a catastrophic occurrence could be considered as "faulty perception of a harsh reality", immaturity and operation of a defence mechanism (Vaughan, 1993, pp. 185, 221). Such notions have prevailed since the 1950s (Augusto and Schroeder, 1995; Webster and Roe, 1998; Zahl, 1950).

The sighted academic Patrick White (2003, p. 140) argued for blind persons to take control of "the story of their own sexuality", and that a flurry of interest to educate blind persons about sex was to make them more actively heterosexual: educators considered blind persons to be "insufficiently heterosexual" due to their restrictive environment. The AFB Resource Guide wanted to “help visually handicapped young people to leave the ‘Blind World’ behind and help them share fully the humanness of all human beings.” White (2003, p. 136)

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59 2009, self-published in Melbourne, Australia.
60 In 1975 the American Foundation for The Blind (AFB) published a compendium of educational resources.
observed that for Blind persons "heterosexual contacts of the most innocuous kind had in the past been discouraged". Improved sex education of young blind persons could funnel "sexually ignorant and ambiguous blind children" into "normal, wholesome, heterosexual relationships" by schooling them in "Gender, sex and desire". In another context, this was termed the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990; Wittig, 1993) where "stable gender" would express biologically correct sex acts (White, 2003, p. 139). Thus, ultimately the sex education of blind persons was about assimilating them into the heterosexual matrix. The existence of apparently ambisexual blind persons may confirm notions of Sedgwick (1994, pp. 15-20; 2008, p. 82-85) who argued that the categories 'heterosexual', 'male', 'female', and 'homosexual' are artificial, and that failure to understand the nature of sexual identity and desire means that “true understanding” under Western culture may not be possible.

Who are ‘the blind’?

Vision is such an impersonal thing ... Foucault has said we’re being observed all the time... as a method of control ... and I think that happens because vision is now the primary sense and it also fits in with not being really relational: it’s to do with ‘dipping in, ‘pervin’, or ... analysing, judging, without ever making a deep contact.

Blind research respondent, 5 May, 2008, social gathering.

Carroll (1961, pp. 220 et seq) argued that blind persons experienced socially-imposed loss of status in two ways: the external dominant world was constructed with a pejorative opinions about blindness and blind persons; and: blind persons may internalize such attitudes and mores, thus despising or denigrating blindness, generating low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. Berkowitz (1989, p. 168) thought being blind had less stigma attached than other disabilities.

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61 Wittig (1993, p. 108): "what makes a woman is a specific social relation to a man" - which a woman can escape by "refusing to become or stay heterosexual".
because people "can easily imagine being blind" and it was less disabling, giving blind persons political advantage; dichotomously, they might be victims of exclusionary processes that inhibit socio-cultural participation, or persons "already over-privileged" (Berkowitz, 1989, p. 168). In the American social welfare system blind persons hold the status of being "worthy poor" (Berkowitz, 1989, pp. 168-169; Spungin, 1996, pp. 1-4).  

I was catapulted into a most horrific experience of social deconstruction and personal disintegration and emotional isolation. What I had been no longer was, what I thought I could be was strongly influenced by mythical negative constructions of blindness. I wanted to die then. There were two years of deep sadness, silent screaming, inner raging, physical apathy, unbearable frustration, humiliation, and de-skilling where purpose was hard to find.


Trevor-Roper believed myopia may be stimulating or damaging to the evolution of individual character and that the same person, born a hypermetrope (see Terminology), would be "an entirely different individual" (1997, pp. 21-24). By contrast, if blindness is just a characteristic that is the subject of appropriate supports and social constructions in attitudes, perceptions and environments, the identity implications might be "reduced to a mere inconvenience" (Kent, 1997, p. 9). An average citizen may not know any blind persons but see one at some time in public (Forrest, 1983), with portrayals in literature and media, including

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62 Accurate ratios and numbers of blind people are not available. In persons aged 65 and over all Queensland Statistical Districts experienced increases from June 1998 to June 2003, when the proportion of such persons was 11.9% of the population (ABS, 3201.0: 15). Using the USA blindness/population ratio, 3.5% of Queensland's 11.9% of its (2002) 3,7072 million population (ABS, 1301.0: 86) = (approx) 15,440 aged people in Queensland being blind, equivalent to a small town. There are no accurate statistics for childhood, adolescent, young and middle-aged adult blindness. Estimates of persons in Australia with un-correctable refractive error are hazy: 160,000 in 1998; totally blind: 60,000. In 1998, clients of principal blind organisations in NSW and Victoria totalled 44,200, leaving 15,800 estimated for other states not reporting or reported.
advertising, likely to engender varying notions of lived blindness. Fiona Woods, a lawyer with childhood onset blindness, long active in BCA and other organisations, described her depression and antipathy (www.bca.org, 2003) upon initial contact. Of blind individuals in social settings, she opined:

Everyone seemed to be either super Christian, obese or drunk a lot of the time. I was probably looking for role models and I didn't find them.

Self-discovery prompted involvement, but she identified more with feminism than disability. Many senior blind and vision impaired persons do not choose to attend agencies "of" and "for" the blind because of reluctance to acknowledge their disability (Yeadon, 1991, pp. 181-196). They may prefer to identify as Aged or Senior Citizens, yet acceptance of blindness and "need for help" can improve quality of life (Kuusisto, 1988, p. 143). Wilson (1980, p. vii) opined "People do not really go blind by the million. They go blind individually, each in his own predicament." It is more appropriate to say 'each in her own predicament' because the majority of Australia's blind may be elderly women. Since the first Australian census in 1911⁶³ there has been a lack of accurate numbers regarding the Australian blindness demographic with numbers of indigenous persons afflicted being particularly unknown.

There are many roads to acquired vision impairment and blindness, signposted perhaps in schoolyards, with derision directed at youth with thick spectacles and perhaps impaired motor and social skills. Newly blinded persons have self-presentation fears: the tentative nature of broad socialisation; the minutiae of which political correctness forbids mention: how do I look, who is there, who is

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watching? Eating with sighted people! Is this public toilet clean? Am I leaving it clean? If I was always blind, what work can I get, how will I pass my life? If I was sighted before, how can I stop the world shrinking, closing down? How to satisfy average, ‘normal’ needs for love and sex, or even affection that is openly reciprocated? – all that s well as lack of access to educational materials, no casual reading on impulse, limited recreational possibilities, and ‘who is watching?.

I always felt that I can’t do or say anything, because everyone’s watching me! And then I’ll get in trouble, and what if they ever found out, God forbid, that I’m gay!? [Laughs].

Blind research respondent, 5 May, 2008, social gathering.

In 1974 the USA’s blindness icon, Kenneth Jernigan, listed nine depictions of blindness identities he claimed were socially constructed from obsolete, inappropriate and deficient cultural discourse: abnormality; compensatory; evil; foolish; parable; punishment; purification; tragedy and virtue. Jernigan also showed contempt for blind persons who did not share his publicly expressed supercrip attitudes.

**Auto- and bio-graphical constructions of blindness identities**

Jernigan (www.nfb.org, 5 June 1991) excoriated John Hull about the latter’s account of becoming blind (1990). Without empathy for the insights of Hull’s experience, Jernigan railed against passivity as well as the rehabilitation industry which he claimed gave emphasis to failure and limitations, thereby discouraging initiative. Hull (1990) described three years in a 38-year struggle against congenital cataracts, retinal detachments, poor diagnosis and deficient surgeries. He documented his transition from a person emotionally, psychologically and physiologically equipped as sighted but unable to see, to being a blind man (Hull, 1999: *Blindness: Is Literature Against Us?* www.blind.net/bpba1974.htm, first and last pages.

1990, p. ix). The journey is to a different 'order or state' of human existence (p. 164). Somewhere along the line there is someone with eyes, blindness being a small jealous world contained within a greater one that pities. Difficulties encountered include: tribalism; parochialism; hierarchies of power and prestige that made reaching across ‘boundaries of states of being” difficult; and blindness always being dependent. Social constructions of disability (Oliver, 1990, 1996; Oliver and Barnes, 1998) do not recognise the corporeal reality of disability (Thomas, 1999a), but social constructionism alone cannot explain blindness biography (Allan, 1996; Blackman, 1997; Doogue, 2008; Torey, 2003).

In 2009, BCA had printed 20,000 postcards for sending to the Federal Minister for the Arts, Recreation, Heritage and Environment. They depicted persons with white canes and dog guides sitting in a cinema with a caption "It's our turn now" and by 2011 movie captioning is progressing. Submission of agendas and storytelling to all media is desirable, but who submits and tells, and to what effect?

**Blindness with bathos**

Describing his feelings of isolation and alienation attending a gay conference in New Orleans, Feinstein “felt as though I was two people: one trying to participate, the other observing what was happening” (2004, p. 134).

The blind man sat in the hotel lobby on an uncomfortable bench. He tried to remember all the things his mother had drilled into him as a little boy, things that were important to sighted people, but had little meaning to him: "I must sit up straight, keep my hands down, my head up, but not too high, and above all, not rock” [Autobiographical].

Feinstein, 2004, p. 129.

Feinstein mostly writes in the third person, memorably objectifying himself as frustrated, lonely, obese, unfulfilled, unhappy and unmotivated.  

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66 Bathos implies a fall of almost ludicrous proportions – Bathos is pathos with a biting edge of sorrow, perhaps due to capricious Fate; it can be self-indulgent, even if true.
attending a convention, there is no sense that he is engaging in it, no mention of activism or issues except those of personal self-indulgence. He expresses enchantment and unhappiness about assistance from sighted persons, but no reported effort into knowing about the lives of others. Feinstein appreciates being taken for drives and seems to be seeking a sighted partner: “... a special buddy... a friend who won’t mind describing quiet passages in a movie” (p. 134). The article gained multiple placements in literature and media. He has written other essays that have also had wide distribution and he seems to be the only gay blind author ‘out there’ in media. While his literary output is not extensive it has become iconic.

**Blindness without bathos**

In autobiographical texts blind persons may, like anyone else, restrict authentic self-presentation. Raiten-D'Antonio (2004, p. 59) maintains that embracing "our own idiosyncratic priorities" is essential (2005, p. 58) but that a "satisfying life occurs in the long process of establishing and maintaining relationships, talents, meaningful work and service to others". However, writing an autobiography can have elements of ‘getting in first’ with the notions one wishes to convey about one’s life before anyone else does it. Crow has lamented (2000, p. 853):

> It was Helen Keller’s responsibility to squeeze herself into a non-disabled world ... The image that constrained Helen Keller constrains us still. It is an image of a super-human attainment – a fictional account of a life, with all the complications and compromises tippexed out. In the public image of Helen Keller, when is she ever shown as fallible, inconsistent or complicated? Where is her autonomy? What happened to the radical and rebel? Where is Helen Keller as a woman? Where is she, convincingly, as a disabled person?

67 Feinstein’s writing is mostly concerned with such personal negativity. See also QX Magazine, issue 655, 18 September 2007, pp. 10-12.

68 www.chanton.com: "Being Blind and Gay" and articles on www.bentvoices.org
For culturally and sexually diverse disabled persons to effect integration with broader communities the tool of passing (Sedgewick, 2008; Seidman, 2008; Temby, 1995) may be employed. However, blindisms may mitigate against social integration (Augusto & McGraw, 1990). Sacks (1995, p. 111) advocates maintaining "the idea of looking": blind persons should face those with whom talking, alert to the idea of face-to-face connection as a consistent requirement if one is to be admitted to the environments and notions of achievement constructed by hearing and sighted persons. W(h)ither multiculturalism? (Pace Johnston, T, 2004, q.v.). Success in the ableist world can be a passport to desired arenas of activity where one can achieve the benefits that suffuse ableist realities.

Autobiography and biography of blind persons seem to fall roughly into three categories: those involved in community betterment; those who cope or survive in ways notionally average; and those devoting energy to personal accomplishment. Basic skills are needed to underpin each possibility. Sacks (1995, p. 108), writing about an instance of recovered sight, observed:

> We are not given the world: we make our world through incessant experience, categorisation, memory, reconnection. Blind persons may enter unfamiliar social situations having had too little chance to garner the requisite experience to be adept in environments such as typical meeting places.

**Community endeavour – 1.**

The Dicksons are depicted as conservative and concerned with blind activism. Harold Dickinson’s autobiography (1982) and that of his wife Mercy (2000) portray their childhood-onset blindness. Harold went blind in 1913 when he was four years old. His Christian, soldierly story of survival through what seems to be an almost Dickensian existence is vividly evocative and ‘old school’. He believes

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69 Mannerisms of blind persons experienced as alienating by sighted persons.
(p. 163) that persons blinded in childhood are at a great advantage compared to those blinded in adolescence and beyond, although the causes - accident, disability, genetics, ageing - each have their own effects. Harold’s wife Mercy had become blind at 7 years of age (1926) from meningitis. She claimed she was ‘lucky’ because, at that age she was “young enough to be able to adjust easily and old enough to have acquired a wealth of visual memories” (2000, p. 15). Mercy was the first blind woman to achieve secondary education in Queensland, later gaining a BA from the University of Queensland which did not help overcome prejudice against her as a possible employee. Mercy and Harold became a team, increasing their profile in broader society and promoting advocacy and service organisations less dominated by the sighted.

**Community endeavour – 2.**
To forge an organisation more under the control of blind persons was also the goal of Tilley Aston. Born in 1873, she was blind by seven years of age and at twenty-three instrumental in organizing a small group of women to promote the interests of blind persons. Wilson (1996) documents: Aston’s experience lobbying, motivating, publicizing and organizing; the vicissitudes of her life; the changes in the blindness demographic; the political and social environment and how control of the organisation that arose from her efforts was wrested from control by Tilley and others who had been instrumental in creating it.

**Resolving or rejecting blindness bathos – 1.**
When Desirée Allan’s "new life in the dark" began, 1990 in a Gold Coast hospital she was too scared to get out of bed, not knowing where it was safe to walk and terrified of accidents (Allan, 1996, p. 8):
I’ve heard people say ‘Oh God, I’d hate to be blind, I’d rather be dead.’ I’ve seen people walk right into her in the street even though she has her cane... taxi drivers toot the horn and stay in the car as Desirée tries in vain to find the vehicle door ... people stare at her ... move away and be hesitant to talk ... talk loudly to her as if her disability of blindness denotes a hearing problem or a mental incapacity.

Clayton [sic], boyfriend of author Desirée Allan, 1996, p. 5.

Imagining that one day she would see light, Desirée gradually built her ‘second life’, instinctively trying to ‘pass’ as sighted (p. 23). She did orientation and mobility training with the Royal Guide Dogs Association who provided an Occupational Therapist to assist food preparation and was taught Braille by an iconic figure in Queensland’s blindness community, Mercy Dickinson. Lonely five days per week, Desirée turned to the organisation now known as Vision Australia to improve her living skills.

Desirée acknowledged jealousy at not being able to join in recreation with her sighted de facto and his young son. She took a pro-active stance, improving her skills and education to establish independence from critically supportive and long-standing relationships. Apart from help provided by service organisations in Queensland, Desirée sought an operation to make her eyes more cosmetically pleasing, taking away their ‘wander’ initially to satisfy her father and the notions she reflexively acquired from him of her appearance. She looked for work and engaged with as many aspects of life as possible: gym; learning massage; public speaking; TAFE computer courses and charitable hospital visiting to a bedridden elderly woman with no family. It comes as a shock when Desirée reveals she was blinded because she tried to suicide with a rifle, that when perfectly sighted she had apparently been a bipolar teenage substance abuser, living what she depicts as a somewhat adventurous but dissolute life.
Resolving or rejecting blindness bathos -2.

Kuusisto (1998, p. 30) wrote of his pre-adolescence: “Closed against boyhood with a typewriter, talking books and a radio is largely how I survive”... then: “Blindness is a profound misfortune, a calamity” (p. 13). Things did not improve (p. 33): shielded from exercise and snacking on junk food, he got very fat:

In the school’s dark hallways I am far too actual, pushed into the metal walls of lockers by bullies. I am their pastime. ‘Blindo! You gross fucker!’

Kuusisto’s maintains that he continually affirmed the negative because he had not been schooled in other possible attitudes. Although he had siblings, idiosyncratic and interesting grandparents, socially aware academic parents and a cosmopolitan multicultural life (p. 41):

I have no affection for my life, must talk, impress my father, become a being of value.

Legally blind but perceiving some shapes, colours and with his nose against objects for detail, he tries to pass as sighted with often farcical results (p. 41):

Frequently I am singled out for derision, but the addiction to pass is stronger with every instance of humiliation.

It had not occurred to Kuusisto that blindness can be a “rich way of living” (p. 59). He prayed that he might never be seen with a white cane (p. 65). During adolescence he diets strictly, wanting to be as thin as the Rolling Stones and to adopt perceived aspects of John Lennon. His social life improved but there were afternoons when “dread of not knowing where to go reached a fever-pitch” (p. 92). He lived a quasi-hippie period: light drugs and long nights. Ultimately Kuussito graduated from university, won a Fulbright scholarship and became an associate professor, but it is only from his mid thirties that he gets to like his blind self (p. 142). He takes up the white cane with some relief, resigned to the fact that (p. 148) "On the planet of the blind no one needs to be cured". Kuusisto (p. 166)
has taken the “slow way to blindness, resisting it like a suspicious skater who fears the river”. He has certainly taken an aesthetic route: his book is replete with artistic, cultural, literary and mystic references.

**Resolving or rejecting blindness bathos – 3.**

I know I shall never be able to keep up with a peer group, shall be left behind, left to scavenge, be banished to a secret, subversive, elsewhere world.


Barbara Blackman experienced a degenerative eye condition and those were her teen thoughts in 1945. In an interview Blackman told of her nervous breakdown at twenty-one years of age, trying to deal with her blindness.

It seemed to me ... I was being given a life sentence for a crime I had not committed. ... it was commuted to solitary confinement with parole, and a hundred lashes a day. The lashes of landscape dissolved in vacant air, smiles and gazes buried in blanks, faces of lovers and children drowned in fathomless, clear water.

Blackman with Geraldine Doogue, 30 March 2008.

Blackman was “very angry” about going blind, she resented people who had eyes but did not read. On scholarship to Sydney University to become a social worker she met her first future husband, Charles Blackman, who ‘thought she was an emotional cripple’ but the marriage lasted thirty years before he left her. Barbara maintains her marriage broke up because the couple could no longer wrestle with ‘the dark angel’ of Barbara’s blindness and Charles’s visual nature.

It became intolerable and we lost our communication, our line of communication was cut. And I knew that our worlds had come so far apart.

Blackman to Doogue, 2008.
Blackman’s autobiography and self-depiction may leave one with a lingering impression of her sadness despite her multiple accomplishments and success.  

Resolving or rejecting blindness bathos – 4.

Michalko’s 1999 autobiography depicts an alienating, dispiriting, sometimes detached and frightening journey into blindness, with stages that include confusion, denial, impersonation and objectification. Michalko claims (1999, p. 186) that blind people live in "a plurality of ideas, opinions and blindness voices" with his own blindness ultimately supplying “an occasion to be a decisive actor in the world” (p. 187). He does not dwell on human attachment but writes with deep emotion about his guide dog, Smokie: “I am alone together with Smokie but in solitude with my blindness” (p. 188).

Michalko is unhappy with the “image of blindness that is organisationally produced” (p. 75), and that the Guide Dog training residential school was patronizing (p. 77). He complains about the lack of alcohol at meal times, venue decoration (p. 76) and how he felt as if the trainees were being paraded as ‘the school’s good work” on a fundraising open-day (p. 78) but concedes that the school paid for everything during the entire month of residence. Michalko (1999, pp. 181-182) believes that conceiving blindness as a condition requiring personal adjustment "immediately solves the blindness problem" - it is simply a state of being without vision (p. 181) and there is "only one blindness". However, if one lives in blindness (p. 182) rather than with it, then blindness “can be interpreted as a dynamic condition”, full of unknowns. Consequently there are many kinds of

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70 Barbara Blackman entered into and contributed to an artistic environment. Her sight degeneration was subject of paintings by Charles Blackman. At age 80 she became the only blind person publicly honoured by the National Gallery of Victoria.
blindness, personalised and variable - perhaps unalterably negative, even secondary to personhood. Almost mystically, Michalko warns that technology interferes with relationships and human-to-nature interface and only helps people live "with" blindness, (pp. 182-183). He believes (p. 100) that blind persons should learn to be "at home" in their blindness, which is an anomaly “and a regrettable one at that”. He then posits questions about the "home" of blind persons (p. 101): blind people "carry their homes" of blindness wherever they go, they are "forced" to do this. There is "[d]ual citizenship" in the sighted and blind worlds. Michalko (2002, p. 153) believes that disability "only recently has figured in human identity". The researcher argues that such a point of view ignores all literature, including the bibles and identities that have been bestowed on people - however superficial, inappropriate or repugnant – through recorded history. In attempting to scope the entire disability field, Michalko (2002, p. 153) produces a notion that

The battle for inclusion of disabled people becomes the battle for ordinariness, a sense of “seeing past a disability” to the ordinary person.

**Resolving or rejecting blindness bathos – 5.**

In *False Light* Sheldon (1993), comments on hearing about the suicide of a friend who had his eyes gouged out by Nazi storm troopers angry at a satirical representation made of them: after being beaten and blinded, then dumped back in his apartment, the friend had gassed himself: “In his agony he made the right choice, better dead that blind” (p. 74). Later in life, due to a car accident, the author also becomes blind; the memoir culminates in the author's suicide: for the final sentence of the book he writes down the words of absolution spoken by the priest at his confession to the imminent act of self-destruction: Sheldon does not
wish to live as a blind person. Writing of himself in the second person (p. 266): “he would not abuse kindness and become a burden”. For Sheldon, child of a mixed, Catholic-mother, Jewish-father marriage, with both aristocratic and hard-working middle-class connections, having un-earned allowance and entrenched social standing, his father brought him to Australia; later Sheldon lived mostly in Greece as an English teacher in relative poverty and vagabondage, allied to his mother’s Christianity and ultimately converting to Catholicism, life was replete with the “false light of literary, medical, personal and religious hopes” (p. 280). He also inhabited many identities and a number of names. The memoir’s chapters are ‘Dawn’, ‘Merciless Morning’, ‘Midday Medley’, ‘Arid Afternoon’, and ‘Night’.

As explained in footnote number 65, ‘bathos’ implies an almost ludicrous fall from prior states of grace. The Sheldon book is full of ghastly, magnificent and ordinary events. Whilst the changes in Sheldon’s circumstances and happenings in his life are on an operatic scale, he writes about all of them in a similar tone, at a state of apparent remove; whether that was self-protective, a literary device, natural state or an instinctive abstraction is not known. He appears to consider the lives of everyone in the book, including his mother and father, without entrenched attachment to them. He expresses no appreciation of his financially indulgent and mostly considerate father, is thoughtful about his mother’s early, lonely death, evidently casual about his friends and various female and male lovers. Sheldon depicts himself as not involved in any notion of ‘the greater good’, nor is he particularly brave. He managed to get by without the gifts of his younger days (including his good looks), but he was not prepared to live without sight. He portrays his pre-blindness behaviour as pretentious and cavalier, and as a blind person, he is often angry, bitter and graceless.
Supercrip attitudes – 1.
Media depictions of blind Brisbane resident and world adventurer Gerrard Gosens present in sharp relief to self-depictions by Feinstein and Sheldon. The status of being a ‘supercrip’ is also problematic. No matter what blind persons of diverse sexualities achieve, they are still likely to be regarded by the broader world as specimens of the social category to which they are deemed to belong (Tajfel, 1978, p. 8) – ‘the blind’. Blind respondents to the research were generally dubious about the public appearances of the admirably self-disciplined, likeable and humble Mr. Gosens - acceding to the perceptions of Overboe (2007, p. 19) that

the image of the disabled hero validates the lived experience of a few disabled people and invalidates the lived experience of the majority of disabled people because they cannot meet such expectations.

Most of us might not meet societal or even our own expectations which may anyway be narcissistic, just as that narcissism inherent to autobiography (Siebers, 2008). However, solo autobiographical performance by self-identifying crip queers (Sandahl, 2003, p. 25) can “provide us not only with a verbal articulation of these issues” about where ”queerness and 'cripdom' intersect, separate, and coincide, “but with an embodied text”.

Supercrip attitudes - 2.
Being interested unusual and unlikely phenomena, Sacks wrote a foreword for the autobiography (2004) of Torey, an academic and athletic high achiever. He was blinded by acid in an industrial accident. A young refugee from Europe, he was enrolled in Dentistry at University of Sydney, working nights to pay his way when (p. 5), he was “buried alive” by the accident. He then concentrated on his

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71 Special Projects Manager of Vision Australia in 2009, mountain climber, adventurer, and contestant on the TV show Dancing with the Stars (Shearer, 2009a and b).
neurological development to regain control of what had been his visual world to eventually accomplish extraordinary feats. Sacks argued (2004, pp. xvii - xviii):

If the ‘seeing’ part of the brain, the visual cortex, is deprived of its usual input, it does not simply shut down; it intensifies in activity, becomes hypersensitive, but now responds to internal stimuli, stimuli from other parts of the brain, in places of external ones. This may lead to hallucinations ... The other senses may now feed into this oversensitive visual cortex; ideas and feelings may clothe themselves in visual forms.

Torey portrays his blindness, determination, experiences, achievements and philandering as atypical, that blindness has the power to reset anyone’s personal world (p. 257) yet he had done things (p. 261) that “few sighted people would be game to try”. He also gives ideas for dating (p. 164) and how not to lose one’s "facial orchestration" (p. 165), to avoid assuming a "deadly mask" (p. 164).

**Supercrip attitudes – 3.**

The biography of Roger McKenzie (Ayliffe, 1997) is a minutely detailed documenting of triumph over meningitis acquired at fourteen. He did not want to work “with a lot of blind people” and was fortunately “the smartest kid we ever had here at Blind School” (p. 109). From “having to push for the right to cut up my own food at the dinner table” (p. 257), McKenzie travelled, courted, loved, lost, loved again and sailed in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

Torey and McKenzie would be ‘supercrips’ (Nelson, 1994, p. 5-9) due to their accomplishments, but not all blinded persons are innately heroic. The literature indicates highly individual responses to and coping methods for acquired blindness, along with expectedly individual personal histories of familial and other relationships. Advocacy and service organisations are not elaborated on in the public stories of Blackman, McKenzie or Torey. However, Michalko believes that political acts have created disability and culturally organized defined it
Arguably, it is the social construction of culture that generates politics. This politics is sifted through media that makes use of a lexicon. The lexicon perpetuates the use of the word ‘normal’ when it should convey what may be ‘average’ – particularly considering that being blind or d/Deaf or Queer is normal for various mammals, but not ‘average’. This is an assertion the research makes more than once!

**A companion’s overview – there are not many of them**
Titchkosky (2006), writing when she had lived ten years with Michalko during which he became more blind, argues for comprehensive ‘mapping’ of disability. This is in the sense that disability may not just ‘arrive’ as integral to a person’s lived bodily experience, but be imposed upon it. Moreover, language describes states of ‘not having’, so that ‘not having’ hearing is not having ‘normal hearing’ just as ‘not having’ vision is a state of *lacking* ‘normal visual acuity’ (Titchkosky, 2006, pp. 102-103), which is another state of disability, the converse of ‘normal’: 'normal' and 'disabled' being depicted as a parts of a dichotomy instead of being mapped in many possible forms. The research suggests replacing ‘normal’ with the word ‘average’. Articulate persons who publish are likely to be considered as spokespersons for a diverse demographic. The lack of individual stories from blind persons permits just a few salient authors to retain prominence and a kind of literary and experiential authority.

**Blindness identities and debatable benefits**
Money can provide status and dignity. Vernon states (1999, p. 393) that wealth gives one control over the lived environment and over how life and lifestyle are organised. Material resources can ensure independence, bestowing "class privilege" that may filter out economic and social discrimination, modifying the
experience of disability; resources may provide funds for transport, recreation, access to information and experiences. Since the early 1950s, Australian Blind persons alone among the disabled demographic have received a Means Test Free pension. Wilson (1996, p. 159) argued that it was considered as compensation by working blind persons for extra expenses incurred due to blindness, and also noted that -

In situations where blind people worked alongside other disabled people there was some bitterness. Why should the blind receive the benefit and not the rest of them?

As Wilson points out, despite attempts at imposing equality over the years financial benefits to the blind have never been withdrawn (1999, p. 159):

The greater benefit was never extended and remained a source of envy to other disability groups. Periodic proposals for the removal of the blind free of means test pension continue to surface at three levels - disability, bureaucratic and political.

With VA receiving substantial bequests yearly from private individuals, and blind persons a stipend, any docility may partly be borne of not wishing to disturb the status quo.

**Quantification of blindness**

Because there is no single database for blind and vision impaired persons, or analysis of clientele, there may not be any focus on the specific needs of clients and potential constituents. Instead, the focus has been on traditional service provision rather than consideration of future or specific needs (Alexander, 2002). Furthermore, aged persons who are blind may not primarily identify with the disability of having less than normal useful vision, or no useful vision at all. With blindness in Australia now largely age-related, those so afflicted may not put themselves in the blindness identity basket.
Non-heteronormative and blind - reluctant to mention it?
The “Ozblindnotstraight” Google group (see Appendix Four), began with an inaugural e-mail from the convener November 10, 2007. In February 2008 an e-mail expressed concern that 'not straight' was an exclusion of persons who consider themselves 'straight' but who have other sexual diversities including desire for occasional homosex. After some e-mail discussion, on February 11th the name of the group was changed to 'Ozblinddiv' – for 'diversity'. For a year or more the list proved to be a reasonable facilitator of communication and exchange, but an attempt during March/April 2008 to instigate autobiographic writing by Australian blind persons of diverse sexualities was not successful:

How about a book about Blindness and Diverse Sexualities? How about we write the stories of blind people who are of diverse sexualities, put them into a book and get that book into libraries, into universities, schools and the general community? This will provide a resource for current and future generations. Difference and diversity are normal parts of nature, and telling our stories to the broader community is the way to go. Of course, we can be anonymous.

There was only one supportive reply but no material submitted. Was it considered that there was nothing particular to write about? That writing might be too identifying? That personal issues are not for public consumption? Sullivan (1996, pp. 189-191) notes that discretion may preserve a persona but negate and lose "the person". He sees morbid consequences for the rejection of one's emotional core, which includes the disavowal of homosexuality, and that the sublimation of sexual longing can create a particular kind of alienated person, as it requires an abandonment of intimacy. Sullivan solved his own problems by "escape" - moving to another country (1996, p. 189):

So many homosexuals find it essential to move away from where they are before they can regain themselves.
Many research respondents and their peers were quite geographically mobile – for jobs, recreation and romance. Individual blind persons could inhabit ‘vagabond’ blindness cultures (Gelder, 2007). Modern life is replete with the educated vagabond professional. Alternatively, the vagabond diverse may inhabit host ecologies, and not be subcultural members in broader ecologies, merely itinerant and potential parts of tentative groupings that never congeal.

### 3.8 On being d/Deaf and deafness

Deaf people argued among themselves, sometimes bitterly ... whether "Deaf culture" was actually a culture or a "subculture". Padden and Humphries, 2006, p. 4.

Deaf people assemble in “common bondage, and this creates the Deaf world” (Miller, 2004. p. xi). Analogous with immigrant groups who are linguistically isolated, bonding of Deaf persons is created in mental spaces via “cultural and social companionship”. Deaf culturalists perceive they exist in a dependent but alien state, under siege from an enveloping and threatening culture that makes intermittent gestures of support and indulgence but which threatens cultural genocide by medical and institutional means.72

The growing awareness of some Deaf people of a cultural and linguistic heritage has promoted a sense of community with sign language at its centre, and marks a significant distinction between those Deaf people who claim sign language as their primary means of communication and those who identify more with hearing communities

Taylor and Darby, 2003a, p. 18.

**Detached in DeafWorld and loving it?**

Sacks (2000), as an extension of reviewing Harlan Lane’s books prior to 1989, wrote *Seeing Voices*, which with anecdote appraised history and biography, as part of an analysis of DeafWorld. Sacks queried (p. 130):

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72 Marion Shulteis, 2006, *Deaf Culture*, for a subcultural approach.
"Will we, the hearing, allow ... [Deaf persons] to be themselves, a unique culture in our midst, yet admit them as co-equals, to every sphere of activity?"

Sacks acknowledged signing (p.97) as an embodiment of “personal and cultural identity” and the “unique culture in our midst” (p. 130, the quote above). However, apart from not using ‘big D’ for ‘Deaf’, the phraseology of Sacks does not always seem to recognise a whole ‘culture’ (pp. 184):

[T]he deaf world like all subcultures [sic, p. 184], is formed partly by exclusion (from the hearing world) and partly by the formation of a community and a world around a different center – its own center.

He also asserts, alarmingly (p. 94), that the parents of “deaf children” have to be “super parents”, and the children “even more obviously” have to be “super children” – bi-lingual and bi-cultural. He believes that languages, including Sign, can only be well-learnt within a small window of time during childhood, and quotes an academic at Gallaudet, Barbara Kannapell, that if hearing persons learned Sign, that would destroy Deaf group identity (see also Ladd, 2003, p. 248).

Who are ‘the d/Deaf’?

Impairments, such as the inability to hear, exist in the world, but deafness, as a disability, is socially constructed.

Molloy and Vasil, 2002, p. 663.

One characteristic of minority cultures is the extent to which they have to resist majority-cultural prescriptions of who or what they should be ... Consequently, there is cultural pressure to reject all aspects of majority culture in order to maintain one’s own, even to the detriment of one’s own cultural development.


Corker (2000, p. 5) argues that Deaf persons are not disabled because "deafness is conceptually distinct from disability linguistically, socially and ideologically". So according to Corker we know who d/Deaf people are not: they are not disabled due to being d/Deaf. They might have other forms of disability "within the
experience of deafness” (p. 5). Corker wished that discourse would move beyond binary constructions of d/Deaf (Najarian, 2008, p. 126). This confusing cultural question is the subject of on-going debate at d/Deaf academic and grass-roots levels (Lane, 2005), the latter evidenced by internet chat rooms and blogs and epitomized at the organisational level by Deaf Australia (DA).

TDFA is less active at state levels, and not restrictive or militant, being inclusive of persons who do not sign Auslan, who are Hard of Hearing (HoH) and who may opt for cochlear implants. Thus TDFA has associations with the medical, surgical and commercial worlds and techniques to improve hearing. These commercial worlds, with their remedial and palliative agendas are notionally and practically opposed to that of Deaf Culture represented by DA. In 2009 a respected (Deaf) person in DeafWorld posted an e-mail onto the DA website disputing the right of TDFA to assert that it represents all Deaf Australians while conceding that TDFA has some merit.73 Invective often submerges rationality in this matter.

Ladd (2007, p. 175) maintains that it is inappropriate “to overlook the linguistic foundation” of Deaf collective experience, to only define Deaf as a disability, and it is equally inaccurate to discount “the very real sensory characteristics of their existence” - being unable to hear accurately. Ladd argues whether the Deaf state has ontological systems, being a landless culture that produces materially little compared with many other cultures. Ladd describes difficulties in conducting research “in the Deaf domain” (p. 268), due to a multiplicity of differing and arguable points of view. In regard to Deaf persons, he considers the social model of disability construction to be medicalized and -

73 This discussion appears on blogs – for example: www.the-rebuttal.com
conceived around the tenets of individualism – that is, the social and political barriers facing individual disabled people and their attempts to gain full access to society.

Ladd’s depicts a journey from “deafness to Deafhood” of five "dimensions": Medical; Social Welfare; Human Rights; Linguistic Minority then Deafhood. "Linguistic Dimension" includes (cultural) genocide. Deafhood is totally 'collective' in culture, history, arts and spirit. Ladd would prefer Deaf communities to be “constructed around a culturo-linguistic model” (2007, p. 268), because now “[m]inority cultures exist within a bi-polar framework, where their own ‘cultural core’ is subsumed by an opposing cultural force”. Such might be said regarding QGLBTI persons within Deaf culture.

Of his book’s approximate 160,000 words Ladd (2007) accords “Deaf Gay and Lesbian Groups” 114 words, less than ten full lines in a book of over 500 pages. An intriguing suggestion (p. 63) is that "there appears to be a much large [sic] percentage of Gay and Lesbian Deaf than in the majority society, especially within Deaf families". While Ladd mentions but discounts these anecdotal notions as "unhelpful speculation" he concedes there is little "Deaf-based research" on the subject and does not mention the work of Luczak.

Wrigley (1997) is less forensic than Ladd, more ‘racy’ across geography and history, providing foundations for Ladd’s in depth examination of ideas. For example Wrigley (1997, p. 107) deals with the idea of a “natural elite” (pp. 104 et seq) quite differently to Ladd (2007: 106) who perceives some Deaf persons as "natural leaders" because they are "truly Deaf" deserving of "elite" or "exalted status" in DeafWorld (Platow, 2003) to which Ladd cleaves and self-nominates to the status of a “Subaltern Elite Researcher” (2007, pp. 277-282). Nine enabling
“subaltern qualities” (pp. 279-280, and see Terminology herein) were identified. The subaltern movement was informed (p. 153) by post-colonialism and Black consciousness and Ladd stakes a claim to worthiness within it. Wrigley describes the concept as being a “perversion of the idea of pride in the Deaf experience” (p. 107), pointing out (p. xiii) that it was “only in 1984” [sic] that sign language was accorded recognition by UNESCO as “a legitimate linguistic system”. So it is arguably from that date Deaf culture/ DeafWorld should have been emancipated in broader community perceptions, rendering ‘Deaf’ endowed with cultural attributes and acceptance, but the public has not been educated and a sizeable number of d/Deaf persons remain conflicted.

All consumers are entitled to describe themselves using whatever terminologies they prefer, and are asked to do so at the time of joining and each time they renewing [sic] membership.

TDFA membership renewal form, 2009.

If only I’d grown up with all my senses intact, I wouldn’t be so anxiously needy as I am.


Brueggemann (2008, pp. 181-183) writes of the cochlear implant “cyborg” as possibly a “crack dweller” in the terrain of deafness and that "it will take far more than an implant to make Deaf identity (whatever that might be) go away". Whilst a witty Deaf academic such as Brueggeman concedes a place in DeafWorld for those who opt for cochlear implants and concedes that an implantee might anyway identify as Deaf, the preference of the Australian peak organisation DA

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74 Ladd’s conceptual background is developed over a chapter in his book (see Terminology). The point for the research is that there are elitist stratifications in Deaf studies and DeafWorld to which claims such as Ladd’s can be made but to which others object. The ethnic model and identification with ethnic journeys is a theme that also has resonance with QLGBTI experience.

75 Rose, 2007, p. 20, states but does not explain why the “artificially enhanced body is no longer a cyborg”.

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for Deaf ‘cultural purity’ is unlikely to change during that organisation's current incarnation.

Socio-political aspects of d/Deaf
Lack of familiarity that Deaf persons have with spoken English is often equated by the hearing to lack of intellect (Lane, 1999, p. 8). Sounds that are perceived as being oafish or unformed provoke instinctive reactions – condescending (Ratti, 1993, p. 15) or pejorative, denigrating the capacity of the Deaf individual. Members of dominant society are not often schooled to encounter difference, disability or a diverse range of cultures and cultural expression. And members of broader society do not consider deficiencies in the five senses as being 'normal'. Skelton and Valentine (2003, p. 453; Corker, 1998, p. 28) describe the "uneasy positioning of d/Deafness as art of disability":

Many d/Deaf people are not sure where they fit: In a Deaf world? In an ableist but hearing world? In a disabled but hearing world?

Unconditional support (Skelton and Valentine, 2003, p. 453) is not readily extended by organisations to deaf people "in transition" from hearing to Deaf, discrimination being idealized as intrinsic to a capital ‘D’ Deaf mission to opt for preservation and purity of Deaf culture. Ladd (2007, p. 446) suggests that young, less insular Deaf people may be able to "bridge the divide" that exists between them and hearing persons. They may adapt to situations according to personal attraction and social/ environmental circumstances. However, cohabiting with a hearing person is a vexed issue (www.all.deaf.com); Reagan (2004, p. 42) claims that the estimated ingroup marriage rate for Deaf persons of 86%-90% is "remarkably high". In brief, Deaf cultural identity, with a capital 'D' usually comprises persons Deaf since birth, or who have received education in special
schools or programs. Mainstreaming where it has occurred, takes place later in the life of the young Deaf adult.

**Quantification of deafness and DeafWorld**

It is impossible to be accurate in quantifying the numbers of d/Deaf persons, due to the lack of Australian statistics (Hyde, Power and Lloyd, 2006). Totally Deaf, Auslan-using, ‘big D’ Deaf persons are just a small fraction of those persons who are deaf. Regarding the subculture of QLGBT: taking a Kinsey-esque \(^{76}\) percentage of 10% being ‘not hetero-normative’, starting with the Johnson figure of 6,500 Auslan-using Deaf persons, also the 1998 Deaf Society of New South Wales national extrapolation of between 3,900 to 6,900 people and the Deaf Australia estimate of 16,000, that would indicate a possible pool of between 390 to 1,600 sexually diverse persons who are Deaf (Appendix Seven). In that regard, an item posted on DeafQueerNews (www.deafqueer.org, 28 June 2009) is of interest:

Dragonsani (“Drago”) Renteria is a Deaf, Chicano transman who is passionate about making a difference. A long-time activist, organizer and historian in the Deaf and Trans communities, he has devoted a great portion of his time over the past two decades towards creating change in our communities. He is founder of the national Deaf Queer Resource Center (www.deafqueer.org) and creator of the largest Deaf LGBT group on Facebook, the Deaf Queers & Allies Group, which currently has over 2,000 members.

Using that 2,000 as a proportion of the approximate current population of the USA to extrapolate to our population, (Appendix Seven has details and qualification), a possible figure for potentially responding Australian Deaf persons of diverse sexualities would be 0.000645%, or 142 people, which does not tell the full story. With all persons and sub/cultural groups, there is a range of

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idiosyncrasy. For example, due to finding them aggravating after purchase, a Deaf person may have a switched-off cochlear implant in one ear, plus an occasionally used hearing aid in the other. The person may then occasionally rely on lip-reading and Auslan. This can foster cultural ambivalence with a sense of alienation and uncertain commitment to any particular group. Different medical conditions can foster cultural and other attitudes. Medically described, there are three kinds of hearing loss\textsuperscript{77} which may be instant or progressive. Deafness is not just the absence of sound, it is sometimes the intolerable presence of distracting, infuriating, unintelligible sound, sensory absence or disjuncture.

[T]he wall around the Deaf community may have some bricks missing that enables a spectator to glance at the inside, but the 'wall in the head' that says 'We are not disabled – you are' ... will take much longer to be dismantled.

Corker\textsuperscript{78}, 2000, p. 8.

\textit{Non-disability of big ‘D’ Deaf persons – the disability of small ‘d’ deaf persons}

Branson and Miller (2002, p. 203) subtitled a chapter “The Surgical Violence of Medicine and the Symbolic Violence of Mainstreaming”: comprising vehement opposition to: a): remedial measures that were medical, surgical, palliative or institutional; and b): mainstreaming that aimed to integrate Deaf individuals into hearing society (p. 216), an assumption being that persons who had previously been segregated “would adapt to the normal [sic] world” (p. 217). These debates and discourses upon which they are based resonate through d/Deaf communities and have impact in the lives of d/Deaf individuals. It is not only the \textit{bodily fact} of difference that is important, but also the welter of meanings generated by or perceived to accompany that fact, or which have been

\textsuperscript{77} Hearing loss medical classifications: conductive; sensori-neural; mixed.

\textsuperscript{78} Corker (2000) is concerned with arbitrary epistemological dimensions.
imposed upon it, or socially constructed around bodily fact and lived experiences. These meanings generate symbolic importance beyond the mere facts. Difference and disability are instruments to be deployed, not features to be displayed or ogled. However, for these tools to be politically useful, there has to be uniformity, not only of aims, but also of the disability itself. Individuation may be inimical to group ascendency and retention of influence and power, because these "ontologically distinct communities" need a "common purpose in dialogue" (Corker, 2000, p. 7).

**The politicisation of difference**

It seems that when people with hearing impairment identify themselves as language-oppressed but not disabled, while at the same time they see people with a mobility impairment as disabled (but not as mobility oppressed), they are attributing medical labels to others in exactly the same way that they reject such labels for themselves!


In order to achieve a coherent and plausible history of a community one has to "ignore individual experience" as well as its psychological underpinning and ramifications (Ladd, 2007, p. 81). The politics of difference are inseparable from the glossing over of difference, or the "sublimation of difference" into a perceivable unity (Young, 1995, p. 247). The d/Deaf partition in Australia is exemplified by the two associations DA and TDFA. This is a posting (November 13, 2006, 08:55:08 hrs.) to the then AAD (later named DA – see Terminology) email discussion forum page, subsequently closed and unarchived:

Perhaps also in 20 years time AAD [DA] will have joined up with Deafness Forum. Perhaps the two organisations will have sorted out their differences and decided a larger membership pool and larger funding and sharing of resources, less bosses, better partnerships etc is beneficial for all. Is this as impossible as it seems? Or ... maybe there will be no AAD [DA]. The rapidly shrinking Deaf Community will make it obsolete.
Representations of Deaf persons in literature and film (Gregory, 1990; Schuchman, 1988) elicit frustration concerning portrayed misconceptions, stereotypes, inhibited development of character – d/Deaf persons rarely equalling that of characters with hearing, yet often depicted as in the simplistic equation: 'silence = strength'; along with loneliness and isolation, disease, abnormality and no humour. Also, because Deaf persons do not usually acquire broad recognition of high status in wider society, sign language is not "legitimized" (Kyle, 1986, p. 273) reinforcing lack of status:

Unless you live in a city or a large town it's very unlikely that you'll be exposed to sign language because there aren't enough people to sign to!

Dodds, 2003, p. 23.

Yet Deaf persons also contribute politicized inter-group environments and intra-group devalorization, indulging the development of derisive signing slang:

... where simple hand motions convey complex concepts, [it's difficult] to figure out how to say "gay" without being offensive. The commonly used shorthands regarding homosexuality immediately betray a historic bias among the deaf that is only now starting to fade. It could be the letter "T" against the chin, signifying "faggot." Or touching the middle finger to the tip of the nose, then swooping it dramatically up over the head, for "fairy." Or, perhaps most offensive of all, to describe a lesbian one might make a gun formation with the thumb and index finger, then put the crux of that formation to the edge of the mouth to indicate "cunnilingus".


**Auto- and bio-graphical constructions of d/Deaf identities**

For Ladd (2007, p. 63), "Disabled Deaf People" are a separate category, accorded 22 lines on the same page as gay Deaf. He claims that while there are a large number of disabled hearing-impaired persons, the Deaf community knows little about them because professional discourses have determined that they be educated within other disability categories. Ladd (2008) acknowledges that
persons who become Deaf-blind feel alienated (Sinecka, 2008) from those who may be their former Deaf friends and colleagues.

**Visibly Qwir in DeafWorld**

Two anthologies edited by Raymond Luczak (1993 and 2007) provide poems, interviews (some reconstructed into biography), and stories from d/Deaf persons who are not hetero-normative. These volumes provide insights that excel in volume, frankness and diversity of content compared to that from blind persons. The volumes are pioneering efforts with the anthologies comprising a unique resource. There are stories that express annoyance at ‘hearing’ non-heterosexual persons who do not learn sign language (such as Rentaria’s essay in Luczak, 2007, p. 365n - in some respects reminiscent of stereotypical French persons angered at foreign visitors who have not learnt French). There are expressions of animosity towards: cochlear implants; hearing straight persons and ‘small d’ deaf non-heterosexual persons who can perhaps speak and hear a little but who do not sign. A contributor (Hoffmann, 1993, pp. 86-89) believed that Deaf ‘straight’ understanding of gay people is limited due to the lack of new information "in accessible format" being available to Deaf persons, the printed word not always being accessible to them.

In Luczak’s Volume 2 (2007) just over 15% of the contributions are anonymous, a big reduction from the 42.9% anonymous of 1993. Diversity is a feature - for example: an intersex male; female-to-male transmen – and a broad geographic as well as ethnic coverage dealing with issues such as: homophobia (p. 232); lack of privacy in the Deaf community (p. 336); antipathy against cochlear implants (p. 149); and curiously (p. 304), an anonymous lesbian who at one time for an extended period, wanted to be Deaf, perhaps for psycho-sexual reasons. There
are no empathic accounts about those Deaf persons who try to learn sign language later in life and who may not be able to become fluent. Issues for d/Deaf persons are those common to hearing non-heterosexual persons, and in some ways similar to concerns of the broader population: apart from coming out, there are difficulties in meeting and identifying friends and future companions/lovers; the problems of discrimination, education, work, discovering personal identities, personal potential and working out where one fits in community and broader society.

In Australia we have no Raymond Luczak collecting the autobiographies of Deaf persons and diverse sexualities, and no Australian d/Deaf organisation importing his books, so we lack a concise overview of Australian Deaf/diverse history. Luczak believes that "individual stories are prisms" through which the world’s diversity can be illuminated (1993, p. 15).

**Visibly Qwir and Militant in DeafWorld**

The USA blogger Ridor claims to write the only world blog “for the legendary Deaf Gay Militant”. However even for Ridor living in New York City meant lack of potential peers and isolation:

> Being Deaf and gay, it kinda spells trouble for me in New York where there are not many deaf gay men that can stimulate me and my mind.

Ridor\(^79\) is likely to be sadder in Brisbane or Adelaide. Tony Nicholas, a New South Wales resident Deaf historicist and blogger-intellectual with a self-assumed portfolio of crusades, \(^80\) deals with “fundamental issues that divide Deaf, deaf and

\(^{79}\) [http://www.ridor.blogspot.com](http://www.ridor.blogspot.com)

\(^{80}\) In April 2010: [http://radio666fm.com](http://radio666fm.com) is the website that remains.
hearing people”, and is observant of the “criticism and bad behaviour” that “is an integral part of Deaf culture” (June 17, 2009):

[blogs provide] the means for Deaf people to share their voice.... Since the national newspaper for the deaf has folded, I think Deaf people has been looking for a way to communicate -- and they found it on blogs and ... video-logging ... I think it is healthy for the deaf community -- it empowers themselves.


It is unknown why there myriad stories told of diverse d/Deaf experience (as in anthologies edited by: Bauman, 2008; Gregory and Hartley, 2002; Leigh, 1999; Parasnis, 2006; Taylor and Darby, 2003), that are expansive and frank as well as voluminous, compared to those few that are extant from blind persons.

**Anodyne in DeafWorld**

In the realm of anodyne histories: O'Rielly (2007) self-published a book of thirty-six detailed autobiographies81 including two biographical portraits titled *19th/20th Century Deaf* of Australian d/Deaf persons: "Struggles, heartaches and achievements of 36 remarkable Deaf Australians". Allusion to emotions or intimacy, apart from acknowledgment of friendships and hetero-normative relationships is minimal. O'Rielly's own achievements as an organizer, Deaf educator and facilitator are substantial, perhaps due to the pro-active nature of her parents in regard to her education, as well the high level of her parental education, their social status and financial security.

**Chapter Three** painted a huge canvas.

Exploring *Crip, Disabled and d/Deaf* identities is problematic from many perspectives. Suffice it to say for research purposes that there are denotational, didactic, connotational, emotional and linguistic points of contention. However:

81 The O'Rielly book is available at The Auslan Shop, P O Box 4681 North Rocks, NSW, 2151. www.auslanshop.com.au - Luczak's books are not available there.
The ghost of Nazism has been exposed. The development of eugenics placed an academic and theoretical framework to instinctive human fears and prejudices against (inter alia) persons blind, d/Deaf, disabled and Qwir. The Nazis infused extermination with notions of purity and prosperity, an enthralling academic, procedural and scientific trick of which the ghost lingers.

Crip Identities and Periodic, beneficial identities have been examined: it may be convenient to dissemble your identity: the person you would like privately to be at home may not be the one who can hold your job, your partner, or status in society. If we cannot hide the fact that we are blind or d/Deaf, just as we may not be able to hide our racial origins, we might be able to keep secret what we do and whom we partner for sex.

Looking at Disability Theory, we queried whether people are mostly wanting to be ‘ordinary’?

We wondered where and how ‘culture’ and ‘disability’ could be found and identified. What is ‘normal’ and do we really mean ‘average’? The excluding process includes these aspects:

- Social constructions of validity
- Excluding physical environments
- Self-regulatory environments
  - Adaptation to exclusion by marginalized persons
  - The absorbing of ableist ideas.

What is sustaining the creation of multiple, artificial ‘normalities’?

Manipulated lives: manipulation of people who are disabled, different and/or diverse has been a gradual process. It includes:

- Mainstreamed education with its isolating mechanisms.
- Ableism – devaluation: we are in violation of dominant value systems
- Our non-conforming identities and undesirable bodies – weird and ugly: this is about us inhabiting our bodies and our physical differences, unacceptable to prevailing, imposed ableist ideals.
- Ersatz (re)presentation of the nonconformist – organisations might not be representing us, just presenting stereotypes that are useful according to perceptions of the organizational boards and managements.

Exceptionality - Be exceptional and displayed, or average and invisible.

Bicultural and in-between - CoDA

Cochlear implantation – polarizing d/Deaf culture

Intergroup hostilities that exclude.

Differences imbued with symbolic importance

Elephants painting abstracts – there is a performance of stereotypical imaginaries aimed at gullible audiences; is it guided by information from advocacy and service organisation processes that are aimed at gathering resources? Or is it based on human desire for distinctiveness and compartmentalisation that are allied with notions of ‘belonging’?
Three aspects of the excluding process
- Social constructions of validity
- Physical environments
- Self-regulation

Exclusion, the media and literature
- Adaptation to exclusion by ‘othered’ persons
- QLGB adaptation to exclusion

Identities and conflict
- *Othering* – the minority experience of queerness and disability

QLGBT / *Crip* adaptation proceeds with multiple variations (in western capitalist societies). Experience of *Quiriness* and disability might depend upon the environments inhabited as well as the individual body and the social identity one might be able to produce. Production of social identities is gestated and constrained by the enveloping and intruding cultures to which each person is subject.

Body theory.

Social identity and its connections.

We perceive and generate identities and notions of sexuality for others to interpret and we use our sensory perceptions and imaginations to build our own perceptions and notions, based on instinctual and cultural inputs.

Identities and culture.

It is not possible to know how many persons there are who are blind or d/Deaf and also sexually diverse, we can just examine how these identities might be constructed and performed.

Blind persons and identity perceptions.

Perceptions of blindness identities and sexualities.

Who are ‘the blind’?

Auto- and bio-graphical constructions of blindness identities.

Autobiography and biography are tools we can use to anchor our notions and perceptions. There is not enough Australian blind and d/Deaf sexually diverse auto/biography, which come in at least five different modes.
- Blindness with bathos.
- Blindness without bathos.
- Community endeavour.
- Resolving or rejecting blindness bathos.
- Supercrip attitudes.
  - A companion’s overview – *there are not many of them.*
o Blindness identities and debatable benefits.

o Quantification of blindness.

o Non-heteronormative and blind – and reluctant to mention it?

o On being d/Deaf and deafness.
  ▪ Who are ‘the d/Deaf’?
  ▪ Socio-political aspects of d/Deaf.
  ▪ Quantification of deafness and DeafWorld.
  ▪ The non-disability of big ‘D’ Deaf persons who cannot hear – and the disability of small ‘d’ deaf persons who have difficulty hearing.
  ▪ The politicisation of difference.

o Among the responding cohort, there are sites of questioning and conflict that include: being bi-cultural and “in-between”; the cochlear implant controversy; intergroup hostilities and differences which are now marinated in symbolic importance. Culture, literature, innate predilections and media reports contributing to this fuzzy picture.

o Auto- and bio-graphical constructions of d/Deaf identities. What is your preferred identity performance in DeafWorld? Qwir, Visibly Qwir, Militant, Anodyne or Detached? Perhaps it depends on context and environment?

**Chapter Three** has placed on record a picture of the ideas and environments to be negotiated by we citizens who may live our lives covertly to keep a tentative peace with dominant social constructs. The quests for belonging to something depend upon and influence our identities. This reciprocal shaping is manipulated by powers beyond the individual, but often absorbed in an osmotic way, such that we can act upon ourselves to the benefit of dominant power constructs, in spite of who we might really be.

**Chapter Four** which follows, explores organisations and the realm of nonprofits where the avoidance or neglect of niche stakeholder issues has fostered the advent of neo-groups or subcultures. In the last decade, institutional care situations have been reported to contain malign and abusive elements, denying or violating citizenship rights and harbouring person perpetrating criminal acts. Organisations are subjected to increasing oversight, while boards and
managements interpret and enact version of the mission statement. Nothing gets done in the nonprofit arena without organisations (Andreasen and Kotler, 2003; Fischel, 2003b; Werther and Berman, 2001). That is why we need nonprofit organisations (NFPs), and why Chapter Four is important. However, advocacy and service organisations may look to guard the status quo within a manageable flux, with intra- and inter-group protests threatening cohesion. The research began because members of organisations had expressed dissatisfaction with them. It therefore remains for us to consider how organisations interact with sexual diversity, blind and d/Deaf identities, attitudes and environments.

Nonprofit organisations have personalities: they can be amendable and docile, needy, authoritarian, excluding, inefficient and paranoid. They can be financially adroit or inept, and in Australia have been almost unsupervised – an extraordinary situation considering the resources involved and persons occupied in Third Sector processes. In 1997 Senator MacGibbon (1997, pp. 14-15) reminded a nonprofit seminar that he had recommended an Australian Philanthropic Commission be established as there were concerns about nonprofit accountability, inefficiency, duplication, waste, fraud, raising and application of funds, overheads and outcomes (McGregor-Lowndes, McDonald and Dwyer, 1993). The Commission did not eventuate and the corporatization that ensued did not ameliorate the need for an authority to oversee operations of the sector. (Lyons, 2001, p. 181). To the contrary: governments devolved and outsourced many of their Third Sector functions to private groups. However, the future holds promise for much needed reform, despite the angst of vested interests.
Chapter Four

Nonprofit Organisations

Organisations for minority groups are ignited by persons who are of that minority or by third parties who may be seeking to contain and marshal a particular cohort for political or financial ends which may be of benefit to the cohort. If an organisation is ‘of’ a particular cohort rather than ‘for’ that actual, imagined or potential grouping, then such "demand-side stakeholders", passionate and motivated, can catalyse organisational existence and determine performance (Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen, 1993, p. 28).

The corporatisation of charities such as the Association for the Blind Ltd (Victoria, 1990) was indicative of a new era (Wilson, 1996, p. 417). Originally the creation of concerned individuals, putative advocacy and service organisations have mostly evolved or were wrested from their creators’ grasp.

The progress of blind people during the past hundred years, from an inferior, destitute existence to a place of admired standing within the broad community, has been a glorious victory. Although the founders did not have sight they did have great vision. A vision their successors latched on to and developed. The two strands of Tilly Aston’s original policy have been vindicated - self-help and sighted support ... However, all the teamwork and help would have been to no avail if blind people themselves, had not, with grit and determination, set out to master the physical impediments, mental inhibitions and discrimination which could, so easily have held them back and imprisoned them.


So that nonprofits survive, organisational actors must adapt and interpret organisational missions according to the exigencies of the time. Recognition of tentative groupings that may or may not be subcultures could be inimical to long-term organisational survival. However, failing to acknowledge constituent identities could reasonably put in play organisational claims of validity to
represent. This chapter examines organisations in these problematic relationships. According to McGregor-Lowndes and McDonald (1994c, p. 15) there is a “less than fully rational pattern of public support for community organisations”. Transparency, accountability, logical and equitable government and taxation frameworks and standardisation of definitions may improve scrutiny of this incompletely understood force in our society.

Organisations and status
Managerial and corporate manipulation and control of perceptions about self and quality of life (Harrison, 2000, p. 164) place organisational elites as causative factors in the construction of motivated identities, with peaks the ultimate arena for third sector management elite performance. However, peaks may present inappropriate, unrealistic groupings and exacerbate difficulties in assessment of efficacy in representing a diverse range of issues of which they may have no intimate understanding (Cheverton, 2005). If not organisationally democratic and representational, a peak may not represent (Smith, 1998), operating instead via the "visions of the anointed" (Sowell, 1995) the anointed being elites which imagine or decide that they know what is best for a never - or disenfranchised constituency. For the coterie of board members, CEOs, and upper-echelon management, "ego is the basis of social policy" (Sowell, 1995, p. 246), other people’s dispositions and values (including their human nature) are tacitly perceived by that coterie as being readily changeable.

Organisations and their stakeholders
Contrary to popular belief, intercultural contact among groups does not automatically breed mutual understanding. It usually confirms each group in its own identity.

Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, pp. 326-327.
The notion of a 'one-style fits all' proclaimable identity afflicts individuals, interest groups and the legitimacy of nonprofit organisation missions. While unlikely in reality, one identity is convenient for funding bodies and governments and for nonprofits wanting to promote a brand or image in order to garner the tangible and intangible resources of funding and status which secure organisational survival in economically rationalist environments.

Organisations generate a great deal of power and leverage in the social world ... far beyond their ostensible goals ... The ends of the organisation ... are those of a small group at the top.


Elites are organisational and societal phenomena (Ladd, 2007; Mills, 2000; Shilling, 1993). Institutional and organisational elites are able to self-perpetuate due to: 1): their dominance or manipulation of the electoral process within an organisation; 2): their inter-, intra-and extra-organisational associations, relationships and ties; 3): their founding role in or devotion to the organisation, along with claims to represent stakeholders or be a repository of knowledge and history. These persons may resist advent of stakeholder youth to boards and managements. The hierarchies in nonprofit organisations may be entrenched and of limited experience (Herzlinger, 1999).

**Ubiquity of organisations**

No one knows for certain how many non-profit organisations there are in Australia. Hough, McGregor-Lowndes and Ryan calculated (2005, p. 5) that by December 2001 there were 125,034 incorporated nonprofit associations out of a third sector total of between 500,000 to 700,000 organisations (Lyons, 2001, p. 17). That comprises a lot of altruistic visions and mission statements that Lyons implies we are meant to take seriously, because his 2001 book set out to
demonstrate that, in Australia a distinctive third sector exists which should be

However, nonprofits can become embedded even while they "become
anachronistic" (Hansmann, 1988, p. 5) and mission statements may be
circumvented, just as the "non-distribution constraint" on nonprofits can be
circumvented (Hansmann, 1980, pp. 874-875). That there is no supervisory body
of Australian nonprofits is reason enough for government funded tax-payer
support to be limited. Vernon (1999, p. 385), noted that

Gramsci (1971) used the concept of hegemony to describe a
situation in which the values of an elite group stand dominant
within a society who through the construction of an all pervasive
ethos, maintain their own interests while subordinating those of
others. The prevailing hegemony is based on an established
concept of 'normality'.

4.1 Organisations and the individual
Groups pursue strategies to produce and reproduce the conditions of their
collective existence (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 92). This ‘genetic theory of groups’
(Swartz 1997, p. 7-8) maintains that forces develop to ensure that a group’s
reasons for existence are perpetuated by that group and that underlying interests
bind individuals and groups into unequal power relations.

There is no autonomy from institutions as well as a decline in the
number of intermediate organisations small enough to represent
individual Voice.

Organisations will have variable relationships with stakeholders. For people
characterized by having differences or impairments in sensory perception,
organisations exist that self-present themselves to stakeholders and the broader
public as providers of advocacy and services. For blind persons, Blind Citizens
Australia (BCA), Vision Australia (VA) and Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) all
have profiles in one or both aspects of advocacy and/or service provision, with GDB presenting itself particularly as offering services in regard to orientation and mobility (see Terminology).

Thus, there are identity constructs of which organisations must be aware and with which they must deal. Organisational awareness of identities could be implied by, or conveyed in service by, their vision and mission statements, which may not include acknowledgement of organisational subcultures. Branding and imagery may be designed to delineate, limit or otherwise influence the nature of cultural constructions that are being established to create either organisational aspirations, fictions or describe realities.

Democratic representation that takes account of subcultural differences may not be productive nor conducive to the attainment of broad organisational goals - "Extreme ambiguity creates intolerable anxiety" (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, p. 165), and non-stereotypical depictions of identity may not serve the purposes of organisational branding and imagery. The post-modernist perspective suggests that identities are continuously being reconstructed in performance, with collective identity not a lasting possibility. This poses questions for the legitimacy of all organisations over time, as well as about their use of imagery (Hogg and Abrams, 1990; Jenkins, 2002; Woodward, 1997).

Marketing and fundraising may rely on organisational branding more than ‘fact’ and may be designed to obscure or avoid fact. What people expect, want and how they might achieve is defined by organisations (Swartz, 1997, pp. 117-142) with a range of stakeholders that includes funding sources, governments, the general
public, organisational clients and consumers, other organisations and the notion of fulfilling the intentions of relative legislation and regulation.

Advocacy and service organisations politically have bearing on the lives and well-being of the people whom they represent (Stebbins, 2002; Bryson, 1994). They are at the interface between the consumers of advocacy and other services and the sources of various forms of capital: political, social and financial (Keen, 1999; Cox, 1998). They are also factors in the production of social capital, either positive or negative (Brody, 2005; Hall, 2002). Organisations have been given power to deal with how and where their members dispose of their time and may not be totally benign. They deal with the temporal and spatial aspects of their members’ lives (Stebbins, 2002). Organisations for persons with disabilities or physicalities differing from the average may mimic or provide work-place environments. They thus have substantial power in the lives of their stakeholders. They may be corporations and publish financial accounts, but the general public is usually unaware how and for whom they operate. Interface with the broader community is most often the product of corporate branding, public relationship design or media coverage that may be motivated (McDonald, 1993; Kramer, 1981). Advocacy and service organisations and peak bodies ostensibly express identity and voice (Melville, 2001; Onyx, 2001). They exist to resolve exclusionary and disempowering practices, but they do not (Campbell and Oliver, 1996; Connolly, 1991; Hall, 1996, 2002; Oliver and Barnes, 1998; Wehmeyer, 1996).

Service organisations for people who have sensory impairment determine who their clients and constituents are in different ways, but organisational processes
are obscure. It is not widely understood how NFP organisations engage or receive input from their clients, constituents or members. The service organisations exist because they stake claims to various identities, including cultural identities. The research is therefore interested in the nature of these claims and what makes these claims legitimate or otherwise in the perceptions of stakeholders, and how the organisations perceive these claims translate into operations and procedures. Organisations may reach out from their client or constituent base to represent, or they may reach back in, to mould and utilize that base as a power platform upon which organisational elites can operate in the broader community.

Shilling believes (1993, pp. 75-87) that management power operates from committees of organisational elites to rehabilitation professionals, volunteers and helpers. "Power" gains access to individuals, their bodies, gestures and actions as organisations conduct processes of identity. An individual may be anonymous in an organisation, assume an identity, or use organisational opportunities to present an identity construction. That construction may be externally imposed or it may arise from internal perceptions. These perceptions can be about what is expected of us, what we are motivated to present, or our presentations may arise from a true awareness of self. True awareness of the self is premised on notions of what we feel ourselves to be, not what others suggest we should be.

Any ideology of 'normality' comprises "identification and pursuit of goals chosen by the powerful" – for example: get a job, get mainstreamed – which is a situation unrecognized by "professionals and their victims"\(^{82}\) (Oliver, 1996, p. 104 and 1990, p. 90). Organisational quests for disabled 'normality' adds to the

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\(^{82}\) The professional are the rehabilitation industry and its clients are 'the victims'.

oppression experienced as professional services fail to meaningfully involve clients in the running of such services, so consistent engagement of dependency-reduction processes is needed or dependency-creation will continue.

Categories and distinctions are enacted by institutions and organisations: their "Power produces the Subject" (Swidler, 2003, p. 29): organisations are in control of membership agendas, identities, topics, foci and members. Organisations provide identity, social integration, stability, structure and control over individuals (Strati, 2000), all factors in the creation of organisational culture. Cultures are created by humans in environments: "active humans" (Swidler, 2003, p. 29) continually create and recreate organisational and group cultures, seeking strategic advantage over other humans and situations in their mutual environments by using skills that may be culturally encoded - specific to that social practice environment. Organisations may arise having a variety of cultures and subcultures that claim (tacitly or otherwise) to engender collective generation and transmission of meaning (Bourdieu, 2003).

It cannot be assumed that the active humans, in these instances the organisational staff, are constrained to act with professionalism in performing their duties, whether or not they have professional qualifications. If corporate hierarchies are "designed to protect those who work there and to deter outsiders from learning more about how they operate" (Hertz and Imber, 1995, p. x) there may be a "front stage and back stage" of social behaviours (Goffman, 1959, p. 253) underpinned by social constructions. These social constructions may not be

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83 This is a reprise of an ‘alarm’ raised about organisational powers by W. Richard Scott (2003, p. 324), the organisational theorist, not blind author Robert A. Scott.
84 Causative, active humans are sometimes known as ‘elites’.
easily immutable the net effect being that some organisations may not even be
directed at a valid client base. In terms of Bourdieu, individuals struggle for
control of an operational cultural field, between styles of work, intellectual
approach and between disciplines and faculties (Smith, 2001). Within each of
these fields the protagonists struggle for power and status, prejudicing mission
goals.

Effective governance by the board of a non-profit organisation is a
rare and unnatural act.

Taylor, Chait and Holland, 1999, p. 54.

Voluntary organisations have a tendency towards oligarchy and preservation of
power (Hall, 2002, p. 149) more pronounced where there is a wide gap between
the rewards received by members and leaders. This bespeaks tenuous
relationships between what have been called 'elites' \(^{85}\) and constituents:

The tendency towards oligarchy is apparently found in most
voluntary organisations where there is a wide gap between members
and leaders in the rewards (intrinsic and extrinsic) received.

Hall, 2002, p. 149.

Corporatized professional managements and boards, with personnel having
increased respect for financial accountability and outcomes, may be at some
remove from idealistic volunteers. As well, constituents – those persons
requiring advocacy and receiving services – are no longer assembled in one place.
Where they are – place – is now unlikely to be where 'community' is to be found:
there are diverse places of work and living for persons who in the last century
would have more geographically defined lives. Therefore, 'place, community and
civil society' have been subject to "dislocations, deregionalisations", separations
of purchasers (and thus establishment of distance) from nodes of funding and
planning, from providers; distance from providers of advocacy, concentration of

\(^{85}\) Organisational boards, CEOs, upper level management.
strategic entities, and thus: devaluation of place-based structures (Earles 1999, pp. 43-54). In other words: physical peer-group community is less, advocacy and services are depersonalized.

**Slow death of the Charity Framework**

The structure of charitable works is based on ableist (F.K.Campbell, 2009), or compulsory able-bodied norms (McRuer, 2002, p. 95), that have set parameters derived from negative ontologies inherent in the processes that create the dominant ableist structures. The 'charity framework', according to Kenny (2000, p. 75),

is organized around three thematic discourses: first, virtue, service and compassion; second, moral discipline; and finally, ideas of dependency and patronage.

For the provision of advocacy and service, we are endowed with three other frameworks: the 'Welfare State Industry Framework' (Kenny, 2000, p. 77), wherein third sector organisations are agents or substitutes for the state; the 'Market Framework' (p. 80), reliant on contractual obligations between the state and other corporations including third sector groups, and the 'Activist Framework' (p. 73). In the Activist Framework -

organisations are constructed around the discourses of mutuality, in-group empathy, trust and solidarity, and that of the democratic organisation oriented to social change.

In any organisation, existence of political, altruistic aspirations and ideologies will affect the nature of organisational processes as well as depictions of the organisational ‘product’. Goggin and Newell (2005, pp. 138, 211) refer to the "apartheid of disability" in Australia and that disability service-providing organisations may better garner resources if they position disabled persons with “the other” in society (p. 199), retaining the “enduring attraction” (p. 25) potential donors perceive in helping the “crippled”, “spastic” and “deserving”. Third sector
organisations can (re)present homogenized, sanitized or even morbid depictions of their clients and constituents and stereotypes of the "acceptable face of disability" because such are crucial in the “disability culture wars” (p. 199). Such terminology and the semiotic imagery of a disabled person 'rattling the tin' has to a great extent been abandoned by the service organisations themselves. Dunn (1983?, p. 54) writing generally on public relations, image and advertising, states that profits followed image, but the original (the disabled person) should be kept "out of sight at all times".

Organisations provide resources, avenues for sociability, information, connect themselves to media, and generate identity. Those organisations “best able to provide for identity validation will survive” (Stebbins, 2002, 38-39). That is, branding "establishes a reputation in the marketplace" that communicates to and addresses the concerns of existing and potential stakeholders and donors, to make the values of the organisation and the donors "fit" by generating familiarity and perceptions of effectiveness (Steinberg, 2000, pp. 1-7). In part, these processes arise due to the competition that exists between organisations for scarce resources of political, social and financial capital. It is argued (Stone, 1984; Jernigan, 1992; Vaughan, 1993) that this has implications for voice, representation and the achievement of competing organisational ends.

Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen (1993, pp. 28, 53) note that in nonprofits, control by stakeholders is “typically incomplete”. That is to say, those stakeholders demanding a service and creating the nonprofit due to government and market failures to supply, may not be able or willing to conduct the affairs of the nonprofit far beyond inception (p. 48) and that a subsequent 'seeding' of new
management (p. 41) for control by others is essential for long-term organisational survival.

Nonprofits may be formed with a desire by their founders for employment (Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen, 1993, p. 43). If the stakeholders are geographically dispersed, nonprofit entrepreneurs may be needed to facilitate confluence of widely dispersed elements. Anyway, control by individual formative stakeholders inevitably diminishes (Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen, 1993, p. 47). This may take generations, as with the expansion over decades of Vision Australia (VA). Textual materials show that VA has absorbed various organisations while yet kindling regional groups under its auspices. Apart from changes in provision of services, there are political and emotional issues affecting stakeholders that have required clarification: the loss of the residential school, sale of properties, provision of Braille music and library resources, computer service, mergers leading to depersonalisation, the stock market crash in 2008 and subsequent economic malaise with substantial loss of donations and bequests that had been invested. While the Third sector has unique features (Courtney, 2002) such difficulties are not unique to nonprofits, nor is an inherent saintliness or altruism infused into operating frameworks of the third sector (Kenny, 2000). In fact, Baldock (1990) found that a continued focus on altruism leads to exploitation of paid and unpaid non-profit organisation staff. Abuses, discrimination and exclusion (Kramer, 1981) occur within Third Sector organisations. Recent histories of various NPOs should be enough to dispel notions that non-profit institutions always contribute to social capital (Joint, 1996; McCormick, 2003). As Gettler, (2004, p. 193) noted:

> Organisations, too, have a dark side – none are perfect. It is just that some organisations, like people, are better at containing their dark side than others.
Scandals should serve rather to reduce claims by Third Sector organisations in general for exemptions, privilege and freedom from accountability and sanctions. Nonetheless, non-profit organisations have a "unique set of parameters" (Onyx, 2000, 7) that include achievement of social and spiritual aims, relationships with other nonprofits, use of volunteers and non-distribution of financial gain. That may constitute a difficult beast, indeed.

Notions of organisational validity
Interpretations of 'validity' may not convey truth, especially if evidence, justification, knowledge and objectivity have no universally acceptable definitions, and nonprofit organisations have "too many stakeholders, whose entrances and exits from active participation cannot be foreseen" (Inglis and Minahan, 2002, p. 6). This makes notions of adequate representation suspect (Sowell, 1995). Harrison (2000, p. 165) dislikes the positioning of disabled people as "clients" and "service users" rather than as potentially productive elements. Davis (2000, p. 140) who became blind in later life, is concerned with the "minimalist concept of representation" afforded by agencies, and that disabled voice is "marginalized" (pp. 142, 147) in so-called representative organisations. However, nonprofit organisations may be able to overcome some of the deficiencies of human service organisations (Hasenfeld and English, 1974, p. 3) "despite the diversity" of stakeholders’ interests in those organisations. Governments consider NGOs are valuable if they are managed well and if government boundaries are extended by NGO involvement. NGOs will be of help to governments if they manage and align their funds with government imperatives (McDonald, 1993a and b; McDonald and Marston, 2002; McGregor-Lowndes, 1993; Melville and Perkins, 2003). The broader community as
stakeholders are likely to imagine that advocacy and service organisation members as well as users are receiving the best results possible (after Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen, 1993, pp. 27-58).

4.2 Advocacy and Service organisations for blind persons
Problems with blindness organisations in the early 20th Century have been well documented (Buckrich, 2004; Ching, 1980; Schweik, 2009; Wilson, 1996). For blind and vision impaired persons there has usually been a shift from demand-side stakeholder control of numerous small to medium organisations, towards supply-side control by organisations and then dominance by sector peaks. Where this has not happened or has been un-resolved, intra- and inter-organisational conflict has continued with entropy or stasis as an outcome. Consolidation of service providers, despite client protests, may provide new impetus and financial life. In trying to ingratiate itself, a peak body may depict itself as championing constituent causes.

Validity of advocacy and service organisations for blind persons
Jernigan and Vaughan, two icons of the USA blindness realm believed consumers of services should remain depoliticized because client empowerment is antithetical to notions of organisational control (Vaughan, 1993) and anyway, "normal" society conceives that only the exceptional or the stubborn among the blind can be integrated into ordinary "normal' society" (pp. 221-224). Vaughan and Jernigan are exemplars to differing degrees of 'blindness militancy'. Vaughan and particularly Jernigan have been popular points of reference for blind persons in Australian blindness organisation management. For that reason, and because USA documentation of meetings and procedures and dissent is far more extensive than found in Australian organisations, information from the USA
is relevant to the research. Both men were concerned with self-determination and the roles that service and peak organisations for the blind play in preventing or promoting empowerment, but constituent power should be limited: "Clients should not control the agencies" (Jernigan, 1992, p. 51). The USA's National Federation of The Blind (NFB)\textsuperscript{86} exhibits a dichotomous reactionary militancy, on the one hand maintaining that the "dependency-rehabilitation conflict" had to be resolved in ways that empowered a so-called "blind community" (Vaughan, 1993, pp. 19-21). The oppressors were professionals operating in highly organized settings, contriving to maintain status, feather-bed and control organisations by keeping clients politically disempowered. Blind consumers of services needed to be retrieved from positions outside the "rehabilitation business" (p. 48) where they had no say in their treatment, and even experienced blind persons were prohibited by the prevailing power construct from mobility-training more recently blinded persons. Democratic representation was not a given.

[H]eads of agencies can have vested interests which transcend their blindness ... [W]hen an agency can pick ... blind spokespersons from the community, it can get people who will say whatever it wants.


Apart from the identity crisis that Vaughan believed afflicted the "blindness movement" (Vaughan, 1993, p. 220), the (USA) "blindness system" was considered by blind people as "unresponsive and irrelevant" (p. 192), and blind persons were coming to feel that what the agencies had to offer did not help or matter in the things that counted in their daily lives, nor their anxieties.

\textsuperscript{86} From vip.list.com.au - a subscription and information list for blind or vision impaired persons: In 2008 the NFB was against an attempt by the USA government to do something about the USA paper currency being indistinguishable. The NFB claimed that differentiating the currency was demeaning and humiliating for blind persons who could cope as well as anyone else and who resented being patronized.
Twice as many people are afraid of going blind as are afraid of premature death or heart disease.  

Connection has been found between the onset of blindness and/or deafness, depression and - particularly in the instance of foreseeable sight loss: psychological distress and suicide (De Leo, Hickey and Cantor, 1999, p. 342). Potential loss of sight "was the main causal factor for suicides involving sight loss, whereas hearing deprivation was coupled with several other likely causal factors". Just as there are many journeys to deafness, there are many journeys to blindness, it has multiple physicalities and manifestations, but nowhere is it described as a Culture, even though blindness has its own written language - Braille - and even though, just like Deaf persons, blind people have historically been oppressed, marginalized and excluded from dominant societies.

However, organisations for blind and Deaf persons can also exclude. Prior to a watershed meeting in October 2008, the constitution of Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) did not provide for partially sighted or non-blind persons to be full members. Faced with atrophy of the organisation, BCA members voted in the majority to accept such persons as full members. It was felt by some that the particularity of BCA had been lost, that representation would suffer as a result, but sighted persons allowed membership of blindness advocacy and service organisations, mutual support might ensue with an ‘accelerator’ effect applied to promoting mutual interests. The argument that was conducted at meetings (www.bca.org.au) and on the BCA website dealt mainly with notions of prejudicing the exclusivity of BCA and leaving it open to control by persons who

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were not fully blind, that this would lead to less Braille being available and closure of the remaining school for blind children. However, neither of Australia’s two major organisations for blind persons - VA and BCA - exhibits militancy. Nor have blindness organisations established any ostensibly monolithic and exclusive ‘capital B’ culture, unlike Deaf with ‘capital D’.

Due to dearth of information only limited assumptions can be made about the lives of individual blind Australians. Since 1970, there have been eight items of research in regard to Australian blind persons: Ford, 1971; Department of Welfare Services, 1981, 1985; Brownsey, 1985; Royal Guide Dogs for the Blind, 1987; Knight, 1996; Constable, 1998; Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, 1994. Themes include the lack of connection that many blind persons have to the advocacy and service agencies and hints at the diverse attitudinal, cultural, educational, and socio-economic spectrum of persons comprising the blind population. Tacit assumptions of hetero-normativity or perhaps asexuality pervade that research. Historically, the psychiatric profession has waged war against homosexuals (Eisenbach, 2006; Lingiardi and Drescher, 2003). In Australia homosexuality was considered a mental illness until 1973 and admission to Psychiatric study was subject to refusal due to anti-homosexual bias until 1992. In part of Australia homosexual conduct was subject to criminal proscription until 1997. So it is not surprising that advocacy and service organisations for persons with sensory disability and difference might be among the institutions preferring to ignore “the love that dares not speak its name” (Two Loves, Lord Alfred Douglas, 1894). The American Council of the Blind (ACB) website is the only advocacy and service organisation in the English-speaking western world to provide a website homepage link to a gay and lesbian affiliate
that operates under its auspices: originally BFLAG: Blind Friends of Lesbians and Gays (www.acb.org) - in late 2009 it was renamed as ‘Blind LGBT Pride’.

No Australian advocacy or service organisation for the blind provides such a link. However, BCA increasingly since 2003 and VA in 2008 have shown commendable acknowledgement of diversity to which this research, since 2006, has been a party and adjunct. By 2008, both VA and BCA made and at least partially followed through on efforts to embrace diversity. The research has developed a profile in both BCA and VA as well as among persons who are blind who are also socially or politically aware and users of the internet. A number of blind people who are of diverse sexualities have not elected to respond to the research. Anecdotal evidence suggests they are concerned not to jeopardize tacit acceptance by observer perceptions that they are ‘making a stance’ and opting for unacceptable visibility. An argument apparently is that hetero-normative persons do not have to make statements about their sexual identities or preferences, so why should non-heteronormative persons have to profile themselves, inappropriately emphasizing sexuality and gender as identifiers? This has implications for Identity Politics. Du Gay, Hall et al (Woodward, 1997, p. 2) depict a "circuit of culture" fundamentally concerned with identity: its production, consumption, regulation and representation. The process of constructing positive disabled identities should have impact on policy formation, as emphasis can then be given to inclusion and service-based systems of social policy rather than care-based systems.

Blind advocacy and service organisations had a history of reinforcing a social acculturation that defined inclusion, participation and worthiness in terms of
paid work, with professionals and consumer activists promoting 'normalisation' and equal rights in opportunities, goals, risks responsibilities, heartaches and disappointments (Vash, 1981, p. 133). For blind persons who were gifted or different, that might have been aiming too low and in wrong directions. Tying organisational validity to ideas of representation and voice may be ideal but futile (Brown and Ringma, 1989; Davis, 2000). An implication is that the few who govern organisations are not typical of the passive, apathetic, ill-informed masses who are governed, and "mass sentiments are manipulated by elites more often than elite values are influenced by sentiments of the masses" (Dye and Zeigler, 1997, pp. 155-157). Thus survival of democratic values is dependent on the enlightenment or disposition of the elites, and to be embraced by an organisational environment requires individual adjustment and adaptation.

Scott (1969) is a "classic" study of a disabled state (blindness) being "taught" to people by the agencies created to support them (Stone, 1984, p. 183). Scott's (1969; 1983) portrayals queried the legitimacy of service organisations for the blind. An opinion on the VIP technical discussion list, August 2009 (available by subscription) portrayed the Australian situation (quoted at length due to its attempt to be conciliatory and comprehensive as well as critical) -

The blindness community has only one strong organisation providing services, this being Guide Dogs (I cannot comment on other states in this respect - I am in NSW). In my opinion, the merger of state based blindness organisations has seen weak organisations merge into a monopoly. Vision Australia has become overly bureaucratic and, especially since the merger, does not optimally service clients.

I don't share with my colleagues on list the view that the best position for blind people is promulgated by making nasty and ill informed comments about Vision Australia or other blindness organisations and this post is certainly not an invitation for people to blanket criticize any Organisation. BCA too, respectfully, is weak.
It doesn't represent the views of the majority of blind people in Australia. This is not because it seeks to ignore its members, rather the majority of blind people are not members. Its membership of more than 3000 blind people pales into insignificance compared with the statistics for 2004-2005 provided on BCA's web site that 50,000 people were blind in Australia at that time. By any calculation, BCA's membership is low. Blindness lobby groups in Australia, unfortunately, are controlled by a few empire builders who are interspersed with people with wonderful intentions. Rather than walking away when dissatisfied, we, as blind people, need to strengthen the voice of the majority. There is no point in not supporting BCA until they either stop listening to us or another alternative arises.

This posting overestimates the membership of BCA: the organisation does not have the resources to action the 2008 proposal (and decision) to revise their membership list by contacting members and then institute renewable memberships. Many of its 3,000 life members may be dead. In 2008 BCA attempted to stimulate membership by admitting persons who are not totally blind and using Braille. However, there has not been any noticeable publicity about this or BCA.

4.3 Advocacy and service organisations for d/Deaf persons

The term "hearing-impaired" is offensive to deaf people. Can you imagine calling a black person "white-impaired" or a woman "male-impaired"? Most of us who are culturally Deaf don't want or need to become hearing in order to consider ourselves as normal. We are a minority group with our own language, culture and heritage.


Berbrier is quoting a letter written to a newspaper in 1992 by the President of the Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens, Doug Bahl, who claims minority cultural status, in effect by not considering the lived experiences of persons who have lost hearing acuity in later life. Dealing with minority groups that have their own language, culture and heritage, which perceive their singularity and consequent isolation from host cultures, expressing the need to remain apart, feeling that
they cannot be catered for by the dominant society or integrated into it, spokespersons are unlikely to be talking for individuals within groups. Spokespersons take political lines to state positions and secure advantage for loose confederations of people who unite in varying combinations from time to time to express solidarity on differing issues (Iyengar, Lepper and Ross, 1999).

According to enrolments in schools for the deaf and data from the national census and neonatal hearing screening programs, the incidence of severe and profound childhood deafness in Australia is, and has been, less than commonly assumed ... Declining prevalence and incidence rates have immediate implications for sign-based education, teacher-of-the-deaf training programs, and educational interpreting. There are also serious consequences for research, documentation, and teaching regarding Australian Sign Language (Auslan), and for the future viability of Auslan. Prompt action is essential if a credible corpus of Auslan is to be collected as the basis for a valid and verifiable description of one of the few native sign languages in the world with significant attested historical depth.


Monolithic and exclusive cultures accreting to an ideology may be essentialist and fundamentalist, requiring allegiance without divergence from the cultural line. There is a quasi Durkheimian quality to the structure of ‘Deaf’. Durkheim maintained (Hall, Neitz and Battani, 2003, p. 77) that "cultures divide the world into two categories, the sacred and profane". For Durkheim, it was preferable that individuals submit themselves to a "particular collective discipline of the [sacred] group" and "the collective activity then serves to reaffirm the cohesiveness of the group." The sacrosanct nature of Auslan in defining ‘Deaf’ provides the ritual-activity core of Deaf Australia. The cultural work performed by Auslan is one of definition: who is acceptable as full member, who merely associated, who will be included socially and emotionally, and who will be cast aside (Hyde, Power and Lloyd, 2006).
Validity of advocacy and service organisations for d/Deaf people

Actual membership numbers is one way organisational validity could be measured. In October 2009 it seems TDFA membership number was 199 (including the researcher) comprising consumers, consumer associations, service providers and service-provider associations. DA membership in November 2006 appeared to be 128 individuals of which at least 65 were voting members and 31 were associate and non-voting members like myself – although I joined in 2007. The status of a further 32 members in 2006 is unknown. My 2009 request to DA for updated or more accurate figures remains unanswered. Nicholas wrote perceptively of the organizational situation (2007) –

One day, some enterprising person is going to establish a new group with the aim of serving the entire range of people with a hearing loss and its name would be: Royal Association of the capital D: Deaf; small d: deaf; small d: deafie, little d/big D: d/Deaf, small p small h: partially hearing; small p small d: partially deaf; small h small i: hearing impaired; small h slash / big H: h/Hearing; big H: Hearing; and small h: hearing; big O: Organisation.

Tony Nicholas believes that no advocacy or service organisation for d/Deaf persons can reasonably offer and moderate discussion forums, due to the many conflicting issues. He campaigned on that issue through May 2008:

To be an advocacy agent, and at the same time, moderate a forum full of rabble rousers, is definitely not a good look. If I were running a business or professional organisation, I would not even volunteer the pretence of promoting dialogue between the organisation and the community via forums ... If not done well, it would be just inviting trouble and tarnish a professional image. Though it must be said, what is the point of hosting a discussion forum, if the provider is not going to adhere to the spirit of open discussion and debate? Let alone, listen?

Nicholas, 2008.

There are questions concerning validity of d/Deaf organisations. From where do organisations gain the right to lay claim that they represent Australia's d/Deaf
populations? *The Rebuttal*, June 6, 2009, published the following e-mail by Andrew Stewart, of The Deafness Forum of Australia:

I am fed up with all these people who want to be consulted, yet they are not even members of the organisations that are fighting for them! If people want an increase in the captioning in cinemas or theatre, what have THEY done about it? Are they members of the organisations trying to achieve change? Have they sent an email - yes, just one tiny email - to their organisation saying that they would like to be consulted. If the answer to either of these questions is no, then can these people please go away, and find somewhere else to throw a tantrum about. If they are not prepared to even communicate directly with, and support the organisations doing the fighting, then they don’t have the right to be listened to!!! My outrage at these people is partly due to my years of fighting for hearing impaired and Deaf people in other areas, and being so fed up with all the armchair generals that won’t get in and help me in the fight!!!

By 1954, mainstreaming of Deaf children gained momentum. While many did not benefit in education and language outcomes, considerable others did not grow up using a sign language nor identify and mix with signing Deaf persons. Thus the potential cohort of Deaf persons signing Auslan was diminished, negatively impacting the viability of the signing Auslan community. Membership figures and function attendances indicate low active participation in both TDFA\(^{88}\) and DA\(^{89}\). Low numbers of persons declaring as d/Deaf may be due to early diagnosis and prevention of infant- and child-onset bacterial and viral deafness, but acquired deafness is anecdotally increasing due to personal electronic entertainment devices, environmental and industrial noises. Longevity will increase the numbers. It follows that subcultural 'little d' deaf membership numbers may increase, but not cultural 'big D' Deaf membership.

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\(^{88}\) As at 30 June 2008, TDFA claimed 58 organisation members and 150 individual members, of which latter this researcher is one.

\(^{89}\) Deaf Australia provides neither a total nor breakdown of its membership. However, at the 2008 AGM in Perth, there were 45 persons represented in person, by proxy or apology, and no corporate members.
4.4 Scoping QLGBT organisations
Hetero-normative sexuality has status and QLGBT organisations are claiming status in broader society, along with sexual equality. There is an increasing quality of mimic as part of a bid to convert outsider status to mainstream, and yet these groups retain demands for acknowledgement of difference, perhaps to galvanize community formation.

QLGBT organisational validity
The concept of a lesbian and gay identity that served as the foundation for building a community and organizing politically was criticized as reflecting a white, middle-class experience.
Seidman, 1996, p. 10.

[L]ack of diversity among the gay community's representatives has led this country to believe things about us that are not true.

The Queensland Association for Healthy Communities - www.qahc.org.au (QAHC – 'kak'), was formerly the Queensland AIDS Council, (QuAC – 'quack'), but it is morphing into a different organisation than it was during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Currently, the mission of QAHC is:

to promote the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Queenslanders. We are a not-for-profit, community based organisation, funded by government grants and community fundraising, donations and sponsorships.

At the end of 1986 QuAC attempted to gain church group support in Brisbane for its work with persons who were HIV positive and on preventative programs. The Sisters of Mercy was the only organisation to offer help, giving QuAC a small house behind the Mater Hospital in South Brisbane. They continue providing support to this day. In 2006, it was decided that QuAC should deal with wider health issues for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Queenslanders, and the
name was changed, along with the agenda. Still the organisation does not reach out to persons with disabilities. The Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association (or GWLA, www.glwa.org.au) is a nonprofit organisation with a focus upon -

the wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex - or LGBTI - communities through operation of the Gay Line and Lesbian line, peer telephone counselling service. As a volunteer organisation, we provide services throughout Queensland and Northern New South Wales including: Peer Telephone Counselling; Community and Social Information, Referral to Community Health and Support Services.

There are ideological and gender issues which place putative members of the so-called 'QLGBTI community' at polar opposites and distances, such as the saga of HIV infection. 'International AIDS politics' (Altman 2001, p. 97) opened up political space for men, but not for women. Certainly, AIDS politics has been a tool that has created and prised open NGOs and NPOs world-wide, to prod them into dialogue with hitherto invisible stakeholders, creating unlikely allies among the homo and the hitherto homophobic (Eisenbach, 2006, pp. 307-309).

However, while church-based organisations in Australia have been given a mandate to deal with HIV issues and persons who inhabited groups that were ideological antagonists may get along in a productive manner, the so-called 'gay community' seems diffuse and split (Johnston, 2001, p. 264).

4.5 Nonprofit management issues
It is likely to be counter-productive for peak organisations to be involved in tangential issues that seem to be ‘odd’. Organisations compete for funding, patrons, resources, executives, managements and staff, relying on volunteers, but that there is no accurate determination of what a volunteer is (McGregor-Lowndes and McDonald, 1994a), how many there are available and how much
time they spend volunteering. As well, the “determination of ‘outputs’ in human service delivery is bedevilled by the diversity of human experience” (McGregor-Lowndes and McDonald, 1994b, p. 7). There is limited control over volunteers and their attitudes (Billis, 1993): when on the job, volunteers may feel less constrained in expressing personal ideas and convictions than paid employees of an FPO. The board and staff of a nonprofit may be overwhelmed by mundane management issues with little time to indulge minority grievances (Frumkin and Andre-Clark, 2000; Hasenfeld and English, 1974; Jones and May, 1996; Lewis, French and Steane, 1996).

There are uncertainties about Government support or intervention in the future. McGregor-Lowndes, McDonald and Dwyer (1993) were perplexed by the lack of accountability with McGregor-Lowndes (1993, p. 37), suggesting "a pivotal charity [legal] statute" to restore supervision, accountability and confidence (Bidmeade, 1994; McGregor-Lowndes and Rodman, 1995). Lack of commitment to the organisations by research respondents could be a symptom of broader malaise with the sector to which successive Federal governments have yet to fully respond.

**Organisational processes**
Strati (2000), depicts organisations as social contexts and artefacts, applying an interpretative paradigm (pp. 59-61) which views their social reality as "ontologically precarious": organisations are products of their management activities, they exist as "processual phenomena", not in concrete form. Organisational actors generate organisational activities which also produce identities. Textual and semiotic imageries may be evidence of such activities, implying phenomenological and symbolic interactionist standpoints.
Structured to achieve the mission goals?

Organisational governance, structure and operations are related to its purposes (Hay, 1990; Plas and Lewis, 2001). Seeking to serve any public at large is an optimistic but non-specific premise (Werther and Berman (2001): each organisation needs to communicate its purpose to stakeholders and various audiences in the broader community. This will involve expressing their vision and specific aims and entails creating an image - all aspects of marketing.

Without funding from some kind of sales pitch like the first entreaties of a founding donor, generally there can be no organisation (Stewart-Weeks, 2001). Organisations do not start without emotional input, funds, clients, an operating environment and staff to work in it. Third sector organisations therefore must deal with issues that these factors generate. Weisbrod argues (1998) that mission vagueness allows non-profits to alter behaviour, confuse means with ends, present all stakeholders with broader and unknown challenges and obscure what organisations might be contributing. Apart from running an established NFP, there are many problems involved with marketing the emotional appeals intrinsic to the process of establishing any NFP that relies on fund-raising (Feig, 1999).

There is presentation of the vision by its "vision driver" (Werther and Berman, 2001, pp. 8, 10) or as an organisation develops, the vision drivers – who may beneficially comprise the board of directors. To achieve their aims, non-profit organisations (NFPs) must establish the management structures required to deal with funds, clients, their operating environment and the emotional inputs within notions of a governance framework. There is not necessarily “consonance and cohesion” of group effort (Lewis, French, Steane, 1996, p. 7).
To consider that which may be unique to NFPs requires understanding of the pressures and constraints upon ‘for profit’ organisations (FPOs). These typically concern material or monetary returns to management, shareholders, credit providers, customers and, in regard to the broader community: obligations to the environment and ethics. Maximizing material and monetary returns can lead to conflict of interests and ethical dilemmas in an FPO as well as in an NFP.

However NFPs notionally should not have pressures that might "compromise their ethics" as they "seek to serve the public at large" and altruism should be expected to increase social capital in civil society (Lyons, 2001, pp. 135-137; Putnam, 2003, pp. 48-64). With third sector organisations notionally providing for needs "not satisfied by governments, statutory authorities and FPOs" (Lyons, 2001, pp. 204-212) ideas of benevolence, "reciprocity and trust" - difficult to monetize and quantify - readily adhere (Barraket, 2001, pp. 111-121). Third sector organisations can thus be expected to generate notions of economic theory, stakeholders, obligation and returns in ways that are different to those prevailing for FPOs, but according to Schumpeter (1961, pp. 124-127) there is an "inescapable connection". He argued that it is the mindset of capitalism that enables NPO existence and development. The amenities, benefits and facilities that western society enjoys are all products of "the profit economy" (p. 125). Marxists see both doom and socialistic triumph in FPO methods, "notions of ownership, management and control of workers" (Muller, 2002, pp. 192-207). There remains an "ethical gap" between "universal love and the reality of self-interest" (Schumpeter, 1961, p. 207) in which markets operate. NFPs cannot be apolitical (Kramer, 1981), competing as they do for limited resources in an increasingly economically determinist and rationalist environment (Earles,
However, the politics affecting NFPs may be different to that which affects FPOs, with accountability (Abraham, 1999; Mulgan, 2001; Onyx, 2000, 2001a, 2001b), religious input and the presence, lack or nature of mandated governance frameworks being arenas of interest (Earles, 2001).

The politics can be "internal" rather than external (Wilson, 1996, pp. 152, 155, 211, 415). Internal politics may have seeds in organisational or individual motivations or may be caused by the sheer impossibility of satisfying all the demands made on under-resourced service organisations that are obliged to compromise and discriminate trying to adhere to their missions and ideals (Baldock, 1990; Cox, 2003; Melville, 1999). This may involve special leadership skills (Platow et al, 2003; Reicher, 2003; Ridgeway, 2003; Strati, 2000). Organisations need to consider what unique concepts, methods, processes and skills are needed for them to successfully carry out their missions, act with benevolence and satisfy needs. If they simply wish to survive, are the concepts, methods, processes and skills employed still similar? Do NFPs have much in common with FPOs?

All organisations have specific cultures; all exist in various social environments, as well as legal environments of requisites and sanctions. They cater to various cultures and each organisation may contain numerous subcultures. Increasingly, charitable and benevolent organisations are incorporating, but this does not mean that directors, management and staff of an FPO are able to adapt to NFP cultures and environments. Small NFPs may not attract suitable executives and staff and they may not bring the same objectivity to their work that is perceived as desirable for CEOs and management in FPOs.
Organisational representations, branding and identity

Organisational representations and how they are constructed comprise 'processes'. These are the many series of continuous and regular actions done over time to put mandated or sanctioned procedures into effect. The processes include: service provision, inter-organisational relationships, formulation of brand imagery and corporate identities. These, combined with provision of statutory information, such as the financial reports, inform persons inside and outside the organisation about organisational mores, and the survival of an organisation can be determined by its 'marketing story'.

There are intangible and tangible elements to any marketing story. A brand exists at two levels: a "tangible level" that is part of everyday reality and the "intangible level" where distinguishing between similar goods is an experience not necessarily connected with rational reality (Braun, 2004, pp. 40-45). For reasons that may be forced on any organisation by the marketplace, an organisation may inform clients and potential clients about the nature of its 'product' in various ways, perhaps represented by a notional quest for legitimacy and authenticity. The primary and secondary characteristics of any brand need to be 'managed' and "in tune with the way the world is now" (Braun, 2004, p. 87).

Brand imagery

Organisations of all kinds make use of advertising and public relations. Marconi observed (1996, pp. 25-26) it is a challenge to create and maintain acceptable public images in a societal environment of "cynicism and suspicion". It takes time, finance and a plan to achieve the 'legs' of branding stability. Branding

90 Hasenfeld and English were saying much the same in 1974 - see 1983 [1974]: 3.
stability involves "creating, influencing and maintaining" audience perceptions (Marconi, 1996, p. 52). Presenting particular images and notions are integral to strategies that ensure survival and growth. The tacit questions that arise include: what role, if any, does the construction of imagery and identities have in crafting of audience perceptions, how does it come about, and why might these processes have importance to the organisation in the contexts of their mission statements, their stakeholders and the service provision environment? 'Branding' is combination of all things that affect clients' opinion of a company, product or service, plus perception of what the product or service is worth (Farrell, 2004). It is also the intangible but real value of words, graphics or symbols that are associated with the products or services offered by a business. Less reverentially, McLeod (2004) argues that branding is about top-down, hierarchal control, its point being to create a metaphor, to render a non-profit environment more palatable for consuming audiences.

In the nonprofit sector, branding engenders the "returns and loyalty required to compete" (Steinberg, 2002). It is a "dig for emotional bias" to create "product and positioning alternatives" (Feig, 1997, p. 47). Branding assists the process of 'singularisation' for business corporations (Lury, 2004; Klein, 2000), as well as nonprofits (Tan, 2003; Steinberg, 2002). The progenitor of corporate branding is the organisational mission (Applebaum, 2004, pp 57-63); for nonprofits dealing with physical impairment that may comprise "continually reconstituting the stranger" (Bauman, 1991, pp. 252-253; Hughes, 2002, p. 577), thereby establishing and re-establishing the "otherness" of persons (Phelan, 2001, p. 29)

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to appeal for resources - funding and volunteers. Using branding imagery to establish notional identities that appeal to consuming audiences inside and outside organisations is part of "the survival process" (Steinberg, 2002, pp. 6, 7). Images include notions of justice, fair-dealing, equity, benevolence and good stewardship. Klein maintains (2001, p. 428) that we accept the "glittering presence of celebrity logos" – star endorsement – as bestowing worthiness. In a post-modern world, imagery may neither correspond to the text nor be about the organisation represented because "non-profit human service organisations continue to present themselves in terms of what they would like to be, not necessarily as they are" (McDonald, 1993, p. 2; Kramer, 1981, p. 9). This may cause "increasing scepticism" among funding sources and the public (Hasenfeld and English, 1983, p 3; Mulgan, 2001, pp. 89-105; Onyx, 2000, pp. 67-69).

Organisations should clarify how they see themselves; how their images are designed to impact upon the general public and their relationships with others in the field (IORs); organisations not cultivating intra-group conformity and coalition-building IORs are unlikely to survive long-term (Brody, 2005; Hage and Aiken, 1970; Hall, 2002). Their ability to achieve their mission goals in a post-modern economic rationalist service provision environment (Way, 1998; Williams, 1993), and reveal what input is made to their client and constituent base will contribute to these survival processes, adding to their credibility (Mulgan, 2001). Stakeholders should interrogate connections (Hay, 1990) between organisational missions, internal and external policies, positive social capital and government funded taxpayer support (Weisbrod, 1998).
**Summary of missions, identity and branding**

Connections between mission statements, identity production, image depictions and strategy should be scrutinized. Branding can tie imagery to mission statements (Elliot and Davies, 2006; Feig, 2002; Hankinson, 2001; Steinberg, 2002) but to promote one un-changing 'brand image' that conveys a persistent organisational identity is unlikely to be accurate. Nonprofit organisations are "values rational" rather than "means rational" - emotionalism is more of a key factor than pragmatism (MacDonald, 1993, p. 3) and this may engender notions of sanctity with which one is not supposed to interfere.

**Leadership qualities**

According to Boucher (1999, p. 7), two images dominate the ways people with impairments [sic] are represented as leaders in popular culture: the leader whose disability is an outward manifestation of intrinsic evil; and the leader whose disability has led to mental derangement. There are currently no media depictions of disabled business leaders in Australian FPOs or government except for Graeme Innes who is blind (in July 2009 appointed Australia's Disability Discrimination Commissioner and Race Discrimination Commissioner).

Wether and Berman opined (2001, p. 16) that “a strong argument can be made that the best leaders are found in the nonprofit sector” but the NGO sector and persons involved may tend to produce notions of mystique around NFP boards and what is required of them. The "delicate balancing act" (Wether and Berman, 2001, p. 16) pleasing stakeholders that NFP managements perform may not imply ability, integrity or ultimate success. Jane Holden, Executive Director of the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (in 2003) offered her view that there was "not much difference" between being on NFP and FPO boards (Fishel, 2003a,
Perceptions may depend upon the type of persons at any time employed or observing and their abilities to deal with changing organisational circumstances because here is a "lack of reliable data across all aspects of the Australian Third Sector" (Lyons, 2001, p. 218) - not enough reliable information about who is doing what, for whom, with what resources for enough sense to be made of it all, while in the for-profit sector ASIC, ASA, ABS and the ACCC all require information on corporate activity. These are some issues which may confront nonprofit managements:

- If trying to please a range of stakeholders, an FPO may go out of business more quickly than an NFP (Werther and Berman, 2001).
- Inability to satisfy funding sources that board and management are capable of accomplishing the mission.
- The range of needs and demands, plus lack of acceptable performance measurement all impact upon achieving credibility.
- Imprecise goal and outcome measurement make governance difficult.
- Emotion can insulate NFPs from scrutiny and accountability.
- Involvement and support catalysed by emotion, instead of by skills and rationality.
- Limited resources due to lack of mission appeal and disinterested potential stakeholders.
- Unpaid or volunteer labour may feel lack of constraints and empowerment without role specifications and sanctions.

Complex human resource management issues that have psychological and legal ramifications (Fishel, 2003a, p. 246), requiring particular skills:

1. Managers may be frustrated by volunteer labour and have limited options in deploying them.
2. The commitment and emotionalism of volunteer labour might allow the NFP to perform functions that would be more difficult or impossible without emotional sense of commitment, which could lead to accusations of exploitation.

These governance issues imply avenues of influence and control that travel, via operating practices, through leadership and management to and from a board
The research wishes to add its own observation about successful leadership:

An ability to adapt to societal changes, and to expanded perceptions of stakeholder lived realities, acknowledging that there are points of change in time to which successful managements adapt.

**The mission statement and governance**

Organisations have meaning in the life of citizens. The organisational mission statement is a way of generating meaning. Bryson argues (1994) that the social justification of an organisation is found in the organisational mission which is framed within practices of power and control (Stebbins, 2002). This framing comprises mandates, objectives and constraints imposed by stakeholders. These justify organisational existence and organisational claims upon scarce resources of which they then dispose (Brody, 2005; Frumkin and Andre-Clark, 2000; Hall, 2002). For Drucker "the mission comes first" (1998, pp. 1-75; 1993, pp. 1-5) and for Carver (1997, pp. 2-3) the "ends policies" have their "roots in the mission statement".

Intrinsic to meanings generated by organisations in this process is the "provision of personal and social identities, realities and distinctiveness" (Stebbins, 2002, pp. 3-4). This occurs as third sector organisations seek to survive in socio-political environments in order to advocate, produce, supply goods and services, and perhaps (Onyx, 2000) assist members of one network to access resources available to other networks, in a competitive, economic rationalist environment. We have noted that Strati (2002, pp. 17-18) considers organisations as a "process" more than a "structure" and under that interpretative paradigm (p. 59) he believes they are best studied via observing the organisational actors, subjects, actions and interactions, over time (pp. 83-132). Strati argues for the importance
of emotion, aesthetics and sentiment (p. 98) and while service organisations can create positive or negative social capital (Keen, 1999; Onyx, 2001) operating in activist, charity, welfare or market frameworks (Kenny, 2000) those frameworks can be mutually exclusive, with incompatible and competing goals.

In nonprofit organisation theory, the organisational mission is treated as critical and catalytic in regard to organisational strategy and survival (Bryson, 1994; Drucker, 1993; Hay, 1990; Plas and Lewis, 2001; Tan, 2003; Werther and Berman, 2001). Drucker (1998, p. 6) posits "three musts" of the mission: "opportunities, competence and commitment", but Scott observes (1974) there is no mandated supervision or monitoring of organisations in regard to those 'musts'. Whether organisational mission statements and publicly presented identities are connected in regard to accountability, legitimacy and truth is not currently checkable on any data base.

As these NFP organisations often make public appeals for resources based on various presentations of identity which are ostensibly linked to their mission statements (Mulgan, 2001), there is ethical justification for transparency, with the mission/ identity/ image presentation link yet posing questions in regard to authenticity and legitimacy (Gabriel, Fineman, Simms, 2000). Numerous fluid, changing and developing identities within organisations are inimical to the notion of organisational image projection (Tregaskis, 2004; Chambers, 1996; Stone 1984). Multiplicity of stakeholders may impose conflicting demands that flourish and subside (Courtney, 2002). In this post-modern world, Boyle describes (2003, p. 65) the "new demand for authenticity" which results in profligate organisational supply of "fake real". Non-profit organisations may not be
immune to such a trend. If society and various of its social welfare organisations indulge in the 'fake real', what happens to notions of "trust" which theorists (Cox and Caldwell, 2000, pp. 60-64; Hughes et al, 1999) argue are intrinsic to the creation of social capital?

**Ott’s model – “myriad events, meetings and functions”**

Ott (2001, p. 290-294) has an "atomic" conception of voluntary nonprofit organisations relevant to notions of social capital. Ott conceives nonprofit organisation modus operandi as structured "more like an atom than a pyramid". This structure takes account of the various constituencies that elliptically orbit a central core, explaining the various levels of "involvement, commitment, self-perceived centrality, and psychological ownership." In Ott’s model, the nucleus does not necessarily concern the mission or the goals, but rather "myriad events, meetings, and functions in which constituencies engage to satisfy their interests" (p. 293). In this way, organisational missions can fall out of contemplation, with no sanctions or coercive mechanisms to ensure that missions remain the organisational focus.

Organisational mission statements should ostensibly answer the question "what is the real business of the agency?" (Billis, 1993, p. 157). The mission statement is the camp flag, the tribal banner, marker of what an organisation exclusively offers, demonstrates by its existence and processes, hints at what it supplies, holds dear, indicates the gap it attempts to fill, differentiates it from others, outlines the "contract failure" it strives to redress (Steinberg and Gray, 1993, pp. 299-313; Hansmann, 1980, pp. 845-849; Weisbrod, 1998, p. 57).
The mission statement answers the "painful question" of who really cares if the organisation survives or not (Billis, 1993, p. 157). Composing or crystallizing a mission statement is therefore a process infused with ideas of social entrepreneurship, innovation, struggle, need, longing, drama, battles for recognition and then support. Brown (2001) discusses social entrepreneurship and the different versions of social capital created: bridging, bonding, active and reactive. Social capital gestates when "the voice of the voiceless" (Carson, 2001, pp. 57-72) is stimulated. Carson's "silent timid voices" speak and the result is a vision. This is the "ennobling statement of what the organisation hopes to achieve" (Werther and Berman, 2001, pp. 30-31). The vision attempts to describe what the organisation strives for and the mission indicates what the organisation must do to get there (p. 32). Or perhaps as Feig claims (1997, p. 66), mission statements are devised as "stepping stones to win hearts and minds" serving as flags or advertising slogans.

If the mission statement can focus the organisation on action (Werther and Berman, 2001) and define specific actions required to attain certain goals (Drucker, 1998, pp. 3-4 and 39-43) it serves to create a disciplined organisation. According to Werther and Berman, the art of strategy is to "match internal competencies" with those external opportunities that further the mission (2001, p. 37). Priorities are evaluated in accordance with the vision, mission and strategy (p. 39), and the goals that allow progress towards and in these three are ideally the ones that get funded. The governance context of non-profit organisations frames their ability to deliver services, influences the nature of their campaigns and their ability to instil mutuality of support among constituents (McGregor-Lowndes, 2006). Like governments, non-profits are supposed to have
missions or purposes that have aspects of either the collective interests of various
groups or the general public at their core (Young and Steinberg, 1995).

The question arises: what is the real business of any agency? (Billis, 1993). An
organisation’s mission statement is the "clarification of an organisation’s values"
(Bryson, 1994, pp. 157-160). The mission statements and mandates are an
organisation’s "social justification" for existence (pp. 157, 160). However, the
mission statement is not the whole of the reasons for an organisation’s existence,
but clarified missions can help eliminate conflict and channel discussion. The
mission statement needs to be "underpinned by a stakeholder analysis"
conducted in part to identify who the stakeholders are in the organisation.
(Speckbacher, 2003, pp. 274-276). An organisation might need different mission
statements and strategies for different stakeholders.

To formulate a mission, Bryson asks (1994) how organisations can recognize,
anticipate and respond to socio-political needs and problems. The answer will
reveal whether or not an organisation is active or passive. However, the
important notion of a reactive organisation is missing from this approach. It is
possible that an organisation might not just serve as an ‘activist’ advocate for
members or potential members, it might not wish to accept all persons who come
within its representational orbit and can react against the aspirations, interests
and needs of certain potential or existing organisational stakeholders once those
demands, requirements or requests become known. There are "threats and
opportunities" (Bryson, 1994, p. 162) that confront directors and employees of
non-profit organisations (NPOs) in both the internal and external organisational
environments, including troublesome or problematic constituents or members.
These are persons who may not be what the board or management of the organisation consider as being ‘key stakeholders’. Persons in ideological or political control of organisations may wish to exclude potential constituents despite inclusive sentiments of the mission statement, and managements may bestow or inflict ‘praise or punishment’ on organisational members (Bryson, 1994) despite notions of equitable governance.

Notions or processes of organisational authority, how such authority came to prevail, and the origin and nature of any exclusive practices may vary with organisational structures and models (McGregor-Lowndes, 2006) operating in different frameworks (Kenny, 2000). Billis (1993, p. 160) refers to the membership process of an association in terms of "outsiders" crossing a boundary line: within it, they must adhere to the purposes of a "named group" and be aware of concomitant sanctions or retribution applicable for betraying in-group norms (Hogg, Fielding and Darley, 2005). ‘Image’ and ‘identity’ are part of this notion. How do organisations convey what they are actually about? Instead of "areas of organisational ambiguity" (Billis, 1993, p. 133), identity and image can be areas of organisational anxiety. Contrary to Lyons assertions that third sector organisations are defined in part by the "democratic nature of their control" (2001, p. 5), procedural evidence from indicates tendency to oligarchy not stakeholder control (Brown and Ringma, 1989; Jernigan, 1999; Vaughan, 1993).

This is not Burr's "subtle [sic] interweaving' of different threads" (2003, pp. 106-109). Variations in stakeholder control can lead to changes in organisational (re)presentations and depictions of identity (Connolly, 1991; Woodward, 1997; Hall, 1996). Hall observed (2002, p. 43) how non-profits involve "episodic
supporters and passively interested constituents who can be mobilized under exceptional circumstances to provide financial or political sustenance" (echoed by Ott, 2001, p. 290). Organisations are continually being structured and re-structured by individual actors who are often in conflict with organisational goals which is likely to affect conduct of policy. In 2003, Tink and Curran placed themselves publicly as persons advocating representation for persons who were blind and also of diverse sexualities in BCA because of perceived discrimination against sexual diversity. This attempted restructuring of BCA to accommodate diversity was not successful but was the basis of activity in future years.

Even persons who claim diverse identities may at some time in the future modify or refute past assumptions of self-perceived or outwardly portrayed identities. In terms of "liquid modernity" (Bauman, 1991, pp. 252-253; Blackshaw, 2005, p. 97; Hughes, 2002, p. 577) there is a "palimpsest version of the self" where self-transformation renders identities contingent and temporary. Branfield (1999) argues for fluid, transient disabled identities (but rejects being represented by anyone not characterized by disability). Clear points out (2000) that the Commonwealth Disability Services Act 1986, subsequent acts, revisions and reform packages (www.facs.gov.au/disability/cds/index.htm) convey that service organisations should have democratic foundations and aim at inclusiveness (Goggin and Newell, 2005). But within the cultures that third sector organisations generate, subcultural quests for justice may be thwarted. While identity politics (Thomas, 2002) has contributed to growth of peak bodies, an "increasingly fragmented perception of the individual, social and political self" has resulted (Melville 2001, p. 92). For example:
[T]here are significant ways in which such legislation [as the Disability discrimination Act] creates disability. In particular, the Deaf ... have had to identify as having a disability in order to utilise this legislation ... they have been required to conform to hearing-world norms in identifying as having a disability in order to gain access to the benefits of such legislation.


Peaks have been assessed as "failing to have any mechanism of direct accountability back to their organisational members, let alone the people they often claim to represent" (Melville, 2001, p. 101; May, 1996, pp. 248-256). If that is so, then peaks are motivated creations with post-modern veneer identities provided by advertising and public relations (Cheverton, 2005; May, 1996; Melville, Pratt, Taylor, 1998). Chambers (1996, p. 29) found cultural identities to be "sources of pride and the basis of an emancipatory politics" with identity being an ideological construct, a "power-laden representation" (1996, p. 26) that generates queries of authenticity and representativeness (pp. 25-66). Yet social theorists argue and imply that civic and social institutions and third sector organisations are generically producing social capital (Putnam, 2000; Brown, 1999) with 'civil society' being a goal.

However, while advertising and PR might generate notions of social capital, the nature of it is not homogenous; it can also exclude and discriminate, fostering schisms of prejudice (Keen, 1999; Onyx, 2000; Putland, 2000; Goggin and Newell, 2005). For clients and constituents, organisations ostensibly provide resources, avenues for sociability, information, connections to media and generations of identity (Davis, 2002a). Those organisations that are "best able to provide for identity validation will survive" (Stebbins, 2002, pp. 38-39). Governance and management may be complicated by staff and volunteers confusing 'confidence in the mission' with accountability (Abraham, 1999;
Mulgan, 2001). The presentations of an organisation may not accurately represent its constituent parts (Stebbins: 2002).

The Department of Community Services and Health (May, 1996) recommended that third sector funding be contingent upon a range of factors. These included groups being representative with organisations having democratic processes for election of executives, reserving at least one place on their boards for a consumer/user representative plus provisions for accountability. That, and outcomes measurement are depicted as vexed issues (Harries, 1993).

**The Third Sector**

With d/Deaf and blind persons being geographically scattered, sometimes isolated and without positive signification, advocacy and service organisations may generate a unified image to avail themselves of economic, cultural and symbolic resources such as power, privilege and status (Mcdonald, 1993a, b, and 2002; McGregor-Lowndes, 1993). Mission statements may not include client involvement in decision making, client control of resources, or in development of common narratives that enable social integration of the persons excluded (Madanipour, 2000; AHURISRC, 2002).

A register of charitable and third sector mission statements could enable increased observation of the non-profit scene and likely to be welcomed by all stakeholders. Responsible boards of directors will be satisfied that they have a frame for their efforts (Brody, 2005; Carver, 1997; Fishel, 2003); funding stakeholders will be more confident that they have not been misled; beneficiaries and potential clients will see and understand that their needs are being kept in focus (Baldock, 1991; Barraket, 2001; Cross, 1990); governments can consider
where there are pieces missing in the mission-statement jigsaw (Bryson, 1994; Drucker, 1993 and 1998).

**Gatekeeping**

In the era of the internet, e-mail lists and blogging, conversations may no longer be mediated by traditional authorities and gatekeepers. Some of these traditional authorities and gatekeepers have been the organisations to whom people belonged, their employers, fellow workers, generally, those prevailing hierarchies of power who could coerce or invoke conformity to the needs and ambitions of whatever power environment in which one found oneself immersed. The relationship between organisational stakeholders can be seen as a one-way flow of power from the organisation to constituents. Organisations may have no interest in changing the power-balance or any notion of sharing it.

**The threat of diversity**

The social order of an organisation should comprise an entity that is consciously coordinated with relatively identifiable boundaries of operation, functioning on a continuous basis to achieve a commonly agreed set of ends, usually defined in its Mission Statement (after Robbins and Barnwell, 2002, p. 6). Clients, management or other stakeholders with controversial identities may prefer to keep them invisible (Leblanc and Tully, 2001). In other words, organisations may be aligning themselves with and presenting themselves in accordance to the ableisms promulgated by the dominant culture (F.K. Campbell, 2009). In such instances, empathic organisational leadership will recognize the *turning points in time*, as have occurred with inspirations revived from pagan pasts, the decline of theocratic influence and the slow infiltration of liberal education through the gloom of recalcitrant conservatism.
**Collaborative individualism and organisations**

The organisations of the future may not resemble those of Ott’s model, but rather may comprise “collaborating individuals” (Limerick, Cunnington and Crowther, 2002, p. 104), and be free of ‘the rhetoric of group teamwork’ (paraphrase) which can stifle particularity and more accurate representation of diversity.

**Chapter Four examined** NFPs, their ubiquity and relationships to status and stakeholders.

- The slow death of intimidating charity ‘mythologies’ has been accompanied by queries regarding the validity of organisations. The notion of ‘charity’ has become suspect and the research asks questions about advocacy and service organisations for blind persons, d/Deaf persons, and about QLGBT organisations:
  - Blind persons who are also QLGBT have few group ‘anchors’ - socially and in regard to advocacy and representation, they are marginalised.
  - Deaf persons who are also QLGBT may join the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ regime of DA, and ephemeral vestiges of Sydney and Melbourne capital city Deaf Queer social scenes remain. *Little ‘d’* deaf persons to some extent can navigate hearing scenes, with age of deafness onset a factor limiting anyone’s ability to learn Auslan.

- Nonprofit management issues and organisational processes.
  - Are they really structured to achieve the mission goals?

- Organisational representations, branding and identity. Corporations that are empathically branded may gain territory among persons who are disenfranchised.
  - The connections between brand imagery, missions and identity.

- Leadership qualities: how the CEO and Board interprets the mission -
  - The relationship between the mission statement and governance. NFP missions and processes are subject to interpretation by successive Boards and CEOs. Beyond their media and public relations presence, organisational actors interpret their mandates. They may cling to conservative identities or adapt to marginalised stakeholders.
    - In that regard, an important aspect is the *turning point in time*, when the moral basis to Board and CEO activities may alter, such that at least the CEO needs to adapt to the changing realities lived by constituents in their various environments.
  - These changed realities may be expansive, such as in the quest for positive recognition by constituents who are of diverse sexualities.
The changes may be regressive, as in the instance of organisations for Deaf persons in Nazi Germany, where the *turning point in time* was the advent and infliction on marginalised persons of Nazi supremacist policies.

Ott’s model, with constituents orbiting a central core of “events, meetings and functions” (Ott, 2001, p. 293), implies that stakeholders in advocacy and service organisations may only engage superficially, leaving the organisational management to a recurrent set of long-serving individuals, with Third Sector organisations currently structured perhaps more like an atom than a pyramid. Such scenarios ought be supplanted in the evolution of the Third Sector.

Changes in gatekeeping of information, financial accountability, outcomes measurement, and organisational processes can be entwined with threats to organisational stability; organisational appeals for resources might be threatened by the existence of stakeholder diversity and questions of validity. With collaborative individualism, the *threat of diversity* might not be so threatening, but a useful ally in helping advocacy and service organisations align their missions to the realities of lived humanity, not to abelisms.

The *Chapter Five* Analysis that follows is in accordance with themes discerned in phenomena revealed through respondent case histories, including those from the accounts of organisational actors. It is informed by interviews and texts - mediated by researcher presence. This may produce the impressions of a *pastiche*: “a picture or design made up of fragments pieced together” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1973), pleasantly akin to “a musical composition made up of pieces from different sources”; or those of a *mélange*, a “heterogenous collection” of mingled colours that will together produce a unified composition with the interpreter’s shaping, a process fraught with dangers that have been described herein under *Possible limitations and strengths of the study*.
Part B

Interpreting Diverse and Elusive Images
Chapter Five

Thematic Analysis

It is difficult enough to develop an adequate consciousness of what we are and what we are at, and how we have arrived where we have done, without also being called upon to make clear to ourselves what such consciousness and self-consciousness must have been like for persons in situations different from our own; yet no less is expected of the true historian.


The first part of the thesis developed images of how sexually diverse persons who are blind and d/Deaf might be supported, or observed and marginalised in their advocacy and service organisation environments. Interested parties gravitated to the research journey to communicate their experiences in organisations as they sought representation and peers. Depictions were established of identities brought to these environments, or created and developed in them. The impacts on persons and organisations by processes of identity generation, management and manipulation were examined, Efflorescence of groups and gatherings, marginality divided into micro-marginality, contention, conflict and some cohesion, all crowded in to this layered picture. The research proceeded initially via the language and notions of the dominant social construct as it acted upon all stakeholders, so any nuance of interpretation generated from the massive interview and textual data collected needs to be monitored for such influences.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Part B is about the sense of research cohort involvement in the issues that have generated themes, and interpreting the diverse and elusive images that have been evoked. Therefore, identifying and grouping the themes informs the analysis. The layering of Chapter Five begins with checking our analytical foundation. Then nine themes picked up from the
analysis are examined. The first seven themes are directly related to identities; the eighth is about how organisations can deal with their missions as well as with stakeholder identities and concerns. The ninth theme comprises an imaginary: what might a future picture of advocacy and service organisations for blind and d/Deaf people, including their sexually diverse minorities, look like? Identity has been the undercoat to the research canvas, the pervasive issue which insinuates each chapter into the next.

The research has clarified what have so far been unknown aspects of the Othered Lives associated with sensory difference and nonprofit organisations; in Part A the thesis was about exploring a number of case histories that were collected in (albeit short) phenomenological case-studies. However, in Part B issues are revealed that cast scintillas of light onto problems existing throughout the Third Sector. Speculative notions regarding these are explored in Chapter Six. While the research has generated opinions, situations will be modified by evolutionary change crystallising new scenarios. By throwing situations that will inevitably be successive into open discussion, the research attempts to overcome the fact that individuals and ‘minorities within minorities’ do not feel they are fully participating in the discourses concerning them (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000), and that they remain marginally comprised in Australian life.

**Establishing a notional platform for thematic analysis**

The analysis in this research should desirably lead to some actionable ‘end’. Apart from being subject of study, it is hoped that relationships between entities in the research will experience transformation. The perspective of the research view has embraced “history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings
and the unconscious” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012, p. 3). Appropriately, in that regard (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012, p. 137):

> [D]iscourse analysts point out that many of our chains are mental and that we will never be free until we throw off ancient restrictions and demeaning patterns of thought and speech and create the discourse to talk about necessary new concepts.

Delgado and Stefancic (2012, pp. 135-136), maintain that

> Discourse analysts ... are apt to emphasize issues, such as identity and intersectionality, that center on categorical thinking. They are likely to examine the role of ideas, thoughts, and unconscious discrimination.

The research thus also turns to Jenkins, (2002, p. 144), who advocates examination of social situations via "the observable realities of the human world" of which there are three 'orders':

- The individual – concerning "what-goes-on-in-their-heads";
- The interactive - what happens between people; and
- The institutional – the organisational way of doing things.

As explained in Chapter One, the thematic analysis follows from the research questions, informed by data collected from published materials, interviews, e-mails and responses to the website questionnaire. The range of respondents has helped create a sense of history and of the transformations taking place. Interviewees and respondents were aged from early twenties to late seventies.

Blind persons interviewed experienced onset of blindness over a range of ages from birth to later maturity as did d/Deaf persons who were interviewed and who responded to the internet questionnaire. While the expression of voice collected is broad in that respect, the demographic appears to be substantially Caucasian. That is an issue with which further, extensively funded research could be concerned, and Ball, Macguire and Macrae (2000, p. 18) caution:
Problems of analysis and presentation are exacerbated by the fluctuating change and instability of the life course of many of the young people ... we have only glimpses into complex lives: they select, revise, re-order and interpret their experiences in our analytic work.

While this research concurs that “we only have glimpses”, the overall impression gained was that respondents were cooperative and frank. Selective revelations are part of the respondent province. Selective revision, re-ordering and interpreting may inhabit the province of the research. Due to sample parameters, triangulating the research between persons who are blind and d/Deaf under the auspices of broad theory cannot be considered "pure" grounded theory (Tuckett, 2005, p. 76), so questions arise about the process of thematic analysis. But this research has no intention to engage in the debate whether “thematic analysis is grounded theory” (Kellehear, 1993), or that “grounded theory goes beyond thematic analysis” (Ezzy, 2002). The symbolic interactionist/social constructionist perspective of Charmaz (2003) anyway guides queries of why, under what conditions and with what outcomes respondents think and feel as they do, compatible with Grbich Qualitative Research in Health (1999). Such lens also allows for multiplicity of meaning constructions (Crotty, 1998; Tuckett, 2005).

Persons who are d/Deaf and blind experience the world and their relationships to it differently, although they were historically treated by governments as locatable together geographically in institutions, and acknowledging that the research analysis has generated some thematic commonalities. Because of this thematic overlap, the research cannot totally separate analyses of themes presented by blind respondents from those revealed in dialogues with d/Deaf persons, and organisational issues are partially consolidated. The amount of
recorded and transcribed data poses questions of selectivity in data processing, referred to in *Possible limitations and strengths of the study* herein, and because identity is pervasive, there is sectional overlap.

A focus of the study is to learn what persons with sensory impairment who also self-describe as being of diverse sexualities need and want from the organisations advocating for and providing services to them. At this point it should be recalled that publicly available literature shows that in Australia, subcultural groups attempting to represent persons who are Blind and d/Deaf who also self-identify as being of diverse sexualities, have either faded away or never effectively operated. Investigation of extant organisational materials indicated changes in the last decade that have at least added to discourse and expanded voice. The research seeks to lessen what an overview of the literature reveals as the 'multiple isolations' experienced, while *not* claiming to be an unmediated (re)presentation of marginalised voice.

**The swirl of intersectionality**

For the research cohort, opportunity to combine, or migrate between lifestyles may be problematic. For example: how can one be Queer, blind and CEO? How to be transvestite, straight, Deaf and a nonprofit director? The implicit demands of oppressive power constructs in broader society may catalyse 1): *masquerade* - the suppression or concealment of identities – and 2): *orbiting* – the alternation of appearance and disappearance by tentative participants – a feature of subcultures and neo-groups. Neo-groups are transient, tentative groups often initiated by persons contacting each other over the internet. Persons seeking to share interests, doubts and emotions may opt to continually re-congeal these
tentative groups on a sporadic basis in negotiable forms with selected or new persons, because the societal environment is not static.

Textual materials show past years where tentative groups of both blind and deaf persons of diverse sexualities have engaged their stakeholders or taken tentative steps towards visibility but in Australia these instances have been incomplete, subdued or short-lived. Even in the USA, by November 2011, www.deafqueer.org seems to have disappeared or been in suspension, as seems to have been the fate of the Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf – www.rad.org. Deaf Queer Men Only appears to be relatively new and active (http://dqmo.org). The cost of website maintenance is obviated by migrating to social networking sites such as Facebook, and expression of voice is increasingly served by YouTube (www.youtube.com), where a plethora of d/Deaf/ Queer/ Lesbian/ Gay material may be accessed.

For individuals, where a dominant society construct may demand masquerade from diverse participants or stimulate participant orbiting (see Terminology), individual lives can be rendered narrower in experience. Under regimes of delineated identity, one may become vagabond searching for connection, or inhabit some modification of a ghetto lifestyle: one’s identity may be circumscribed, disposed of, made mono-ethnic, perhaps racialized while being rendered paradoxically inauthentic to one’s inner-being, within a prescribed politic and polemic.

Attitudes, choices and behaviours catalyse processes that become histories, whether for groups or organisations. Groups and organisations are about identity which is pivotal to group formation, and expressions of identity are
intrinsic to respondent attitudes, behaviours and choices. The research is a snapshot of identity formation processes or their symptoms at a particular time. Participant views of those attitudes, behaviours and choices which are intrinsic to group and organisation histories and their own experiences are subjective fragments making implications, triggering inferences and requiring interpretation.

There are nine main themes, most of which arise from establishment of, and out of concerns with, issues relating to identity.

**NINE THEMES**

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<th>Identity processes and perception of difference</th>
<th>Impacting factors</th>
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For consolidation, representative respondent replies have been sampled with particular points rendered in bold type to aid scanning. In reproduction of transcripts, ‘gay’ is sometimes used by respondents as a universal signifier for any or all of ‘QLGBT’, so it is retained exactly as used, but the reader will need to infer from the context what is intended if it has not been explained, and if it is relevant. Grammar and spelling are also retained and reproduced. The research
cohort ranged from those who present themselves in a kind of ‘take it or leave it’ style, through persons adrift or uncertain, to those who have attitudes alert to conveying adaptive or more sophisticated impressions.

Extensive research shows discrimination and prejudice based on sexual orientation detrimentally affects psychological, physical, social, and economic well-being.

QAHC media release, 31 July 2009.

5.1 Identity processes and impacting factors
Journeys to identity for sexually diverse persons imply issues of citizenship and belonging. The influence of education and the age at which persons become blind or d/Deaf impacts upon how blind and d/Deaf persons deal with daily living and broader relationships, apart from the potential ‘double whammy’ of double exclusion due to sexual diversity.

The compatibility of small groups and subcultures in organisational processes has relevance to individual desires for inclusion. Organisations of interest to the research have power based on identifying themselves with aspects of sensory impairment and/or particular cultures, at the same time representing the physical impairments and cultures to all stakeholders, including individuals, governments, statutory authorities and civil society. Represented persons may then be "indulged, supported or tolerated" by prevailing societal power elites and mundane society (Cox, 2001, p. 267). The organisations may gain authority, influence and status, creating a sense of 'Otherness' to claim sympathy and finance, because to assert rights based on claims of normalcy might invalidate special consideration. Group and organisational affiliations

were not strong among the research cohort. Individuality and idiosyncrasy were features.

I've friends who are trannies ... they just happen to be trannies, but they're my friends first and foremost ... and usually it's because ... I've got other interests in common with them, like computers, or whatever ... but they happen to be trannies, or don't, or whatever, or blind, or who cares? I think there's a danger of people becoming so involved with a particular movement that the movement takes them over.

Identity splits and intra-group differences

We remain locked in relationships of superiority and subordination at various levels. Violence and abuse still police the boundaries. Power continues to ensnare our passions.


In QLG environments in Victoria there has been conflict between lesbians and male-to-female transgender persons - all the way to court. "Lesbian desire is everywhere" according to Vicinus (1993, p. 433), but separatist lesbian feminists will not accept it with male-to-female transsexuals (Feinbloom, Fleming, Kijewski and Shulter, 1976 [sic]), with a research respondent explaining issues she experienced (2008):

Gay rights didn't follow on trannie activism in Victoria ... the trannies made the mistake ... of trying to force their way into the gay female side of things, without ... explaining themselves fully - and the lesbian community rejected them. I'm talking about the late sixties, early seventies. The feminist movement has never quite got over that. I used to be a member of St Kilda Baptist church, and Tim Costello was the pastor [we] talked about how come there's a lot more contact between the trannies in Sydney and the gay movement, than there is in Victoria? ... I said it was because there was certainly some bullying ... "I'm a woman and you're going to accept me as a woman!" – whoom! Straight in! - Like bulls! And lots of trannies make that mistake, because they haven't got 'the bloke' out of their system, I think. The reality is, and I'd dispute it with anybody, there is something male in the most tranniest of trannies ... to let go of it totally, you'd have to have a brain transplant. There isn't any way ... And I mean, when I react to something violently, that's the male coming out.
The basic fact of being Queer, Lesbian, Gay or a Transgender man or woman is not going to unite different character and personality types into a group or community. ‘Community’ implies some ideological, intellectual, political, social or recreational interests in common. Generational cohorts amongst sexually diverse blind and d/Deaf persons are thinly populated which could encourage private socializing across a broader age demographic. However, the outside world still impinges upon notions of what is appropriate behaviour.

I think there must be nothing sillier than watching a 75 year old dyke go to a lesbian nightclub - but they go because it’s the 'Lesbian Thing to do' - to be accepted as part of a movement: 'I’ve gotta do this, I’ve gotta wear that, I’ve gotta say this, I’ve gotta think this – I've gotta play pool!' And the Blindies are the same!

Neo-groups formed claiming to cater for special subcultural interests in reaction to perceptions that conduct by the dominant culture, regarding issues that were of interest to the neo-groups which were not being conducted in ways beneficial to those groups. Or the neo-groups formed to gain recognition and equal citizenship with presumed heterosexual mores informing their advocacy and service organisation processes. There has been minimal or no contact between the special interest groups and the advocacy and service organisations, and there are competing advocacy and service organisations within what outsiders might perceive to be a single interest group. The neo-groups that formed within dominant advocacy and service organisations were not conducive to cohesive operation of the dominant organisational culture in achieving its aims for all stakeholders.

Acknowledging neo-groups within an organisation subculture may have negative impact for the organisation in the broader community, inhibiting the accumulation of social capital for stakeholders. There may be no way to keep
neo-groups extant over time because by their very nature they can represent the forces that prevail in response to particular and temporal conditions, as well as being symptoms of the notions of those who drive the groups. Neo-groups can also be conversely representative of dominant cultures; however, individualism may be a suspect in the decline of any putative group, and persons with broad, objective educations may not easily bond into fervent, fundamentalist ‘communities’.

**Education processes**
Where and how we are educated and the experiences we have in those processes instil attitudes, behaviours, responses and influence choices. Socialization into peer group experiences or individual isolation may be outcomes.

I went to a blind school in Victoria. From the time I was three until the time I was fourteen. There was a lot wrong with the blind schools, but there was a lot right with it. **We got our heads around blindness far younger than if we hadn't been to the school** – we came to terms with the reality of blindness, far younger, because we just had blindness around us all the time. I must say, when I left the school, and went from a school of 43 kids to a school of 1,200 kids - and almost pissed my pants on my first day - Form 3, and we had as many kids in that room as I had in the whole school. And I just – went right 'off me brain!' – 'Cause I hadn't got my head around being 'out' – **but it didn't take long. I had a grasp on reality.**

Respondents to the research who were blinded before teenage years generally saw benefit in attending a ‘blind school’ - a school with only blind students – at least for a period of time. In 2009 the Vision Australia ‘blind school’ in Victoria was closed. The 2008 petition for the Victorian State government to provide a blind school had failed, denying hope for a “a centre of knowledge, expertise, and materials such as Braille, as well as blind and low vision staff to act as
mentors, as well as a place where children can have peers with whom to play and learn “in genuine parity”. Mainstreamed education lacked competence.

The support teacher hadn’t any experience with a blind or vision impaired person before ... The teacher’s assistant had to learn to type on the Brailler, she had to learn everything from scratch, how to guide and so on.

**Mainstreaming**

The experience of education is not just the subjective emotional and physical experience of those years and the interstices between school terms. Those years are when institutional, often bizarre ideas and (im)moral, (il)logical concepts might be foisted upon existing and putative identities. Institutional mores and motives may not be benign or accommodating, but malign towards individuality and repressive of difference. Respondents who experienced mainstreamed education conveyed a sense of being isolated, limited and threatened – but otherwise the experience was *bland*: being without the stimulation of peer interaction, comparison, and shared instances of discovery. To some extent, it was age-related: reactions to being mainstreamed varied from contented acceptance (in a child blinded after the age of eight years), through wishful thinking, to resentment.

I would've - I think I would've liked to – have gone , to a school where everyone was *blind*.

The researcher and members of the research cohort joined the petition to save the school for blind children, to no avail. The researcher sent a letter of query to the CEO of VA, Gerard Menses, but the two-page reply from VA was evasive and did not deal with the concerns of respondents to the research. Mainstreaming is an issue upon which there are opposing opinions from those who have experienced it. Children who have the innate or acquired differences of the

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94 Personal communication for a research respondent, 21 November 2008.
research cohort often have their childhoods and teenage years rendered separate and sorrowful by prevailing constructs such as Mainstreaming. It seems that those who have been blind since birth or early childhood found Mainstreaming to be a profoundly isolating experience with deeply negative psychological impacts.

In school, when you have a disability, you tend to spend all the time trying to learn, and trying to deal with your disabilities, while you're growing up, in the mainstream schools with people who don't have disabilities, it's quite difficult. Very difficult. And all that time is spent doing that, and not much time is spent on developing all those other things you need when you're an adult.

For persons blind from birth, companionship beyond the family may be first experienced as soundscapes, and emotional geographies constructed with peers. Those persons who were blinded from about the age of ten years onwards may experience mainstreaming as the proper continuation of their schooling life and may have developed greater adaptive skills.

I was born blind ... prior to coming to Australia, I was at a school for the blind. When I got here, I was mainstreamed, and that was very difficult at first. But you get used to it in the end. I was sixteen. We lived in an isolated country town.

Experience of 'blind school' was not unequivocally acceptable to all respondents.

There was a compulsion of people at the blind school to be very 'the same'. We were regimented. You had to be part of it, when you were told what to do: you had to do it. But that's a boarding school ethos, you know? – And it's ultimately necessary when kids are living together like that.

Doubts were expressed about conforming to heteronormative mores in a school that may have attachment to an organising religion: historically, Christian missions and organisations provided Braille, schooling and accommodation to blind persons. Early framing of attitudes, morals and mores, plus blinkers on knowledge and awareness have engendered generational divide in organisations, only now beginning to fade as the old guard step down or die out.
[The residential school I went to] was staffed by leaders of the Methodist or Baptist church – I’m not sure which one. **Most of the literature available to blind people was religious.**

Persons thought about their identities: where, how and if they fitted in anywhere.

I didn't enjoy the blindies' school at the time, but I think I got some good things out of it – I think I extracted the best and lost the worst, of that blind school experience. **The worst was being different** [that is, gay: not as others, who seemed heteronormative], and knowing that you were different, and people around you knowing you were different but not being able to express – not even knowing why.

The type of blind school desired is replete with technology and access to information and resources. The pre-technology, pre-globalization blind school environment is not the kind of school to which young adult respondents related.

In my time, we had no choice but to go to a blind school, because that's all there was, because nobody went anywhere else other than to blind school unless you were incredibly – or seemed to be incredibly intelligent – you went straight from the Blindies' School to the factory, and made brooms and brushes and things ... And if you were good, on the weekend your parents could come and visit you and take you out. If you were bad, you stayed in, and even if you got to be an adult, you still lived in the same place. And wore the institution's clothing, right down to your undies, so that when your parents came, they had to bring their own clothes for you to change into, to go out in the horse and buggy or whatever it is they had! By the same token, I knew blind people that were older than me, and when I stayed at the hostel in Prahran for four years, they had some really cool stories to tell.

Adventurous persons with uninhibited self-esteem and high socialization skills managed mainstream schools, but they were exceptions.

I think that my education, even tho' I was integrated from the beginning, was exceptional, and – in many respects more successful than I think it would have been had I gone to a blind school, from my subjective point of view, of course, I was – not quite in a fantasy world, but I was a real day-dreamer, I lived in my head a lot, and – perhaps I might have come to terms with things a lot earlier.
Education processes and d/Deaf identities

The literature depicts that the process of coming to terms with a (cultural) Deaf identity can be a joyous revelation and that a positive Deaf identity is likely if one has been privileged to go to Galludet University. A USA response:

I attended Gallaudet University, which was a 24/7 total immersion environment for me. Sign classes taken earlier didn't work for me, but total immersion finally got me into the ASL/Deaf culture mindset.

Reprising the four main types of Deaf Identity (Leigh and Lewis, 1999 see Terminology, p. vii): Culturally Hearing, Culturally Marginal, Immersed in Deaf culture, Bicultural: there is movement between these classifications, with persons Culturally Hearing and Marginal often migrating to Immersed. when Deaf identity is accepted, adopted or congeals. As with apprehension of sexualities, Deaf identity awareness can come as a surprise. The research asked:

How did you learn about your deaf identity?

A: Through CRS [Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services] and Qld Deaf Society. I was becoming more lonely and withdrawn in the hearing world ... where I felt I was not the same as these people because they mostly acquired a mild to moderate hearing loss later in life, whereas I was born with a severe hearing loss. I then went to QDS [Queensland Disability Service] where I met Deaf people for the first time. However, it took a while to identify with Deaf people because of their culture and language (Auslan).

Deaf persons with good command of written English are advantaged in negotiating both worlds. The broad community does not understand that ‘native born Australians’ might be unfamiliar with English and such could be topic of a national government campaign. Respondents with few exceptions did not learn of their Deaf identities from their families, nor their QLGBT identities:

A: In my math lecture there was a sign language interpreter - my first lecture at the Brisbane College of Adult Education. Up till that time I had no exposure to a sign language interpreter. I was watching the lecturer and was pleasantly
distracted with the sign language happening and was perplexed as it was quite fast ... so I observed the lecturer ... and then I looked at the interpreter and worked out that I was getting more information from the interpreter than I was just from lipreading. I had a complete crisis of identity ... I just realised that I was nowhere near being 'a person with a small hearing defect" to: "fuck - I'm deaf!"

This for some is an ideal way to live: with enough language skills to be able to live in the speaking world, but also developing signed language skills so that all boundaries might be crossed in the search for a fulfilling life.

A: Very slowly [learnt my identity]. At school was taught the oral method - i.e. to speak and use as much hearing as possible with hearing aids. When 17 years of age, after leaving school, started to socialise with many signing Deaf people and slowly became a part of that community, whilst still maintaining strong links with hearing people.

Methods of teaching d/Deaf students historically were akin to colonialism: foreign interventions, imposed supervision and wars fragmenting indigenous cultures of signing that had developed (Lane, 1999). Colonialism still exacerbates conflict between d/Deaf tribal differences and identities.

Q: Do you have hearing aids? Cochlear implants?
A: No I strongly do not believe hearing aids or cochlear implants are useful at all. Using these aid and implant deprives my rights of being Deaf, I am strong against the hearing aids and cochlear implants. I WAS BORN DEAF.

Q: Do you belong to a d/Deaf social group?

The research asked: What communication methods were you taught over your education period?

A: Lipreading and listening ... Australia has never been pro-signing nation since 1940 where the American couple came and turned the tide from signing to oralism. I'd like to track them down and give them a piece of my mind! I was always told that I was hearing impaired ... at [X university - in Queensland] I read up on the terminology and I found out that hearing impaired is usually for those who lose their hearing after birth so technically that makes me Deaf. But more so that I identify with my Deaf
Community and its an identity thing for me. I don’t support oralism which is a form of abuse in Australia and the Education system will not accept Auslan except for Toowong School in Brisbane.

Not being able to communicate leads to oppression and misunderstanding, family stresses and societal problems. Deaf persons are often excluded from major aspects of family and societal life, without having learnt how to assert themselves in troubling situations (Steinberg, Loew and Sullivan, 1999).

A: I was taught to hear with hearing aids and to lipread but I taught myself to lipread mostly. I felt very much on my own, isolated cos my parents did not understand what I needed and I didn’t think that I should be assertive. Later I learnt Auslan and this helped with my confidence to ask for support and I asked for notetaker at TAFE and I felt good about being supported.

Information pathways may be lacking for Deaf persons who are mainstreamed.

In specialist schools, trained professionals transmit comprehensive information.

A: Pre-school for Deaf/HI children - oral method. Primary and secondary mainstream private co-ed school: oral method with teachers of the Deaf; basic signing ... Felt quite isolated in classrooms when no teacher support. Managed to get through with lots of reading. University: no support for undergraduate studies other than note-takers for final year. Felt very frustrated ... managed to get through with lots of reading ... Postgraduate studies - all the support I needed including note-taking, captioning, Auslan interpreters. Enjoyed this experience far more than previous education as had full communication access.

Bullying of d/Deaf children and adolescents in mainstreamed schools remains widespread.

A: [For communication] - hearing aids in primary and high school with no support. Got into a lot of trouble because I could not hear properly and was bored. Also got into a lot of fights due to my deafness. I had interpreters for bridging course where communication with teachers and fellow Deaf students was not a problem ... I had interpreters for diploma course [but] lots of difficulty communicating and fitting in with fellow hearing students.
Attempts by d/Deaf students to participate and ingratiate themselves with peers often fail.

A: Throughout my education from Preschool to High school and matriculation - I use lipreading, listening and speak for myself. In university I used Auslan. I found it frustrating with communicating with speech and lipreading in that I was always the one that went 95% of the way to make myself understood [with hearing peers in mainstreamed settings] and to understand the other person so when I wanted to know why they were laughing it was always will tell you later ... fuck em. Smile.

“1 in 2 deaf adolescents that may have some kind of mental health problems while at school in relation to self identity” (Jones, 2009, p. 3), and attempts to foist a hearing/speaking culture onto Deaf persons may be implicated as partial cause. The literature and respondent replies reveal mainstreaming as contentious: a supposed 'one-size-will-fit-all', economically rationalist solution to learning, tailored by itinerant attending teachers. For Deaf persons, getting a good education is problematic and lack of it can engender frustration then anger against broader society. While blind persons are mostly conversant with and literate in English, many Deaf persons are not, which can render the world relatively inaccessible. Australia's provision of interpreters and electronic assistance is improving, but when one wants to say something or to 'hear' something, it is not cheap or always convenient to set up an appointment with an interpreter.

A. University was when I first worked with interpreters and it really opened up education for me making it much more comfortable and easy, because I no longer had to concentrate constantly on lipreading.

There was no recounting of joy at being in mainstreamed primary and secondary schools by Deaf persons.

Q: What is your highest level of education?
A: TAFE - I had a notetaker and felt supported by staff and students. I did have some problems when teachers talk while face the blackboard or in discussion groups with students but usually staff and students have been pretty good. I had none of this support at high school so I felt good about being supported at TAFE.

Resentments lingered about apparently intransigent bureaucracy and lack of negotiable alternatives. Minimalist support from itinerant teachers did not bring students up to standards commensurate with their intellect, leaving them adrift in the system and alienated from future careers.

Q: What kinds of schools did you go to over your total education period?
A: I went to an OD Unit [Oral Deaf] from preschool to primary education ... then I was integrated into the regular class part-time from grade 3 to 4. Grade 5, I was fully integrated with itinerant teacher 1 to 2 hours a week while attending a fully integrated class. I was sent to a fully hearing high school with itinerant teacher 2 periods a week. I couldn't continue to do my HSC at my local high school ... they refused to allow me to take on subjects that will enable me to get into University ... so my mother in her ocker ways told them to fuck off ... and took me out of [outer suburban NSW high school named] – I’m still mad about what happened - and would spend anything up to 2 hours each way in travelling to Granville TAFE to do my matriculation (year 11/12) with tutorial support.

The System tends to 'dump' students in approximations of what they might really need as though just 'ticking the boxes'

Q: What kinds of schools did you go to over your total education period?
A: Hearing primary and high school Deaf bridging course at TAFE Hearing diploma course at TAFE

Circumstances always were more embracing when Deaf students had Deaf peers and adequate interpreters were provided. However, Deaf students having to study in English can still exclude them from full and useful education.

Q: What is your highest level of education? Please write your experiences and feelings about it.
A: Diploma. Primary school was easy and fun. **High school was difficult and stressful** as I struggled to keep up and I left after grade 9. **Bridging course was great as my fellow students were also Deaf and we had interpreters for all classes.** Even though I had interpreters, **the diploma was very difficult to achieve because I struggled with the English** and course content.

**Perception of difference**

By broader society and its media, the disability of vision impairment or blindness will mostly be portrayed as negative, or risible, and be aesthetic or social anathema. Conceptions that blind and vision impaired persons have of their own identities not only bespeak reaction to social construct but also experience of intrinsic corporeal realities independent of external construct: such realities can be reprised at waking up with the insecurity of being unable to see (French, 1999). A respondent who is blind and of diverse sexualities remarked:

> My poor mother, when she found out, she resigned from her *Over Fifties* group! I said 'why?' she said 'oh, they might find out!' I said 'well, who gives a shit!' - 'Don't you swear like that!' she snapped!

Dissembling in the face of familial disappointment, fraught reconciliations and cool distance were frequent negative experiences and reactions as persons realized their identities rendered them unacceptable to those upon whom average people usually rely for support.

> I only recently came out to my family ... **Mum was upset** ... we’re recreating a relationship that was shattered. There’s lots of things we can share ... Neutral ground to socialize on.

In Australia, for blind persons the prospect of 'no place to go' due to familial and spousal estrangement is somewhat alleviated by a small income from the government: no other disabled group receives a pension free of the Means Test.

> In a way, I wouldn't have a problem with the Blindness pension being Means tested. The problem I would have, that danger that I
would see in that, on the personal level for a lot of people, if their families were well-to-do, and they lost the pension, **they would then be at the mercy of their families.**

No one asks heterosexuals when or how they became heterosexual and hearing persons are not usually asked what a hearing identity means to them (Gutman, 1999). Two responses from the USA – the first a male, the second: female.

**Q:** Are you out to your family?
**A:** Yes and no, I always have been honest with myself ... my non-biological hearing father is deeply religious. He have $$$.

*I have to keep my private life very discreet* or will not get any kind of inheritance.

**Q:** Did your family try to make you be "normal", like straight?
**A:** My **siblings usually called me "queer" back to my pre-adolescent years.** My deaf liberal mother once called me "queer" when I took out her car without the permission at the age of 16 - legal age for driving. She accused me of driving out to look for men to have sex with. My elder brother once pulled out his cock and insisted that I suck his cock. We were squabbled at that time.

In the above, it is not known whether the abuse was due to perception of vulnerability because the respondent was Deaf, younger, of devalued status as 'queer', or all three. Apart from such drama, it is ultimately boring to sit around while others are socializing in a foreign language. The emphasis below is all on the part of the respondent:

**Q:** Do you belong to any social or cultural group in your parent's nationality?
**A:** No - **BOOORRINBGGGG BEC OF HEARING PEOPLE TALK. NO INTERPRETER OR ANY HEARING USING SIGNING**

**Q:** Do you feel pressure to be like your family or anyone else?
**A:** YES MY PARENTS EXPECTED ME TO BE LIKE HEATHER WHITESTONE [the first Deaf Miss America]. OH CHEEZEDди ... FUCK MY PARENTS WANTS ME BE LIKE A HEARING PERSON.

**Q:** If you did not come out, why?
**A:** **BEC OF JUDGE PEOPLE FROM DAMN TEXAS**

**Q:** Are you comfortable with your sexual identity?
**A:** Yes

**Q:** Are you out to your family?
**A:** NOPE BEC THEY ARE HIGH CLASS AND REPUBLICANS

**Q:** Did your family try to make you be "normal" (like straight)?
**A:** **YEAH ALL THE TIME.**
5.2 Inhabiting diversity
Persons may slip out of an identity as one might out of a disguise or costume, in which instance an identity may be an important but discardable masquerade. One can become vagabond, as in: ‘I belonged to the Waratah Deaf gay group, but I left it because there was a lot of back-stabbing’. For that respondent the Waratah group no longer sustained notions of an acceptable identity, it was a 'back-stabbing group' more than it was a 'Deaf gay group'. The research showed even a usually 'out' homosexual blind person was wary of being 'out' in all circumstances.

**Labelling yourself is too final, it's too limiting.** If I say ‘I’m a lesbian”, I can’t be attracted to a guy! ... I could very well say “I’m heterosexual” because I haven’t been with a girl for a while ... but it doesn’t mean that I won’t. It seems somehow okay to be lesbian AND have a boyfriend, somehow. Society is really strange. When I hear that a female media personality is lesbian, I think, that’s good: if I meet them, I might have a chance, too! I’m not particularly ageist, either – an older woman is fine.

Being blind and not heteronormative can be an emotionally and geographically sensitive condition: one can be 'out' in some spaces or places, and not in others; neutral geographies can be inhabited by persons who are empathic or potentially threatening. A blind sexually diverse person may choose impermanent self-labelling, and may anyway not be disposed towards self-labelling at all. Similarly, some respondents ‘just got on with it’, not placing overt emphasis on their sexual diversity.

As a bisexual, I’ve never felt that I’ve needed support because my sexuality has just been one of the things in the life ... one of the things that I’ve thought about and catered for ... on my own terms. So the need for support has never arisen.

Within a broad group of sexually diverse persons, often there are antagonisms and forthright deprecations of people's lived experience and status.
**Bisexual people get no support** – guy likes a girl, then he's friendly with a guy ... the gay guys want to get him ... girls want him. He says: "You know, I think I actually might be bisexual" ... the gays and straights say: "A WHAT?!! They don't EXIST!!"

The research considered terming what respondents sometimes termed *bisexuality* as being *ambisexuality*. Ambisexuality is not as limited as bisexuality. The research embraces a Polynesian view of sexuality, in that a sexual act is something that can take place for many reasons, *none* of which might necessarily indicate a permanent, lifetime commitment. Rather than the binary implied - not only in male/female, hetero/homo, but also in: *bisexual* - the research believes that many healthy, uninhibited persons have *erotic landscapes*. Such person may experience varying infatuations with beings of varying dispositions, genders and genres. As well, persons who are capable of eroticizing landscapes of other humans may creditably interpret atmospheres, landscapes and ecologies as erotically stimulating and potentially fulfilling, with other human actors playing non-gendered roles in their lives.

I have acknowledged myself as being *bisexual from 14 years of age*, and I remember it being for me, a choice. And I'm not in any way saying that's the same for everybody else. But for me, it *was* ... basically, I liked my own 'bit', so why wouldn't I like other men's 'bits' – I liked girl's arses, so why shouldn't I like guy's arses? - Down to the physical nuts and bolts of the body ... it was very much 'What is there about guys that isn't fuckable?'

Bisexuals are a conundrum difficult for heterosexuals to totally abjure, perhaps the homosexual is considered just as a deviation on a journey in the 'right' direction: towards an assumed *hetero fifty per cent* of the bisexuality⁹⁵ - is the latter definitively a binary: fifty per cent homo sex and fifty per cent hetero sex?

A: I think that d/Deaf bisexuals in particular need more attention. **Bisexuals are often overlooked** or not even thought

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⁹⁵ As at January 2012, the Australian Bisexual Network via members.optusnet.com.au seemed to have been dormant since 2008, as did information on rainbow.net.com.au. However, bi-nsw.org.au has functions planned for 2012.
about. d/Deaf bisexuels deserve as much attention as gays and lesbians.

The realization of being diverse and different, as well as exploring the meanings and implications of one’s innate diversity and difference:

As a child I just knew I just was [lesbian], I just knew. When I became vision impaired I was extremely angry – I’m stuck, I’m socially isolated, I’m bored out of my tree, I’m going mad – [laughs], but ... I just had to do something different. So, bit by bit, I had to rationalize with myself, I took back my decision-making, and instead of saying “I don’t want to be isolated anymore” I’d start to say “How can I meet some more people?” How do you meet people when you can’t see them? Where am I going to go when I leave my husband?

Thus generating a notion of fulfilling sequential identities and going where they take us. As per the theme of the story I Can Remember It for You Wholesale (Philip Dick, 2000, London: Millennium/Orion Books Ltd), why go somewhere as yourself? Why not go somewhere as ‘someone else’, and experience their memories?

**Venturing out in various identities**

Persons of backgrounds and composesures that fostered resourcefulness and determination, implied by respondents 'getting out and about' were less likely to be patient with group processes.

I decided I could study again, I wanted to get back into people-oriented business again, in front of people, talking with people, I learnt to type so I could write letters, have an opinion, ring up - and then went to work in a sheltered workshop. Hear someone going by and say ‘hi’ as you pass them, and get to know what’s regular and routine. When I came to Melbourne I got to find out where the women’s pub was ... I was at Guide Dogs, so I’d say ‘take me to such and such a pub’ and I’d sit up on a stool in front of the bar and I’d say what I like to drink and that I don’t see, and would you come up every so often?’... I’d listen to people, go to the book readings, got into a bit of trouble when there was a brawl ... and there was a fight, nobody told me to duck and I got knocked off my stool! ... I got a black eye from it!
But not everyone is sufficiently mobile, confident, of an age or disposition to put themselves in such potentially challenging and difficult situations.

**The environments are daunting, without sight, ‘un-negotiable’.** I’m finding it pretty difficult to get around. I don’t know if I have someone to go to any clubs with yet. Or how I would find someone?

Activation of individual resourcefulness is often dependent upon happenstance: existing networks, environment (school, university, familial, workplace, residential) - but these options can be limited relative to those available to sighted persons, limiting self-perception of identity possibilities.

The rest of the family moved to the capital, I was already there, boarding with an older lady for a year or two, and now I’m living with a couple of friends.

An individual’s need for assimilation into various environments and groups (group identity), together with that individual's oppositional need for differentiation (self-identity) may exert pressures on the construction of self-identity (Sherman, Hamilton and Lewis, 2000, p. 89) unless sense of self-worth is strongly developed.

**Q: Do you feel conflict with your different identities?**

**A:** No I don’t see it as having "different identities" I only have one me I am who I am. I don't try to be anything I'm not. I make my decisions and choices in life to suit my own sense of what is right and wrong. I do not attempt to conform to any group, trend or organisation. At the end of the day, **who I am and the choices I make are my own** and have very little to do with the greater scheme of things. I don't really care if society in general or any particular individual accepts me, I like and accept myself and that is enough for me.

Equipping oneself to live in two or more identities is akin to developing a performance repertoire: if one has the knowledge, skills and motivation, one can play the music that most suits a particular audience. There may be community subsets, as well – such as ethnic and work communities, all which may have
expectations of – and even demand – different behaviours (Gutman, 1999). "I’m a Deaf person who just happens to be QLGBT" is example of response differing from those given by blind persons – for example: "I’m a person who happens to be blind, who happens to be QLGBT". It demonstrates that strong cultural feelings can be associated with being Deaf, and that those cultural feelings to not pertain to persons who are blind.

**Q:** Do you feel conflict with your different identities?

**A:** No - **lesbian is not a strong identity for me.** Deaf is more accurate to define me. Being a **lesbian is not a big part of me.**

**Q:** Any thoughts about isolation, exclusion and communication?

**A:** I was never oppressed, excluded because I am lesbian, but **experienced exclusion and lack of communication related me being Deaf.**

The relativity of exclusions experienced may depend upon how much time one spends in the various communities with which one is involved. A Deaf respondent from the USA said that identification with Deaf persons was due to being unable to identify with hearing persons - a kind of ‘on the rebound’ choice. A Deaf sexually diverse person with a hearing partner who avoids Deaf organisations and who functions mainly in broader hearing communities of QLGBT persons may only be aware of exclusions experienced in that environment.

**Q:** How did you learn about your sexual identity?

**A:** I noticed that I was attracted to my male classmates when I was in preschool ... for the Deaf in St. Louis ... So that means I **knew on a visceral level that I was gay when I was four years old** ... In college I discovered a gay bookstore ... and bought tons of books there ...

**Q:** Is it a positive identity?

**A:** Yes. It changed from a negative to a positive identity after I joined the **student gay group** at Brown University.

**Q:** Is it a negative identity?

**A:** **Only because it wasn't validated anywhere** ... It would have helped if the Internet had existed back then!
‘Validation’ and ‘authenticity’ are flip sides of each other, commensurate with ‘status’. Self-validation is intrinsic to Deaf culture, but for other marginalized lives, such as those of QLGBT persons, there is no fixed basic point of reference that explains ‘how to be any of QLGBT’. Multiple expressions of the diverse breed multiple reactions, but empathy may not extend across individual boundaries of the personally unfamiliar, even within and between groups of people who are sexually diverse in varying ways. From an Australian in the USA:

A: Have **not had a chance to learn about my sexuality** as a Gay until I went to live in [the USA in a particular decade]. I learnt a lot about the sexual identity from other **Deaf gays in America**.

**Q:** Who gave you that information?
**A:** American Deaf Gay Community - attended the Rainbow Alliance Conference in Los Angeles

**Q:** Is it a positive identity?
**A:** Yes when I learnt more about my identity that have **given me strength** [and his family gained more confidence in his gay identity due to the fact he has a partner to whom his family has been introduced].

**Q:** Do you feel conflict with your different identities?
**A:** No - I knew I was gay since the early age and it was much struggle especially from Deaf people who treated me as a dirty person!

The fundamentalist attitude that the respondent encountered in the ‘straight’ Deaf community may be akin to that in ethnic or broader communities as well.

A: [My sexuality] is **not a big issue**. I try not to make it a big issue by preventing it. I also prevent discussing about my being gay as certainly **my friends will have troubles accepting me**. Whether they are **true friends or not is not the issue** but I sure enjoy their company because I **have no other place to go**.

**Q:** Do you have support?
**A:** No.

Living in at least dual identities is something with which most respondents have to deal on a daily basis, exceptions being those respondents who did not identify as sexually diverse, including persons who maintained they were simply interested in the issues, and past and present officers in the organisations.
5.3 Qwirly visible

Visibility is a precursor to voice and staking of metaphorical territory as citizens. However, a number of blind persons demonstrated ambivalence in their sexual diversity, not being committed to homosexual expressions of attachment or desire. This ambivalence was not noted in Deaf responses, although it was expressed by a blind person who was becoming Deaf. In such instances of ambivalence, or if one has ‘an erotic landscape’, what ‘territory’ is there to which one might stake claim? Apart from that, many respondents were not particularly ‘out’ to their families, in the sense that their sexuality was not a matter for discussion, even if family members were aware of it, so conveying a visibly diverse sexual identity for them would be counterproductive. Organisations had nothing to offer their constituents in the way of counselling or even referral to appropriate and empathic counsellors. Blind and Deaf persons sometimes had one parent – most often the mother – who knew about their sexual preference but did not reject them as people. Often there was one parent who did not know, or who would not approve if they did.

Becoming visible implies public knowledge of previously covert identities. Many of us produce social identities (Weinberg, Williams and Pryor, 2002, p. 349), which our private personal identities would discredit. Sullivan argued (1996, p. 12) the first “homosexual lesson” is that “survival depends upon self-concealment” and (p. 13) no homosexual child, surrounded overwhelmingly by heterosexuals, will feel at home in his sexual and emotional world, even in the most tolerant of cultures. and every homosexual child will learn the rituals of deceit, impersonation, and appearance. Anyone who believes political, social or even cultural revolution will change this fundamentally is denying reality. [Emphasis added].
Public acknowledgement of *previously covert* identities happened with only one blind individual during the research - that person being catalytic to the creation of the internet chat list, but the list did not spawn a genuine group. There were no rules and beliefs espoused – rather, the group was without norms and there was nothing that bound original subscribers together. Covert involvement of individuals may be a factor in limiting the possibility of intimacy between members (Rubington and Weinberg, 2002: 223). Some respondents to the research were “trapped between feeling wicked and feeling ridiculous” (Sullivan, 1996: 15) in their various dominating cultural environments. Finding other peers is not easy when identification and communication is rendered baggage-laden, problematic and secretive.

Self-understanding depends on the constructs into which one was born, on the social discourses into which one was initiated. Human nature does not exist; it is a spontaneous social creation.


It was evident from the research that respondents could conduct their lives in at least two modes of what might be called ‘Authenticity’: the research terms one *Expedient Authenticity*, and the other: *Inconvenient Authenticity*. The first is socially constructed and motivated to assuage threat – an authenticity such as a gay or lesbian person might adopt in a homophobic environment. Inconvenient Authenticity occurs when you are perceived (caught out?) being overtly, inconveniently *gay*. Your representative organisation might not be attuned to multiple declensions of an identity they wish to portray.

An in-group survives by continually creating and recreating out-groups; visibility is integral to the actual and metaphorical staking out of territory that is performed by competing individuals; full citizenship is not granted to offending
individuals. An adept group or organisation will learn how to handle Inconvenient Authenticity so that no one loses face, the mission statement is not jeopardized and stakeholders not affronted. An entire group might need to be diffused, mollified, side-lined – so long as appearance produced that the issues have been considered the organisation may remain stable. Baudrillard (1988, p. 72) maintains that it is “impossible the world will ever be reconciled with itself”, that “appearance is always victorious” – and that it is better to leave some secrets as secrets. He decries and observes

[the fury to unveil the truth, to get at the naked truth, the one which haunts every discourse of interpretation, the obscene rage to uncover the secret ...]

So the discourse of truth is impossible because it is too damaging. Baudrillard believes (1988, p. 72), that there is a "giddiness of simulation" to be enjoyed by not revealing, by not being totally visible, that it is the absence of mystery which is obscene. The liberationist model of identity takes away the mystery.

Limited autobiography or those selectively published can also ‘take away the mystery’ and replace it with inauthentic and alienating stereotype. The archived autobiographical resources provided by the now defunct online magazine Bent (www.bentvoices.org) give insight into experiences of persons with disabilities - although Feinstein is the only blind contributor. As of 2010 there were eleven articles by Feinstein who makes clear that having a computer, writing and networking has given him broader experiences in life. Because these articles may have some status and therefore importance for being written by one of the few gay blind authors to get media coverage, they may be perceived as typifying the experience of blind gay men. The articles exhibit a negative self-awareness: 'need', rather than reaching out to 'offer', disengagement from other motivations.
and with whomever he may be at the time of writing; concerned with food and eating and in a depressed state, without deep insight into what keeps him thus. He presents a scenario of unrealized and perhaps unrealistic expectations. Although he may suffer exhaustion due to his self-proclaimed obesity, he can get about, is educated and bilingual but has not apparently applied these blessings to any particular aim.

Apart from Feinstein’s articles (see also Guter and Killacky, 2004), QLGBT blind stories in English are rare. That might be because there are few blind folk of diverse sexualities, or few who feel secure enough in their environments to stake open claims to contentious identities. Ahmed (2006, p. 101), discusses the "ease with which heterosexual bodies can inhabit public space". Sexually diverse blind and Deaf persons may not have that ease, nor any space of their own, nor may they desire any separate (and further-isolating) space. Persons who are sexually diverse may prefer to inhabit heteronormative space. Expressing sexually diversity could be perceived as resulting in loss of more important advantages already gained – such as status in heterosexual space.

Externally generated inner conflicts lead to alienation. The question was asked:

*Do you feel isolated because you are deaf / gay?*

A: Yes - I have a double life, straight and gay. There is **massive conflicts in both and between**. In my straight life, I have to act straight and **pretend I like guys** (hook-ups, kisses etc). I cannot stand that. I have to protect my good reputation. In my gay life, Im very comfortable ... the girls love me and understand me very well. What worries me is that **someone might see me at a gay club or with gay friends** and go around telling other people.

Despite any selective coming out’ respondents were generally influenced by broader community negative reactions to the politics of sexual and gender
diversity, concerned about unwelcome exposure and attacks of various kinds. At least from the Middle Ages, homosexuals in the Christian and Islamic worlds have been burnt alive, hanged, stoned, criminalized, jailed, harassed, bashed and entrapped by state institutions; derided and devalued in movies and the media (Plummer, 1975). There are varying arguments for personal and public revelations of sexuality, but there seems no immediate advantage in trying to establish an unsupported identity in an environment that is unaccommodating.

Q: Do you think Deaf advocacy and service organisations such as DA, NSWAD and others should be more supportive of Deaf GLBTI people?
A: Yes they should. Because Deaf GLBTI people are part of the wider Deaf community and they often have high needs for advocacy and health care issues etc.

The ‘two-edged sword’: drawing attention to oneself can be counter-productive, even dangerous. Anecdotally and from researcher observation, intermittent groups of gay Deaf persons attend the shrinking number of gay venues in major capitals, mainly Deaf males who may not be recognized as either gay or Deaf unless doing something ‘gay’ or ‘Deaf’ - conducting themselves in particular ways or signing, which to many observers looks flamboyant and ‘gay’, anyway.

Q. If you did not come out, why?
A. Australia is not fully diverse yet or accepting gay fully!
Q. Are you comfortable with your sexual identity?
A: No.

Respondents claiming to be lesbian were rarely able to consistently embrace Rich's lesbian continuum (1993, p. 239) because the breaking of taboos and rejecting compulsory ways of life is not consistent with dwelling as dependents in the suburbia of dominant heterosexist cultures. Younger respondents did not express their lesbianism as originating in any political act of rebellion against male dominance and heterosexuality.
My Dad doesn’t understand it. He thinks lesbians are weird ... 
[We] used to be really close, we used to talk, he’d tell me how things worked ... I don’t know if he knows, maybe he chooses to deny it? ... My Mum: she accepts whatever makes me happy, without understanding it. But Dad, some of the stuff he says – it’s just so upsetting. Once when he picked me up ... he told me my sister’s boyfriend at the time was coming ... And so I asked: “Can my girlfriend come?” And he said “No!”... So I asked “Why?” His reply was “Don’t play games with me!” So I went inside and was crying, Mum asked why ... she urged me to be patient, and if it happened, let it go until then. She was okay about it. I just wanted to test the water!

Cultural environments inhibit expression of sexual and emotional voice, choice, action and behaviours.

Sporty jock stuff and football talk turned me off a lot of men ... a lot of the guys at school were shits, and I wouldn’t touch them with somebody else’s cock, but I sensed a difference that I thrilled in, as much as I hid, and I hid out of sheer expediency, because you don’t acknowledge something like that to your mates at a country public high school if you want your arse to remain un-kicked... I’ve never ’come out’ – but ... anybody who I think needs to know, I tell. For instance, my parents don’t know: it’s not because I’m afraid to tell them or that would stop loving me, or something. But it would upset them, it would be far worse, them knowing. And that’s generally been my experience.

Claim-staking processes to rights, territories and power are secured by eliminating competition or by suppressing other quests. Among all species, exceptionality is a precariousness state of being. However, as Baudrillard maintained (1988, p. 41): “Today, we need a solution to deliver us from resembling others”.

5.4 Exceptionality

Exceptionality can imply identities deviant to the dictates of the dominant social constructions. You can be rendered ‘deviant’ because you were born three thousand years too late, a thousand years too early, or three thousand kilometres too far east: time and place are issues (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000). Developing discourse may mitigate or abrogate colonial creations of
deviancy, such as the historical constructions of Deaf and blind persons (Baynton, 1998; Branson and Miller, 2002; Kelly, 2008). However, intra-group divisions in accordance with intra-tribal deviances may still flourish. Individual quests for social identity are concerned with belonging and then these identities may be organisationally adapted and utilized in even just one group or organisation, no matter how small the organisation may be. There are intuitive processes that construct social identities which include categorisation of others, identification with or comparison to them, and perception of some prevailing, distinct group psychology. Individuals can take action based on this: they can create and define their place(s) in various social constructions and achieve comparative identities, or others might do that for them. Underpinning the research is appreciation of the variety of journeys that are being made to, and via, potentially multiple and fluid identities. But there may be readers of this paper who consider QLGBTI persons to be unsavoury and objectionable, and who might culturally believe that blindness, for example, is a punishment for reprehensible activities in a former life, even activity by one’s ancestors: as Ching asserts (1980, pp. 15-16), even in 20th century China it was believed by some that evil spirits could be released by piercing the eyes with needles or sprinkling pepper into them to cause weeping to wash them out. This would sometimes be done at the command of a temple monk.

The exceptionality of the group of persons originally attempting to start a chapter or sub-branch within BCA was discussed with a BCA blind CEO; it may have been easier in retrospect for BCA to deal with such a discussion than it was at the time the proposal was made:

[T]here was a group that had got together, of people, who were either of a different sexual orientation or who were gay, lesbian, trans-sexual or whatever it is, or they empathized with those issues and tried to get a group together. And I remember some of
the people that were in the organization [BCA], that were kind of the stalwarts of the organization, the comments they had, it was either this nervous laughter, you know 'hoh hoh hoh hoh', or you know 'just another group' or 'secret hippie business', and it was just like – amusing to see the reaction: they were either uncomfortable, or they didn't know how to relate, or – you know, for whatever reason. It was quite interesting to watch.

The speaker is an accomplished person, highly educated, employed full-time professionally in a major capital, totally blind, holder of many different positions in blindness organisations:

I'm not necessarily that way inclined [emphasis added - not sexually diverse] but I have lot of friends who are ... And it must be really frustrating for people ... that are diverse in some way, and ... in terms of us: we should be more understanding as a group, because we're, I guess, people who are disabled in a way, so you know: we get it, so why would we, kind of, inflict it on other people? Sometimes it's a little bit frustrating. You know, it happens to you – you, when you walk into a shop and the salesperson doesn't know what to do, because you're blind, and ... for whatever reason, [they] can't deal with it, whatever, and yet you might go out and be the same way to another person who is – culturally, or some other way diverse, so it's quite amusing.

The verbs ‘watch’, ‘look’, and words to do with seeing are often used by blind persons in conversation, such as: “I haven’t seen you for ages”. I have never known an instance where the response: “Well, you haven’t seen me at all!” has been taken as offensive, or received with other than a smile or a laugh.

Similarly, for the CEO to state that expressed symptoms of exclusion or rejection were observed as “amusing” should not be taken as offensive.

You know, like, there's subcultures within a subculture, and again, I'm sure that there's probably differentiation between people who are - maybe gay and are HIV positive as opposed to those who are not, or, there may be some kind of feelings towards those people as opposed to those who are not, or whatever, it's fascinating.

Moreover, in organisations there is likely to be suspicious about what is inferred as implicit intentions motivating persons forming a minority group, are they
going to be "performers that dress up in women's clothes", or um, "people who just want to demean the organization" – or so-called demean the organization in some way, so there might be a feeling of - being threatened, you know: the stability of the organization, the reason for its being there, the culture, the whatever-it-is, will be affected by this small group of hostile people [“And turn it into a dating agency!” – interviewer joke]. Yes! Something like that – and it's just not – I mean, it's just not the case ... I know a lot of gay people don't want to be different, they just may have a partner who's of the same sex, or whatever. It's not a big deal. They don't dress any differently, you know – a lot of them have kids and have been in a heterosexual relationship before, whatever. For whatever reason, they've just made this decision, they want to live – and so be it. They could live next door to any of them, and who cares?

For cultural groups, exclusivity and a narrowing of horizons may be idealized, especially within the dominance of a broader culture unable to embrace what might otherwise be perceived as unusual or odd: in the instance d/Deaf persons:, it is a language expressed by bodily movements. Small group participants can form hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. For persons with sensory difference to be normalized into society implies the addition of technology, perhaps making one less disabled in a workplace, but more isolated. The 'normalized' disabled person may be accompanied by, attached to, implanted or in tandem with some kind of technological assistance or extension. Emphasis is on physical aspects and improving 'quality of life' by use of technology without regard for social and emotional needs (Scherer, 1993).

The occurrence of disability and QLGBT first has to become part of social discourse for any lifestyle improvements to be instigated. In Australian subculture periodicals from the 1980s, all now extinct, the topic of disability and diversity was minimal; there was also not much of ‘T’ and nothing at all of ‘I’. Sexual diversity is anyway not enough to weld diverse persons together in a
cohesive group, just as physical characteristics such as blindness is not enough to bind diverse personalities and ages into cohesive groups.

I even have problems with Blindie computer user groups! If what brings you together, isn't the computer, and the fact that you're blind, I just think that basically you should be thinking of, you know: **I'm a computer user who happens to be blind**, rather than I'm a blind person who happens to be a computer user, you can see what I'm getting at?

Idiosyncratic individuals conditioned to being solo, marked out for attention or treatment that is particularized, cannot be expected to integrate smoothly with a broad range of others who may have limited or vastly different emotional, physical and psychic experiences. Oppressive social constructions, cultures, geographic and other crafted environments impinge upon or destroy hopes of inclusion and contribute to existential angst. Ultimately, among respondents there is a sense of a common humanity faced with tacit, unreasonable expectations, with sensory deprivation and difference adding to that burden.

Nobody is perfectly able or perfectly formed. The disability rights movement was just disgusted with Wolfensberger and Normalisation - **what's the matter with it?** Some of the things we can't do preclude us from participating in a normal range of actions. With children who are born blind, they can be facilitated to have a much better social life and interpersonal richness **if they're give opportunities to have pointed out to them how sighted people respond with their bodies in this situation instead of using words, and what that helps them to do.** It strengthens the meaning or interpretation of what's being spoken: **Blind children, if they've never seen, they don't spontaneously smile**, or if they do, it's not in social communication patterns, it can be random ... **I want to know all those higher level things.**

The interviewee emphasized that what might be considered by some as attempts at ‘Normalisation’ were simply techniques to gain the most from occasions of social interaction with a broad sighted public – such as might be encountered in the workplace or in academic projects. In such instances, confronting unaware
audiences with blindisms and other idiosyncratic behaviours are likely to be counter-productive distractions (Augusto & McGraw, 1990, p. 399).

[W]hat is wrong with offering people social conversational skills? ... the reaction was: “How dare they talk about normalizing us, trying to make us like them!” and I said ... We all might be ‘normal’, but there are cultural norms and mores, and there’s a range of compliance, of adhering and cohering within that which is up to individual and familial use and interpretation. What right have people with disabilities who are articulate, who write and form opinions for other people ... to say “don’t go with this ‘normalisation’” because the opposite is to be ‘not normal’.

Even respondents with strong political views about exclusion and rights, may have little interest in disability or history. As per Goffman (1956), persons can play different roles for different audiences, being conveniently inauthentic to avoid any discomfort produced by being inconveniently authentic. Who can then fully understand individual motivations? Such uncertainty renders documenting of an authentic history problematic.

People think that I should be interested in the past. They expect I’ll read all these tranny books and things like that, they expect that I’ve got lots of tranny friends. And I say, Look I’m a person who happens to be female who happens to be blind, who happens to be blahblahblah – and on and on like that, you know?

We have seen that varying social environments may require a "negotiating self" (Thoits and Virshup, 1997, pp. 112-113), via which one is motivated to perform according to identity roles, making attempts to ingratiate or avoid expungement (Hughes, 2002).

I’ve never been strongly affiliated myself with the gay community – I’m not a gay stereotype. There’ve been times when I needed them, but on the whole, I hoe my own row.

Being ‘normal’ but not ‘average’ in the environments constructed or adapted to catering for ‘average’ is likely to place persons in states of constant tension when they are beyond a small orbit. What mechanisms are required?
You learn new rules and new skills and get new layers of awareness, but **with disability each time you learn something new**, like an independent mobility skill, you’re **fairly quickly confronted with another level of inability or disability**. Being able to be safely mobile from point A to B is terrific, you can do your own banking for example, but once at the teller’s counter, you can’t carry through, you have to ask for help, which is another thing maybe not thought of. And so **for years and years, there’s this revealing, or re-confrontation with inability or disability**, stemming from new skill acquired. Which opens up another level of disability **and reactivates grief at another level**.

Being blind or hard of hearing or Deaf affects many aspects of a person’s life. Exclusion from majority populations and thus majority group activities, will bring about reduction in the prospective pool of peers and partners, limitation of career choices and promotion possibilities. Limited numbers gives rise to persons conceiving of themselves as lonely planets in restricted and lonely orbits with few opportunities for socialisation and rendering mixing with the broader community increasingly tentative. The thinner the population the more difficult lifestyle can be. Being blind and homosexual in a small-town is a triple-whammy:

I haven’t met any other peers, not a single person my age, it’s something of a wasteland. There are a few younger and older people. It’s quite a long trek into the [blind organisation]. I don’t go there anymore, **no point to my going there, as there’s not a lot going on. Because we’re blind, and so on. Nothing for people my age.**

Out on one’s own, the experience associated with blindness is projected by some respondents as being a disabled experience in an ableist world.

I especially was treated as an outsider: because I was different, because I was blind: **people just didn’t know how to react around me**. And I think that’s when my parents decided they were going to send me to the capital, they’d seen me go through a lot of tough times, so, although they thought it might be scary, they thought it would be best for me.
The respondent above is dealing with issues of socialization, not just the dangers of a city: with whom will a person who is blind, different, an outsider socialize? Where and with whom will a peer group or companions be found? The initial shock of inhabiting another state of being from the majority of the population requires adjustments with which not everyone can cope.

Rehab wanted us to forget about all those higher communication things, and just learn typing and basket-making, use of the cane, two hours off at lunch-time.

The processes of previous decades seem extraordinarily primitive in retrospect. However, proximity to centres of training is still important for persons acquiring blindness beyond school age. In fact, some of this training could be undertaken in sufficiently adept and authorized secretarial and tertiary colleges.

Trial and error, being aware of my posture, my head, talk with my hands – I couldn’t see what was wrong with the basic premise of education and skills training that enabled people with disabilities to find new ways of doing ordinary activities and developing sophisticated, effective interpersonal communicating skills. Being nicely groomed, being clean, tucking your shirt in, having clean clothes, learning to stand up...! Being careful of mannerisms, like sniffing. I know we get runny noses, develop mannerisms, scuffle along, but if people have never been shown, or haven’t had any example or experience of the positive differences between behaviours, or that they have a choice, that what they do and how they do it does have an impact on others.

It is possible that 'blokey' attitudes to problems accompanying blindness have been antithetical to the development of instruction in what might seem to be minor social skills. The research has pointed out texts wherein an oppressive 'maleness' to the state of blindness was noted. This was confirmed by more than one respondent.

Blindness was male and pedantic, I moved right out of it, because it was very oppressive ... Certain people seem to have a bit of a strangle-hold on the operation, it’s changed a great deal, but ... coming to Melbourne, I never grew up in Melbourne ... never worked in Melbourne, had no network in Melbourne
and it's very hard to break in - that other network is very tightly held, everything has its politics.

Unlike the adventurous and possibly Alpha-type males considered in the autobiographical literature, being blind can take feelings of potency and prevent blind persons from establishing a causative persona.

I miss having eye contact. I was very good at catching an eye and holding it ... To be honest, I do not believe there is an answer. We have to rely on time and chance for someone to approach us with a desire to know us, as we are.

“As we are” in this instance indicates feelings of a diminished state: being passive, waiting upon the actions of others. Blindness can be experienced as an excuse.

I know that I would be moving ahead much faster if I could see where I was going in life and could get there without having to wait for someone to give me the assistance I need. I live alone which is not desirable ... but it is the way I have found myself. I did not plan my life this way.

Persons may not plan to be of diverse sexuality, either – things might just turn out that way. No Intersex person responded to the research, and it would be salutary if government health departments began to deal with sexual ambiguity in an inclusive manner: it is a social issue, not a medical problem, with which clinical, legal and medical reforms (Preves, 2008) could deal, preceded by empathic research.

A transgender male to female person responding to the current research expressed little interest in the stories of other transgender 'pioneers' in Western culture.\footnote{Such as: April Ashley, Christine Jorgensen and Renée Richards.} Our research participant was adamant about her desire to 'do things [her] way', without influence from others or reference to them and their life journeys. As a person blind all her life and his life before the transgenders
process, problems presented by choosing gender reassignment had been confronted. The vicissitudes of suburban life as a blind man had been experienced and now there is life as a blind woman. Afflicted by some of the normal health issues of ageing, the respondent is nonetheless good company.

Wit and a broadly raucous public persona may be a shield from sharing true intimacy: laughter keeps one at a distance, reducing intimate exchange. Dating her life "AD" and "BC" ("after dick, before cunt" - sometimes "before vaj"), having dealt with unkind or simply thoughtless jokes, discrimination, rejection and isolation, she gives the impression of having reached a place of relative peace. Blindness seems to have been a kind of passport through all the issues. The idea of changing from being a blind family man to a blind woman at middle-age provokes a WTF!? moment of response for the average acquaintance or observer. Just imagining the scenario distils a kind of wonderment regarding the probable trials experienced on such a journey. She has little to do with BCA or VA these days, living far from a major city. It should not be imagined that one ‘chooses’ the lifestyle of being a transgender person97, or the hobby of transvestism in order to become sexually active or as a prerequisite to sexuality. ‘Choices’ may just be preferred states of self-imagining; but we may not really be able to freely choose anything, due to cultural, environmental and familial constraints. As a corollary, some interviewees who expressed homosexual inclination only claimed experience of heterosexual sexual activities, but acknowledged physical-homo-sex longing, possibly unconsummated, meanwhile they were living ostensibly heterosexual lives. Bisexual persons can

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97 Norrie May-Welby was the first person to be declared neither male nor female. No internet search nor Welby’s blogspot to January 2012 revealed the current situation in this saga.
unwittingly cast the same spells of doubt and fury as other gender performances, as Armstrong (2002, p. 179) maintains:

[The AIDS epidemic produced a stream of attacks on bisexuals as the source of infection of a "pure" heterosexual community ... From the perspective of a political movement built around promoting gay identity, the very existence of bisexuality and transgenderism seemed threatening. These phenomena seemed to undermine the solidity of lesbian and gay identities. Bisexuality and transgenderism drew attention to experiences of gender and sexuality that did not fit neatly within the categories of gay and straight.

A person living ‘mostly’ as heteronormative and partaking ‘predominantly’ in heterosexual activity may not be 'bisexual'; nor should the indulgence of available heterosex be taken to undermine any claims to be simply homosexual. The notion of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ persons has intruded into this context, especially with the arrival of the AIDS epidemic. Conceptions of free-will and the matter or ‘choice’ re-inscribes ideas of ‘deserved consequence’, which leads to all kinds of horrors, including that of the trans panic and gay panic legal arguments - which in places are still successful defences in ameliorating charges of violence and murder. Substitute/second-best sexual or emotional involvements are promoted by social constructions/constrictions which inhibit deeply felt desires, such that thwarted desires may be re-directed - assisting one through imposed existence but not to preferred authenticity. Expectations or lack of them, either self-imposed or implied from externally prescribed social covenants impose more stress of self-monitoring than may be experienced by average citizens.

What about looking at people? It’s so ingrained at me to look at people in the eye and not be shifty-eyed. And I didn’t know even if I was looking at someone. Where do I put my eyes? **Well, they didn’t have an answer**, or they didn’t want to explore those aspects and there certainly wasn’t anyone there to teach me.
Families, friends, associates and those lived environments are the arenas from which one might imagine drawing comfort and support. Anecdotally, 90% of Deaf children are born to hearing parents (Myers, Myers and Marcus, 1999); similarly, 90% of QLGBTI persons are likely born into ostensibly heteronormative families. Most blind persons are born into sighted families. The familial abilities to offer support are rendered problematic. For blind persons, there is an unknown but tiny fraction – certainly no more than ten per cent – of all literature available in alternative formats, with organisations unequipped to supply individual taste. So the ability to satisfy emotional, intellectual, psychic and physical needs of blind persons is curtailed.

Reading is another passion but ... My main interest was with nonfiction and the bulk of books in audio form are fiction. I loved History and Biography and researching subjects which aroused my curiosity ... I have spoken to staff both at the Blind Foundation Library and the Public Library who told me that recorded books must be for the majority and us minority have to go without. I've never found fiction very involving, reading about something which never happened or someone who never existed.

The sighted intellectual can go to a library and pick up items of interest, browse the shelves of a newsagency for information about their hobbies, or an item to while away a few hours at home or in transit. Mild expressions of loss or deprivation can be symptoms of deeply felt grief.

I love classical music ... and my garden ... without it, I would go mad with boredom ... I would like to know how others handled their sight loss and how they reinvented themselves. Also what thoughts there are on who is in the stronger position: those born blind or those who lose their sight at a later stage?

As well, for blind and d/Deaf persons, territories are limited, due to lack of accessible venues and diverse recreations. For some respondents, life is at a
standstill and it is not at all obvious how anything might be changed or improved.

Losing the interests that were such a large part of my life, brings on the question: who is the more fortunate, those who are born blind or those who lose it after experiencing vision? **If I had been born blind I may have developed differently and not pursued interests that were snatched away from me.** Being born blind would have seen me taught differently and able to manage my life easier, not that being blind is easy ... **Losing one’s sight during one lifetime is such a traumatic experience and the support, as in training and teaching, is not there. Mainly we are on our own.**

Being born into hearing families who do not sign can produce marginal identities in Deaf children, because hearing parents and siblings will want to include the Deaf child and may therefore opt to impose technological restoration or imitation of hearing on the Deaf family member; whereas Deaf children who become bicultural are more likely to have spent early years in Deaf contexts or been born into Deaf families (Wax, 1999).

I try **not to be involved in family gatherings or be invited to other relatives’ parties/functions** as it does make me **totally isolated**. If it is unpreventable, then I go and try to enjoy myself if I can. Anyway, **this is more the reason for my being in the deaf world, because this is where I belong.**

A Deaf member of a hearing family may experience parental withdrawal and that the parents communicate superficially. Deaf children may anyway feel devalued compared with siblings who can hear -

**Being deaf has limitations in life. My hearing [siblings] have unlimited potential to do whatever they desire** and I am buggered to be **stuck with restrictions.**

Deaf persons from hearing families are more likely to seek support from peers than their families (Steinberg, Loew and Sullivan, 1999). Affirming that sexual diversity is a broad phenomenon might eventually bring more tolerance and understanding, but meanwhile -
they do not accept it or find it hard to believe that I am gay. It’s easier not to talk about it.

Perceptions of deviancy within ‘Deaf’ may have bearing on the kinds of advocacy and services that are available. It has been pointed out by the literature that DeafWorld has routines of objectifying and interpersonal valorisation which can be instant upon personal introduction, comprising a strictness parallel to that of exclusionary tribal societies. These structures include: school relationships and affiliations being of paramount importance (Emerton, 2005, p. 140), as are profound deafness and growing up in a Deaf family,

and signing fluently ... 'hearing activities', such as use of the telephone or one’s voice in conversation are suspect.

The research received one reply from a person who self-described as CoDA – Child of Deaf adult(s), who identified as ‘gay’. Concomitant to a CoDA's journey to identity is the function of mediation (Myers, Myers and Marcus, 1999). The hearing child is born into a realm of difference and stressors wherein the parents are potentially isolated in familial and broader cultures. In this instance, technologies are of limited assistance and the respondent did not seek to take part in Deaf culture beyond the family.

Q: Are you comfortable with your sexual identity?
A: Yes

Q: Are you out to your family?
A: Yes and No. My deaf parents are aware, but it is not discussed. It's clear it is a taboo subject. My hearing sister knows, and she's perfectly ok about it.

Q: Did your family try to make you be "normal" (like straight)?
A: Yes. Felt awful. This was more along the line of my father trying to enforce his ideas of masculinity onto me.

Q: How do you communicate?
A: verbal/auditory - sign/sms with family - some email with extended deaf family

Q: Why do you communicate this way?
A: It's the only way. Some older deaf people are unable to take advantage of internet technologies because they do not have the education to make it accessible. I hated TTY using a mediator. Very intrusive.
Ladd maintains that (2007, pp. 441-442) ‘Deafhood’ (or ‘DeafWorld’), is an ongoing process with which one must engage, not a static state to which individual people or a community may ‘arrive’, or in which one can be placed. This is the complex exclusivity and heritage to which DA is committed. For deaf persons who feel they do not belong to either hearing or Deaf cultures, biculturalism may be an option. Such persons may be marginal to both groups (Best and Luckenbill, 2002; Weinberg, Williams and Pryor, 2002) but marginality can also mean "experiences of more than one world" (Emerton, 2006, p. 137).

Because the Deaf community is "very ethnocentric" (Emerton, 2005, p. 141), active participation in group activities is expected98. Other Deaf community problems are similar to those within colonized ethnic communities: negation and/or suppression of language, culture, institutions and mores. The corporeal realities of blindness and being Deaf may become identity classifications each subject to a service organisation universe. Dominant society’s elimination of 'strangers' can comprise expunging them from daily life.99 For example, persons become blind or Deaf, are so categorized, become 'othered', then non-participants in the work- and leisure-day worlds of dominant society.

Historic accounts of being d/Deaf place Deaf persons at odds with the dominant power ethos. Such alienating experiences have framed the establishment of DeafWorld and Deaf culture (Ladd, 2007; Ladd, 2008; Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996; Luczak, 1993; Padden and Humphries, 2006). Whatever has been endured by persons who have been objectified creates a rationale for resistance and impetus for change.

98 Corker (1998) deals with Deaf culture, essentialism and politics at book length.
99 Similarly for Jews from Kristal Nacht, November 1938: they existed in Nazi territories but could not participate in broader society.
The portrayal of deaf people as socially isolated, intellectually weak, behaviourally impulsive, and emotionally immature makes school psychology and counselling, special education and rehabilitation, appear necessary.

Lane, 1999, p. 69.

**d/Deaf relationships to the hearing world**

For d/Deaf homosexual persons who can manage interaction with hearing homosexuals there are opportunities to socialize and the internet has broadened such social networking. However it would be a mistake to imagine that acceptable and totally accommodating emotional environments or geographic space for d/Deaf persons of diverse sexualities exists anywhere: there may often be the sense of being in a foreign country which has a somewhat incompatible culture. However, not always: a respondent from the UK -

Q: Do you identify as Deaf, Hearing Impaired, Deafened, Other?
A: Deaf - Because I am - I don't buy into the "deaf culture" thing – I was born deaf. I am happy if people want to self-identify as deaf, hearing impaired etc., **but find the d/Deaf debate as being counter-productive to achieving rights for deaf people** [research italics].
Q: Are you out to your peer group?
A: Yes.

The “It” that “suggests” is only as good as “anecdotally”. What may be perceived as “gayness” by some may just be the perceived flamboyant animation of Signing, its need for quite intense gaze, and the lingering goodbyes that characterize any meeting of Deaf persons. [Emphasis added].

The **incidence of gayness** within the Deaf community is **perhaps 15 per cent higher** than in the hearing world. There is a kinship between the groups. **It has been suggested** that as many as 90 per cent of hearing-Deaf marriages end in divorce, but the **majority of successful Deaf-gay relationships appear to be** between Deaf and hearing individuals.


There is particularity about relationships between the d/Deaf and hearing worlds, with research participant involvements being individualistic and
difficult to discuss due to complex sensitivities and politics. It would take a more focussed study to understand the actualities, parameters and possibilities.

Q: Do Hearing Gay organisations give you support?
A: Yes definitely! ... I was involved heavily with the hearing Gay community thru the Mardi Gras and provided the sign language catered for the GL Community.

Enthusiasm for the hearing world was muted, substantial but not unqualified. A deal of angst has been experienced by those wishing to bridge the voids that often exist between variants of these multiple emotional worlds, physical representations and geographical places.

Q: Do you belong to a Hearing Gay Lesbian organisation / group?
A: Yes because there arent any Deaf Bi groups
Q: Do Hearing Gay organisations give you support?
A: Yes - social support Peer/Cultural Group Support.

Deaf persons, just as blind and non-blind persons wish to travel to different cultures to explore what emotional, intellectual, physical and sensual and experiences they may offer.

Q: Are you comfortable in the hearing world?
A: Yes they are cool and interesting people, I find hearing people are more interesting, I have learnt a lot from hearing people, I believe deafies should go and mix with hearing people and learn what's happening out in the real world etc...

Being sexually diverse
Sexual diversity complicates stereotypical performances of assumed sexuality and while symptoms may be disguised, the state of being remains.

Q: When did you come out?
A: Still on ongoing process. Fear holds me back from being totally out. My deafness plays a part in this fear.
Q: Are you comfortable with your sexual identity?
A: Yes

The part that deafness played in the fear of coming out is that of being marginalised in d/Deaf environments. Multiple isolations are imposed on
decent, aware people: citizens who are prevented from integrating with and contributing to the broader community.

Q: Are you comfortable with your sexual identity?
A: Yes
Q: Are you out to your family?
A: Not yet ... because the majority of people including some of my family are against gay people ... I have to pretend that I'm straight. It is very hard to do.
Q: Do you feel conflict with your different identities?
A: No 'I am what I am'
Q: Do you feel isolated because you are deaf / gay?
A: Yes I feel isolated due to lack of communication skills. My hearing is progressively deteriorating, now have difficulty understanding what people say and also my signing skills are very basic. Most hearing people find my hearing loss frustrating. Most Deaf people consider me as being 'hearing'.
Q: Do you have support?
A: No.

Forthright expression of interest in women by women is refreshing because usually it is left to men to depict sexual sensuality with a hint of predation -

Q: How did you learn about your sexual identity?
A: Ah, I had strong feelings for girls therefore went to see my school counsellor and discussed about it ... I kept in the closet for about 3 years ... I was sick of hiding my true identity so I decided to stand up for myself.
Q: Who gave you that information?
A: Counsellor and friends.
Q: Is it a positive identity?
A: Yes, positive identity because people have become more accepting of my sexual identity therefore making me feel more comfortable without that exertion of acting straight.

Finding affirmation, positive role models and empathic professionals may be difficult for QLGBT persons who are Deaf. A response from the USA –

Q: How did you learn about your sexual identity?
A: at Gallaudet University
Q: Who gave you that information?
A: gay counsellor
Q: Is it a positive identity?
A: yes
Q: Is it a negative identity?
A: yes I went to see different counsellor ... I never forgot that I chatted one of deaf counsellor that she doesnt like
gay deaf people but she has to be her duty to help them anyhow. I disgust it / still disgusted they are too faced toward their patients.

Unconscious emotional response of a therapist which interferes with objectivity is called countertransference. Should counsellors be vetted for and declare their prejudices to intending clients? Otherwise, bigoted counsellors could do catastrophic harm, just as do the bigoted employees of our major institutions: clergy, teachers, psychiatrists, lawyers, politicians. More than one respondent was living in more than two identities, not just Deaf or blind and QLBT. Usher’s syndrome causes progressive hearing and sight loss but a formerly hearing person may straddle d/Deaf and hearing identities for a time, and be of diverse sexuality as well.

Q: Are you any of: QLGBT?
A: Lesbian
Q: When did you first realise you are Gay etc?
A: About 14
Q: When did you come out?
A: 17/18
Q: When did you learn about your identity?
A: Around 17/18 years of age
Q: At what age did you accept your Deafness?
A: Around 20 years of age
Q: Do you feel conflict with your different identities?
A: No Don’t feel conflict as both identities [Deaf and homosexual] are all about accepting who I am and being comfortable with both identities. They are both different identities, yet the common factor is about dealing with other people’s perceptions of what is 'normal'.

Such perceptions of normality are not helped by religious exhortations, such as those of the fundamentalist Pope Benedict, which are readily absorbed into Deaf fundamentalist culture. Benedict, in a December 2008 speech to the Vatican administration, equated homosexuality as a threat to humanity equal to rainforest destruction. Cultures rendered ignorant by limited, poor, incomplete or irrational education are stressful for diverse individuals. Fundamentalist
organisations have various tools at their disposal to maintain authority and control, whether the management elites believe in and adhere to them or not.

**Sex and (being) d/Deaf**

Adding diverse sexuality can produce a double psychological and cultural burden that is not alleviated by the organisations claiming to represent all Deaf persons.

> No matter how cleverly we package our so-called issues and our very selves, there's no avoiding the pervasive and carefully cultivated association that gay still means gay sex to most people and that revolts them.

McFarlane, 2005, p. 105.

Deaf persons of diverse sexualities obviously mix and meet at places different to those frequented by the blind. The animated aesthetics of performing Auslan and the visibility of Deaf persons at homosexual venues may have contributed to anecdotal evidence that DeafWorld comprises more overtly homosexual persons than non-Deaf persons. Socialisation by homosexuals is often around alcohol: venues associated with the sale of alcohol, music and the clandestine supply of drugs. As well, there are the ‘beats’ – places where men meet up to either indulge or arrange casual, mostly anonymous sex. The toll of HIV-AIDS amongst Deaf males is testament to the participation of Deaf persons in such homosexual activities - not just a problem in the West\(^\text{100}\). Bisexual and transgender persons also attended venues such as Sydney's Taxi Club, which after midnight was a pick-up point for transvestite or transgender males to connect with locals and visitors. For most blind persons, such places are difficult to access and even pointless. Sex-on-premises venues, while visited by some research respondents, present potential blind clients with an imaginable

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range of difficulties beyond those psychological and emotional that may also be experienced by sighted persons.

Deaf persons gripe that venues such as discos discriminate against them, because they are unlikely to get full benefit from any music, while they yet usually have to pay prices including the provision of music, but if there is illumination, sign language is an advantage in a noisy environment. In DeafWorld, most venues are illuminated to a degree intense enough to dispel any vestige of romantic atmosphere, and a roving eye can be interpreted as an attempt to eavesdrop on someone else's conversation. While people who are blind and of diverse sexualities have almost nowhere accepting or accessible to go, many sighted, hearing persons also find gay/lesbian scene venues anathema: in fact: an accepting scene may not ultimately be acceptable.

5.5 Coping and affirming
In 1993 the magazine101 Deafwize provided safe sex information in a non-condemnatory framework. The information was produced by the AIDS Council of New South Wales in conjunction with the Deaf Society of New South Wales and Deaf community activists, some of whom were of diverse sexualities and at least two of whom have responded to www.netsurvey.com.au. For persons who are disabled or d/Deaf, but not academically inclined, there have been few publications that could be used as resources for what might be termed self-appraisal, comparison and location in the spectrum of sexually diverse human existence, practice and preference. The advent of organisations like ALSO and to some extent Access Plus has arguably contributed to the well-being of diverse

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101 Produced by Streetwize Comics Ltd (defunct).
and exceptional persons in Victoria, specifically Melbourne, but outreach from major cities is problematic and funding scarce.

Where the nature of Work was revealed, it ranged from professional (such as lawyer), through gardening, computer technology, web design, home duties, student to nothing at all. While occupation can be defining of identity, the research was not focused to pursue employment issues via the internet questionnaire or interviews, as prevailing notions of the ‘work=identity’ construction are ableist and emotive.

Coping with work or the lack of it can be problematic for people with sensory difference or impairment. Work is broadly considered to be an affirmation of worth; if one does not have work, other attainments, tokens or symbols of worth or status may be sought. Many respondents worked for either an advocacy or service organisation: on a casual basis, or had in the past, might in the future – or felt some allegiance to such organisations due to the work situation: past, currently provided or potential. However other persons either attempted or did operate in broader workplace environments.

I couldn’t go back into [Y kind of work] as I didn’t have [that sort of certificate]. And you had to have one if you wanted to do anything in [Y], including teach. But I knew there were people in wheelchairs who were in [Y work] administration, who had been in hostels for people with disabilities ... I thought it would probably take me twelve months to get a job ... it took me three years ... I’d ring them up and say “why didn’t I get the job?” and initially they’d say: “Because we don’t know what you can do when you can’t see”. Then The Acts and so on started to come in and they wouldn’t dare to say that, they’d say ‘the other person had more ... qualifications and experience’ ... So I decided I would go back to Uni.

102 Najarian (2006) is informative about women, work, gender and ability; Clark (2007) evaluates aspects of what has been available for Deaf Australian students.
'Coping' includes how we manage our relationships, to what we aspire and how we conduct processes to get it. It can imply 'you just endure' but also 'you triumph', yet always comprises a struggle. All respondents had struggles, and perhaps persons who had not developed coping mechanisms did not reply to the research. Certainly, all were seeking further insight and more comprehensive futures.

I've got some friends – and the way they go on about little incidents that happened five to ten – even fifteen years ago! And y'just go: obviously your lives are just so unfulfilling, you haven't got past this: this is really very, very sad, indeed.

Being infantilized and patronized by persons and organisations remains a potential source of frustration and fear. Countering the equation 'not being able to see = not being able to comprehend' could be engaged by a rational information campaign, not by depictions in super-hero movies such as Daredevil. A respondent explained:

Blind people in general – sexuality aside or gender aside – we're expected to feel sorry for ourselves, and to long for a life that we could've had but didn’t, and all that kind of stuff.

The responding cohort of blind persons generally displayed independent, sometimes feisty personalities.

There was this girl in a wheelchair, she's got multiple sclerosis or something, she was just going on about the bad things that have happened to her ... and I said, well, that's all understandable, but all I want to talk about is the future ... I've forgotten a lot ... I remember the good things, and I deliberately forget all the bad things - and that's the way to keep you sane, for fuck's sake! Blindies are the worst kind of elephants!

5.6 Interaction with peers
That physical places (or geographies) to physically encounter person are somewhat superseded by internet domains, which raises questions whether or

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103 2003: blind lawyer by day, physically agile and fearless crime fighter by night.
not there is any scene for d/Deaf-diverse and blind-diverse persons in Australia. Geographies within which to socialize depends upon many factors. QLGBT geographies are limited, and anecdotally fading fast, even in Sydney and Melbourne; d/Deaf QLGBT geographies more so. Thus a question was asked about peer group association: *Is there a Deaf Gay and Lesbian scene?*

A: Yes  
Q: *Where is it?*  
A: [A club and a pub in Sydney named]  
Q: *Do you feel connected with the group or not? Please explain.*  
A: Oh yes - **fantastic - same mind - talking about issues** - the group is not able to financially do much - the same old board members - young people don’t know about them - so **it’s a closeted group.** They organise group events - weekly at city - mostly matured age.

A non-pejorative, perhaps 'cosy' impression of cliquey-ness was inferred from the above comment, but that even if the group was embracing, no one ‘new’ was knocking at the door. With a limited pool of possible participants spread over vast areas, getting people together on common interests is difficult.

A: Yes Sometimes they meet at [names a pub in Queensland].  
Q: *Do you feel connected with the group or not? Please explain.*  
A: No, I don’t. I feel that group is too focused on **drinking and recreational drugs. Too much gossip** and I don’t feel comfortable with that scene.  
Q: *What could [an empathic] group do for you?*  
A: Provide alternative meeting places for social, education, etc. away from the pub scene.

'Tricultural' persons (QLGB Deaf people involved in hearing communities) who wish to protect themselves against innuendo and gossip steer clear of venues in the same way that high-profile community persons are obliged to so do, in order to protect their status by not being ‘caught out’.

A: Yes. In Sydney, mainly [A] Club, [B Pub], [C Pub]  
Q: *Do you feel connected with the group or not? Please explain.*  
A: No. My professional and social life is through a wide variety of networks across Deaf and hearing communities.
Gradations of deafness pose problems because those persons who are hard of hearing (HoH) do not fit into Deaf society without signing skills. Respondents who were HoH sometimes knew of and had experienced small informal groups for Deaf persons of diverse sexualities, but felt rejected or marginal because –

A: Its for the deaf not for the hard of hearing
Q: Do you feel connected with the group or not?
A: No
Q: What could a Deaf GLBT organisation/group do for you?
A: put me in contact with other hard of hearing gay people whom i find difficult to come across.

Enthusiasm for past groups was more noticeable amongst signing Deaf persons. Perhaps this is because the singularity of the culture made it easier to 'group', whereas Hard of Hearing has a broad range of gradation. A further question asked was: Are you 'out' to your peer group?

A: Yes, being a leader within the Deaf Gay Community in Sydney and Australia during my heavily involvement with DGLA (NSW) and ADGLA. I was responsible to organise the first Conference for DGLA in Melbourne with late Robert Lee during our employment with the AIDS Council in NSW and Vic.

Past leadership of groups for Deaf persons of diverse sexualities considered those groups to have been useful in the 80s and 90s, to flag awareness, educate sexually, to provide companionship and stimulate connection between persons who might otherwise be isolated. However the groups had not been sustained in any broad-based way. Leadership of those groups did not inhibit persons moving on to other careers in the broader Deaf community where sexuality was not made an issue, perhaps because it was not carried as an issue. If one is of a fairly reserved demeanour, it seems that credit may accrue to 'earned status' in the sense that, if one worked for the community one could be permitted a homosexual identity, so long as aspects of that identity were muted.
A: Yes ... someone of my peer groups. They are very accepting about it and nothing in our good relationship has changed at all. I did this because I can be who I’m actually, be comfortable with my sexual identity.

What works for some may not so do for them in other environments:

A: No. Most of my friends are straight and they seem to be racist and hate the concept of gay. I prefer not to inform them of my sexual identity.

Q: Is it a positive identity?
A: Not really. Australia is still young and not fully diverse or accepting the concept of being gay fully yet.

Q: Is it a negative identity?
A: Yes. As above [due to general non-acceptance in Australia].

Marginal small communities are adept at slicing out their unwanted marginal diversities. It may be possible to legislate against discrimination but even education does not ensure tolerance and understanding.

A: Yes - It is other deaf and hearing people who are judgmental and so it’s hard to come out, not knowing if I would be glared down.

That response marks the Deaf community as having homophobic attitudes on a par with the broader community, no more or less.

A: Yes - Our society isn't that good with gay issues... so when it comes to Deaf Community ... since the death of our Deaf Club, it’s harder to meet with others. We used to have a Deaf Centre in Stanmore and that was so good ... it was a mixture but you could meet regularly ... since the Deaf Society underhandedly sold the Deaf Society and moved to Parramatta it’s harder to connect and yeah: we feel isolated ... the Deaf Gays and Lesbians are situated in the city and I live 1.5 hours drive.

However, proximity does not guarantee emotional embrace and empathy. Even working in the Deaf community is no guarantee that one will not feel isolated:

A: Yes [I feel isolated, but I identify as Deaf] – because Auslan is now my primary language and most of my friends are Deaf. I also work in the Deaf community.
Keeping major aspects of one’s identity secret is about shame and fear, in which there is a circularity: being scared is shameful, so any delight in having a secret is mitigated by the devaluation implicit in the subterfuge of dissembling.

A: No - I accept being deaf but I do not discuss about my being gay. I am out to my family but they are having either difficulties in accepting it or does not believe that I am. Let's face it ... everyone that I know perceives me as being straight, except for a few close gay friends who know my real side.

Deafness, being queer, having a disability and being 'geographically impossible' to meet is an isolating hat-trick. The respondent still has confidence that, provided with mobility, there are still opportunities to fraternize with empathic souls in some accepting geography. Facilitating this kind of optimism could be an organisational goal.

A: No - Being queer or hearing impaired does not isolate me, however I do feel isolated because I have limited physical mobility, I have a very low income and live in [an area that could be described as non-urban].

Weeks (1985) argued for acknowledging social constructions of sexuality that include social institutions, mores and meanings. However, there were few respondents who have 'come out' in their lived daily lives.

In situations like being transgender, if support existed, it might be overused, you know? For example – you get those who lean on you an awful lot. Then they say you said this or that – that's the danger of support, like – it gets the blame if things go wrong. [X] set up a sort of Tranny half-Way house, in Sydney. The comment made was: you're Tranny makers. But people were going there to learn the strokes. They go to see one of the shrinks - so the talk is: "oh, when you go to [name of a psychiatrist] say this; don't say that. Say this when she says" – you know: almost learn a script, become a stereotype! Like becoming a professional Deaf person, you know?

A cultural commonality, such as being Deaf is experienced and is proclaimed to be, may be enough to bind together Deaf persons who consider that ‘Deaf’ is a cultural state and not just a physical state.
With Political Correctness and Economic Rationalism, everything’s got to be income producing, productivity-related, priced, a commodity, inputs and outputs, and there’s a lot of things you can’t talk about: everyone’s got to be polite and correct, you can’t fail, you can’t be average, in the bottom corner of the cohort, and on the other hand groups are using ‘elitism’ as a pejorative descriptive adjective, instead of looking at it as being about the higher levels of performance or ability.

Patronisation by power-elements of the dominant social construct has to be fought or endured. Women have been particularly disadvantaged.

Unless you can find a way to work on the structures that are prescriptive, nothing really changes ... Very early on, I was working, I was married, I wanted to buy a property, I wanted to get a loan, I wanted it to be in my name, and the bank manager, who had known me most of my working adult life said that I couldn’t – I had to have my husband’s consent, in 1975. When I wanted a tubal ligation, I also had to have my husband’s consent ... The Doctor said “At the very least you should be on oral contraceptives, as we don’t want you to become pregnant, do we?” I said: “Why don’t we?” He said it was because I was blind. He said I can’t look after myself, so I couldn’t look after any children. I contested this, as he wasn’t acquainted with my abilities.

The ability alone to sign Auslan does not guarantee active social lives to individuals who are able and interested to seek out peer groups. However, if one has self-confidence, socializes with broad-based goals beyond romance and sexual adventure and looks to contribute to a community rather than just go in for what one can get, prospects for emotional and sexual fulfilment might be improved – so long as one inhabits 'binary homosexuality': is simply either lesbian or gay and not too confusing.

A: No [I don't feel isolated because I'm Deaf and gay]
Q: Any thoughts about the issues of isolation, exclusion and communication?
A: Am fortunate in that I personally am proactive about being part of the community, meeting people and communicating with them.
Q: Do you belong to a d/Deaf social group?
A: Yes - Various informal social groups.
Societal and peer pressures, lack of experience, information or broad education leads to persons making decisions inappropriate to their true states of being.

A: No [I don't feel isolated because I'm Deaf and gay].
Q: When did you first realise you are Gay etc?
A: After age of 22
Q: When did you come out?
A: When I was 22 and divorced.

HoH - Hard of Hearing people - are isolated from both Deaf and hearing peoples so may find less opportunity to establish groups or communities:

Yes [I feel isolated]. **Because I am hearing impaired** not because im gay.

One respondent identified as transgender, but has not done anything about changing his body to match what he feels is his mind, due to perceptions of conflict with cultural, familial and peer environments. One Deaf Australian (male) who identified as ‘straight’, empathised with d/Deaf persons who are sexually diverse, and felt that DA was “almost elitist and exclusive”.

There are about 70 people in the Deaf Gay and Lesbian group in Atlanta.

The Atlanta population was estimated at about 537,958 people in 2008. 70 people equals about 0.00023% of that population. Extrapolating that to over twenty million Australians gives a comparative approximation of there being a possible 2,800 Deaf Gay and Lesbian people in Australia who might join a Deaf gay and lesbian group. However, the USA Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf – RAD - claimed about 365 persons attend their USA convention in July 2009, but potential subgroup/ neogroup/ subcultural people who 'qualify' to join subgroups very often do not join any group.104 As with the USA d/Deaf environments, Australian d/Deaf persons of diverse sexualities who have

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104 The USA population in October 2009 was estimated at 307,611,000 people. In the USA then it seems that only 0.00012 % of the population is willing to join a national gay and lesbian Deaf group conference, half the potential cohort.
responded to the research have also expressed a diverse range of feelings about their organisations and inclusiveness. Apart from Raymond Luczak, the USA has Dragonsani Rentaria – a high-profile, female-to-male transgender person - and M. J. Bienvenu, a political activist at Galludet University. No equivalent representative personalities have emerged in Australia so far.

Blogs and anecdotal evidence indicate that 'little d' deaf have wider ranges of social acquaintance than do Deaf persons. Auto- and biographical literature (Luczak, 1996 and 2007; Taylor and Darby, 2003b), and responses to this research indicate that some deaf persons, although equipped with Auslan, still prefer to socialize and perhaps cohabitate with hearing persons. Perhaps to accommodate these perspectives, they do not necessarily consider their 'lack of hearing' in either medical or cultural terms, although the medical and cultural effects of the differences impact on relationships and socialisation.

**Citizenship and belonging for d/Deaf persons**

A sense of belonging and self-worth (or otherwise) starts with family, school and peers. Persons Deaf from birth inhabit brightly-lit visual landscapes, keenly observing. However, ‘belonging’ suggests mutual acceptance of and by a culture, which for d/Deaf persons is fraught with contention and oppositional meanings. This is due to notions of d/Deaf heritage, ones ability to access DeafWorld by adept usage (in Australia) of Auslan or being in an alien limbo due to onset of hearing impairment with inadequate development of communication skills. Being born 'pure' makes it easier to survive in fundamentalist cultures but one can graduate to them. The journey to Deaf World is selective and elitist – antithetical to a broad notion of 'd/Deaf community'. To achieve status one

105 For example: www.radio666fm.htm
must attend a Deaf school and sign (Ladd, 2008). But being in Deaf schools or institutions of learning, achieving camaraderie while absorbing and creating cultural practice may be antithetical to inclusion in broader society as no dominant society is learning to sign.

It is only since 1970 that in psychopathological writings about deafness that hearing loss has not been considered as leading to mental disorder (Pollard, 1999). Society has placed d/Deaf persons in extenuating circumstances but is generally oblivious the stress that bureaucratic and medical imposts create.

Q: Do you identify as Deaf, Hearing Impaired, Deafened, Other?
A: Deaf
Q: Why?
A: KNOW WHO I AM
Q: How did you learn about your deaf identity?
A: I AM ONLY ONE DEAF IN HEARING CLASS
Q: Is it a positive identity?
A: No.

If they have the money or otherwise qualify, USA Deaf persons fortunately have Galludet university (www.galludet.edu). In a country as vast and sparsely populated as Australia, a specialized university for Deaf persons would not be viable, but it is an ideal.

Not all persons are interested in just 'hanging out' with others, but instead may feel it is better to meet like-minded souls by working together towards some goal greater than just recreation or simple pleasures -

A: I have been involved with DGLA, NSW [Deaf Gay and Lesbian Association] in the past but because of my commitment I have not valued DGLA's input. It is all recreational and not quite stimulating for my own kind. I am looking for a more intellectual kind of organisation so unfortunately I do not get this with DGLA.
While there was respondent interest in what might be called a 'liberationist' model for a group, others were interested in having peer social relationships promoted.

A: Provide a **social and identification point** for like minded people.

Some idealized expectations conveyed poignant, fantasy aspirations for a Xanadu, sweetness-and-light type of environment replete with facilitators and a large local cast of prospects -

A: Promote social life and therefore ultimately one's psychological health, **promote networking and exchange of information**, meet old and new friends and people who could be future boyfriends or life partners.

Such functions are beyond the parvenu of either peak organisations or small informal groups due to the amount of resources they would require to expend on limited number of participants if confined solely to d/Deaf persons.

A: Organise **workshops on relationship and sexuality**, organise safe sex workshop support group for those in abusive relationship, counselling group to deal with coming out as **most of us are not fully out**. Social groups a specific sex education officer to educate those who are gay but not sure whats out there ... baths, sex venue, having sex and what to do when something goes wrong. Introduce to police Gay Liaison officer and how can they help us?

The provision of services suggested by the above respondent aligns somewhat with the function of organisations like the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities.

**The ozblinddiv contact list and the internet – peer interaction**

It is not possible to intimately, authentically socialize and connect without representing oneself openly and authentically. Blind respondents were initially happy at the prospect of having an Australian contact group. The name was initially **ozblindnotstraight** but changed within a few months to notionally
include persons who were at least sometimes sexually 'straight', and interested in constructive, meaningful e-mail exchanges with other blind persons of diverse sexualities – hence ozblinddiv:

I like the idea of having some deep, serious discussion about a wide range of topics, particular to us, even if we do not reach agreement.

E-mail lists can engender irritating respondents who subvert serious conversation topics or demean them by smutty innuendo or sharp criticism, even while it simulates the geography of a clandestine meeting place.

Definitely the internet seems the place to start. I had a long distance ‘thing’ with someone overseas, for ten months, but it didn’t work out. It’s like a fantasy, but at some point you have to deal with the reality of a person, in person. With long distance, someone has to make the move to travel.

Cyber-sex is a substitute for in-person contact and long-distance relationships cultivated for months may come to nothing: no personal physical contact. It is unknown whether abilities to interact on an intimate cooperative level are enhanced or inhibited.

Gaygirl.net is a fantastic social site for lesbian women, it’s got people from all over the world, really fascinating. I don’t think the heteronormative world is ready to really know about the lesbian and gay world.

The 'you are not alone' assertion that these sites make at least grant some comfort and engender excitement, perhaps boosting confidence and creating opportunities for real-life contact, engendering further challenges.

Going out on the 'gay scene' is so daunting, that the second and probably less confronting approach is via online personals sites. This raises some questions and challenges. Do you mention the fact you are blind /visually impaired in your profile?

Perplexed by what he depicts as a passive, alien state of being and unable to see how to change things, a contact to ozblinddiv describes his perceptions of the available homosexual geography:
Oxford Street has **always intimidated me**, as has much of the 'scene'. I've never had any close gay friends, except for one friend who identifies herself as a lesbian and a few guys I ran into at uni but no longer know where they are.

Disguised e-mail, 2008.

A continuing enigma is the absence of female persons in on-line discussion. This also seems to be the instance generally: that less females are on-line searching for new experiences, casual contacts and partners. The following contributor expresses a view on the nature of attraction and relationships:

**Why don't women take part** in on-line forums, gay chat sites and the like? Well ... there's just too much to do, if I spend time on line I'm not interacting with people. I haven't got enough time to spare ... I'm more interested in 'the human being', and can leave the sexuality as being insignificant, but in my case – you either have a partner or you don't, and you're either enamoured of a particular human being or you're not.

Female interviewee, 2008, disguised.

Respondents appeared to have diverse and interesting sexual experiences and adventures. In other words: blind respondents of diverse sexualities who actually talked about sexual interludes and experiences, despite claims about feelings of isolation, seemed to have reasonable opportunities to connect with other persons physically. Not everyone was interested in finding a long-term significant other and a monogamous relationship.

“X” thought the idea of meeting gay guys “a bit daunting” but he “loves a challenge” yet is “not out to friends and family”, finding it “confronting” to walk into to a gay bar alone with his guide dog or cane: “the idea scares me considerably”. The “idea of walking in to a gay bar or club [is] **infinitely more scary**” [vocal emphasis] than travelling to far parts of the world:

My biggest fear is ending up in a room full of people and noise, having no idea who to talk to, and **feeling quite out of place**. I guess the biggest challenge here is **missing out on social cues** such as acknowledging a look or smile from someone else. I guess I am also the shy type so just picking someone at random and
starting up a conversation does not come naturally to me. I sometimes feel quite out of place at conferences I have to attend ... for just the same reasons.

That speaks of global social awkwardness and inhibition, not just the 'gay scene', where he is not alone being inhibited: sighted persons may also have the same feelings - anyone with average social skills and average or low self-image.

If you’re inexperienced, and want to go up to someone and ask if they want to dance or have a drink - it’s a daunting thing to want to do.

Not all male blind persons want to plunge into domestic relationships, some still want to leave their options open, checking out the broader, sighted gay scene.

*It's about self-esteem*, how we image ourselves, the way we see ourselves, and how we deal with that. Anyway, after a while, I felt really good, because - you know who you are ... I met a whole lot of people, all ranges ... backgrounds, professionals, un-professionals, I had a good time, I just didn't sleep with everyone ... if I felt okay [about going further] that's fine.

Others seem unsure as to whether they can carry the weight long-term of relationships that have potential to start at venues where they have met sighted persons.

I used to meet regularly a [nationality stated] guy, the first time I'd had sex with a tall guy – about 6 foot 3 ... sexually we were really terribly compatible, and then after a while he wanted to go into a relationship, but ... it would never work, we had nothing in common ... he was upset with me, but I always said all along to him ... I just want friendship, and if we're sexually compatible, look after each other [sexually] from time to time.

Where sex occurs between pals on an intermittent basis without romantic involvement or expectations beyond the sex act of more than friendship, the participants are called 'fuck buddies'. The Comedy Central cartoon played regularly on commercial and cable TV refers to them as "butt buddies".

I always thought, 'No guy would be interested in me' why would they be? Average looking, blind and all that – so I used to always think negative ... I went to [a sex-on-premises venue] ... because there was no other way of meeting anyone ... this
guy comes over to me, and he started talking to me, and he sounded really, really lovely ... I thought, well, he wouldn't be interested in me, because of all these other people, and eventually he came up to me and said "why are you avoiding me?"... and I said 'you wouldn't be interested in me' He said 'I'm very interested'. Anyway, he eventually drove me home, and he stayed the night, and he was so lovely, he was [mentions a European ethnic culture] - and he played the guitar for me and he recited poetry, but again: I could tell he wanted to keep in touch, but I couldn't believe he wanted to keep in touch – I let him go - even though we had a lovely night together, I didn't say to him: 'Oh, you want to meet up again?' I just let him go and I'll always regret that.

The respondent was thinking perhaps too far ahead, to a time when the reality of his blindness might have to be dealt with 24/7 by the attractive person he had met at a venue of which the purpose was to provide a secure environment for anonymous sexual encounters with strangers Other respondents did not express interest in gay venues.

I'm a bit of a musician, so sometimes in my spare time I record things, or for socializing I go out with a few friends, or if I'm feeling intellectual I go to a library ... The local library is fine, very supportive, if I request a book they order it in. I don't use any library connected to the blind organisation, I find the renditions of the books mostly just terrible! No expression in their voices - some of them are good, others - I just don't think I can listen. There's an art in making a talking book interesting.

Lack of incentives to socialize was recorded by older QGLB blind persons, but this is not greatly different to that felt by the researcher and his peers.

Queer social life? – all changed. People moved into different ways of maintaining their social connections ... the flamboyance, excitement, quality, beauty, things like that – rare occasions! The women went quiet as well. I was involved in the early part of ALSO. The focus was to set up and work towards the forward planning for Gay people and alternative lifestyles.

With the hysteria of HIV/ AIDS being a 'gay plague' gone by more than two decades, QGB life in cosmopolitan cities is tending once again to be more integrated with 'straight' existence.
I have hardly any contact with the gay scene anymore, I have no contact with the [Y kind of work] scene, I have friends because they are friends, some gay, some not. I really couldn’t be bothered going to any raves or things like that – we go out to dinner and such.

With research respondents, there is lack of correspondence between individual identities and that of the group. We may have more in common with groups of people internationally and across cultural, financial and status boundaries than we have with our neighbours, birth tribes or local communities - or in the nonprofit organisations to which we belong, although these groups may also practice oppression, suppression and enforce conformity. Persons with disability who are not heteronormative may inhabit subcultural realms of dominant and subservient cultures, including within the advocacy and service organisations that are ostensibly supporting them. In such environments as well in the broader community, ‘tolerance’ does not mean ‘acceptance’ or ‘integration’.

Social life beyond blindness organisations for persons of diverse sexualities is not daunting for some respondents. For others, it presents problems, provokes doubt - engendering depression, feelings of futility and hopelessness in regard to establishing spiritual and sexual connections with a significant other. Organised religion currently did not play a major role for respondents and only a few persons engaged the topic. Most blind respondents did not exhibit the Christian fervour displayed by iconic blind persons of previous generations (Keller, 2002; Ching, 1980); Ching claimed an ostensibly devout heterosexual life, but all we know of Keller is her media-managed and edited personality. For Christian persons who can self-identify as being sexually diverse or ‘deviant’ among empathic others, self-acceptance is easier:
I’m a Christian and I think God made me who I am. **A lot of people say it’s a sin, I think that’s rubbish.** I used to go to the Seventh Day Adventist church as I was baptized there, but I don’t now. **I’ve never once accepted that it was a sin – it’s the way we were made.**

For persons of Catholic origin the struggle is more blighted. Papal admonishments of homosexuality negatively affected wayward members.

I went to a Catholic [‘gay’ group *Acceptance*] - but **then I was struggling** with my own religious values, or **what was instilled within me.**

When an inculcated philosophy or dogma has implanted or minds with doubt about our basic natures, safe spaces may be imbued with hostile prejudice.

5.7 Feeling 'safe': what roles for minority groups or putative subcultures?

Safe spaces are those environments that can be controlled - including spaces in one’s imagination. To indulge fantasies and their projections is a normal function of imaginative minds. A respondent blind from birth said:

I know blind blokes walking around in Harley Davidson biking gear, with keys hanging off their belts and a helmet under their arm and they’re totally blind - for *Fuck's sake!* What bit of sense does that make? And yet, **when I was a kid, I wanted to be an aeroplane pilot! It's just silly.** [O]ne guy I know...still carries his car keys around. And I say, 'Mate, what've you got there?', and he says 'Me keys!' I say 'Whatever for?' *He* says: 'A Falcon!'

Whether fantasy intrudes on dealing with the exigencies and demands of reality, or whether it arises independently, as response to lack of sight, is unknown.

I think it’s a lot to do with the fact that blind people and young blind children, and young blind adults, **live predominately in their heads.** And I’ve noticed that working with very young blind children, even a single-disability, high-functioning one, **they tend to mistake fantasy for reality.** I’m talking five to eight year olds. And that manifests itself late in life, diminishingly, but nonetheless, as - introversion is not the right work - as a lot of them can be extroverted people, but ... they dwell on and analyse and diagnose everything that is said, everything that they have said, every thought they have, every desire, every reaction that
they're met with by other people ... I was guilty of that ... My experience is ... you get these people who are, not bad people, but they'll remember, or recount an incident of what they've constructed or imagined that they've remembered, as a slight.

Familial cultural background can present individuals with advantages or blight their possibilities of ever becoming who they feel that they are. A respondent from a country with an oppressive political and social structure:

Q: Do you belong to any social or cultural group in your parent's nationality?
A: No - Deafness and sexuality is a barrier.

Q: Do you feel pressure to be like your family or anyone else?
A: Yes. In subtle ways.

'Communities' are ostensibly protective and inclusive - if they are not, there is less reason for them to be sustained by potential constituents.

What a blind organisation could do to acknowledge us? - in their newsletter they could at least put an events column or a small section particularly related to gay and lesbian issues.

Perception that a so-called 'community' is an arena for attack may generate enhanced feelings of alienation or betrayal plus need to strike out on one's own independent path.

It would be good to have blind people at the top of all blindness and service organisations, not because they were blind, but because they are skilled in management. Not sighted people who think they have the answers, and who are there to help the organisation make money, which is what VA might be heading towards, becoming too corporatized.

It is axiomatic that large organisations find difficulty representing individuals per se – but that can explain the new VA advocacy arm, about which supporters and members of BCA are confused, because advocacy was the role of BCA. For VA to indicate its acceptance of diversity would only require mention in its website Links of state-based services for sexually diverse persons, of course without offering recommendation, but with prior consultation.
Having straddled two communities, realistically speaking: one being the gay/bi community and the other one being the Blindie community, they're both little bitchy cess-pits – I don't want a bar of either of them ... For me ... it's almost like saying: "I'm standing in the door of the aircraft, with the parachute on, do I jump or don't I?" And you do your jump, you get to the ground, and you say: "well what the fuck was all that fuss for? Why did I even worry about it?" - I've actually done that. The Blindie community are the ones that are standing in the door of the aircraft, with their parachutes on – for the rest of their bloody lives.

VA's non-negotiable closing of its blind school shut the door on public negotiation of education processes; in that context, VA needs to debate belonging and the effect of outsourcing its responsibilities on lived experiences of stakeholders. BCA and VA were acknowledged in the research for what they had in the past provided, as location of work, comfort, learning and possibility.

BCA taught me about organisational structure: about committees, conventions, and people working towards a common goal. Rather than being paid to do so, they’re there on a voluntary basis. Although the process can sometimes be untidy, you get to a seminar or convention and can be really proud of what you’ve done. I really like that part of BCA.106

Persons who had not recently worked or volunteered with BCA were more likely to complain about the organisation. Persons who had recently volunteered or worked with BCA, VA or other organisations often expressed more positive attitudes and feelings towards them, and being involved with those organisations has catalysed friendships in the responding cohort.

In relatively small, so-called communities with claim to difference, Othering might be ‘nothing more’ than what is thought to be (by the perpetrators) as

106 Maureen Matthews, legally blind proprietor of Bliss, a store in Melbourne retailing sex aids, received an amused and enthusiastic reception at the 2007 BCA National Convention. Expressions that arose therefrom of diverse sexualities met with ostensibly cheerful acceptance by BCA’s assembled members, the Board and CEO.
amusingly derogatory remarks and gossip. However, subjects of gossip and
derogation can find the debasement experienced insurmountable and therefore
retreat from the community.

I was **involved in a marriage relationship**, and all of that
broke up. And of course my ex was blind, so of course the blind
community in Victoria, the older blind community, know all about
it – and ***what they don't know, they make up.*** My name in all
this was *Gender Bender*, for Chris'sake, that's about as original as
they can get!

When conflicting identities are inhabited, chosen, realised or acted upon,
parties to previous relationships may feel deceived and betrayed. A sexually
diverse person may have been self-deceiving or deluded. The psychiatrist Isay
(1993, 1996) who was married with children came to the conclusion he was
homosexual and that to live as one wishes, one is merely responding to "a need
to make a life that is more fulfilling and consonant with his or her inherent
longings and desires" (1996: 91) – in other words, 'authentic living'. Such
revelations intrude into workplaces, so organisational policy cannot be aloof
from them. Understanding inclusiveness with a conscious program of education
for volunteers and staff may need to be established.

**Blind organisations weren't hostile to me** – not
organisationally ... **But individually**, it's the individuals that
were ... People would ring – I was doing a course at the Blind
Institute in '88 or '89 and someone rang for me and the
switchboard was overheard saying: "IT'S not in today!" ... that
sort of silly childish attitude. And I just flew all through it. My
attitude was, if that's what amuses you buggers ... then you're
**puerile fucking morons** – That's exactly what I thought!

Respondents largely perceived attributes/ deficiencies in representations of
identity made by organisations. That is to say: they did not respond to the
research because everything was perfect, they responded out of need to make
improvements and because there were important areas of their lives. This mainl
concerns their perceptions of freedom to fulfil their personal identities and the lack of organisational and societal support for them to do so.

If respondents were interested in their organizations, they were mostly concerned to have expressions of affirmation about acceptance of diversity and some 'policy to point to' that enshrined accepting attitudes. Gossip is a tool of social organisation and control. Observation and comment may inhibit establishment of emotionally safe environments in which to socialize.

In the organisations there’s a little bit of nosey-ness about people’s lives.

For persons of diversity that is viewed as extreme, co-opting others to accept you or form a group may not be an option. An ordinary blind QLGB in a suit may succeed, but if you are unusual in your environment, should an organisation or community make public stance that you or those whom you represent are to be treated inclusively?

If you've struck out on your own, because you can't get any support anywhere else, you've got to be prepared to pay the price for it. The Blindie community or whatever community extract a price from you. But, if you're prepared to pay that price – like a punishment - nothing is overt, but certainly: it's a price - then you go ahead.

The lack of support is troubling. A d/Deaf person of diverse sexuality has few places where s/he can comfortably inhabit a marginalized identity, and may present somewhat impenetrable otherness to the broader community, and possibly even to a sexually diverse group. Such persons may sometimes have to endure the squabbles of d/Deaf communities, groups and organisations. Q: Are the d/Deaf groups / organisations positive about QLGBT people?

A: No - backstabbing ... the young gay Deaf groups are biased against the old gay Deaf people. They are more discriminating.
Q: Do you feel Deaf advocacy and service organisations such as DA, NSWAD and others support human rights for all d/Deaf?
A: Yes.

This indicates dichotomous stakeholder relationships. While at CEO and administrative levels there may be tacit acceptance of unobtrusive 'binary homosexuality' – being either simply and covertly gay or lesbian - 'rank and file' may not feel constrained in establishing behavioural control-constraint via gossip and maliciousness upon persons who proclaim diversity too obviously.

The emphasis below is that of the respondent.

Q: [I]s there homophobia in deaf organisations?
A: Yes - backstabbing.
Q: Do you feel that d/Deaf organisations are run by straight people for heterosexual concerns only?
A: NOOOOOOOOOO!
Q: Do you think Deaf people think there are too many gays in advocacy and service organisations?
A: Yes.

In what may be the relatively 'hot house' atmosphere of small specialized environments, oppressive behaviours may be reflections of broader societal attitudes. If you really knew me, would you still like me? (Eugene Kennedy, 1975) might be a mantra for masquerading deviants. Making do with available company because one has no other place to go is the lot of many, not an ideal state of being. The d/Deaf respondents of diverse sexualities employed by or volunteering in advocacy and service organisations for d/Deaf persons gave no evidence of working for incremental change within their organisations. Once again, it is the broader social environment that dictates agenda priorities.

Q: Any thoughts about the issues of isolation, exclusion and communication?
A: Deafness does create a barrier. The world is naturally built around the ability to hear. Being Gay compounds this, esp. the overt prejudice and ignorance.

107 Professor of Psychology, formerly a Catholic Priest. Allen, Texas: Tabor Books.
Q: Do you belong to a d/Deaf advocacy or service organisation?
A: Yes - Australian Association of the Deaf [now DA]
Q: How did you find out about these groups?
A: Long time involvement in the deaf community.

On an individual level, responses to www.netsurvey.com.au as well as e-mails and in-person interviews via Auslan interpreters revealed d/Deaf respondent concerns that included how to find companionship, transience of connections, and problems in finding places to meet new people and prospective romances. Other major respondent concerns included communication with other d/Deaf persons, their families and siblings, the various hearing worlds and difficulties in the so-called Deaf community.

5.8 Organisational concerns
Organisations and institutions are the enabling or inhibiting machineries that can work for or against us, helping or inhibiting attainment of goals, emotional and intellectual serenity, financial health or failure. Being CEO of an organisation multiplies individual power and capacity to access resources. At every moment of our lives we are in thrall to organizations. One cannot sleep, wake, eat, prepare ourselves for the outside world nor conduct our lives without organisational processes. No other method of bringing goods and services or ideas to modern communities could match the fitness of organisations designed to so do: processes, equipment and ideologies all start with people: the 'motivated meat' on the organisational treadmill.

A: they have a common problem among me ... we are united / support rather than 'deaf professional' [like the people in the 'Deaf' organization] because they are having their two face again.

The respondent above is referring to those Deaf persons who are derided in Deaf circles as 'professional Deaf' – persons who emphasize the characteristic and
make it a focus to gain advantage from broader society. There are also very independent persons who rely only on their own bravery and resources -

Q: Where do you get relationship information or support?
A: I don't ... I just cry in bed alone ... and wake up in the morning and move on.

With constituents having such varied needs is difficult to imagine how any committee from the advocacy and service organisations could incorporate social life and counselling functions - specialized, wide-ranging, and apparently far from their usual province. Workshops and counselling are available through Relationships Australia. The *Queensland Association for Healthy Communities* provides liaison with a range of possibly useful services. Obviously, the blindness and d/Deaf service organisations do not provide any referral to these organisations, nor do they refer to them on their websites. With fragmentary connections to others, Deaf persons can obtain information 'word of mouth' about clandestine informal groups, which latter are usually about socializing and 'hooking up', not support. If elements are too antithetical, it may be difficult for peak advocacy and service organisations to provide any over-arching impetus to acceptance and integration. Yet the research began because sexually diverse persons who had sensory difference or impairment wished to form sub-groups under the auspices of their advocacy and service organisations, thus the question was asked: *Should d/Deaf / Gay have separate groups or belong to a main deaf group?*

A: A relatively difficult question to answer. If the main purpose of the group is social, then I would see a *separate group* working well. If it's for advocacy or political reasons, it may be easier to be *part of a larger Deaf group* so that there is more support for the advocacy work.

For diverse reasons, most respondents felt that any group for persons of diverse sexualities should not be affiliated with any Deaf advocacy organisation. A
major reason was that the Deaf 'straight' world did not have the knowledge or empathy -

A: Deaf Gays and Lesbians do need their own groups, as the main groups are not equipped to deal with Gay and Lesbian issues.

Others felt that persons who needed the sexually diverse group should also belong to the 'straight' organisations -

A: Should have separate because they share same beliefs, values, behaviour, culture etc. Should also belong to wider Deaf community to share other interests.

Keeping a low profile was another reason for maintaining separate groups – visibility being conceptualized as a threat to familial, social and financial security -

A: I think Deaf Gay groups are better off separate than with a major deaf group because a smaller separate group will give more privacy and a comfortable atmosphere to be ourselves.

Constraints on self-presentation and authenticity by being affiliated with any Deaf organisation catering to 'straight' d/Deaf audiences was considered an unacceptable compromise -

A: You can't talk about your own sexuality in a Deaf club – pffft ... you can only talk about it in the DGLA [Deaf Gay and Lesbian] group ... I mean using signs for 'fucking' in same sex would be a complete turn off in the regular Deaf Club but its accepted in Deaf Gay group ... we talk about who we like perving at, who looks cute, nice arse, big package etc ... sometimes we pash with each other while partner is pashing with another ... etc ... its all intermixed and accepting.

The notion of having to fragment ones personality in a supposedly empathic group in order not to offend or run foul of a dominant construct was perceived as negating the intent and worth of having a QLGBT-friendly group -
A: I think that d/Deaf GBLTIQ people should have a **separate group** to cater for the needs of d/Deaf GBLTIQ people where they can have a space to be fully themselves.

**Advocacy and service organisations for d/Deaf persons**

Whilst Deaf persons appreciated the work DA does on their behalf, there was no condemnation of TDFA – although DA in essence is broadly antagonistic to TDFA. Past and present CEOs and executive persons of both organisations responded to the research and were less restrained in regard to issues of diverse sexualities if not currently working in the organisation. Respondents have opinions about the politics of their organisations - TDFA, DA and others, but organisations can work detached from potential constituencies and do not need to validate their mission statement claims. So the internet questionnaire asked respondents: *Do you think Deaf advocacy and service organisations such as DA, NSWAD and others should be more supportive of Deaf Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transvestite and Transgender people?*

A: In my opinion, they are - altho I was President of both AAD and NSWAD therefore **I was openly Gay** person during my presidency.

That d/Deaf organisations may comprise homosexual persons is known, but for rank-and-file members being 'out' is still a vexed issue. Being austere, educated, devoted to duty and 'up the line' of command seems to inhibit open malice.

A: Yes of course. **Employing** people who are Gay is not enough. I think they should be **running forums** for Gay and Lesbian, assisting Deaf people with this sort of survey ... I got a negative experience with DEN [Deaf Education network] when I mentioned that sometimes I feel comfortable having a male teacher who happens to be gay ... **I got just a backlash.**
Just as the talents of d/Deaf persons may be obscured by focus on lack of hearing, 'gay' persons are considered to 'lack' heterosexuality' and its purported attributes.

A:  Yes ... first of all **they must stop having their two face toward gay people** ... they need to look at them as person not gay or whatever ... in their skills not sex identify.

Any problem of acceptance in the broader Deaf 'straight' community was also attributed to the influence of Deaf 'old guard' as stakeholders or functionaries in Deaf organisations -

A:  More awareness ... opening accepting ... **some elder people still have negatives** about Gay.

The organisations may not want to deal with QLGBT concerns, but they claim to be about representation and advocacy, so as this respondent argues –

A:  They should be more upfront and vocal for human rights

Q:  *Is there is homophobia in deaf groups or organisations?*

A:  Yes. They **brush aside gay and Lesbian concerns** as relevant to them [the gays and lesbians] alone, and we **should deal with them separately**.

Responsiveness of organisations is proportional to the feeling of connectivity that members, constituents and stakeholders feel with that organisation. The question asked was: *Do you feel connected with Deaf organizations?*

A:  With regards to Deaf society - no I don't. They are **traitors that need to be hung**. With regards to my Deaf organisations like AAD - I dont approve DA - NRS [National Relay Service] yes [ok]. Deaf Club, NSWAD and ASLIA [Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association] - great.

NSWAD (New South Wales Association of Deaf persons) is an independent sub-branch of DA, hosting Deaf Club, and the NRS and ASLIA (see quote) are interpreting facilities which the research has experienced as efficient and friendly.
A: Connected to Deaf Australia, NSWAD

Q: How did you find out about these groups?
A: Long-time community involvement

Q: What are the main reasons you belong to a d/Deaf group or organisation?
A: Keep up to date with issues

Q: Do they give you support?
A: Yes

Q: What's the best thing about belonging to a d/Deaf organisation?
A: The advocacy work they do for the Deaf community

Q: Do you feel connected with the group or not?
A: I feel relatively connected, probably because I keep myself informed about the work they do which affects my life.

Quir outreach by d/Deaf organisations

Should advocacy and service organisations for d/Deaf persons reach out affirmatively to those who are sexually diverse? Is there any role for organisations to play?

Q: Are the d/Deaf organisations positive about QLGBT people?
Positive expressions about sexual diversity such as "Yes happy accept me" were made by about one third of respondents. Other responses equated broad general community response to that of d/Deaf organisations, or else tended to believe that negative reactions to d/Deaf gays and lesbians were d/Deaf-specific. In Deaf signing contexts, just as in hearing ones, facial expressions, silence or other manifestations of fear, can convey rejection, disgust and hatred. That is not unusual: Kramer (2005, p. 36) estimated that sixty million ordinary US Americans hated the idea of homosexuality and would express their hatred to homosexuals.

Q: Do you feel there is homophobia in deaf organisations?
A: Yes - It is a daily problem with every community group - therefore there are a large number of Deaf homophobia.
In the following reply, an apparent denial of homophobia in Deaf organisations should perhaps be read as meaning that homophobia in the broader world is commensurate with that in DeafWorld: “negative and naïve” apparently equate to “homophobic” -

A: No - Their **negative and naive attitude towards gay people is generally the same as the hearing community.**

'TBig D' Deaf respondents were often defensive of broad Deaf culture -

A: No. **Australia, whether they are hearing or deaf, is not fully diverse or accepting gay totally.**

Those persons who had experienced decreasing hearing over a period but who did not claim to sign ('little d' deaf respondents), were more sceptical about DA and Deaf culture: "They have their two faces."

**Q: Do you feel there is homophobia in Deaf organisations?**

In answer to this question there were three forms of expression: as a particularised personality clash: "Yes - they don’t talk to me"; plus: politically and ideologically moribund: "Yes - Mainly elders, still old fashion"; and: innately prejudiced:

Yes. They express their hatred and dislike of gay people. The organisation understands they cannot stop gay individuals from participating in their programs; but, underneath, some straight individuals are biased". There were differing insinuations about whether there were gay people in executive positions in d/Deaf organisations or not, and whether it was common knowledge: "Not many knew there [are] many secret in closet.

Keeping an employment position or status might entail keeping a low profile -

**Q: Do you think Deaf people think there are too many gays in advocacy and service organisations?**

A: Yes.

However, there may be no incontrovertible truths, just weighted possibilities.

The question was asked: **Q: Do you feel that d/Deaf organisations are run by straight people for heterosexual concerns only?**
A: Yes mostly. It is the reality. Heterosexuals are the majority of the world. Homosexuality is only about 10% of the population.
A: really they are - favorism ... power!!!!!!

Our Australian peak Deaf associations, DA and TDFA, prefer to remain silent on issues of sexuality and diversity, so to help establish a picture of how d/Deaf organisations responded to ideas of QLGBT, the question was asked: Are the d/Deaf organisations positive about QLGBT people?

A: You really should have an extra button with 50/50. No group is fully accepting of QLGBT. I would have to say that yeah all are Gay friendly ... I mean its no secret that the [Z] of [X organisation] was fucking with a bisexual male who identify himself as being Gay ... its no secret that one or two of the staff of [Y organisation] are gay etc ... so yeah it’s there but not out there.

On balance, while in respondent replies there was agitation about DA and TDFA figured as being about non-signing deaf persons and intervention, the research gained an impression that there was latent grounds for progress if DA inched towards notional inclusion, without taking on partisan activity for sexually diverse persons.

A: Yes [the organisations are positive about QLGB] To date, I haven’t ever felt EXCLUDED by them, even if they haven't specifically done work for the QLGBT community.

If reported as everyday news in Deaf organisation publications, consecutive contributions to events like the NSW Mardi Gras Fair Day and Gay Pride events nationwide could assist wider Deaf 'straight' acceptance.

A: Yes. Saw stall at Mardi Gras Fair Day run by NSWAD ... [d/Deaf / Gay] should be affiliated but maintain separate identities ... There are many Deaf/hearing impaired GLBT in the community.

The average Deaf Australian – even if QLGBT – might currently be aware of sexually diverse persons in Deaf communities, and correctly know or assume
that "Not much is said or done about QLGBT people" as far as their advocacy
and service organisations are concerned. A USA response -

The National Association of the Deaf is pushing for acceptance of
Gays and lesbians.

No Australian organisation for blind or d/Deaf persons actively 'pushing' for
acceptance and integration of persons who are sexually diverse. The overall
respondent view seems to be that there may be notional, clandestine acceptance
by organisations of limited, constrained, sexual diversity. Yet there is
widespread individual experience of rejection within organisations. What would
give persons of diverse sexualities impetus to be who they really feel they are
within their organisational environments? Not only had the advocacy and
service organisations proved inadequate to meet needs of potential constituents,
but the small, informal groups that once existed for Deaf persons of diverse
sexualities (DGLA - Deaf Gay and Lesbian Association) also proved inadequate.
At its height, DGLA membership was about 30 persons, mostly gay men.

Physical or sporting activities may be an ideal place to start relationships, but it
is up to each individual to 'put themselves out there' and often 'on the line' of
potential embarrassment in order to make a start on that new journey to
another potential identity and living space: "Yes - Welcoming me into it, e.g.
[gay yoga group]". Frustratingly for all parties, miming and writing notes while
communicating simple thoughts mostly lacks complete meaning due to the
tediousness of method which ultimately becomes tiresome to pursue: "Hearing
groups are often not equipped to deal with people with hearing disabilities".
Jointly accessible and appealing entertainment and socialization opportunities
and facilities for mixed Deaf and hearing couples or groups are few.
A: They don't provide enough interpreters or captioning for their events!!

Deaf persons may feel or experience that their culture is conceived as something lesser in the perceptions of hearing persons – a kind of 'cultural cringe' which may in fact be due to hearing persons not gaining access to deaf culture through lack of opportunity or time to study, or ignorance. A response from the USA -

A: I am Deaf. I grew up at a Deaf school, after going to public schools, I realized that something was missing. I wasn't "enough" in the eyes of hearing people, despite my high GPA, my continuous studying, my awkward attempts at social life. When I went to a Deaf school, all of that confusion and doubts disappeared.

Appropriate education has facilitated many Deaf persons to be active in hearing and d/Deaf realms. Q: How do you cope with the different worlds?

A: In the past - I've kept them separate. But easier for Hearing to enter Deaf world than vice versa.

The response above seems to reaffirm colonialism, where the hearing colonial is meant to find being in the non-hearing heartland easier than the reverse situation. A hearing person might disagree, and a third assert that feelings are likely to be commensurate.

A: I am great communicator and can meet with any Hearing members of the Gay and Lesbian Community. Eventually I was also involved with Sydney Mardi Gras and lobbied them to have the Show Signers on the side of the stage.

Replies to many questions are idiosyncratic, rendering themes inconclusive -

A: I didn't... just stay in the closet ... our culture does not affirm this kind of relationship so yeah ... its crazy ... I have emotionally been to hell and back ... etc.

As with blind persons of diverse sexualities, Deaf persons similarly blessed by being able to experience something beyond whatever is notionally 'average' may also be showing the way to broader populations just what kind of human
relationships and interactions are possible. The opportunities for sexual and romantic encounters depend upon the environments one can access.

**Q:** Describe any type of conflict you have between your d/Deaf and hearing contacts.

**A:** My partner is bi and I'm gay ... he loves me completely. **My partner has a boyfriend too and I'm looking for an open relationship with another male and still have my partner as my main.**

At times, the research wondered if Deaf persons felt themselves to be akin to foreigners who have some exclusive territories but who have a placeless or vagabond culture within broader Australian society.

I do understand that the world does not revolve around deafness, so I go out and do my thing and **limit my interactions with hearing people as much as I can.** But, I can speak or write with them if necessary.

Rather than needing to resolve potential conflicts arising between Deaf and hearing environments some attempt to avoid contact or make appropriate provision, as in this response from the USA –

> When possible **I no longer accept invitations** to occasions where I know I'm not on the same conversational floor as everyone else. I will say yes **only if an ASL interpreter is provided.** Otherwise I'll just take a pass and come up with a socially acceptable excuse for not attending.

Respondents presenting articulate English were mostly from the USA and usually had attended Galludet University. Those views might not representative of a broad demographic, perhaps to the contrary. The marginality of Deaf persons is also that of other broad demographics: there are educational, familial, notional, organisational, personal and social issues presenting problems likely to inhibit attainment of near-term social and personal objectives.
Advocacy and service organisations for blind persons

Organisations play roles in the lives of blind respondents, whether a font of resources, support and employment, or as a place where people can feel connected to ideas, forms of mutual expression and identity. The organisations work to increase benefits and maintain of existing advantages, not often acknowledged by constituents. When organisations are criticized and scorned or the subject of angst and frustration, seeds for potential improvement can be gathered: persons who are potential members and the organisations themselves should interact on issues that are contentious to create more representative and welcoming organisations, but outreach is expensive and time-consuming. However, losses incurred during the Great Financial Crisis (2008-2009) catalysed retrenchments at VA, casting shadows over personal networks. There was a deal of ambivalence towards VA as if respondents were talking about an aggravating family member with whom they were stuck or might ignore.

The only organisations I use is VA here in Sydney ... mainly just at the moment for employment opportunities, library ... for Braille music as well - and for transcription. From the library, I’ve read a couple of gay books ... but I reckon there should be a lot more ... I haven’t ... read anything about cross gender or anything like that at all. They’re very limited ... if I bought a gay book, right? I’ve got a scanner here, so I could scan it, if I wanted to - Into text, and just read it that way. VA help me enough with music and stuff.

No blind respondent offered unqualified praise of either BCA or VA, but that might be just due to the nature of the self-selecting sample of respondents.

I go to Vision, for my employment opportunities, but I don’t mix, I’ve never joined any of these groups. One reason I’ve stayed away from these groups is that there’s too much inside fighting or bitching, and it’s just what they want, and I just don’t get involved in it, I really don’t get involved in it [laughs] I just keep a low profile.

Sydney respondent.
VA is now in apparent competition with existing dog guide training providers. Less than a third of blind respondents to the research had experience with guide dogs, with users of course interested in reliable animals.

I use a cane - guide dogs could be a nuisance, but a guide dog can give independence as well as be a hazard. I know a few people with guide dogs, but they get their training in Melbourne, they have to go to Melbourne.

Melbourne was generally credited as being a source of better guide dogs than Brisbane with Sydney second. Guide Dogs Victoria were recognised as providing competent dogs and "doing a very good job" in O and M training (Orientation and Mobility), apart from the homophobic attitudes of a male instructor recorded on p. 131 herein, and similar expressed by a mature-age female instructor in a different city. In 2008 VA took over Seeing Eye Dogs Australia (SEDA) so it remains to be seen how that facility is managed and whether the dog output gains good reputation.

Oh equipment, yeah, from VA – but I do my mobility through Guide Dogs, I won’t do it through them [VA]. I do O and M training ... through Guide Dogs. I swear by them ... they’ve been great. Vision [VA] for transcription, employment and that’s basically all I’ve done. And the Braille service - I do use that but it could leave a lot to be desired - Their proof-reading thing – it’s pretty low – I’ve got friends in Melbourne who actually do it and I’ve found the work that’s being transcribed in Melbourne is a hell of a lot better, it’s done thoroughly – Here in Sydney I’ve noticed work that’s been done is not corrected, its formatting’s not right, they don’t proof read here as much as they should ... their standard is very low. ... the Melbourne lot ... they’re great, I can’t fault anything with them.

However, homophobic comments made by O and M assistance personnel had discomfited two respondents in two different cities, neither of the offending persons being from Vision Australia, who received other flak -

I don’t think VA Sydney is very well organized. I don’t think NILS [National Information and Library Service] here is organized properly ... they could do it by getting more people – getting the proof reading done more thoroughly, employing more
proofreaders, if they want to help blind people ... transcribing. Probably encouraging more people to transcribe ... have people doing some of it at home and sending it in electronically, or having people work from home and having the work sent to me and I could do it! ... I could proof read it, but you’d need a scribe ... to produce the printed copy ... But as I said – Melbourne, I’ve got work from Melbourne, I’ve hardly found anything wrong.

Western Australia – in 1951 home to the first dog guide training school in Australia - has an Association for the Blind incorporating Guide Dogs WA (www.guidedogswa.com.au). About 25% of their clients are in regional areas.

The organisation I think was called Vision Impairment Service, now I think it’s called Vision Education Service. Now that I’m not in school and closer to the capital, I’m a member of the Association of the Blind and get any services I need through them.

Service and advocacy organisations appear, naturally enough, to maintain identification with what might be termed the implications of heterosexual 'normality' (which the research prefers to term an 'average' state of being, because heterosexuality should not be endowed with any notion of exclusive conveys mythic implications of suitability and lack of transgression against specific and narrow 'norms' about what is admissible in prevailing society.

**Being blind and blindness organisations**
The persons who instigated or catalysed the small activist groups did not feel a sense of belonging within their Market Framework advocacy and service provision organisations.\(^{108}\) Creation of small peer groups was an attempt to carve out *Qwir* space and territory. For blind persons, the attempt was about gain in credibility, a kind of *certification*: to operate under the auspices of BCA within the geography presented by the advocacy organisation affords status, permitting sexually diverse persons opportunity to experiment with living

\(^{108}\) 'Market Framework': reliant on contractual obligations between the state and other corporations, including third sector groups (Kenny, 2000: 80) – see p. 192 this research.
authentically. Reasons for difference between circumstances for blind and d/Deaf persons are speculative. It could be that blind persons historically have felt more beholden to or dependent upon their service organisations for employment, socializing and essentials than is the instance with d/Deaf persons and that current facilities are just ghosts of an ideal that has not materialised. Potential members may be not simply apathetic but could feel personally or geographically alienated, that persons in control of their lives are detached.

[T]here’s always certain people in every group - the same people ... have their fingers in a lot of pies ... And I think ... whatever they say, sort of goes? And they don’t want to address any issues? It’s just what they want, what they feel and don’t consider anybody else. Does that make sense? There’s a core group in control which has a particular agenda [and] they don’t want any deviation ... I think they could do a lot more. I think - certain people ... could be a lot more open to other things, a bit more supportive – I don’t think they are really, and ever since this merger ... I don’t think nothing’s changed since the merger.

Some respondents found little or no need for VA or BCA, beyond use of the library – and others made no use of that, opting instead for their local libraries or conversion of favoured books into readable texts by self-scanning. In such instances, orientation and mobility training was obtained from a guide dog organisation. Guide dog organisations gained mostly compliments, with the notable exception that overtly expressed homophobia was experienced by respondents from employees of guide dog organisations on at least two occasions, in different states.

Respondents who felt no need for advocacy or services other than orientation and mobility, have utilized a guide dog organisation, with or without getting a dog guide. The Project Nexus amalgamation (Diamond, 2003; Simpson, 2003) of service organisations (commenced in June 2004) was still perceived as an
issue in 2010, part of a depersonalising and re-territorializing process in service provision.\footnote{The Nexus amalgamation brought together the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB), the Royal Blind Society (of NSW), the Royal Blind Federation (Qld) and the Vision Australia Foundation (formerly the Association for the Blind).}

I don’t use BCA or VA for anything. Maybe that’s because of the way I was brought up, and because I was mainstreamed. They don’t appear to have resources and funding, and I don’t get a lot of support from them, and I honestly think there’s a lot more that an organisation could do. There’s no social activities, no interaction for non-heteronormative people, especially young people. Very limited sociability.

BCA was often depicted as a hereditary or familial personal fiefdom -

Oh, God – BCA is like a family business that goes on for generations. And people move between that and what’s now VA and back and around.

Uncertainty whether BCA is to remain independent from VA is alienating:

There is uncertainty amongst potential supporters because BCA and VA organisations have not made clear statements as to what they are about ... VA could sponsor advocacy within BCA, but it’s maybe too late to do that now, because they’ve got a Policy and Advocacy department within VA ... Putting the funding into BCA could’ve been a better way to do it. Maybe they think the structure of BCA is too solidified with the same old faces for such a long period of time.

Members (and potential joiners), could not muster up enthusiasm for BCA:

Now it seems that a lot of people don’t want to be involved, it’s becoming a bit stagnant, they’ve been on committees for six or seven years, they need a bit of a break, and there’s no one to fill that void.

A concern was that BCA would no longer act as an impartial advocacy organisation. While the research does not perceive any specific problems with BCA becoming part of VA, it certainly would help all stakeholders – including the general public – to know exactly how these organisations perceived their roles and activities, for stakeholders to be informed about how these
organisations go about their processes; what *‘a Day in the Life of BCA and VA’* is about could be a valuable public relations exercise.

At grass roots level, VA tend to put a dollar value on everything. For example: Braille music: our current problem is getting the Australian Music Examination Board exam materials for piano and other instruments Brailled, we have to find support, and some musicians might take the brunt of the problem, because we’re allotted an amount of music for a year, but we feel that the organisation should just Braille these papers, because it’s standard repertoire ... We’re told that we need to get funding, that VA are on our side, but they want to find out how to do it in a monetary way, and I *feel that they should just do it, anyway.*

Organisational pragmatism has not been explained to constituents. There is confusion about why decisions are made when an organisation does not communicate effectively with potential supporters.

In the early 80s, I worked for the Association for the Blind. Some of the anomalies: I had a client base, and at the Xmas celebration for staff I wasn’t allowed drink, *because no blind person was allowed to drink on the grounds.* So from being a Staff member, I was a blind Person.

Long-time office bearers in blindness organisations do not have many contenders for their roles, and there have been no effective mechanics to bring about wider participation. Potential stakeholders still feel detached.

The way it works for the blind community, and in a way, I see it as centring a lot around membership and involvement with BCA and organisations like it. *There's the in-crowd of Blindies* who are *Doing The Right Thing* and *saying The Right Thing* and *Getting Up In Arms About The Right Thing* ... it’s generally, you know: the ‘All Rights and No Responsibilities Movement’ ... a lot of it, anyway. *BCA's done some good things over the years, on the whole.*

There were respondents who complained about BCA who perhaps had a sense of entitlement without contribution – they did not want to attend meetings or conventions, did not pay a membership fee and did not vote or volunteer. Blind persons did not express pride in belonging to some 'blind world' or special culture.
I’ve heard of BCA but I haven’t ... really dealt with them – I mean: they’ve helped a couple of my friends, but, I haven’t really had much to do with them ... I haven’t had much to do with them at all.

Sydney resident.

BCA does not have a full time visitable office in any city other than Melbourne.

Its contemporary outlook would have more impact were the organisation able to access greater funding.

In BCA and VA you’ve gotta do, say think, *operate* in a certain way to get accepted as part of the movement, *but sexuality is one of the things they’d never exclude people on to their face* - Oh no, good God. They would let you on the *board* these days, but you’d have jokes made about you, and you’d be sniggered at – the kind of thing that went on ten or fifteen years ago.

Some respondents are very busy in their lives with neither inclination nor time to get involved in organisations, some complaints may be aspects of whinging indolence and others based on unresolved frustration, anger or resentment.

About sex and that - I think they’re in the Dark Ages. We’re just as equal as everybody else. I think too, that *there have been people in BCA that have been there too long* and need to move on, let new people come up, and change ideas. If they appointed someone for each subculture, that would be a good thing. I mean, look at things like interpreting into Braille: give them something to interpret to do with gay rights, or whatever.

The idea to 'school' the board of BCA has merit but of limited use while funding lacks to follow up matters of diversity. A then current, but now past CEO of BCA talked about the organisational role:

I’m aware that in the organization there are people that are, ah, sexually diverse or whatever you want to call them. Certainly **I haven’t seen any blatant or outright discrimination** or anything like that, but I just think that it is something that the organization hasn't brought to the fore, necessarily, for various reasons. Not – whether it’s because people themselves don’t want to – like – I **know when this initial group was established, it was all very private** ... people have to right to not ... make it aware who they are or their sexual preferences ... So ... maybe it was the people themselves within the group that wanted it that way, I’m not sure, I just kind of, myself, when I was aware that this group was forming, I **kind of thought, well, you know, if you**
are 'out and proud' then you should be, but not necessarily, but maybe it's because they couldn't\ because, well, oh I don't know: well, you know, \textit{the organization's culture, I guess}, I don't know.

When \textit{BASIC} (see Appendix One) was first proposed to BCA, perhaps the time had not yet arrived – in the chronology of human affairs, there are periods when it is ‘safe’ for some things to be expressed, and environments are conducive to new and radical ideas as well as modes of living. At other times, conservative elements prevail. (Savonarola did not last forever in Florence).

There's a lot of people have been \textit{involved in the organization, over thirty years, you know}? And they have been involved in the blindness sector way way, way before then, you know \textit{there are people that have lived with blindness that I know, that are involved in the organization at different levels for thirty, forty fifty sixty years}, so maybe people felt \textit{kind of intimidated by that particular group of people or those people} - thinking, well, they won't be accepting of our thoughts, or our beliefs or our views, or whatever, I don't know.

Thus a small group of conservatives apparently held sway over a majority of persons who may not have had much of an opinion at all, and perceived no political advantage in taking on board different attitudes.

But I do think that we are ... lacking in terms of that, and probably we are \textit{lacking in terms of those people who are of a background, like culturally and linguistically diverse background}. We don't do a lot, to support those people, and I think that's something – both those areas where I would like to see the organization progress.

Is it a resource problem? Personnel, volunteers, funding?

Yeah, I think it is, and I also think ... it would be really nice to have people that identify themselves, as say, culturally or linguistically diverse, that are \textit{spokespeople for their culture or whatever, that can kind of 'break down the barriers'} – I think there's a fair few barriers.

The thought is that the organisation is waiting upon an appealing and perhaps iconic spokesperson to champion such unusual causes: leadership via strong and attractive celebrity.
And it's the same with the indigenous population ... It's really hard, there are a hell of a lot of people who are low vision and who are blind, and within the Torres Strait Islander race and the Aboriginal races. We don't have within the organization if you look at our membership: we have very few — well we don't actually identify people as that background ... but I'm pretty sure. You would find that we have, I don't know, maybe half a dozen people at the most who would probably be of that background. And I think: what do we offer these people that - and I don't know that we offer them anything because we don't know that we know what we can offer them, in terms of we're here in Melbourne, a nice clean city ... we do have some regional branches, but we're usually based in a town, like a fairly big town ... so we're not located out at Tennant Creek ... or at wherever the need arises, or wherever these people are situated, so we don't understand — because ... we don't reach that part, or our tentacles aren't that far reaching — we don't know what the needs are, and therefore we don't, we can't offer anything.

I felt this was a poignant and important moment in the research (one among many), and mentally started to wonder how a diversity office for BCA could be funded, at perhaps $35,000 per year basic salary plus expenses, for a four-day week (see below, p. 301 herein).

I mean, frankly, if you're living in the middle of nowhere, do you really care about getting your newsletter once every three months on tape? You may not even have a tape recorder to play it on! You really care about the fact that you don't have a job, you are discriminated against, you have never worked, you're poorly educated and it's all because well 'you're blind, you can't possibly do these things', 'the family will take care of you'. You know, 'it's our responsibility to take care of you', 'you can't even walk around your community', or whatever, because, you, know, for whatever reasons — you're not familiar, you haven't had appropriate training to get around, you can't use a white cane, or whatever!

I interposed: “No O and M out there” (Orientation and Mobility training).

Exactly! And it's something that we probably — and again: it's funding. Like, you know, I think it would be really good for BCA to somehow get out there, particularly in the rural and regional areas, and get out there and get involved in those kind of communities, and - but also have the contact within those communities to get involved, because it's not, not easy for a bunch of white people ... So that, that really is one area I'd like to see improvement. And you see that, I mean, that is the
same with any I guess 'diverse group', you don't, you know - I mean I guess 'as diverse as we go' is we have a Women's Branch at this stage.

My scant information on the Women’s Branches was that they could get fairly discriminatory and excluding – see p. 341 herein.

And I don't know that that's really a 'diverse group' – it's a just a group that is, that maybe - have different needs or whatever, they're fairly strong and they're fairly pro-active, but there's a lot out there that we can't do because we don't have the funding and we don't have the manpower, or the contacts within the different groups.

Neither do BCA staff and volunteers have the hours in a day. Neither was there any plan for cultural or inter-community liaison: nothing particular with indigenous peoples or with persons or groups who could maintain contacts with sexually diverse persons or organisations for them.

It seems, again, it's: 'the time, who does it?' and we don't have – at the moment there are six people that work within the organization, not all of them full-time – where does it – you know it would actually be good if we were able to get some funding for a person who actually - who worked in that area specifically - whether it was a project for a year or something, to bring to - to develop those contacts. We do – within - we're a member organization of the Australian Federation of Disability Organizations and within that organization there is a group called ... the National ... I've forgotten what it's called, but they're people who are HIV positive. It's the national, peak kind of representative body. So we do have contact with those people, we haven't developed those contacts in terms of ... getting our information out there to people who maybe do have HIV, and who have or are losing their vision, whether it's through HIV or the fact they're in an ageing population and just getting older ... But we haven't done that, and maybe we need to look at maybe those small steps to kind of – to I guess advance our relationships with ... diverse people of diverse backgrounds.

And what is the likely cost of a diversity officer cost each year?

I think maybe thirty, thirty-five thousand, maybe for four days a week or something, usually, depending on what ... the brief of this person was. But ... even to conduct forums and to conduct small information sessions, and to attend ... different
conferences aimed at people of a different background ... to let people know, well: *We're here, this is what we do, please contact us*, or ... *'Be a part of our organization, join up!' You know: 'Form your own', like ... 'We have special interest groups, we have a computer users' group, we have youth branches as well*, so it's not like we just expect people to join up and join what's already here, but ... I don't think the organization is at all backward in terms of, well: *If there's enough interest, this is what you need to do to form your own special interest group – go ahead and do it!'

Informal dialogue with respondents who had been part of the BASIC proposal agreed that proposals could be put to BCA, but in that instance, felt that BCA was not interested to get behind the BASIC proposal. However, it would be fair to assess the initial proposal as optimistic but unsustainable (Appendix One).

I think the one thing that we do well, at this point in the organization, is ... *people can virtually say what they want to, they can – whether they write into us or call us and express an opinion, or express a direction that the organization should take, or something in terms of that the organization isn't doing as well as it should – we're certainly open to that, and we'd never – I'd be horrified if any of my staff, you know, treated those kind of comments with disdain* ... sure: there are people who might ring up and say things and tell us we should be doing things that are totally unrealistic due to budget or whatever, and we would explain that to them and often they understand, sometimes they don't and it's because it's just very strong passion about whatever issue it is. But we never say: 'Well, go away, your opinion is not worth anything'. We're a member organisation, we rely on the – the statement's out there on our website: the lifeblood of our organization is the members. *It's the members, they tell us where we're going and what we should be doing.*

The pressing specialized issues include the absence of indigenous activity and representation. Low organisational membership and membership indolence are other factors. A member replied:

In Vision Australia, everyone who's a member is entitled to vote on things – *I never vote on anything - I keep a very low profile*. I don't get involved with all these groups! Too much politics! - now with this merger, I think ... we're rally lacking up here in Sydney, and I heard Brisbane's not that good, either. *Melbourne's getting all the benefits: they're offering*
better courses down there, and job opportunities down there.

Organisational politics was part of the game plan for current and past organisational actors (some were and others were not sexually diverse). Interviewees were politically aware and had experienced varying minutiae of the QGLBT blind and d/Deaf worlds. Disappointment in the lack of ‘community’ characterized responses:

I’m very critical and think through very carefully every uttering of the extremist feminist movement, as I think we’ve been very destructive and hurtful, bitchy even, and very divisive because they only make room for one way of thinking and believing and interpretive thinking, but for quite a while in the university sectors and even internationally, they hijacked the [gay and lesbian] agenda.

This is reminiscent of Hall and Wolfreys (2002, p. 51): "Internal divisiveness and diversity of outlook have always characterized lesbian and gay groups and movements". Policy developments and the organisations do not deal with everyone's concerns nor create a sense of positive social capital, but the groups that tentatively develop to fill voids do not cohere over more than a few years, at the most. That does not render the neo-groups insignificant, but the needs of the general demographic may require survival of advocacy and service organisations kept effective perhaps by regulation if not by self-monitoring.

A major issue - organisational survival

[A]n ability to survive does not mean that an organisation is well managed.

Lyons, 2001, p. 117.

Exclusion and discrimination have roles in the formation and maintenance of groups by imposition of uniformity and sanction against digression, and for some organizations are inherent to effective governance. As in terrorist groups, for example, a dominant unitary identity is essential to identity, focus and
intent. The meaning and value of organisations may depend upon the emphasis one places upon different aspects of an individual’s multi-faceted identity.

From past and then-current executive of d/Deafness organisations, the research received three e-mail, internet and interview responses; from blindness organisations there were four interview responses. The organisational actors interviewed perceived their first organisational duty as being 'to keep the organisation operating'. In the course of so doing, if organisational identities of what was permissible were not generated by intent they would anyway be generated in stakeholder perceptions, including those of staff and volunteers. Gossip and 'slagging' have roles in setting the boundaries of acceptability. These organisations have tacit cultures of accepting 'acceptable diversity': a Transman is not going to be CEO for any of them, anytime soon. The simple binary of homo/hetero sexualities on a 'don't ask, and don't tell too much' basis applies, as in most other large – and small - Australian corporations dealing with a diverse public and beholden to government and community goodwill for their survival.

Marginalized persons may be excluded from advantages secured by organisational intercession and relationships (IORs). Societal institutions operate the 'micro-physics' of power over the human body (Foucault, 1991, pp. 26-27). Some of this activity comprises "generation of identity" that is socially constructed (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, pp. 14-17), dependent on temporal, cultural and situational factors. Non-conforming organisational members and stakeholders have disruptive implications. IORs maintained by the organisation might be adversely affected if an organisation is perceived as even as a 'gay
haven', especially if QGLBTI persons and issues become problematic. The role of an organisation may be to effect reconciliation between its constituent elements and bind them together. A defensive organisation may not be able to commit to such procedures, perceiving them as destabilizing. An organisation that has successfully laid inclusive groundwork will be less nervous about being 'white-anted' by infestation of its structure. Thus it seems appropriate for DA and TDFA to liaise with such state and territory organisations, publicizing their existence and services amongst stakeholders and ensuring that interpretation is available. In this way, the peak organisations could also ‘slough off’ the aspect of diverse sexualities onto possibly more appropriate organisations, assuming those other organisations were equipped to deal with the issues.

The research does not want to promote the idea that DA and other peaks are anything but a hard-working, efficient and/or useful organisations, considering the resources available. They exist (and therefore behave somewhat), as outsourced arms of government under little apparent effective supervision. There are more beneficiaries to the activities of DA and TDFA than there are members, and persons of diverse sexualities do not easily fit into their focus, even though, as a respondent claimed in affirming allegiance to DA: "There are lots of Deaf gay and bi people!!" However, even if you belong to a federal or state peak for support, you may not get the support you feel you need -

Q: Are the d/Deaf groups / organisations positive about QLGBT people?
A: No - In my early days, they are not - but today it has changed a lot but I have left Australia [several years ago].

Q: Do you feel Deaf advocacy and service organisations such as DA, NSWAD and others support human rights for all d/Deaf?
A: Yes.

Q: What are the main reasons you belong to a d/Deaf organisation?
A: **Peer support, identification**

*Q: Do they give you support?*  
*A: No.*

There was little mention of TDFA by research respondents. Most comments tended to be in the context of feuding between DA and TDFA.

*Q: Do you belong to a d/Deaf organisation?*  
*A: Deafness Forum, yes but not Deaf Australia, unfortunately*  
*Q: Do you feel connected with the group or not?*  
*A: About DA, they are currently in their own little world. They are not open to collaboration and its frustrating as a Deaf person. We all need to work together.*

'Gaining language' as a cultural imperative for the foundation of identity is a common theme. Alienation from family because the family has no role to play in being part of an acceptable, appropriate and transmissible d/Deaf or QLGBT culture is another issue. The existence of a strong, acceptable ethnic and racial culture can help sustain familial bonds. However, while most parents of respondents find no place in cultures of diverse sexuality, others adjust and attempt to frame and contain expressions of diversity within their own (ostensibly) heteronormative cultural territories. *Coming out* for respondents is rarely depicted as easy and heart-warming, in the way that coming of age to romance and sexuality is often depicted for heteronormative persons. Angst and uncertainty, and *lack of being validated by acceptable role models* may present crisis points of potentially catastrophic uncertainty. Organisational guardians and advocates do not generally assist in alleviating feelings of alienation and devaluation. They could easily so do, but they most often have not elected to make any statements of support. Response from the USA -

*Q: Do you feel that d/Deaf organisations are run by straight people for heterosexual concerns only?*  
*A: Pretty much yes but not always. Deaf CAN [Canada] has a posted policy against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but their gay employees don't like*
people to know they're gay while they're at work. [Two names] are both mostly straight deaf clubs that are run by openly gay deaf presidents.

**Summary of the organisational theme**

Identities, missions, accountability and governance: service organisations may be faced with an 'either/or' option: truth and accountability or: dissembling, expediency and survival. Juxtaposing organisational missions against governance processes may provide a template for assessing organisational legitimacy; although mission statements can be circumvented by artful design or negligence; or rendered irrelevant by organisational processes and strategies; or subject to broad interpretation. Whether or not the organisational mission becomes impotent or perverted, there is still a 'blood line' between any organisational mission and the formation of social capital. Whether that social capital turns out to be 'positive' or 'negative' depends upon organisational governance via the nature of the mission and its interpretation by various organisational actors from time to time.

Do the mission statements accord with organisational procedures, how, or why not? To that extent 'procedures' are defined as those broad governance strategies framed by the board within which managers of organisations conduct those daily, operations/ processes to achieve the organisational mission (Werther and Berman, 2001). Therefore, the vision serves as a guide to producing a mission statement, moving an organisation at least *in the direction* of attaining the expressed vision. Therefore, development of a shared vision and mission statement is a primary task for governance of non-profit organisations. What is needed to build a sense of shared humanity and responsibility among stakeholders.
**Lack of resources can project oppressive imagery**

Organisations may seem characterised by governance and managements that fail to eliminate discrimination and exclusion. However, it may simply be lack of time and resources; lack of funds to employ consultants who might pinpoint management problems; inability to discipline staff and volunteers; preference not to ‘rock the boat’ if the organisation is achieving basic goals; active prejudice of particular persons who are in relatively unassailable positions due to lack of competent and willing replacements.

### 5.9 Imagined ways forward

The *Third Sector Research Institute (TSRI) Working Papers* of the late 1990s resulted from collaboration between The Centre of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (CPNS) at QUT, the Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights (CCHR) at Deakin University, and the Centre for Australian Community Organisations and Management (CACOM) at the University of Technology, Sydney. The papers do not seem to be popular points of reference and the CD of the voluminous collaborative activity hard to find. In 1994 the Industry Commission completed a draft report regarding charitable organizations (Rodman, 1994). Anecdotal evidence is that the sector was apprehensive about the Commission, and denigrated its findings. Reforms that the Program on Nonprofits recommended or implied have not resulted, and it would be a gargantuan task to achieve community, state and federal agreements regarding processes and outcomes. However, knowledge is being accumulated under auspices of the Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies\(^ {110}\) which is conducted in the Faculty of Business at QUT, and its influence seems to at last be trickling through the sector.

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\(^{110}\) [http://cpns.bus.qut.edu.au](http://cpns.bus.qut.edu.au)
Advocacy and service organisations that fail to represent constituents to whom they lay claim may functioning in accordance with the laws of the dominant social construct, but without moral credibility. If an organisation’s mission statement makes ambit claims to represent a constituency, there are issues of community and fiduciary trust. Governments and statutory authorities should be obliged to create or restore accuracy and accountability in organisational focus and reporting. However, that cannot be done if “there are over 70 definitions of “charity” for social, academic, statistical, legal, regulatory and taxation purposes” (McGregor-Lowndes and McDonald, 1994, p. 3).

Furthermore, “(t)he degree of heterogeneity within the non-profit sector undermine [sic] any capacity to make meaningful generalisations” regarding services provided (p. 8). No organisation, institution or government or person is effectively producing ways for comprehensive inclusiveness of blind persons and d/Deaf persons, let alone those of diverse sexualities. The displays of tokenism are unfulfilled, somewhat as the symbolic, numerous but increasingly pretentious acknowledgments of ‘indigenous country’ do not at all mean that prime land is going to be given back to anyone, anytime soon, nor current and future benefits shared. No Australian organisation for persons of diverse sexualities is actively engaging with organisations for blind and d/Deaf persons.

A guide dog, a person with a cane – I never see them. You can stand on the tactile paving in a city all day and never encounter a blind person. It’s tokenism.

Tokenism abounds - one can stand on the tactile pathways of Australian cities almost twenty-four hours and not encounter a blind person; or wait at the twitting traffic lights, put a hand on the vibrating button-hub and marvel at the

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considerations symbolised; but blind and d/Deaf persons – especially those with late acquisition of blindness and deafness – are typically confined to smaller environments.

An ideal future ... might involve an organisation being more accepting. I think there are so many people in Australia who are homophobic and who just don’t want to understand us. And if you say to them: “You know what: I’m gay” or “I’m lesbian”, they just think “How disgusting!” I just think that organisations could try to cater to gays and lesbians ... who are vision impaired and blind. Gay and lesbian blind people should be able to enjoy themselves as much as heterosexual couples would. You know, going out to gay clubs or lesbian clubs, not being turned away.

VA could perform public examination of VA's claims to serve and represent; discuss its perceptions of attributes and deficiencies in representation and respondent concerns about problematic areas of their lives upon which organisations may have impact. While BCA has at least engaged at the edges of sexual diversity, intensely political issues such as superannuation, tax arrangements, civil unions and marriage may need to be parcelled out to other organisations and advocacy services, or else fester where they presently hover.

There’s [historically] been all this bringing people out of asylums and institutions, but no sanctuary created for them, and their voice is gone and they’re hidden: tens of thousands of people in their own home and in households that are hostile and unsupportive. They don’t get out and about anymore, and I’ve noticed that people with disabilities are disappearing off the streets, as the older people go into nursing homes or are dying, as a lot of people with disabilities don’t reach great ages, and you don’t see the younger disabled at restaurants, in their chairs out and about as much as you used to.

Despite the millions of words that have been written on the topic of disability and inclusiveness, the broad general public are not actively supportive of disability issues because they are not a priority for the average family or individual; it is also likely that the topics of blind persons and d/Deaf persons
and sexual diversity touch upon deep-seated fears and repulsions. These fears and repulsions have historically surfaced, with even academic, professional and cultured persons rationalizing retaliatory violence, let alone that which is perpetrated by the street ignoramus. The broader community with lack of interest, avoidance, exclusion and jokes perpetrate psychological violence.

Organisations like BCA, VA, DA and TDFA demonstrate that for persons with sensory difference in various peak environments, sexual diversity is not excluded by charter, but perhaps by culture and habit. Marshalling technological advances and incremental change, individuals, groups, corporations and governments reach out to more disparate audiences. Inclusiveness under the banner of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ bespeaks insecurity. In positions of varying precariousness and degrees of being scrutinized, organisations seek to survive and retain mandate from funding stakeholders as well as from service-consuming clients and interested members. Inter-personal, inter-group discontinuities and competing, in-group identities are pressures on the cohesiveness of gatherings, groups, subcultures and organisations.

Multiple strands of deviance from a dominant ethos can be factors in any subculture finely divided from the mainstream (Connell, 2005, 144). Thus a non-heteronormative neo- or subgroup in a blindness organisation is likely to experience stresses from some finely divided classifications within that subgroup, than from the over-arching blindness organisation itself (Abrams, 2005); this internal pressure means that any subgroup may be tentative: continuing to exist as a cohesive unit with unified aims may be difficult.
Under such circumstances, the over-arching blindness organisations, while acknowledging diversity among constituents, need not acknowledge the existence of non-heteronormative groups within it. No such cohesive entities exist in terms that define on-going subcultures, but the elements of a potential subculture may be organisationally acknowledged, and organisational acceptance of such elements could be public.

However, acknowledgement of any subculture not sufficiently formed or stabilized as to present a coherent mission or profile may have no intrinsic merit or sense, but also be contrary to the existing and ultimate public representation and perception of the dominant organisation. A putative subculture may not have mechanisms in place to either represent the majority view within that subculture or discipline aberrant elements within it. This could result in misrepresentations of the subculture. As subcultures arise and conduct their existence upon modern media such as the internet, it can be that persons who are the most expressive will dominate representations in consumed media presentations even without majority authority or input. This could lead to misrepresentation: the QLGBT cohort interviewed by the research are not represented in any way by the only ‘gay blind’ autobiography on the internet. A single spokesperson may display inappropriate issues in the public arena, which in the absence of other depictions may be taken as representative. The fact that, overall, very few of the accomplished, amusing, charming, fun, interesting, intelligent and witty people interviewed by the research have publicly told their stories makes potential for representation of their concerns more difficult.
The instigators of organisations and groups for blind and vision impaired persons have tended to enlist sighted persons of specific talents. The instance with organisations for Deaf persons is different to that with blind persons to the extent, at least, that Deaf persons have wrested control of some organisations from hearing persons (Galludet University for Deaf persons in the USA being an iconic example).

What drives organisational ‘brand connection’ with any target audience is the ‘irreducible core’ of the brand, the value that does not change over time, suffuses the advertising, the logos and daily brand management; it includes claims to universality of representation as depicted by the mission statements, along with described or documented ranges of advocacy and service provision and images of reciprocated goodwill. Rhetorically one could ask: should not organisations acknowledge their clients' subjective worlds in the process of claiming to be the legitimate representatives of those clients? Or must clients tacitly fragment their identities according to organisational mores? Organisations for blind and d/Deaf persons will have limited funds to allocate for such representations, and correctly perceive that groups of sexually diverse persons, if too obvious, may interfere in perceptions of an organisation's 'irreducible core'. Also, despite any board, staff and management empathies, the creation of the corporate entities that charitable and service organisations are obliged to be has eroded the autonomy of professional management elites, because it is organisations defining their work and organisational settings. Emphasis within nonprofits on mission values may not be compatible with internal controls and external accountability. There may be benefits in adopting certain presentations due to resource imperatives.
Economic rationalism and the exigencies allied to economies of scale have resulted in the 'dertitorialisation' (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 50; Earles, 1999, pp. 53, 54) of organisations: to the extent that they have limited geographical presence, they are “placeless powers” (Earles, 1999, p. 54), leaving those supposedly represented in “powerless places” (p. 54). In other words, identities are not represented: dominant power structures may create identities without acknowledging the composition or relevance of the demographic. Organisations should be mindful of "space": transgressive sexualities and states of being have potential to destabilize spaces marked out by dominant heteronormative constructs (Duncan, 1996, pp. 137-143). For example: being a stereotype person supported by stereotype organisations could be an easier existence than that experienced by a flagrantly gay blind person in a suburban housing estate.

The Australian advocacy and service organisations for persons who are blind and/or d/Deaf (BCA, VA, TDFA and DA) do not exclude persons of diverse sexualities, and certainly persons of ‘limited diversity’ (simply homosexual, mostly) retain management and/or directorial positions. VA, TDFA and DA are yet to deal with the issue of diverse sexualities in a positive, public way. In those organisations, the administrative and governance tools required to so do have not been examined. For organizational purposes, it may be more useful to exclude potentially divisive subgroups that could distract from what the organisations perceive as more important issues.

Groups or gatherings that may develop among persons who are d/Deaf or blind and not heteronormative have been prefigured as being subcultural to some supposed community or environments inhabited by the advocacy and service
organisations. The (Appendix One) memorandum of BASIC indicated an attempt to mediate between the sighted aspects of a dominant social construct and persons who found themselves marginalized into any sub-set of a social construct, but the notion of 'subculture' to be problematic. The question of 'subcultural to what?' also needs exploration. Blindness is not a culture. It is a physical characteristic that certain persons acquire or have thrust upon them via genetics or happenstance.

The research has gained an impression that persons blinded before adolescence adapt to broader society with greater ease than if blind from birth, and that persons who become blind as adults, unless availing themselves of technology, mobility training and all possible assistance, find their world shrinking with no chance of some newer, modified world of any appeal developing. Being normal but not average imposes burdens of adjustment and adaptation.

The prospects of emotional, intellectual and physical allies can be whittled away if one is Othered in relatively miniscule communities. Organisations offering advocacy and services to blind and d/Deaf persons might have perceived threats within their stakeholder cohort from putative subcultures akin to those of an ethnic model, and only one indicated open inclusivity, but although it opened the door, there was no group there to come in, and no resources to deal with diversity, anyway. Other organisations (VA and DA) have remained ostensibly aloof or intransigent, but perhaps tacitly malleable - sufficient either to accommodate or contain stakeholder frustrations, or else smother them with reticence to engage and opposition. TDFA, being particularly interested in technology, has no interest in stakeholder sexual diversity.
Oppression that homosexual persons experience is not akin to that experienced by persons who are of visible ethnic difference – which latter is always a public identity due to visibility: such as being black or Asian. Persons with visible disabilities and difference do not control the "nature of their public identity" (Sullivan, 1996, p. 152). Homosexuals are "born afresh in every generation and every social, racial and economic class" – amongst every race, disability, sensory difference and to every socio-economic heritage, but we are not always made visible, neither might we choose visibility. We can hide more effectively than did Jews in the Nazi holocaust although "the force that hunts [us] down is just as terrifying" (Sullivan, 1996, p. 153). We are somewhat like gypsies or vagabonds, searching for safe places, and organisations cannot effectively guarantee them. Where internal gossip has been experienced as alienating, in order to effect reconciliation, a peak advocacy organisation could officially extend welcome or hospitality to persons so Othered, proclaiming policies of what is organisationally acceptable to set standards for staff and volunteers.

Perhaps it is a measure of how alienated blind persons are from QLGBT communities that respondents mostly have not considered the services available to QLGBT people through what are in effect various state associations for healthy communities, such the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities (QuAHC). ¹¹² This information could be the subject of targeted government initiatives. For example: Relationships Australia is happy to provide counsellors of diverse sexuality. The advocacy and service organisations "could produce a lot more material and information - counselling – there's a lot of blind gay people around."

¹¹² The reference to AIDS is likely to dwindle from the names of these organisations in the way it has in Queensland (formerly the Queensland AIDS Council). The ACON website www.acon.org.au does not display the acronym AIDS on its homepage.
VA and BCA could demonstrate their willingness to act as facilitators, and liaise with the various state associations for healthy communities.

I think the organisation should have a role in helping people of diverse sexualities. About VA - I would think ‘lack of support’ – that’s the only negative thing I could find. I mean, it supports you ... in mainstream stuff ... But diverse stuff: no. I think it’s important.

An important aspect is that VA need not grapple with issues that might be inimical to its interests among a broader demographic where it secure the most substantial part of its funds. There is need for a 'liaison officer' or 'diversity officer' -

Maybe they should have a person there – who’s in that situation, who can relate to it - [being of diverse sexuality] ... you know, be there for people to talk to. Maybe like the police force: have a liaison officer. Yeah! Same thing should be for us.

BCA, the organisations most expressively open to diversity, now provides an environment where intolerance could not be incubated. Persons expressing frustration with BCA may not be of dispositions that could easily adapt to committees and boards. Being unwilling to attend meetings or conventions, not wanting to get involved as paying members can render stakeholder opinions ineffectual. More publicity as to what the organisations have done and can do is likely to be of benefit to present and potential stakeholders, but BCA cannot reach out far beyond Melbourne on its reportedly scarce funds, despite its desire to operate nationally.

There is a shortage of persons willing to take Board responsibilities in community advocacy and service organisations. That may be a reason why the 'sexual diversity card' is not played against such candidates for office. Homosexual presidents, chairpersons and CEOs exist in NFP organisations, but here and even in the USA, discrimination is still a factor invalidating the
existence of citizenry. Within organisations, being openly QLGB could make
tenure of an executive position problematic, and if one is Transvestite, a
Transgendered or Intersex person, public profile and responsibility might be
impossible.

**The Federal Government imagines Ways Forward**
The Federal government has renewed its social inclusion agenda. In May 2008,
there had been an inaugural meeting of the Australian Social Inclusion Board
www.socialinclusion.gov.au. In the four years until the end of 2011, eighteen
meetings were held, with many board members often absent.

The *Office for the Not-for-Profit Sector* was established in October
2010 to drive and coordinate the not-for-profit sector policy
reform agenda and the *National Compact: working together*.

By June 2011, board minutes were not published, just ‘outcomes’. The board
and website have been reconstituted (www.socialinclusion.gov.au) and –

Reforms to strengthen the not-for-profit sector are being
implemented as part of the social inclusion agenda which is a
whole-of-government approach to providing opportunities for all
Australians to participate in the life of the nation.

The above two quotes are from the Social Inclusion website. A Reform Council
was established in December 2010 to implement reform in three categories:

- Establishing a national ‘one-stop-shop’ regulator for the not-for-profit
  sector (the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission) to
  remove the complex regulatory arrangements currently in place and
  streamline reporting arrangements;

- Greater harmonisation and simplification between Commonwealth,
  State and Territory Governments on not-for-profit issues, including
  regulation; and

- Reducing red-tape for government funded not-for-profit
  organisations, including through streamlining contracting and
  funding arrangements.

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Another “specific reform activity” underway was:

- Introducing a statutory definition of ‘charity’.

This indicates how far there is to go before the minutiae of individual organisations can be addressed by the federal Government – if ever it can. That is because there is no process being considered by the government to protect constituent diversity, without exacerbating or fostering division. The relationship between disability multiculturalism and social inclusion processes needs to be put on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) agenda.

**Problematic processes**

Chapter Five distilled diverse, contesting elements in the lives of marginalised persons and in the organisational environments of the organisations that claim to represent them. Finding how to improve lives, and tailor processes of those organisations accorded status and resources to be representative, requires that the research embrace a process of eidetic reduction (Rée, 1999, after Husserl, 1931 – see p. 114 herein), which entails eliminating (faulty) perceptions from phenomenological studies in order to make clear the essentials.

Data analysis for mixed methods designs presents problems (Creswell and Clark, 2007). Suffice it to say that two arenas of data validation were not embraced in the analysis: peer examination of data was ruled out due to issues of confidentiality and anyway, there are no peers familiar with research of this nature as none similar has been attempted in Australia. Due to issues of confidentiality, presentation of broad data to respondents was deemed an issue too fraught and complex to effect. Using just triangulation and presentation of
disconfirming evidence (Creswell and Clark, 2007) may mitigate against what Creswell and Clark warn (p. 151) as "the reader getting lost... in multiple layers of data analysis", a possibility when immersed in a great volume of data that includes repetition by many persons of slightly varied common themes.

The process is imperfect due to elements of phenomenalism (Bryant and Charmaz, 200, p. 46): when induction has been “fairly uncomplicated” there is a danger that “staunch positions” could be adopted as things might seem to have just ‘one fit into place’. Hermeneutical phenomenology (Creswell, 2007, p. 59) interprets the texts of life: there is an “abiding concern” with “essential themes” and the researcher not only describes but conducts an interpretive process, attempting to "mediate between different meanings" that may be attributed to those phenomena (Crotty, 1998, p. 78). However limited, the research has expressed a mediation of respondent voice via representative quotes material to the research questions, with edited extracts regarding the issues interrogated.

These representations may be problematic in the terms of Ball, Maguire and Macrae (2000, pp. 16, 17, 19), but the extracts show that respondents have engaged in critical and self-critical reflection (Grbich, 2004, p. 114), that the opportunity was not taken to give "a spiel". All research is integrally political (Ezzy, 2002), and it is not claimed that this research has been able to present unbiased information. The research has also been mindful that (borrowing from Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000, p. 57), “in all the narratives we have elicited, there is a fragility and contingency involved in the sorts of identities” constructed; however it is believed the research has "demonstrated respect" for all participants (Ezzy, 2002, p. 57), for individuals and organisations. As
respondents partake in and negotiate their organisational and social worlds, research discretion has been a primary concern (Brownlow and O'Dell, 2002).

**Summary of the themes in Chapter Five**

Having established a notional platform for thematic analysis in a swirl of intersectionality, *Nine Themes* were set out, most of which intersected over a background of identity issues.

1. Identity processes are impacted upon by a number of issues – there are split identities, differences between groups within those identities, and perhaps most important: education processes are generally considered to be less than ideal. Mainstreaming is an issue that warrants greater study.

2. The diversities inhabited are not always comfortable for those dwelling within them, nor for other persons in shared environments – there are lacks in understanding and all parties seem tentative to varying degrees in their relationships to each other. There is little education in sighted and hearing environments about persons who live in blind and d/Deaf environments.

3. Being visible at all, if one is performing accurate identities, can mean being *Quirly* visible. This is likely to entail venturing out in various identities, and can result in ‘different treatment’.

4. *Exceptionality* can be a result of being different: one can be exceptionally visible, or rendered invisible because of exceptionality. Being d/Deaf may not impede contact with sexually diverse worlds that are initially visual, but being blind can place such environments out of reach, and navigation within them is problematic.

5. Coping and affirming require skills of adaptation to varying environments, and there are age factors: such as the onset of blindness or becoming d/Deaf, and even the onset of realising that one is of diverse sexuality.

6. Interaction with peers is a process of affirmation, and is especially needed if one is denied citizenship and belonging in broader communities. For d/Deaf and blind persons, the prospects of peer interaction have ostensibly been improved by the internet, as various small ‘scenes’ for Deaf persons of diverse sexuality have faded, and for blind persons they have never really existed.
7. Feeling 'safe' relates to physical territory as well as psychological environments. Groups and gatherings for marginalised persons might have joys, but they also hold the terrors of marginalisation: some sexually diverse persons may still be unacceptable within a special group, for many and varied reasons. Even, perhaps, not being able to sign Auslan properly, might be enough for one to be sidelined from future gatherings.

8. The concerns of advocacy and service organisations for d/Deaf persons and blind persons are different, except for one: the organisations want to survive. There has been no overt Qwir outreach by d/Deaf organisations, but there has been covert acceptance, and there are officials with sexual diversity occupying administrative and other roles in deafness organisations. That is so, currently to a lesser extent, in blindness organisations.

There are turning points reached in the lives of organisations, due to the activities of different boards or CEOs, responding to changes perceived in the social and economic environments. These perceptions or changes may be negative or detrimental to constituents, obliterating identities, or positive and identity affirming.

Of the four organisations considered, only BCA experienced a turning point in regard to diversity issues, overtly supporting ethnic, linguistic and sexual diversities. However, lack of resources and fear that the little an organisation receives might be choked off, can contribute to projection of organisational imagery that oppresses niche constituents.

9. Imagined ways forward - Just as most sighted and hearing persons do not employ those natal attributes or 'gifts' of sight and hearing to get 'the full story' of other linguistic groups and cultures, one cannot take part in the fully nuanced life of a dominant sighted and hearing culture from just the visuals of a signed language. There will always be margins of separation and always persons living at them. What can ameliorate the marginalities experienced? What attitudes and structures need to be in place to include me as a citizen? How can organisations change so that I feel included?

What could reduce the multiple indignities lived by blind persons? On the macro level, governments may improve the regulatory and operating envelope. They must find ways to reach into the micro level of individual organisations, and insist upon aspects of diversity. But how can that be done without destroying the branding and exclusivity that promotes disability multiculturalism, marks out niche NFPs, sets up and prolongs rivalries, creates competition, fostering inter-organisational difference, rather than intra-organisational diversity?
Chapter Six

Scintillas in the Mist

There is the hackneyed cliché of a movement (or a book, or an idea) whose time has come, a transitional point that becomes established due to evolutionary or revolutionary changes in perceptions or power structures, after which at least something is different, something important has changed. Depending upon where one sits on the spectrum of the possible, events may be positive or negative. The research accompanied and catalysed some of these moments for blind persons of diverse sexualities, at least in the environment of BCA, and has been present at and recorded others. Why particularly were there changes in BCA? – perhaps because, as an organisation it is accessible to its members.

This chapter first nails up some picture rails so that the pictures painted from the research can be hung upon them, not to represent ‘cause and effect’, but to display the emergence of moments and movements which first attracted some angst or ire, and historically in the broader community, violence. Unusual art (cubism, impressionism) needed to reach turning points in time to become accepted, but by 2007 Australian organisations could have taken the lead of BCA, when sexual diversity no longer needed to be made into a vexing issue. But most organisations do not inter-relate or take cues from each other, and noting makes them so do.

The chapter then responds to every research query, describing the pictures painted during a cultural moment. The research is presumptuous enough to believe that there are answers to every problem, inhibited only by contesting powers wishing to maintain spheres of control and influence. The
future roles of the federal government and the Third Sector are considered, as well as the engagement of constituents in their organisational processes. Importantly, what happened to the organisations, not just what happened to the gatherings and neo-groups, is dealt with in broad brush-strokes.

**Picture rails**
The research revealed tension between the various identities to which QLGBT people characterized by sensory impairment or difference may wish to aspire on the one hand, and expressions of identities and lifestyles embraced by advocacy and service organisations on the other. Interpretations by the researcher have been structured from understandings about the circumstances, environments and issues in the lives of respondents and organisations. As with the work of Ball, Maguire and Macrae (2000), there is no claim made that the “analytic possibilities” of the data have been exhausted (p.151). Resources included autobiographies, personal correspondence and other histories via blogs, e-mails, verbal accounts and response to the research website, all mediated by the research, presence of the researcher, or accoutrements of the research environment. Areas of overlap might give a sense of “déjà vu” as the colours or stains of identity seep into each picture.

Relationships were investigated between nonprofit organisations and their stakeholders, and as a result, possible ways to achieve more inclusive citizenship for marginalized small populations have been revealed. Apart from personality clashes causing deviation from group ‘norms’, differences among d/Deaf and blind and vision impaired persons and deviances from any ‘group ethos’ can
derive from the ages at which the onset of sensory difference of impairment is first experienced, which can place persons among various marginal environments that result.

For blind and even Deaf persons, social environments can be difficult to negotiate even according to the availability, position and fluctuation of light: Deaf persons must be able to ‘read’ facial expressions and Auslan, and persons who are blind or vision impaired may be more confident in their O and M if there is sufficient light to perceive outlines and obstacles, and other blind persons get about better with less light. Kuusisto reflected (1998, p. 13) “I am blind in a bittersweet way... my impressions of the world are at once beautiful and largely useless”. The more one inhabits the margins, the more difficult it can be to find company; our lives are anyway precarious cultural moments, tenuously situated in *swirls of intersectionality*.

6.1 What happened to the groups?
The research has found persons who are blind and d/Deaf and of diverse sexualities working through and/or establishing various identities, sometimes living and operating in multiple environments. These persons have aspired to form or belong to groups of like-minded souls, many wishing to find companionship or partners. They are or have been stakeholders in organisational processes and all seek improved futures, individually or collectively.

**Dwelling subculturally**
The western capitalist world provides numerous possible sub-realms of habitation. In authoritarian cultures, subcultural expression is anathema and
often ruthlessly pursued with intent to obliterate. Western capitalism, by contrast, often finances and subsidises the subcultures that oppose it. Curiously, it also sees threats where none exist. The fear of subcultures in Western capitalism is likely to originate in a dominant subculture reciprocally nurtured by the society, whether they want to nurture it or not. For example: the implacable opposition to homosexuality by Catholicism and other religious organisations that enjoy taxation benefits, which amount to broad taxpayer funded subsidies. Deny these religious groups their perks, and they may be less vociferously aggressive in their persecution of people who should be allowed equal citizenship.

For some subcultural denizens, migration between lifestyles is inhibited or impossible (Yinger, 1970): how can one be openly homosexual and a Muslim, or Catholic, or ultra-Orthodox Jew, for examples? Once ‘out’, it may not be possible to get back ‘in’. Disporting oneself in a subculture might require the fostering of identity management, avoiding disclosure of detail that is potentially destabilizing (Irwin, 1997; Chasin, 2000). Masquerade (see Terminology), and the self-suppression of identity have been useful and necessary survival tools in social constructions where it is dangerous to be authentic (see Terminology). Sometimes, masquerade and identity management are next to impossible: how to be a black indigenous person, who is also blind and of diverse sexuality, in outback Australia? Every difficulty we miss is a new blessing.

Subcultures are "attempts to create or select solutions" (Cohen, 1970, pp. 97-108), to lack of representation. The research has found that subcultures cannot
be represented by advocacy and service organisations for blind and d/Deaf persons because community power constructs need to constrain expressible identities in the interests of presenting universalized stereotypical imagery of group mores. Conflict has been engendered by the nuances and polarities generated. Some persons believe in and perform identities that are fixed, bilateral and oppositional while others experience, use and define themselves with diverse and sometimes multiple identities.

To assert the existence of cohesive, representative subcultures comprises acknowledgement of political and cultural investment over time. However, member incongruities over time may render subcultural mores unrepresentative. While transient neo-groups may sometimes be appropriate to organisational flux, they will be of little use politically in lobbying or public (re)presentation. Groups formed with intention to represent QLGBT subcultures were, in the instance of blind persons: never cohesive, never fully formed as there was never a committee or coming together to debate and institute any agenda, and they were never representative as no issues were established to represent and very few of the putative members took part. There was no ‘cultural’ celebration of blindness or being blind - no joyous reactions to loss of sight have been found, and it is unlikely, if they exist, that they would be believed. There were affirmations of being culturally Deaf, but no confirmation that any cohesive subcultural group of QLGBT persons had formed to represent their interests.

**Drops, drizzles and spurts**

If parameters of success include consistency, longevity and engagement of members, it might be said that many groupings of peers for blind and d/Deaf
persons of diverse sexualities have failed. However, even limited existence has served the purpose of creating awareness, generating momentum which may be revived and successively built upon, perhaps if maintained via the internet, which is cheap and flexible. Intergroup evaluations and intergroup behaviours might be totally disassociated; existence of stereotypes may play no role or convey valid predictions of prejudice; there may be conceptualizing of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours – not least because, among the in-group, the salient feature may be *ambivalence* (Mackie and Smith, 1998, p. 501-502); while in the out-group, interplay of subjectivities such as uncertainty or self-enhancement can prejudice out-group coherence and cohesiveness. The internet can cater for the establishment and maintenance of these seeming contradictions.

The short-term existence of these groups has relationships to the advocacy and service organisations and to the orbits in which d/Deaf and blind persons find themselves functioning. The longevity of the groups or lack of it depends upon numbers of persons potentially be involved, widespread geographies, the often vagabond nature of identities and cultures, the expectations and lived experiences of the cohort who make or respond to the calls for establishing these groups, and desire for privacy from gossip and observation. The ‘*validity*’ of any goal to sustain such groups must take account of *all* these factors.

The history of each aspiring neo-group resides in various people, in fragments, and persons have different perceptions of those histories. Such histories would provide posterity with important information about the lived realities of marginalized persons who would prefer to live non-heteronormative lifestyles.
Australian advocacy and support organizations were not and are not interested to host these potentially transient and even potentially inflammatory groups under their auspices. Documenting the histories of these small groups in accurate detail is difficult; that is due not only to varying ideas of what transpired as well as dispersion and death of participants, but also to changes in CEOs and committee members, and because incumbents over decades may have no vested interest in documenting organisational histories and decisions to which they have been party.

The short-term existence of these groups and attempts to organize them indicates that the broader blind and d/Deaf population demographic, and the organisations, have in the past passively negated their existence. However, in the years following 2003, at least BCA has progressively become more relaxed with the idea of publicly acknowledging diversity. The research was witness as tentative intra-organisational dialogue by BCA with persons of diverse sexualities re-emerged, re-energized, and helped catalyse that improvement.

6.2 Fragments of Theirstory

Minimal information is extant about group formation, operation and denouement. Whilst the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Melbourne, Victoria, hold some information from the 1980s ‘gay press’, including information about the Waratah Deaf gay group and its loose inter-relationships with other groups for Deaf gay persons, little has been documented by participants. The groups had an intermittent history, were clandestine to the broad average public, and contributed to the ‘gay scene’, anecdotally, numerous.

Anecdotally, the ALSO Foundation has archives, but a search of their sparse website January 2012 failed to find any mention or link.
of them attending the ‘leather scenes’ at sex-on-premises venues. Many Deaf men succumbed to the AIDS virus. The early ads of ‘Death’ at a bowling alley, with young persons of both genders as the ‘pins’, being victims of Death’s bowling, led to a downturn of attendances by Deaf Gays at bowling alleys, as the message was taken from its appearance, having not been explained in Auslan. Associations for Deaf gay men were apparently overtaken by Deaf gay women, with the men departing and associating informally through the mid-1990s. More recently the groups fragmented to fade away. Only on a couple of occasions was there overt hostility expressed by gay Deaf persons against lesbian Deaf persons in general, and vice versa. Such was not noticed amongst blind respondents, but is certainly often the instance among hearing and sighted lesbian and gay persons.

Amongst Deaf persons there would be at least five (male) persons of particular interest who could be interviewed at length, and preferably a number of times, to gain a clear understanding of the politics and chronology of events in this important era of minority histories. At least three of these persons, who have been leaders in Deaf cultural matters, were respondents to this research. The persons who could best document these histories – both male and female - at this time only express reserve, or somewhat distracted interest in thoroughly reflecting upon group histories. It may be a topic with which they will be prepared to deal in their more senior years. There will anyway be a number of different perspectives as to why things happened or did not.

Amongst blind persons of diverse sexualities, while many persons had opinions on political matters concerning advocacy and service organisations, as well as
attitudes, politics and behaviours of other blind persons in blindness environments, no one appeared to have an overall conception of what happened with attempts to organise any group for sexually diverse persons, or be able or willing to convey what inhibits the formation of such groups for sexually diverse blind persons. As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, that indeterminism was a partial catalyst for the investigation.

**History of recent groups for blind persons**
Reasons why the original putative organisation *Blind Out and Proud* failed to get momentum in 2003 and *BASIC* lapsed in 2004 became evident in the research process. It was not particularly any active desire by BCA as an organisation to thwart member concerns or interests, but in June 2003 there was an open protest about the possibility of BCA having a *Queer* group as an affiliate in the same context as the Women’s Group, and this is a protest letter - http://www.bca.org.au/news0306.htm - *Blind Citizens Australia News* June 2003, *Letter to the Editor* [these are the relevant three paragraphs]:

> I would like to comment on [X’s] article about being blind and queer. I imagine there are many obstacles that queer people face if they are also blind, especially information about lifestyle, social opportunities, peer support and literature. I would expect BCA to support members to advocate for changes to overcome these obstacles. I would also expect that BCA would act to ensure that queer people were not discriminated against in any aspect of its activities. I do not believe, however, that BCA should be used as a vehicle for confronting homophobic attitudes, however repellent they may be.

While successive CEOs of BCA gradually pursued policies inclusive of diversity, this attitude expressed in this letter prevailed until about 2007. The letter is marked by fears: of outside opinion, loss of status and claim to resources and clinging to past ways of doing things. The letter continues [emphasis added]:


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BCA is the united voice of all Australians. Its members include people from all walks of life, with the full range of political, religious and cultural beliefs. If we introduce the idea that BCA has a right to question other aspects of members’ lives, we jeopardise our position as the authoritative voice of blind people – **including our ability to seek funding, sponsorship, and most importantly, members.** BCA has remained strong for so many years because it has retained its focus on blindness as its reason for being – our reason for being together. I have seen this demonstrated by the National Women’s Branch, where it is recognised that **if it espoused feminism it would lose many hardworking members and splinter** as debate ensued about **what form of feminism** it espoused.

This resonates with an interview conducted with a person who felt she had been marginalised out of a Women’s Group, because although being a mother and having been married, she casually declared her lesbianism, and is by nature an activist. The writer of this *Letter to the Editor* was on the same committee. [Name of author removed in case she has changed her outlook].

BCA exists to change the world for blind people, including those who are queer. I hope there are similarly effective organisations to help change the world for queer people.

Some individuals who subscribed to the original **BASIC** generated by *Blind Out and Proud* (see Appendix One), also became subscribers to the later incarnation of **ozblindnotstraight** (November 2007), which quickly became **ozblinddiv** (February 2008); but consistency, cooperation and perseverance were not structured features of any incarnation (Milian and Erin, 2008; Erin, 2008; Ferrell and Griego, 2008); there was anyway nothing substantial to nurture or support from what was loosely and very tenuously spun by the internet group of blind persons. Benefits accruing to blind persons who subscribed to **ozblinddiv** have included a sense of refuge, and that there was a ‘fall back’ position to loneliness. However, the ‘safe space’ ideal was too quickly undermined by internal ‘attacks’ from a hyper-critical member. The list of subscribers became quiet within twelve months of establishment. Many subscribers had elected
anonymity by request to the moderator, although some had revealing internet addresses, while other names and addresses were masks. Most persons did not enter into exchanges of views on any topic at all: typically, just one or two persons wrote. By 2011 the list was largely dormant, there was little response to postings, with minor flurries of interest. (Groups for sexually diverse Deaf persons seem to have lasted years longer, but without renewal of membership ensuring their long term survival).

Blind respondents had an opportunity to network via the internet list that was established during and as a result of the research. When persons did communicate, it was not always in what would be termed an interested and friendly manner. There was ultimately a lack of friendly interchange and exhortation: while it might be broadly known that one contributor to the list was going on a holiday, no interest would be evinced from other list members: no expressions of 'bon voyage', no interest in the trip itself, or a safe return. When many members of the group went on a theatre outing to a production (where audio-description was arranged at quite some effort), no substantial comment was put on the list for universal circulation but there was, oddly, a sharp rebuke from an attendee for a query having being posted requesting a review of the performance. No general appraisal of the outing was given.

Subscribers to the list did not give any evidence of interest to assist in making the list functional or to create, in fact, any real organisation of blind sexually diverse persons at all. Under these conditions, the creator and owner of the list expressed his frustration, appealed regularly for help, posted interesting items that received no feedback and which almost no one offered evidence of having
read. When the list convenor took some unilateral action – for example in regard to contacting the *relatively* successful organisation now named *BlindLGBTPride.org* in the USA - he was criticized by ‘x’ as not consulting list subscribers first to have them review his letter of approach. That regular respondent was typically critical of anything posted, often with a negative interpretation of what he had read. This inhibited the progressively measly contribution that prevailed: it seemed that respondents refrained from writing to the list because they anticipated being ‘jumped upon’ with criticism and comment that was often wildly inaccurate and inappropriate.

In the meantime, *Facebook* and other forms of internet social networking developed.\(^{115}\) Ultimately, within eighteen months of the list being started, the founder and convenor evidently lost interest, although sporadically returning with decreasing frequency to post items that he thought may evince subscriber involvement or response. Blind persons in the research did not seem to establish amongst other *previously unknown* participants any regularised, long-term, inter-personal contact, perhaps due to distance and the small pool of persons, desire for privacy, lack of trust that confidences would be maintained, and lack of inter-personal attraction. In November 2011 a blind contributor asked of *ozblinddiv*, via the internet: “Is anybody home?” There was only one reply; the

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\(^{115}\) BCA Parent News August 2011 ([www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au)) Blind and Vision Impaired Social & Support Facebook Group. ([www.facebook.com/groups/v.i.p.supportgroup?ap=1](http://www.facebook.com/groups/v.i.p.supportgroup?ap=1)) A closed Australia wide Facebook group has been developed for people who are blind or vision impaired. The group states that “The goal with this group is to get Young Members involved in the community and to get out and about and to stop isolation!! You can be any age to join, but at the moment we are mainly involved in support for the younger community from ages 16 to 35. There are discussions available for different age groups also! We have our own events and list events that are happening through blindness organisations to keep you updated with what’s happening! We like to do fun things in this group, our last event was Thunder Jet Boat riding in Sydney Harbour. If you would like to get out there, have some fun and meet other people with low vision and blindness, PLEASE JOIN!” Email v.i.p.supportgroup@groups.facebook.com
list moderator did not comment for several weeks. Subsequently, at the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, there was a minor brief revival in list posting, only in Victoria, among a few males.

Apart from the group ignited by this research, Australian internet groups for persons who are sexually diverse exist. The ALSO Foundation (www.also.org.au) survives. In the 1980s groups for Deaf persons got fleeting publicity as they gestated in the hothouse atmosphere of tenuous claims for recognition in the hostile, unfavourable Australian emotional, legal, medical and social climates that then prevailed. The original Deaf trail-blazers have aged – or died. Deaf youth and persons of various sexual persuasions sometimes network via Facebook (see pp. 373 et seq herein), and there are informal meetings at pubs and other venues. Anecdotally, activism has faded away and the live scene is rife with gossip, which some potentially sociable persons prefer to avoid.

Heteronormative blind and d/Deaf persons may devalue or not wish to consider the needs of those among them who are of diverse sexualities. Organisational actors and protagonists, even if they do not harbour prejudice, should be mindful that the first duty of an organisation is to survive. That survival could be prejudiced by perceptions that sexual diversity was receiving undue organisational emphasis – as it often does with a prurient media and curious broader public.

116 The ASLO Foundation offers outreach to QLGBTI persons.
117 Access Plus offered outreach in Victoria to sexually diverse persons with disabilities. It went on Facebook 14 January 2008, had its last posting about an event 13 February 2008, and was virtually defunct by that November (MCV Magazine, 05/11/2008).
**Being d/Deaf in deafness organisations and groups**

While d/Deaf persons formed groups of by non-heteronormative individuals outside the parvenu of mainstream d/Deaf organisations, there is no record of any d/Deaf diversely sexual group ever being interested to seek IORs with DA or TDFA, nor to seek affiliation, approval, affirmation or acknowledgement. Respondents to the research who are Deaf complained of 'backstabbing' and gossip in DeafWorld, but in this way DeafWorld may not be ostensibly different to that of the enveloping social construct. In both environments, political gossip and backstabbing can reach the available media, but in DeafWorld, with finite limits of its constituency and being numerically small even if geographically widespread, gossip and backstabbing can be inescapable and individual lives may be rendered incapable of reconstruction.

While DA does is an organisation principally for persons signing Auslan, TDFA is more inclusive of a wider range of deafness but did not elicit mention from most respondents. TDFA may be open, accommodating, adaptable and willing to encompass diversity of d/Deaf and be impartial to individual and sexual diversities, so association with it is unlikely to be conflicted. Research respondents had mostly a passionate association with AAD/ DA that was often conflicted. DA was sometimes appreciated and the CEO thereof considered to be accommodating at least of homosexuality, but the organisation had never issued any statement supportive of sexual diversity. An overall impression was that a statement by DA of acceptance would be a positive move in establishing a precedent of basic courtesy that could be emulated throughout DA by volunteers, members and employees. Such a statement would need to state that DA accepted the diversity of its constituents and stakeholders and acknowledge
that DeafWorld, in the diversity of its inhabitants, at least is the equivalent of the broader world in all its complexity.

Being Deaf is perceived as foremost a cultural state based upon linguistic difference. These linguistic differences are perceived and experienced as being substantive enough to provide experiences of both the body and lived environments substantially divergent, if not at odds, to those perceptions and experiences of persons with hearing. The literature largely depicts those persons in that separate state of communicating only with Auslan as if under siege by the dominant hearing culture. Deaf persons express an ownership of culture in being Deaf, while deaf persons who do not fluently sign Auslan and/or who use hearing aids or were deafened later in life, expressed ambivalence. They felt somewhat adrift between Deaf and hearing – certainly unaccepted by the inhabitants and mores of Deaf culture. Schisms within DeafWorld do not seem more predicated upon sexual preference than upon being a Deaf person who flirts with the prospects of cultural genocide by acceptance and use of technologies to provide hearing or by indulging methods which exclude Auslan.

6.3 Sustainable convergence of sustainable interests
Isherwood maintained that any minority (1964, p. 59) “hates the majority ... It even hates other minorities – because all minorities are in competition.” Such would seem to also mitigate against the establishment of sustainable groups. Even the building of intra-group relationships amongst persons of diverse sexualities who are hearing and those who are d/Deaf, and between persons who are blind and amongst QLGBT persons who are sighted is fraught with difficulty, division and impermanence. The righteous goal to augment social
capital and increase integration of marginalized communities is not solely sabotaged by dominant power constructs. Brewer (2007, p. 731), maintains:

Humans are characterized by two opposing needs that govern the relationship between the self-concept and membership in social groups. The first is a need for assimilation and inclusion, a desire for belonging that motivates immersion in social groups. The second is a need for differentiation from others that operated in opposition to the need for immersion.

There is no certain science as to how balance between individuality and desire for belonging might be worked out. The research found that groups formed with intention to represent QLGBT subcultures and people with sensory difference have not survived and that there was no true 'subculture' to represent. The realm is one of transient ‘neo-groupings’ which if they ever function, wax and wane, transmogrify or die. The groups form with ideas of self-advocacy and individuals want to belong when needy, but when individuals experience positive personal events the group is often abandoned, if in fact it ever formed, because they are inimical to privacy. The process is exacerbated if the group convener or moderator does not have a broad socially active interest in maintenance of the group. Moderators or conveners may emotionally abandon the group if and when their personal needs are met, if the apathy of other members makes them despondent, or if resources of time and imagination cannot be committed. The instigator of a group may not wish to pass on the list of members or create a process of succession due to lack of confidence or trust in any other person’s ability or discretion to moderate proceedings, or because of issues relating to personal ego.

Establishing groups for people of diverse sexualities for people with sensory difference or disability has been tried with minimal long-term success, but not
without advantage. Persons who have had access to these transient, almost will-o-the-wisp groups have at least generated the ghost of an idea that may be reproduced, perhaps made a contact if they need to chat and gained awareness that there are others who have shared similar doubts and emotions. With the internet, such gatherings can re-congeal in negotiable forms.

Acknowledgement from advocacy and service organisations could be made in some way – there is no need for organisational endorsement or affiliation with the angst that might be wrought for some organisation members. Perhaps familiarisation and acknowledgement if deemed suitable, and reference made on the organisation website. The QLGBT group could make continued efforts to contact various state and community agencies, such as any Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association: proposals for joint introductory meetings or talks might wear down any aloofness encountered. Overarching all of this is the universal struggle for resources.

For gatherings and neo-groups to survive, there has to be more than one person as the driving force. The research found that internet groupings were too unstable to congeal into long-term subcultures, being riven within a few years of inception by animosities and/or apathy. Gossip is part of net-working and establishing status and power relations. Blind as well as d/Deaf respondents mentioned gossip as a factor inhibiting positive, continuing relationships in blind and Deaf environments. These problems would need to be overcome. Small committees of at least three persons need to meet regularly. A list moderator or convenor needs to have a line of succession or a holiday replacement. For even this to prevail, persons must have discretion (no gossip
or snide dealing), and be socially trustworthy. As well there should be a core of at least a dozen active members with a potential pool of perhaps another twenty. This may be stretching possibilities too far. However, if non-blind and non-d/Deaf persons are made welcome, while other issues will arise, the diversity may create and sustain some momentum, because ‘Core Outsider Status’ – the fact of being d/Deaf or blind, may not be enough for a group to cohere. To quote myself (p. 160 herein): difference and disability are instruments to be deployed, not features to be displayed or ogled. But for these tools to be politically useful, there has to be uniformity, not only of aims, but also of the disability itself. Individuation may be inimical to group ascendency and retention of influence and power, because these "ontologically distinct communities" need a "common purpose in dialogue" (Corker, 2000, p. 7).

Those ‘communities’ also need a legal framework, but Federal and State politics impact on this. By not agreeing to ‘gay marriage’, the Gillard Labor government illustrates little interest in the ‘gay vote’ or Lesbian and Gay agendas\(^\text{118}\) for the 2013 election. More recently, exemplifying the ‘NIMBY’ approach - *Not In My Back Yard* - the Gillard government made it easier for Australian lesbian and gay persons to get married overseas.\(^\text{119}\) This is would appear to mock any program of the newly hyped Australian ‘department of social inclusion’, sending as it does an affirmed message that sexually diverse people are ‘Other’ and deserve to be treated as such – exiled to weird and exotic places like Portugal, South Africa, Canada and the Australian Capital Territory, perhaps?\(^\text{120}\)


6.4 The quest for safe spaces
Safe spaces for blind persons and d/Deaf persons of diverse sexualities may be their homes and their friends’ homes, although back-yard barbeques present socialising difficulties to blind persons. Bars and pubs are mostly inappropriate due to noise, lighting and other hazards. Picnics in public places could pose problems of safety and spectacle. Beyond that, various state versions of the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities may provide suitable facilities, or group conveners could find and negotiate empathic environments; coffee shops and cafes are possible for table-sized groups. The advocacy and service organisations should provide safe emotional territories for consultations and advice on deafness and blindness issues as well as physically safe territories such as lounges and meeting or party rooms.

Despite transience and failures to gestate, groups for people of diverse sexualities are valuable in d/Deaf and blind environments, in order to give persons who might otherwise feel alienated points of contact and reference. While notions of security and stability could be engendered if the groups were to survive, even short-term existence provides sign-posts and contacts. In the research, it seemed that few persons involved wished to establish long-term mutual interpersonal obligations amongst other neo-group acquaintances.

6.5 Reflections in the organisational mirror
It is ‘lack’ that motivates political activity and extreme measures for minorities that feel excluded from processes affecting their lives; and the individuals within those minorities wish to be acknowledged as citizens with equal rights to the societal average. The research has shone a spotlight on these advocacy and service organisations for minorities – BCA, DA, TDFA and VA – and there is no
doubt that only BCA has openly embraced the issues of diversity. TDFA in its embrace of d/Deaf and technology, is eroded at the ‘culturally Deaf edge’ by DA, and at the other edge by new, more active organisations, such as Shhh Australia Inc (Shhhaust.org), which is very much about technological assistance for deafness. DA, TDFA and VA demonstrate no interest in persons of diverse sexualities and do not promote ‘other organisations’ for any issues of diversity. Whatever those ‘other organisations’ might be is not canvassed by DA, TDFA or VA in any context. This ‘compartmentalising’ by the service organisations is a notion akin to the Mainstreaming of education: it seems to function ‘in principle’, and it ostensibly ‘gets rid’ of any problems by putting them elsewhere, but it fails to recognize and deal with the special needs and variety of outlook that may accrue to individuals with sensory difference, compared to issues confronting the average sighted and hearing person who might appeal to QLGBT organisations or services.

Organisations may convey representations and imagery that the organisations prefer its clients, constituents and the public to consume. The forging of acceptable identity parameters is part of a process comprising a struggle for power over the bodies and lives of constituents, seeking to preserve control instead of ameliorating isolation or considering diversity of constituents and stakeholders.

6.6 Neo-groups, acknowledgment, peaks
Whether the groups gain acknowledgement depends to an extent upon the aims of the groups. As shown earlier in this research, the short-lived Australian Deaf groups of the 1980s and early 1990s have all but faded away. The research wondered if there was any substantive interest in, or reasons for, reviving such
small neo-groups. Hence respondents were asked: *What could a Deaf GLBT group do for you?*

A: If the group was prepared to **advocate and engage** in lobbying activities (such as same-sex marriage), **then I may be interested** in the group. Currently, the group organises social activities, which I don’t necessarily need. I do however recognise the importance of such social groups for other Deaf QLGBT people, particularly those who have moved from other areas and don’t know anyone.

Perhaps such matters comprise issues upon which peaks do not wish to comment. The advocacy organizations Deaf Australia (DA) and Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) have remarkably different attitudes to being approached about sexual diversity. Anecdotally and historically, DA has had more sexually diverse persons in its administration than BCA. At the highest level, DA does not appear to be averse to having sexual diversity in its administration or among its members. However it does appear to be coy about the potential presence of diverse persons. The impression is that DA does not wish to stir up what may be a broader Deaf negative reaction to persons who are sexually diverse, just as we non-hetero persons often do not wish to stir up broader negative ‘red-neck’ reaction by drawing attention to ourselves in many situations. BCA is by contrast, relaxed and relatively a trail-blazer for diversity. DA, unlike BCA, seems to think it unwise to position or promote itself as providing ‘safe space’ for sexually diverse constituents.

### 6.7 Building IORs

The survival of special interest groups might be abetted if they could expect to receive acknowledgement from peak organisations of d/Deaf culture and blindness advocacy and service provision organisations. However, even acknowledgement by BCA of ozblinddiv was not enough to ensure its survival.
However, it did provide a measure of authenticity and paved the way for some future group formation if culturally and socially persons who are sexually diverse and blind feel they need to form a group to press for recognition of special interests. However, the groups should provide a Code of Conduct and have suitable ‘Aims’ and ‘Methods’ (see those expressed by BASIC in 2003/4 in Appendix One). There needs also to be an appropriate hierarchy of responsibility with sanctions in place regarding behaviour of members so that unseemly behaviour does not reflect on any sponsoring, authorizing or otherwise complicit stakeholder or the nonprofit organisation itself.

To survive, the special interest groups need to follow formulae that are well spelt out in theories of small groups and organisations and be aware of best practice and risk. They should be formed with small committees of at least three persons who are willing to take on-going responsibility in accordance with job descriptions. In such ways they will engender confidence not only in prospective members but among authoritative organisations and persons in their environments and the broader community.

In QLGBT environments the liberationist mood and model has expired along with energy, commitment, cohesion, group protagonists and focus (Gamson, 1996; Plummer V3, 2002; Secomb, 1999). Apart from the mimic-projects of marriage, homosex parenting and in-vitro fertilization IVF), IOR establishment with d/Deaf and blind persons by QLGBT persons seems to be of no interest. During the research, the secretary of the Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association (GLWA) of Queensland was e-mailed by the moderator of the on-line group for sexually diverse blind persons, but she did not return the contact. The
researcher then contacted the secretary about contact with the on-line blind group, but nothing eventuated. She evinced no apparent interest, and did not ask any questions, nor make any response to information offered. One might assume that she felt providing blind persons with the website contact address was sufficient, and that person who wished to be involved or use the service could individually volunteer to engage with GLWA. In fact, that may be a reasonable and rational outlook: not to 'nanny' or hand-feed any particular group of individuals who may be capable of making a phone call and reaching out. However the researcher felt, belonging to GLWA as a paying member, when attending random GLWA functions over a number of years, that it was ageist, oddly 'wary', 'cliquey' and not particularly welcoming or friendly. The website does not display competent management of financial affairs: as of November 2011, the financial reports for the years 2009 and 2010 were still “coming soon”, as were those for 2004 and 2005” (glwa.org.au). This could ignite some aggravation in past and future prospective donors.

**Sighted** and **hearing** QLGBT persons and groups did not establish IORs with persons characterised by blindness, low-vision and deafness. There are anyway communication challenges to such contact and mutual embrace, let alone integration. Opening up organisations may be a way to facilitate future IORs. But it is unlikely that there will be any "articulation of a universalist approach" (Weinzierl and Muggleton, 2003, p. 16) sufficient to unite the disparate elements. As hereinbefore asserted, without effective IORs, groups and organisations cannot survive.
On 7 September 2008, Gary Kerridge wrote in the–rebuttal.com:

... Deaf Australia have become too isolationist ... [they] try to go it alone on too many issues... there are overseas models where Deaf and hearing impaired groups share resources, management and political messages...there is a case for merging Deaf Australia and Deafness Forum ... the hostility and sniping that goes on between our two peak bodies ...does Deaf and hearing people no favours at all... it is an embarrassment.

On 24 March 2010, in the-rebuttal.com, Kerridge, disclosing that he was at that time aboard member of TDFA) continued the theme more emphatically:

Collaborate or Die! ... DA does not handle conflict and negotiation well ... DA seem to be narrowing the scope of who they even want to represent... do I really want to be on the board of an organisation that is so purist? Are you deaf enough to be ‘Deaf Australia Deaf’.

Just as lack of regular connection between groups fragments the potential safe space, the lack of IORS limits organisational development. However, in April 2011 BCA made a presentation to the Productivity Commission public hearing. BCA at that time also made a joint submission with DA, TDFA and the Australian DeafBlind Council on the impact of a proposal regarding people with sensory disabilities (from the Blind Citizens Australia 36th Annual Report, 2010-2011).

6.8 Discrimination, exclusion, organisational governance
The governance that fails to mobilize the administrative tools required to eliminate organisational discrimination and exclusion is that of ‘ordinary people’ - unable, unwilling or scared to countenance persons and processes outside their usual realms of habituation. Fear of problems being generated, lack of empathy, experience or training, and sometimes lack of education mean organisational elites can be immobilised at the idea of taking on what to them are issues for other organisations, which they have made no attempt to find or
consult. Discrimination and exclusion do, however, have roles to play in keeping organisations viable. If membership is diffuse then focus can be equally diffuse and missions difficult to fulfil. An organisation cannot be about everything.

**Summarizing the organisational swirl**
The advocacy and representative organizations for persons who are blind and d/Deaf position themselves differently in regard to those of their constituents who are not heteronormative. The Deafness Forum of Australia (TDFA) could be typified as having similarities to Vision Australia (VA): they do not get involved in issues of personal preference but as organisations do not discriminate, having non-heteronormative people at various levels of their organizations performing in responsible positions.

TDFA particularly makes efforts to reach out to the full spectrum of persons who are d/Deaf, without mentioning sexual diversity. Individuals in VA and TDFA might express negative opinions of sexually diverse persons, and there is no known charter of behaviour to guard against the actions of such persons. However, the first duty of DA is to survive as a going concern, and its apparently broad-minded executive is arguably taking the correct action to ensure that the accommodating attitudes of individual members, including executive and staff, will permit inclusion to prevail, so long as the DA ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy is maintained.

**6.9 Adjusting the focus of the Third Sector**
'Community' is not an applicable concept to the environments researched despite wide deployment of the term, and the research does not want to be an accomplice to any particular respondent viewpoints. A deal of inter-
organisational work needs to be done between parties concerned before any assessment can be made regarding how to progress issues of awareness, recognition and conciliation. Entities needing to negotiate and reconcile include: the nonprofit organisations: DA, TDFA, BCA, VA; various state associations for healthy communities; gay and lesbian welfare agencies, organisations or groups representing other interested parties, such as those representing transgender and intersex persons, as well as funding bodies, including various government agencies and health departments.

As a society, we need to decide what we want out of the Third Sector. Is portion of it to be about mandating and rewarding division and exclusiveness, granting status and concessions to niche hatreds? For whom or ultimately what is the sector designed? If any notion of a cohesive, broad Australian society is considered as a beneficiary, then the Australian Third Sector needs to be about inclusion and encouragement of acceptance of diversity in all organisations that receive government and taxpayer-sponsored benefits. Otherwise we have a Third Sector of which elements are fostering the maintenance of festering ill-will and fragmentation, and of which funded-benefit scenarios can only be rationalised by political expedience. To strip the illogicality and divisiveness from the Australian Third Sector framework will take years of tiny steps, not a blow-torch, because it is steeped in a wizard’s cauldron of politicised emotion and covered in an emotive, defensive, flame-proof cape of mystery.

Why insularity should be rewarded with concessions remains a topic for extensive analysis. To that extent, a register of the likely several hundred-thousand charitable and third sector mission statements searchable by key
words and phrases could prove to be a valuable analytical and tracking tool that facilitates exploration of organisational accountability - for example: checks that resources are applied to aims expressed in mission statements. The Australian government in 2011 has at last made a commitment to setting up an independent regulator of charities: the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC). The sector has been warned: Richard Noone reported (The Daily Telegraph, 24 October 2011), that “Charities experienced a short-term plunge in donations after a similar scheme in the UK threw open the ledgers”. A web-based information portal whereon charities will need to disclose financial records will be an ACNC priority.

The lack of interest by non-blind, non d/Deaf, QLG organisations to reach out to persons who have sensory difference and impairment may be typical of the ableism, aloof cliqueyness, elitism, fragmentation and stratification experienced in QLG (not including B and T) environments.

**Creation and maintenance of Qwir-friendly environments**

It is speculation that organisational embrace and provision of inclusive environments will permit the establishment of groups that cohere and interact. The example of BCA indicates that it was neither lack of encouragement or endorsement that caused the tentative QLGBT groups to live or die. ‘Queer’ with its intimations of ‘community’ may be oppositional to the convenient but mostly falsely cohesive agglomeration of 'lesbian/ gay/ bi-sexual/ transgender/ transvestite' (LGBT), but the key concept is ‘marginality’. Unfortunately, the creation of Qwir friendly environments is not just up to we Qwirs.
**QLGBT in blindness and d/Deaf organisations is not convenient**

Responses hint at caution in attempting to change the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy which prevails in advocacy and service organisations. The silence in Australia about Deaf-Queer leads to suppositions: one is that people think there is no need to talk about diverse sexualities because it is not an issue. Or it may be felt that attention drawn to QLGBT could have adverse impact on advocacy or service organisations, or the status particular persons or of DeafWorld. While there is overseas d/Deaf/ blind/ Queer biography and in Australia some historic visibility at least of d/Deaf gay persons on ‘the gay scene’, there has been no auto- or biographical information until this research. What has not been available to the research to some extent has been as important as what has been available: paucity of information reveals that blind and d/Deaf persons of diverse sexualities have not been thought about in Australia.

**General observations**

For persons culturally Deaf, it would be convenient if financial allowances and compensations for being deaf were named something like ‘Deaf allowance’, with no reference to disability. Then perhaps the notion of ‘Deaf Culture’ would be ‘clean’ to the uninitiated. Humans may be capable of such leaps in thought when the syntax is modified and euphemisms are employed, but empirical notions of a culture arguably remain tainted while ‘disability’ allowances are required, requested or provided. Whether such an approach would be adopted by persons from myriad other cultures inhabiting Australia is unknown. Perhaps they could claim inability or lack of willingness to learn English and also typify attempts by the Australian government to insist upon English language skills as ‘cultural genocide’.
What happened to the organisations?

This question may best be answered from three perspectives:

- Possible public perception of the broadcast images of each organisation,
- Likely member or follower numbers,
- Publication of financial reports.

Running a neo-group or organisation with Facebook reduces communicating expenses. DA, (T)DFA, and VA link to Facebook, via organisational websites, and only BCA does not have its own Facebook page. Social networks ostensibly make organisations and groups easier to run, but while potentially expanding a cohort, they may render social scenes amorphous or illusory. Taking group and organisational gridlines from the picture of what used to be can render abstract what might be there. Organisations with web pages may struggle to maintain them, but a saleable output helps. DA and (T)DFA have nothing to sell; Hear and Say quite a deal, and VA markets to anyone many useful items.

Broadcast images

DA has an attractive website (www.deafau.org.au), replete with embedded Auslan videos concerning matters of interest to Deaf persons. It was developed by Deaf Australia, funded by the Australian government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and kept up-to-date. The issue arousing most passion in the several months prior to the start of 2012, arrived with the statement by the founder of The Hear and Say Centre in Brisbane, Ms Dornan (Telstra’s Woman of the Year, 2011), that “Deafness is at the same stage as polio – it is a scourge in our world”. DA’s involvement with interactive discussion seems to have dulled somewhat with the advent of Facebook and Stop Deaf Cultural Genocide (See Appendix Three
for more of the social media aspect and membership interest). No financial information for any year is available on the DA website.

(T)DFA also receives funding via the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and discloses the amounts on its website, as well as an analytical chart of its membership. The year 2011 seems to have been problematic, with information inaccessible, perhaps due to critical staff and board changes building up at that time. Total membership is given as 226 entities and persons. The DFA website (www.deafnessforum.org.au) shows the 2010 Queensland membership was a total of 23 entities, comprising 7 persons, 4 consumer associations, 6 Service providers, and 6 Service Provider Associations. There is a pervasive sense that the realm of (T)DFA is being sliced up somewhat by the advent of other organisations that also embrace the use of technology.

These include: **SHHH Australia Inc.** – Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (www.shhhaust.org) – “a voluntary, non-profit educational organisation dedicated to helping Australians with a hearing loss and whose primary method of communication is through speech.” The organisation webpage has a link to its *Facebook* page, which in January 2012 had about fifty followers.

**Aussie Deaf Kids** (www.aussiedeafkids.org.au) believes combined methods should be used contemporaneously - ‘total communication’ – “to teach vocabularies and language in any ways that work”. Sign language is encouraged, but there are subtle hints that it is not going to be easy for the family of a Deaf child, that there are only “around 6,000” persons using Auslan as a first preference, and that technology should be embraced:
Learning the sign system and the vocabulary is a long-term, ongoing process. As your child’s sign language skills develop and become more complex, your family’s skills will need to keep pace to provide a stimulating language–learning environment for your child. You will also have to encourage your child to consistently use hearing aids, cochlear implants or FM system.

Then there is the site that seems politically incorrect to mention, *Hear and Say*, (www.hearandsaycentre.com.au), which has a link to its Facebook page that in January 2012 had over 19,500 ‘likes’, and which declares itself to be one of the leading Paediatric Auditory-verbal and cochlear implant centres in the world, teaching children who are deaf or hearing impaired to listen and speak since 1992.

*Hear and Say* has a formidable list of year 2010 donors, but overall there are no financial figures given by four of the five organisations mentioned. Only (T)DFA makes any disclosures. But DA at least seems to attract fierce loyalty, including from many of its QLG constituents, a number of whom hold positions of importance in DeafWorld, and several of whom were respondents to the research. Perhaps that is because it has attractive cultural and polarising issues to pursue.

As a side-note, the only ‘Deaf organisation’ to mention a link with a Qwir group is the Deaf Education Network (www.deaf.nsw.edu.au): that link is to the Deaf Gay and Lesbian Association of NSW (DGLA). A mobile phone number for SMS and an e-mail address are given, but it is not known how up-to-date the information may be. So it seems that our ‘three questions’, about organisation images, follower numbers and financial reporting regarding organisations for d/Deaf persons are answered inconclusively. Except for (T)DFA, member numbers are uncertain, and Facebook ‘Likes’ (or otherwise) are apparently easy to manipulate. This should matter to the funding sources, and the government
— often the latter is a large part of the former, and it should matter to the broad public if institutions claiming respect are post-modern fantasies.

The blindness organisation VA has an active Facebook site with apparently over 2,000 followers (www.visionaustralia.org). Financial information for VA is somewhat buried in its web site (see part (b) of Appendix Four). VA is among many corporations that have struggled to recover from investment losses; in 2012 donations have slowed, but erosion of its asset base has been ameliorated by timely property sales. At the time that several organisations amalgamated to form VA, there was an income of almost $69,000,000 per year and an asset base of about $170,000,000 (as in the Project Nexus report, www.rvib.org.au/downloads/campbell_pres_abf.org, October 2003). It is unknown what the National Disability Insurance Scheme announced in 2011 by the Federal government is going to mean for service-providing organisations, except that forward financial planning is rendered problematic.

A BCA media release (22nd October 2007), informed that BCA allowed full membership to persons who were not totally blind, so that persons who were vision impaired could join. This had been passionately contested by ‘the old guard’, but was critical to its future existence and relationship with VA, and this extra diversity has expanded the potential of BCA to survive. BCA reveals its financial data, usually rather late, but at least disclosure happens. It has no Facebook page, but is forging IORs with organisations that do have them. Like DA and (T)DFA, the bulk of its funding comes via the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and more recently it has benefitted financially through its IOR with VA.
In all, these are not organisational positions that would be tolerated by regulatory authorities in the Forprofit sector, or indeed if they were private businesses subject to ASIC regulation. No listed corporation of VA’s size could get away with what appears to be cavalier attitude to public financial reporting. No private organisations could be as discriminatory as some of these organisations are, or have been in the past. ‘Who’ is going to do ‘what’ about it, if anything?

**Conciliatory and remedial goals need to be defined**
The research ultimately looks for manifold positive outcomes for blind and d/Deaf persons of diverse sexualities and their advocacy and service organisations. How to reconcile resentment at exclusions; to have at least one school for primary education of blind children for those who wish it to alleviate loneliness felt in mainstreaming; to provide greater access to literature and other educational and recreational resources; for citizens to have permission not be tentative about their identities as sexual persons, eliminating the need to dissemble; enhance access to or opportunities for socializing in QGLBTI environments. Open representative organisations to scrutiny, assist co-operative stakeholders who abet organisational survival. Explain that expressing lived human truth, feared as distracting and divisive with potential to alienate financial and community support need not be so characterized, that human truth can be constructive and fulfilling in organisational settings; work to reduce any innate and historical prejudice that individuals in organisations might harbour against diversity by education and familiarisation.

Whether or not we can be authentic to whatever identity we wish to (re)present depends upon: the institutions to which we belong; our economic, political and
social status; upon what we are doing and want to do and achieve in what environment(s). By such dubious criteria, research respondents and the researcher could be deemed to have deviant and spoiled identities. Marginal people may have what are considered to be unorthodox views and be perceived as deviant to all societies in which they would be interested to take marginal roles. For instance: a self-described bisexual may confine sexual activities (or public evidence thereof) to heterosexual activities: such may be perceived as identity enhancement by the dominant hetero-power nexus, also by the subject. The in-group as well as the covert bisexual may now experience benefits of *uncertainty reduction*: mystery and doubt are removed, with the protagonists according to some cultural or notional *average*.

Obscenity begins when there is no more spectacle, no more stage, no more theatre, no more illusion, when everything becomes immediately transparent, visible, exposed in the raw and inexorable light of information and communication. We no longer partake of the drama of alienation but are in the ecstasy of communication.

Baudrillard, 1988, pp. 21-22.

Previously perceived ambivalent or free-flowing identities may be interpreted or experienced as destabilizing. Baudrillard queried how we are to disguise ourselves and dissimulate (1998), when our lives and all phenomena are transparent and we are subjected to procedures of identification, detection and dissuasion, and identity is forced upon us. He is not convinced that such circumstances are better than states of alienation (Seidman, 2004, p. 276). In other words, persons who experience their lives as alienated from the majority may be better off experiencing those states of existence than living the common tedium of being ordinary if they can accommodate and survive the mobilized angst of others. The supposedly enlightened west has intellectualized innate fears and prejudice naming it Eugenics, and has institutionalized phobias
against sexual diversity in attempts to typify and impose homogenized human experience.

Advocacy and service organisations have failed to represent such niche identities, these indeterminable, unquantifiable, forming/ dissolving/ resolving, personal identities that even when numerous and in association do not display the certitude and coherence conveyed by the term ‘segments’. So it cannot be said that the peak organisations have failed. By not succumbing to fragmentation, they have survived, even if they do not fulfil their mission statements regarding representation.

**Acknowledge that unitary identities are ultimately unlikely**

Any notion of unitary identity among blind or d/Deaf persons is likely to be a device around which socialisation and power can be organized, not an ultimately valid representation of voice. Perceptions of difference in minority ‘communities’ and resultant exclusions are integral to broader systems of dominance, just as with colonialism - which latter could only flourish because it took advantage of multiple tribes who were already actively committed to discriminating, devaluing, excluding and fighting among themselves, based on their social constructions of culture, genetics, heritage, heritance, ideologies and perceptions of difference. Potential colonialists may take advantage of innate human predisposition to impose colonially subjective values, differentiate, exclude or marginalize.

To gain moral standing the myriad disability cultures could consider their own often narcissistic behaviours, rationalisations and excluding practices. QLGBT persons similarly may have spokespeople - not always representative -
conveying notions of cohesiveness that do not reflect anything broader than a once-a-year Mardi Gras assemblage of difference. Disputing neo-groups with gradations of difference facilitate colonisation and domination by other but dissimilar cohesive, focussed, motivated, organised power structures, even though that colonising power structure is not representative of the cohort it ultimately dominates. It is not just that ableism entitles certain populations, closes off possibilities and destabilizes integration, or that disability is a fantasy of ableist imaginings (Campbell, 2008, 2009). Ableism has been a cult dominant in human survival, art and sport for millennia, arguably until the slow advent of the technological age. Blindness, having deafness, the lack of sensory perceptions and being sexually diverse are not going to achieve the cult status of ableism, despite the encouragements of Baudrillard, who also reminds us that “the body is a cultural fact” [sic - 1998, p. 129].

Celebrating disability, sexual diversity, being d/Deaf and exhibiting new ways of normativity can comprise strategies of resilience and resistance against threats of domination and obliteration. The research has examined ways in which identities inform the use and disposal of the lived body, but it is speculation how organisations (and individuals in them) might help constituents integrate and exchange between socially constructed worlds that participants experience differently. A quest that this research has not solved is what needs to be done so that blind persons and d/Deaf persons might not be rejected in whatever all the various QLGBTI environments might be. The putative groups in Australia that arose or were conceived for the special interests of sexually diverse persons with sensory difference or disability have not maintained positive inter-member attitude or actionable cohesiveness over any extended period that might have
validated the groups in the perceptions of their advocacy and service organisations.

For individuals in organisations, *acceptable* sexual diversity that is not considered too transgressive of dominant social norms has not prevented persons from rising to the top of advocacy and service organisations for either blind or d/Deaf persons. These organisations could assist sexually diverse constituents and members by establishing IORs with the various state Associations for Healthy Communities and Relationships Australia.

**Find acceptable iconic spokespersons, not superstars**  
There have been iconic personalities in the blindness and DeafWorlds, as there are in the worlds of culture, politics, entertainment and sport. Ornery attitudes such as expressed by the USA's National Federation of the Blind (NFB) can galvanize attention and respect.  

There is no equivalent organisation in Australia. BCA and VA are if anything now considered too close, with staff migrating between the organisations, and intimate organisational relationships. Some stakeholders are concerned that VA has entered the advocacy domain instead of totally delegating that to BCA. There are personalities in the 'blindness arena' who have 'been around for yonks' and who almost seem to have developed a – if not quasi-familial – long-standing intimate network of influence regarding matters of concern to constituents. Their influence is viewed as paternalistic and probably a major reason why BCA has not garnered increased membership, why certain organisational systems remain in place so long, and why now the organisation has extended its membership to non-blind

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121 As well as annoy - such NFB's opposition to audible traffic signals, tactile pathways and even to the USA at last differentiating the sizes of its paper currency, all under the general notion that 'blind people can cope just as well as sighted persons'.

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persons. Many of the 'old-hands' – persons blind from birth who have been members for decades – have been disaffected by this, and effort will have to be made to replace actively supportive members.

BCA prior to 2008 denied it would end up within VA. However, in the BCA 2010-2011 Annual Report, its association with VA is mentioned 21 times with VA suppling a good deal of its funding, being relatively well-off due to substantial bequests (despite the GFC – The Great Financial Crisis, 2007-2010, which took toll of VA assets). The organisation had realized some of its valuable properties before the crash and in the absence of frank disclosure it seems that its investment of the proceeds was unfortunate to the degree that employment and facilities were cut – such as closure of the blind school for children - to keep the organisation viable? It seems incomprehensible and has not been rationally explained.\textsuperscript{122} Blind persons who might have been employed by VA or as subcontractors to it can no longer count on such opportunities. Work is already difficult to find for persons who are blind and this makes the situation worse.

\textit{Future organisations}

Other organisational possibilities were canvassed for blind and Deaf persons. A culture change was suggested for some of the old board members in their nonprofit organisations, including in BCA where it was still felt that some older

\textsuperscript{122} 26/11/2010 BCA Press Release: Blind Citizens Australia today backed discussions in Parliament on the educational needs of children who are blind, whilst calling for a critical increase in funding to improve outcomes for children across Australia falling through the educational cracks. This call follows a Senate motion by Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector, Mitch Fifield calling for $2.2 million to fund the development of a specialist school for children who are blind, the Insight Education Centre for the Blind and Vision Impaired in Victoria. Blind Citizens Australia Executive Officer, Robyn Gaile, says that the funding of a blind specialist school in Victoria alone only goes a small way to addressing the root problem of the resourcing of education for children who are blind or vision impaired around Australia. “The core issue for our children is access to specialist resources full stop, irrespective of whether the child is in a mainstream or specialist setting.
board members thought diverse sexualities were something of a joke. Despite any whinging by some respondents that organisations do not do enough for minorities the research broadly conceives, as do the majority of Deaf respondents, that whilst the advocacy and service organisations could present inclusive statements on their websites, it is up to various diverse minorities to organize themselves into whatever form of groups they feel appropriate, amongst themselves. Once these groups, if they came into being, achieved critical mass it may be appropriate for the advocacy and service organisations to mention them on their websites, whilst not necessarily taking the step of according affiliate status taken by the American Council of the Blind. Any recognition would impose substantial duties of self-regulation on the diverse sexualities group to avoid disturbing behaviour and possible excommunication.

There is no rationale or need for Australian advocacy and service organisations for blind or d/Deaf persons to create or include affiliate groups organized around sexual diversity. However, advocacy and service organisations that comprise limited cultural diversity, with indigenous Australians not adequately represented, might fulfil their missions to be representative of all Australians in their cohort if they could secure funds and create a job description for an effective Cultural Diversity Officer. The possible portfolio for such a roving official with causative powers, perhaps shared among such organisations is arguably worth investigating when future social policies are being formulated.

The future is brighter for marginalized small groups of citizens if the solutions embedded and implied in this research are undertaken. Certainly it seems that children who are blinded below age of about seven years may have difficulties
with later socialisation in broad society, if mainstreamed. It appears that a substantial period in a residential school for young blind persons would be to the long-term advantage emotionally and psychologically of pre-teens.

Ideally these solutions could include: one primary school for Australian blind children with boarding facility and funding to bring blind children from regional Australia to it; perhaps funding the required government and IOR coordination necessary for aspiring and qualifying Deaf students to attend Gallaudet university in the USA; delineation of peak body operational areas to avoid inter-group squabbles and wasteful competition; and statements by all nonprofits that they accept sexual and cultural diversity at the peril of losing their charitable status and tax-payer funded resources. In such ways various governments will be affirming that their intention is to create a cohesive civil society and national community, not to fund competing dissentions under a banner of ‘multiculturalism’. Nonprofits did not of themselves begin such processes so reform could only start ‘at the top’.

Sexually diverse persons need to know they can have divergent lifestyles without retribution by persons in advocacy and service organisations that claim to represent. This is best accomplished by training within organisations and firm statements of non-discriminatory policy and that organisations themselves do not have value-judgments to make on diverse lifestyles. Sensory impairment and sexual diversity have not so far together generated subcultures or groups that cohere and consequently have voice, although group vestiges are there if anyone is interested and can find them. The sexually diverse aspects of personal character may one day anyway be irrelevant in organisational environments.
In regard to subcultures, Worschel (1998, p. 66) claims that a "unified, clearly distinguishable group identity" needs to be created at the expense of individual member identities and that "high conformity, swift rejection of deviants and perceptions of 'in group' will foster this goal". Such subcultural environments will not necessarily comprise or be locations of 'community', although various smaller groups that could be based on same-sex attraction as well as some other pivotal interests such as cycling, motorbikes, dressing as women or in leather, playing tennis, might inhabit subcultural environments. Although individuals within such groups may have to “cut loose from the cultural models” constructed by dominant societies in their environments to achieve their aims (Worschel, 1998, p. 56), they may still struggle to establish and maintain a neo-group identity. That subcultural members have outsider status may only allow them tenuous living among broader society, their membership used against them, inhibiting accumulation of social capital. Thus danger may be intrinsic to subcultural establishment. Repudiation of outsiders is a protective mechanism, as is wariness of ones surrounds.

**Strive to ameliorate organisation and group chauvinism**

Even within humanistic frameworks social constructions of de-humanisation may compete (Overboe, 1999), and the stranger will be continually reconstructed (Bauman, 1991; Hughes, 2002) because Power needs *Strangers* to reinforce and maintain dominance. Humanism has endorsed human rights, including reproductive rights, gender equality, social justice, separation of church and state, reliance on reason as well as the best observable evidence and endorsement of scientific scepticism and method. Humanism may also be used to underpin a logic for eugenics and the euphemistically termed 'euthanasia' of
unwanted citizenry. Even democratic organisations and groups can exclude Strangers. Persons will also *self-constitute* as Strangers – acting out or just living their differences in self-imposed idiosyncratic chauvinism.

The research indicates that persons who have sensory difference to the majority of the population and/or who experience those differences as impairment or liability are not necessarily amenable to co-operating with others who have similar or slightly variant life trajectories. Instead, these persons may concentrate on even finer differentiations of attitude or experience rather than conceptualize or feel part of an overall human experience which may bind a group of persons together. However, it may be ill-conceived to strive for visibility in the belief that it is allied to securing status and power: awareness and relegation to the sidelines could result, instead of inclusion and citizenship.

At this time in western history nonprofit scenarios are being conducted in environments comprising: benefits derived from wealth creation; residual empathy; surviving welfare systems and improving technologies. Benefits will be maintained only so long as the economic system can keep producing the resources and there is a collective will to allocate necessary funds to whatever the dominant ethos has been convinced is ethically worthy, within a dominant-ethos framework that enables whatever gross national product required to provide the disposable cash to distribute for welfare and unfulfilled need.

The research has developed an opinion that some d/Deaf organisation strategies in Australia are not conducive to the harmonisation of relationships amongst d/Deaf persons, and that current strategies are not ultimately viable. Whilst disharmony provokes increased sentiments of difference and can reinforce
inter-group differentiation, the question needs to be asked for any group: what is the long-term destination? The history of the human world is not about the preservation of the number of tribes, species, languages and odd customs – it is about the reduction of the numbers of tribes, species, languages and odd customs. Certainly, sign languages are culturally valid means of communication and need to be retained. Perhaps more emphasis, effort and funding needs to be put into universalizing them, stressing and increasing commonalities or improving tolerance and understanding for the variants amongst the signed languages of Deaf persons.

As with all tribal groups and human need to feed ego and power paradigms, the adoption of exclusive and sometimes impenetrably unique language expression is considered to mark uniqueness, belonging and differentiation. DeafWorld like other ethnic and political cultures want their versions of purity to prevail and to do that may devalue what lies outside their cultural constructions. Are dominant cultures obliged to protect and fund exclusive cultural cells that dwell within and survive upon the flourishing of and funding from - that dominant culture? Is that what 'diversity' is meant to convey? We exclude you, you exclude someone else? – And we get paid by governments and taxpayers to do it?

Like all original research this thesis is flawed but not to such a degree as to render it useless. To the contrary, the research created windows through walls that isolate lived and particular human experience from mainstream understanding and acceptance. Some of those compartmentalizing walls have been breached, so that ‘disability’ might be understood as being a ‘normal’ human condition, so that ‘homonormative’ is on a par with ‘heteronormative’ in human experience, that ‘normal’ is a term so arguable and contestable that it
should mostly be replaced by 'average', such that being a transgender person is a process, not only just common across the ages through thousands of discrete cultures but a given fact of human experience, that transvestism is a hobby in which anyone can indulge - and all of which can be embraced by persons with differing sensory perception. None of these normal human behaviours define or incorporate notions of intellect, gender or social harm. All are potentially harmless and may be constructed to define individuals and groups when attributes and functionaries of the dominant social construct insist.

Living is a process of discovery that precipitates survival mechanisms by which we selectively reveal and conceal ourselves without achieving genuine inclusion. We need to invent more accurate, meaningful expressions to explain or replace the problematic word ‘Community’. Multiple theoretical tools facilitated analysis of issues dealing with cultures, disability, eugenics, financial resources, groups, identities, mainstreaming, organisations, subcultures, sexual diversity, multiple stakeholders and the reflexivity of researcher partisanship and immersion. The research provides an intimate look at issues confronting Australian nonprofit peak organisations and their stakeholders, and so augments the understanding needed to guide future social policy initiatives. The myriad differences that comprised the research include culturally-based social constructions that are innately inculcated, corporeal experienced realities that might not be ameliorated by policy adjustments or psychological and emotional epiphanies or rationalisation, self-perceptions of divergent realities, or each of these in various combinations. Truly a swirl of intersectionality.
The research has traversed QLGBT and Crip environments, exploring groups, cultures and disabilities. Issues discerned include: tentative desire to form groups; instabilities; neo-group transience and lack of lasting community; intra- and inter-group rejections; isolation of persons and of out-groups; disability and queer theories as well as deviance, body and subcultural theories; organisational environments. The problematic notion of organisational process, its compatibility or otherwise with small groups and subcultures has been illuminated by considering culturally diverse realms. These multiple environments are conducive to individual persons experiencing various identity formations which can also be successive, or fluid, even ostensibly incompatible.

**Capturing elusiveness and contingency**
This research has explored manifestation and nature of these phenomena in order to better understand how persons rendered marginal by diverse sexualities and sensory difference relate to their advocacy and service organisations, each other and dominant social constructs. Any single portrait of identity, inclusion, citizenship and status may be painted by myriad power constructs, persons and organisations as they associate and interact with each other within dominant societal constructs and their laws or regulatory parameters. An individual with a potentially causative, inflected, idiosyncratic and sexually diverse identity may not find a place in dominant social constructs. Perceived threats to the notion of “the greatest good for the greatest number” and implied threats to ablest aesthetics can be side-lined in multiple ways. Organisations, operating merely to survive, might brand themselves in a post-modern fashion: words become detached from meaning, the aspirations of stakeholders are utilized without being accorded mission-statement fulfilment,
which is not necessarily illegal, and Third Sector oversight by government is minimal.

**Fear is the key to dominant societal constructs**
The ableist world fears disablement and spends billions on intervention to attain many kinds of illusory ‘normalcies’ as well as multiple allusive versions of beauty. The unusual or exceptional person is acceptable as entertainment, but not always in the streets or as social companions. An accommodating culture and institutions, including the media, could habituate people to accept what is not average but certainly normal. Baudrillard claimed that appearance would always be “victorious” (1998, p. 72), but that we needed a solution to stop us from “looking like others” (1989, p. 41); we - blind or d/Deaf persons, deficient in or lacking one or two of the five senses, users too of ableist technologies and artefacts, perhaps implanted with them to see and hear, using them to walk, might not imagine the excitements Baudrillard felt were inherent to our “terrain of anticipation” (1988, p. 51; this thesis, p. 119), because there is no point anticipating broad, sweeping improvements for blind and d/Deaf persons of diverse sexualities. There are little firework flashes of activity and involvement, a lesser fizzing when matters become problematic, a moment’s resurgence of interest and even hope, before all is much as it has been: diverse lives worked out in the ebbs and eddies of dominant cultures.

**Being marginalised by use of Facebook and social networking sites**
There are fine divisions between (or gradations within) groups of potential companions and peers. The internet is opening up more possibilities: one does
not have to go out in bad weather, buy a drink and stand around in a difficult environment to meet people, but it is unknown which of the two choices – being ‘there’ if one can locate a physical environment, or being in cyberspace – is likely to render courtships successful, protracted, or misleading and futile (see Appendices Four and Seven b).

Q: Any thoughts about the issues of isolation, exclusion and communication?
A: To overcome issues of isolation, I’m now on Facebook, where there are about 4,000 deafies and two deaf queer groups ... Since my profile can be seen by employers and it is legal for landlords to evict tenants for being gay in Michigan, I have not joined these or other gay groups on Facebook ... I do go to local deaf clubs ... [one] has an openly gay deaf president ... one closeted gay member ... [Names a club] ... has an openly gay member on its board ... [and Names a club] ... has an openly lesbian deaf president.

The above response is from the USA, from whence the internet questionnaire had 17 responses – see Table p. 27. The advent of the social network site Facebook has impacted upon the way some persons communicate, and the ramifications include the following: as Levine has noted (2008, p. 129), “we communicate in a public voice in order to address someone, and it matters who listens” [author’s italics]; anway, Facebook is another potentially marginalising tool. Engagement with and on Facebook is not equitable nor is it universal. Whilst several of the research respondents who are blind also have Facebook profiles under identifiable names from at least 2011, few of them are actively communicating by them, and only a couple of the males are ‘out’ according to their claims of diverse sexualities.

Of course, people can have profiles under several aliases. A problem for blind persons is site accessibility, perceptions of a site’s accessibility, and whether or
not the person has easy access to a suitably equipped computer in a private situation, as the pages are read aloud by the screen readers (headphones help, but who is quietly watching over one’s shoulder?). This was put on Facebook, September 2011, from a blind respondent to the research:

I don’t get onto Facebook as much as I used to as the constant changes to the layout are annoying and are increasingly difficult to navigate.

However, this was posted onto Facebook two weeks earlier by another research respondent: “Thanks Facebook for fixing their accessibility works well [sic].” One hesitates to ascribe these differences in experience to any particular cause. However, A cursory appraisal of websites and networking in January 2012 indicates that Deaf persons of diverse sexualities are more engaged in public or visible site use than blind persons (see Appendix Two b).

Several d/Deaf persons who responded to the research have Facebook profiles, but few are using the site regularly, and fewer are identifying as sexually diverse. As mentioned in this research, many Deaf persons experience English as a barely or partly known foreign language, which limits the use of such sites. Also, they may not have private access to a computer, and uploading Auslan videos is not a convenient option. However, Facebook serves a socially useful function, as by January 2012 the Australian Deaf Gay and Lesbian Association – which has a Facebook site – was advertising its August 2012 party at a pub in Melbourne - “It is a safe zone for everyone”. and it seems that a “few” sexually diverse d/Deaf persons from Brisbane intend going to it.

“Come as you are” means anyone who is “deaf-gay-Auslan-disability-friendly and their friends is welcome! Come As You Are also means you come as your plain self, as a drag queen or drag kind, as an opposite sex or however you would like to be!
Also in January was the plea:

I have been trying to make a date with any hearing person and all I keep getting is that they were not sure if it would work out and after coaxing it out, the real answer was because they were not sure if dating a deaf guy would work out because of communication in person. It really pisses me off!! I just don’t understand how people think that way..Sighs..To my hearing gay friends, would you ever consider going on a simple date with a deaf person? Why or Why not? I want honest answer please. Thank you everyone...

There is no point pretending that Facebook and internet social networking have solved the problems experienced by persons alone with their technology. People who have little or no access to the technology miss out on what is available via the use of it, even it is only access to Hope.

**Hope comes in spurts**

The landscape is mystical and contradictory. I came to the research because I was given to believe certain circumstances prevailed, but the nuance had not been portrayed to me or the reader of texts in the way that immersion in the research has revealed it to be. The research also observed that persons who put themselves forward to press for organisation amongst marginalised peers had over time gained some status and work, but perhaps no more so than others who had *not* pursued group or communal roles amongst marginalised peers. Age, attitude, education, environment, health and access to emotional, financial and physical support are some of the variables dependent upon *other* variables – contributing to that ‘swirl of intersectionality’, in which advocacy and service organisations, with the notable exception of BCA, stand aloof. It has been a while between spurts of hope, but it is by small steps that moribund situations may be nudged into evolution (see Appendix Two).

123 This was at first a semi-conscious reference to the song title “Love Comes in Spurts”, written and performed by Richard Hell, 1975, (aka Richard Meyers) of *The Voidoids*, and one of two *The Heartbreakers* bands. Copyright also registered to Richard Suggs.
**Charity begins with clarity**

During 2012 the Federal Government will establish the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission, with the implementation of a public information portal by July 2013 (www.ato.gove.au/content/00283235.htm). Ideally, a registry of Mission Statements should follow, with a yearly report on outcomes. Between competing agencies, IORs should be mandatory, and a prelude to consolidation in the long term. Minority stakeholders in advocacy and service organisations should have a forum in which to register their problems with NFPs claiming to represent them. Oversight of these issues could be expensive, but it is likely that many organisations claiming charitable work and tax exemption will not pass increased scrutiny. On 27 May 2011 a consultation paper “better targeting of not-for-profit tax concessions” was issued by the Australian Taxation Office (accessible via the above website). Whether the issue of NFP-fostered divisiveness and fragmentation will become a topic for the Commissioner is unknown.

**Preparing another canvas**

This chapter has traversed just a spectrum of the many marginalisations in society - *what happened to the groups* and gatherings of *othered* people? If not part of some subcultural life, are people anyway *dwelling subculturally* – living as outsiders to the life that flows around them each day? Marginalised persons can at least contributing to *history, visibility and hope* if they can find a forum. Gains can only be made with the help of organisations if there is *sustainable convergence of sustainable interests* between all parties. We might not see ourselves *reflected in the organisational mirror* for some time, but organisations could turn themselves into *safe spaces*. 
Future peak organisations for d/Deaf and blind persons might acknowledge neo-groups and build IORs with gatherings or neo-groups of QLGBTI persons, perhaps through the mediation of various state associations for healthy communities, or with encouragement from the federal government’s social inclusion agenda. Perhaps DA, with a fervent chauvinism for Deaf culture that might over-ride all diversity, has the right answer for the time being: don’t ask, don’t tell, just participate. However, getting ‘Big D’ DA to co-operate with ‘little d deaf’ individuals and (T)DFA or any advocates of technology or ‘remedies’ for, or ‘modes of amelioration’ of deafness is not just problematic. Persons in Deaf culture want population maintenance and growth of Deaf people.

We have recorded the annoyance of Deaf male homosexuals that Deaf lesbians took over the putative social neo-groups, and have observed that lesbian groups do not wish to socialise with groups of male homosexuals. We have seen indications that male- to-female transgender persons may be rejected from lesbian neo-groups or gatherings. (We have no account of any female-to-male transgender person wanting to socialise in gatherings of male homosexuals). Discrimination and exclusion are part of group and organisation governance processes. We need to have a Third Sector Authority that can make decisions in regard to how much of that discrimination and exclusion is tolerable, having regard to the cohesion of our society as a whole – or rather, its current lack of cohesion and the wide insistence upon selective cultivation of divisive elements.

The focus of the Third Sector requires adjustment if there is to be creation and maintenance of Qwir-friendly environments throughout the sector. We have seen that recognition of QLGBT (and very likely the un-researched ‘I’), in
blindness and d/Deaf organisations may not be convenient to advocacy and service organisation agendas. Therefore, conciliatory and remedial goals need to be defined by all stakeholders.

The Third Sector, its organisations and the social inclusion agenda need to acknowledge that unitary identities are ultimately unlikely. Organisations need to find acceptable iconic spokespersons, not superstars. We are normal, perhaps not ‘average’, not ‘super’. Future organisations need to:

- Strive to ameliorate organisation and group chauvinism;
- Capture elusiveness and contingency as acceptable elements;
- Appreciate that fear is the key to why we absorb, reproduce and cling to dominant societal constructs;
- Increase activities that multiply spurts of hope, to encourage interest and attachment;
- Charity begins with clarity: the mystique of the word ‘charity’ is losing its power to intimidate. Whatever is worthwhile should be able to revel in transparency.

The research observed assumptions and aspirations for ‘cultures’ and ‘subcultures’, but the foundation for such, on the evidence, is contingent, dependent, tentative and often illusory. At grass-roots level, the research cohort looked for representatives in advocacy and service organisations who had experience or understanding of sexual diversity. Before and during the years of the research, BCA was the one organisation that has provided active and tangible evidence of its willingness to engage such issues. Their tentative public engagement with diversity began in 2003 and came to gel in 2007. From that point, it seems there is nothing more to say and that no person of diversity is hanging around to listen, anyway. Perhaps the organisation lost allies by the length of the process. Respondents who were unfavourably disposed to BCA at
the time of the research, and who are have not been involved with BCA during this period may cling to earlier experiences, not aware or accepting that organisational attitudes can change. BCA is looking for more involved members who might also campaign to inform and educate stakeholders, thus elevating the profile of diversity issues.

Any next research snapshot transferred to canvas with layered brushstrokes will not produce the same picture. It will be obliquely evolutionary, not revolutionary, but clearer images will emerge from the false light of initial apprehension. Future Third Sector organisations may be subject to increasing appraisal, with legislated oversight and sanctions. Unfortunately, Australia has nothing binding it together: there is no forum into which persons from different environments are mandated, so that cultures have to cohabit and experience each other – except in jail. We do not have to cooperate with each other in a mandatory Emergency Service, or train with each other in a National Service (which does not have to mean marching around with guns). We are multiculturally divided. Abusively, we are even meant to celebrate the day the indigenous civilization was invaded as a defining holiday.

The research predicts that it a future picture of advocacy and service organisations for persons who have sensory impairment or difference will show organisations cooperating sensibly to create new IORs and openness in order to survive and placate increasing public and stakeholder scepticism about their roles and validity, and that they will increasingly come to make inclusive statements about diversity. The federal government is providing a new picture frame, a new basecoat to the social inclusion canvas. There will be microcosmic
dioramas layered on it: these smaller patchy depictions of future marginalised gatherings await investigation and interpretation.

I went into the research expecting to find suppressed unities – instead there were oppressed fragments, aloof or discordant and bickering microcosms, and a dominant ableist culture that shrugs: it does not have to divide to conquer. The conflicts primed by advocacy and service organisations have solidified, become part of the Third Sector texture, ingrained and maintained by its structures and myths. Constituent alienation and frustration have been no match against protective emotionalism and economic rationalism. Those fragments pictured at the edges of multiple, more populous environments will have to group together in new ways, by all means painting themselves in colours of diversity, but with urgent need to display unity and significance to an otherwise increasingly ableist world.
Appendix One (a): BASIC - Blindness and Sexuality Interests Collective Branch Proposal, 2003

PURPOSE
The purpose of this proposal is to request that Blind Citizens Australia grant this group the status of Blind Citizens Australia special interest branch. If our request is accepted, this group will be titled Blindness and Sexuality Interests Collective (BASIC).

We are a group of 23 Blind Citizens Australia members, who are either of diverse sexuality, or support those who are, who believe in the Blind Citizens Australia objectives as defined in the Blind Citizens Australia Memorandum and Articles of association. We believe that one of the most effective ways we can adhere to these objectives is to establish a group within the structure of Blind Citizens Australia that caters specifically to Blind people of diverse sexuality and their supporters.

Moreover, we believe that the establishment of the Blindness and Sexuality Interests Collective (BASIC) will assist Blind Citizens Australia to adhere to resolution 06 passed at the 2003 Blind Citizens Australia national convention. This resolution states that:

"Given the difficulties faced by Blind people who are members of minority groups, this convention:
(a) recognises the importance of the issues these difficulties raise; and,
(b) urges BCA to play an active role in promoting and upholding the rights of all people to equal access to both information and services."

We use the term Blind, as defined in section 1 of the Blind Citizens Australia Articles of Association, to refer to a person whose vision impairment would make him/her eligible to receive the Disability Support Pension (Blind) for permanent blindness according to the criteria in the Commonwealth Social Security Act.

The mission of the branch will be to empower Blind people of diverse sexuality by increasing understanding of relevant issues within both the Blind and diverse sexuality communities, and to develop networks between Blind people of diverse sexuality and their supporters.

Our objectives and methods are outlined below.

OBJECTIVES
1. To raise awareness of, and find solutions to, issues that are relevant to Blind people of diverse sexuality.
2. To promote understanding and acceptance of Blind people of diverse sexuality within Blind Citizens Australia and the Blind community as a whole.
3. To ensure that Blind Citizens Australia is an organisation where Blind people of diverse sexuality feel welcome, and comfortable as Blind people of diverse sexuality.

123 An undated verbatim transcript of the original, from a privately communicated resource, originating in 2003.
4. To promote understanding and acceptance of Blind people of diverse sexuality within the diverse sexuality community.

5. To provide peer support and social opportunities for Blind people of diverse sexuality and those that support them.

6. To assist Blind people of diverse sexuality to develop confidence and pride in themselves as Blind people of diverse sexuality.

METHODS
* We will hold an annual election in which all branch members will be able to participate.

* We will elect a committee of Blind people who identify as being of diverse sexuality to represent the branch. This committee will meet regularly to advocate on behalf of, and provide opportunities for, all branch members.

* Communication between the committee and the branch, as well as between branch members, will be maintained in a number of ways including newsletters, an e-mail discussion list, telephone link-ups, and meetings at state and national Blind Citizens Australia conventions.

* Blind Citizens Australia will be kept up-to-date with branch activities via regular reports in Blind Citizens Australia publications such as Blind Citizens News and Soundabout.

* We will keep up-to-date with Blind Citizens Australia policies and practices.

* We will promote branch, and branch member, participation in Blind Citizens Australia.

* We will develop links with relevant organisations in order to represent our members.

* We will fund raise, and ensure that the branch maintains a healthy financial status.

* We will seek funding to hold forums and conduct projects to advance our objectives.

CONCLUSION
We believe that our objectives and methods are supported by, and give support to, the mission of Blind Citizens Australia. As such we ask that we be given the status of Blind Citizens Australia special interest branch.
Appendix One (b): Minutes of the first meeting for the proposed foundation of a GLBT group allied to BCA

[Names of those attending have been removed from this document].

Advocating on GLBT Issues  Notes from meeting,
Monday 16 December 2002  The meeting began at 8.30pm
Present:  [X] (chair and minute-taker), and five other people. An apology was received from one person [sic].

The meeting noted that the Board [of BCA] is reluctant to appoint a queer officer to the National Policy and Development Council at this stage, and would prefer a group of members interested in GLBT issues to establish a network for the purpose of educating the rest of the organisation and identify issues that need to be taken up by NPDC [National Policy Development Committee] in future. The chair advised that the meeting would attend to three agenda items.

First, it would take some preliminary discussion about what GLBT issues are relevant to people who are blind or vision-impaired. Second, it would discuss to what extent these issues figure in BCA's advocacy work. Third, it would discuss strategies and actions for meeting the needs of GLBT people who are blind or vision impaired, and for increasing the profile of GLBT issues within BCA.

1. Preliminary discussion of issues

* lack of peer support networks for GLBT people who are blind, and lack of information about the limited networks that already exist.

* increased stigma for people who are blind with a sexual orientation contrary to heterosexuality, relative to the stigma applied to people who are not blind. This arises from several factors, including the high profile role played by organised religions and their followers in service provision to the blind.

* Confidentiality and privacy with respect to sexuality is not respected when accessing services from blindness agencies. Confidentiality is similarly compromised for individuals who speak about GLBT issues within BCA.

* Texts interesting and relevant to GLBT clients are under-represented in Braille and talking book library and information services. The chair acknowledged that there are many other issues besides those listed above, but directed the meeting to move to the next agenda item.

2. Representation of GLBT issues in Blind Citizens Australia

The meeting agreed that GLBT issues are not receiving the attention they deserve at present within BCA. Reasons given for this state of affairs included the reluctance of members to raise GLBT issues due to fear of malicious gossip or becoming ostracised from other members, and the reluctance of a minority of Directors and Councillors to take on GLBT issues. The moral conservatism of the blindness community and the influence of organised religion were also identified as factors.

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The meeting noted a message from Robert Altamore, BCA National President, wishing it well in its efforts to identify strategies for advocating on GLBT issues relevant to people who are blind or vision-impaired.

3. Strategies for educating the organisation and advocating on GLBT issues

* NPDC should develop an anti-discrimination policy or statement of inclusivity. This should give strong attention to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of GLBT members.

* Blindness agency Boards and senior management need to be reminded to enforce their confidentiality policies with respect to sexual preference

* existing peer support networks need to be promoted through BCA media, and new networks need to be developed.

* The Board and NPDC need to be persuaded to exhibit more leadership on GLBT issues

* BCA media can be used to promote GLBT issues to the organisation

* a session at the 2003 national convention would be particularly valuable, and funding sources need to be found to assist more GLBT members to attend Convention.

The meeting agreed to defer establishing a GLBT special interest group until after Convention. It further agreed to form a steering committee to work toward that end, and to also prepare articles for BCA media and organise a session at Convention. X was the only person attending the meeting not to join the steering committee.

The meeting appointed a chair and secretary for the steering committee. The steering committee will operate under the name "About Us". The meeting directed [Y] to advertise the steering committee in BCA News for the purpose of recruiting more members. [This did not happen]

The first meeting of "About Us" will be in late January [2003].

The meeting approved [X] to forward these minutes to Queensland Pride. [It is uncertain what - apart from nothing - happened from this point with Queensland Pride - it did not publish anything. However, the Difference and Diversity in our Community section of the 2003 Convention was a landmark occurrence, perhaps unequalled by any other disability advocacy organization before or since].
Appendix Two (a): Posts upon which to fix organisational change

In 2002, a group of six blind persons gathered to advocate on GLBT issues within BCA, but first the organisation preferred “a group of members interested in GLBT issues to establish a network for the purpose of educating the rest of the organisation” (personal e-mail from a member of that group, 30/08/2009). The National President of BCA in 2002, wished the meeting well “in identifying strategies for advocating on GLBT issues”. Some sexually diverse members at the time of BCA were reluctant to raise GLBT issues due to fear of malicious gossip or becoming ostracised from other members, and the reluctance of a minority of Directors and Councillors to take on GLBT issues.

The existence of Blind Out and Proud (BOP) was inaugurated by an announcement in the March 2003 BCA News. It seemed that an organisational turning point was looming. The Blind Citizens Australia National Convention in Canberra from 4 to 6 October 2003\textsuperscript{124} included two discussion elements: Blind Citizens Australia: Who We Are, What We Do and How We Do It, and Blindness and You: Difference and Diversity in Our Community. In the latter section, as in the first:

Four speakers discuss their differing experiences of the impact of blindness in today’s world, outlining what they have done to achieve goals and combat unhelpful attitudes in education and training, employment, socialisation and reproduction.

So it was in October 2003 that a young male presented The Perspective of a Person who has a Diverse Sexual Orientation, asserting his homosexuality to a crowd suddenly embarrassed, who laughed when he gave his contact address and number. Due to the guffaws with which the implication is greeted, Hoho, as if

\textsuperscript{124} The proceedings of this Convention were available on the sound archives of BCA, accessed repeatedly in 2006 and 2007, but now unavailable.
anyone in the audience might want to discuss such matters! – the contact details were indistinct on the archived recording.

In early 2004 the original convenor of BOP (the group by then considering that name as too “in your face”), under the new title of BASIC – Blindness and Sexuality Interests Collective, put a proposal to BCA for a branch as per the Women’s Branch, which BCA did not accept. A strategy requested by BASIC was for the national policy Development committee of BCA to “develop an anti-discriminatory policy or statement of inclusivity” was countered by requests for BASIC to “work on a way to elect a committee” (personal e-mail from a group member, dated 12/05/2006), and “we may have needed to re-write our by-laws a little also”. “But with all of us at work and uni and such, the group seemed to just slow down”.

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria held a Living and Loving in Diversity conference, October 2004 in Melbourne, and characterized it as 'a resounding success'. Some 20 "GLBTIQT" groups representing "over 34 cultures" were present (Chang and Apostle, 2008, p. 56) but nothing dealt with d/Deaf or Blind persons being QGLBT, even with the conference report recommending that government and institutions be involved with service providers, religious organisations, the Asia Pacific Forum, multi-cultural communities, the media, educators, community leaders, factions of the various "GLBTIQT" communities, women's rights networks, to commission research, that it investigate behaviours and identities in various communities, and review social worker competency.125

125 The website for AGMC- Australian Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer, Multicultural Conference, can only be accessed via www.glvh.org.au.
But blind, d/Deaf and disabled persons were not included. A report on GLB youth (Hiller et al) in 2005 did not include blind and d/Deaf persons. Neither did a report on GLBTI Australians (Smith, Pitt et al, 2006).

I first received an e-mail from Ross de Vent 6th April 2006 (see Appendix Two b), then interviewed him in Melbourne, April 2007. I was sitting next to him at the BCA National Convention 20th October 2007 at the Ibis Hotel in Melbourne when he declared his diverse sexuality to the entire gathering. The themes of the convention had included Forging new Partnerships, about improving IORs and Sexuality and Relationships. Ross’ 2007 public declaration was met by cheers of well-wishing, a marked contrast to those embarrassed guffaws in 2003.

On the 26th October 2007 a forum was conducted in Melbourne by the ALSO Foundation, Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria, and (the now-defunct) Access Plus Victoria, to consider the needs and opportunities for persons who are disabled and also GLBTI. Its title was Under the Radar – my talk and that of Ross were editorialised in the December 2007 Blind Citizens News (bca.org.au).

On 19th May 2008 I joined with a group of health professionals in Melbourne at The Rainbow Network Professional Development Forum, titled Sexuality and Disability. Activity in states other than Victoria seems to have been negligible or nil. (That is another issue deserving investigation).

Robyn McKenzie:
..... [Y]ou have started an e-mail list, for people who are blind, for people who do not identify as heterosexual, and how did that all start?

Ross de Vent:
I’ll give you some ancient history first. About six years ago there was a group and I was involved with that to a small extent, of people who identified as not being heterosexual and who are blind, in Australia, and there was only about six people - instrumental people - it led to us actually wanting to form a branch of blind citizens Australia especially for people who are not heterosexual. That fell through, because I think the main reason was, that, we lost energy basically - it just - we did get quite a way towards it, but when it came to the crunch we just were running out of energy to do it, because it does take a lot of work to run a branch of Blind Citizens Australia. So that fell through and we all just moved on. Then about four years ago, or three years ago, I was contacted by a man called Warwick Abrahams who’s writing a PhD in Queensland on organisational structures and how that includes minorities within minorities. And he was specifically wanting to look at our group that we had formed [in 2003, but which had faded away within six months]. And see what happened to that group within Blind Citizens Australia and seeing whether anything could be done again. I participated in his PhD and I got really excited at the time - and I’m still excited by it - he’s still doing it. He - I got excited because someone was actually thinking about it and thinking, and saying you know, ‘this is something you should - like this should happen’, so I started to get back in contact with the people involved.
Appendix Three: Advertisements to publicize netsurvey.com.au and later social networking

Advertising was taken in QLG periodicals such as “Cherry” and “LOTL” (Lesbians on the Loose), “DKN”, “Q”, “AXN”, “MCV”, “Sydney Star Observer”, “Blade” - from glossy magazines to newspaper format and in various state Deafness organisation magazines and websites: Deafness Forum of Australia newsletters; DeafSociety.com; aad.org.au; vicdeaf.com.au; wadeaf.org.au. It took over a year to achieve 65 replies from d/Deaf persons and a year of intermittent travel to complete in-person interviews.

**Do you feel supported? Do you feel left out of your community?**

I am looking for Deaf or hard of hearing people who are queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, or transvestite to be part of a survey. This survey is at www.netsurvey.com.au

So far, my interviews with people who are blind and of diverse sexuality show there is a need for issues to be addressed to ensure they are included in the wider Queer/LGBT community. My research hopes to help solve exclusion by finding out what Deaf and hard of hearing Queer/ LGBT individuals have experienced in their life whether positive or negative. The motive is to help find a way forward for all communities to feel part of the broad Queer/LGBT communities.

Easy and interesting: http://www.netsurvey.com.au Thanks!
This survey is anonymous and confidential. Any questions or feedback?

Email me at: warwick.abrahams@student.griffith.edu.au Griffith University, Logan Campus, Queensland

E-mail to the Editor of Q News and other periodicals:

I'm a student at Griffith University, Logan Campus, who wants to put a display ad into Qnews on a suitable page, and maybe get some editorial cover about my research. The ad is attached as a Word document. Basically, the research is dealing with how some of our Queer, GLBT brothers and sisters are placed and kept at the margins of Queer, GLBT life. I'm particularly dealing with people who are blind and Deaf. Back in the 80's and until about 1995 there were occasional articles in the (so-called) gay press about people who were ‘differently-abled’ or disabled - about blind and Deaf persons, mostly (The Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Melbourne are a good resource that deserve more publicity and support). These days there's nothing in the media that's inclusive about people marginalized in the various gay so-called 'communities'. People seem to be making themselves 'acceptable' - or is it thought to be 'normal'? - by gym
workouts, steroids, cosmetic surgery, hair dyes. Turning themselves into acceptable stereotypes is great for commerce and industry, maybe not so good for self-acceptance, integration and peace of mind. The fact is: we all end up disabled or less-abled or with various of our abilities and faculties impaired. Disability is as normal as difference, but we're not taught how to deal with it, get used to it and make the most of it. My research is looking at how organisations can assist.

My website www.netsurvey.com.au has been designed as a means to interview people who are Deaf. I'm trying a number of ways to get as many respondents as I can.

Advertisements were placed on:

BBC website ouch! – it's a disability thing: www.bbc.co.uk/ouch - under See

Hear Talk: the heading Diverse Sexualities and d/Deaf and Organisations:

www.alldeaf.com, with the heading Different sex desires (not str8) and organisations - I joined this forum in October 2007 as 'Ricka5', and was given a little promo under the heading: Exclusion of QGLBT Deaf:

I hope some folk can take time to look at this website I have constructed, www.netsurvey.com.au – I'm looking for some respondent who are d/Deaf and of Diverse Sexualities – not any supposed 'heterosexual norm'.

In Australia, a precedent is being set for this research by the Forum 'Under the Radar', which is about gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) communities in Melbourne who are being asked about the social, recreational, leisure and cultural needs and opportunities for GLBTI disabled people. What's being looked at are:

* Experiences of growing up as a GLBTI disabled person.
* Difficulties in accessing sport, recreation, leisure, cultural and social needs in the disability sector and/or in the GLBTI communities.
* Opportunities for meeting sport, recreation, leisure, cultural and social needs for GLBTI people.
* What needs to change and how it might happen.

I want input from persons who are d/Deaf, HoH. My interviews so far with persons who are blind show there is a need for the issues to be addressed constructively and without recrimination. The research seeks a constructive way forwards and to find out what roles advocacy and service organisations might perform. Hope you are interested to comment on the website, anyway. And suggest how I can improve it? Thanks! [Forum contributors are required to submit
an alias, not their full name. I gave my true first name (as called by my sisters and immediate family), which is 'Rick']. Student Researcher, Griffith University, Brisbane Australia

www.netsurvey.com.au is a research project from Griffith University Qld Australia and has some interesting questions to ask, as well as 8 videos in Auslan. It’s non-profit, looking to solve issues of exclusion in Deaf communities of people who aren’t straight.

– and the advertisement was also placed on:

www.About.com - Forum/Deafness/Hard of Hearing – I was allowed to sign my full name and introduce myself as a mature-age student researcher at Griffith University.

The same ad also went on the Deafies Australia forum, which I had joined in April 2004. This forum was closed for lack of participants in (there had been 49 including myself), and lack of chat. It was revived in 2009 but even the exhortations of the list-owner/moderator do not bring forth discussion.

As a member of AAD (since named DA – Deaf Australia), I joined their discussion forum in September 2007 and advertised the research, but got no on-line comment at all.

Attempt at dialogue on the AAD (now DA) discussion forum:

Name Rick Abrahams
From Queensland
When Monday, November 27, 2006 at 16:17:59 (EST)
Email zzwabrah@yahoo.com

Hi - Anyone know what happened to the Australian Deaf Gay and Lesbian Association? The e-mail address dgla@iprimus.com.au no longer works, neither does the web page http://home.iprimus.com.au/dgla - and the Sydney phone number (02) 9358 6387 seems to have been disconnected. Thanks - Rick

And then later (19 September 2007) on the AAD general discussion forum:

I hope some folks can take time to look at this website I have had constructed ... with much the same text as the other ads 9 as per previous pages). My postings on the AAD forum did not lead to anyone taking up the thread.

This forum was closed to the public in 2008 due to some slanging considered malicious and potentially actionable, or perhaps because there were queries about DA’s actions and processes. It had been lively and interesting. When it was only open to paid-up members it became all but deserted, and the forum idea has since been supplanted to an extent by the Facebook site Stop Deaf Genocide, and DA’s own Facebook pages.
Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (www.glhv.org.au) kindly allowed me space on their website, and under the logo of Griffith University, with the heading Research Participants Required, in June 2008 they published my submitted text as follows:

Back in the 80s until about 1995, according to PhD researcher Warwick Abrahams, there were occasional articles in the gay press about people who were differently-abled or disabled.

Records at the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Melbourne (a good resource that deserves more publicity and support), provide articles about blind and Deaf persons, but that’s about it. The ALSO Foundation in Victoria is attempting to lessen exclusion and increase awareness that there’s a much greater diversity of QGLBT persons than is found in pubs, saunas and fashion outlets over any weekend but these days there’s nothing in the media that’s inclusive about people marginalized by disability in the various so-called ‘communities’.

The media profiles are of abled QGLBT people having gym workouts, body-building supplements, cosmetic surgery, hair styles, buying cars and vacations in various cozy, stylish consumer worlds. Acceptable stereotypes with access to spending power are great for commerce and industry and that all helps the world go round, but maybe it’s not so good for self-acceptance, integration and peace of mind.

The fact is: we all end up disabled or less-abled or with various of our abilities and faculties impaired. Disability is as normal as difference, but we’re not taught how to deal with it, get used to it and make the most of it.

The research website has been designed to interview people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Warwick’s also interviewing people who are blind and of diverse sexualities. The results will form part of a PhD to be completed next year in the School of Human Services and Social Work, at Griffith University, Logan Campus, Queensland.

In 2008 I briefly had a Facebook entry, but grew wary of that organisation when it apparently attempted to sell all the data it had collected from its participants. So I did not advertise on it, as I did not know whether it would have drawn in people to disclose their private information for use by the Facebook organization in profiling for profit, which I still perceive as a danger, as it is ultimately a commercial venture. Future researchers might be best advised to avoid seeking information on social networking sites.
Appendix Four (a): Qwir blind persons and cyber social networking

November 10th 2007 - ozblindnotstraight@googlegroups.com
To Warwick.Abrahams@student.griffith.edu.au - ross@de-vent.net
has added you to the ozblindnotstraight group with this message:

My name is Ross de Vent. I have set up an email list for people who are blind or have low vision and are not straight in the Australasian region. I will not spell out what this might include because sexual identity is about questioning.

I have added you to this group because we have discussed you joining this group. You will automatically begin to receive messages which are sent to this list. If you would like to write a message to this list, simply write to the email address: ozblindnotstraight@googlegroups.com. I do not necessarily have all the answers, but I can provide an online forum where you can explore. If you are unsure whether there are other people in this situation, let me assure you that we certainly do exist. I must stress, this group is not about outing anyone. Membership is restricted including the message archive. However, messages are not moderated, meaning that messages will go straight to the list.

Although, nobody will be able to join the list without my list administrator's approval. Please be assured that only other people who are like you, people who are blind or have low vision and are not straight, will be able to read what you write. If you are uncomfortable with writing to the whole group you can write to me privately at: ross@de-vent.net (I certainly remember the panic of walking through the door of the queer lounge for the first time at uni). Topics which may be discussed on this list may include: peer support, friendship, relationships, identity, sexuality, sex, sex education, meeting people, coming out within your individual communities, inclusion or exclusion within the not straight/blind communities, physical access issues, written resources, service and advocacy organisations for people who are blind and/or not straight, political advocacy, etc. A description of me: I have two disabilities (totally blind and right-sided paralysis), I am a man in my mid-20s, I identify as gay or a man who sleeps with men, very open and do not judge anyone. We all have courage and we all need solidarity. No rubbish or spam, thank you.

Here is the group's description:

This list is for people who are blind or have low vision and are not straight in Australasia. Membership and message archives are restricted to protect identities. Nobody will be outed. If you are not comfortable with joining but would like to contact the list administrator, email ross@de-vent.net

January 2012

No Australian Facebook page was found for any blindness group of diverse sexualities. The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) comments on the inaccessibility of social networking sites for blind persons: from Blind LGBT Pride – an affiliated group of the AFB - The “Inside Out” Newsletter September, 2011, Volume 11 - Issue 3:
The most serious accessibility issue AFB found was the inability to create user accounts on MySpace, Friendster, or Facebook without sighted assistance. This is due to the use of CAPTCHAs—those abstract renderings of random characters that ask users to retype the word they see on the screen. Also known as the "vision test," CAPTCHAs are meant to keep spam programs out of the system, but unfortunately they also keep out people with vision loss because they are essentially jumbled text embedded in an unlabeled graphic. They are extremely difficult for people with low vision to decipher and screen readers cannot read them because they have no descriptive ALT text. None of the social networking sites offer an audio version—like Google's Blogger now does—or an alternate means of registering for people who are blind. LinkedIn is the only site in the evaluation that did not use a CAPTCHA as part of its registration process.

Conclusion:
Until MySpace, Friendster, and Facebook offer an alternative to the CAPTCHA, people with vision loss will not be able to independently sign up for these services. But the good news is once someone gets through the CAPTCHA barrier, becoming a MySpace, Friendster, or Facebook user is possible, since the templates for these three sites are fairly well labeled. LinkedIn, the leading business networking site, is the most user-friendly of all the social networking sites because its pages are well labeled, and it does not include a CAPTCHA in the registration process.


The AFB’s 2008 Special Report on aging draws attention to ... the baby boom generation [as it] continues to age. Experts predict that by 2030, rates of vision loss will double along with the country’s aging population.

The report found that the age group with the most people who have vision loss is ... the baby boom generation-those between 45 and 64 years of age who are on the brink of aging into the senior age group and often have yet to experience the full extent of the severity of age-related eye conditions.

Blind and Vision Impaired individuals who are LGBT face a number of particular concerns as they age. Several studies document they are less likely than their straight sighted counterparts to access adequate health care, affordable housing or other social services that they may need, due to attitudinal barriers, institutionalized discrimination, and the lack of program access. It’s reported Blind and Vision Impaired LGBT older adults tend to not avail themselves of services on which their sighted straight counterparts thrive, thereby increasing their likelihood of experiencing social isolation. This rapidly growing population reports pervasive social isolation within the LGBT community itself.
## Appendix Four (b): Vision Australia - adapted from their website

See web site under *About Us*, then *How We Work*, then, *Annual Reports*, thence to *Financial Reports* (reviewed February, 2012), and see also www.visionaustralia.org/info.aspx?page=105

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An overview of key figures across VA's Services and organisation</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clients (active)</td>
<td>49,046</td>
<td>47,011</td>
<td>46,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client satisfaction (annual %)</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submissions to government</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New employment services clients</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace modifications</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tele-Groups ## Peer support</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation and mobility services</td>
<td>12,230</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>1,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free canes</td>
<td>1,000*</td>
<td>2,000 *</td>
<td>2,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelix++ titles available for loan</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>300*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total loan items</td>
<td>759,274</td>
<td>801,346</td>
<td>759,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total downloads: i-access online</td>
<td>62,187</td>
<td>48,069 †</td>
<td>45,348 †</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing Eye Dog clients</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate dogs</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total working dogs</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursary recipients</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Contact Centre calls</td>
<td>214,975</td>
<td>150,000 *</td>
<td>108,000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total employees (Full Time)</td>
<td>744.75</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff turnover rate per month</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
<td>1.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff with blindness or low vision</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total revenue</td>
<td>101,610,000</td>
<td>95,919,000</td>
<td>79,523,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenses</td>
<td>89,706,000</td>
<td>82,295,000</td>
<td>106,786,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total government grants</td>
<td>30,584,000</td>
<td>37,817,000</td>
<td>29,786,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total fundraising</td>
<td>29,819,000</td>
<td>30,544,000</td>
<td>32,564,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total investment income</td>
<td>16,577,000</td>
<td>8,289,000</td>
<td>8,920,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = approximate numbers
† = correction

## See under Services, then *Independence in the Community and in the Home*, then *Telelink ++* Library borrowing kits with tactile explanatory items
Our Vision
Vision Australia is a partnership between people who are blind, sighted or have low vision. We are united by our passion that people who are blind or have low vision will have access to and fully participate in every part of life they choose.

Our Mission
Vision Australia will achieve this through creating a community partnership of knowledge, skills and expertise to enrich the participation in life of people who are blind or have low vision and their families. We will ensure that the community recognises their capabilities and contributions.

About us
We are the largest and only national provider of blindness and low vision services in Australia. Vision Australia works in partnership with Australians who are blind or have low vision to help them achieve the possibilities they choose in life. We are a not-for-profit organisation with client numbers of 50,000. We are also a major innovator and partner in the international blindness community. We offer 15 core services through 28 Vision Australia centres in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland and Victoria. While most of our services are delivered in metropolitan areas, satellite clinics are also held in 29 other locations and there are outreach services to the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

Most of our services are offered free of charge and that requires us to raise nearly $100 million each year to deliver our services. We assist clients of every age, as blindness or low vision can occur at any time from birth through to old age. Vision Australia has a proud history of 145 years of consecutive service through the seven heritage organisations which now form Vision Australia – Royal Blind Society, Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind, Vision Australia Foundation, National Information Library Services, Royal Blind Foundation Queensland, Hear a Book and Seeing Eye Dogs Australia.

Total revenue for the period 2010-11 was $101,610m (2009-10 $95,919m).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Summary</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major income sources</td>
<td>$,000</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$,000</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$,000</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legacies, bequests and donations</td>
<td>29,819</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>30,544</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>32,564</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Grants</td>
<td>30,584</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>37,817</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>29,786</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment and other income</td>
<td>16,577</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>8,289</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>8,920</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from the sales of goods and services</td>
<td>9,067</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>8,015</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>8,253</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain on disposal of investments and property</td>
<td>15,563</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>11,254</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>101,610</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>95,919</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>79,523</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Five (a): Questions for interviews with Deaf persons

Does the name Deaf Australia have a particular meaning for you?
Do you rely on any organisations or are you a member of any organisation?
Do you want to belong to any kind of organisation to represent you?
Does Deaf Australia have an impact on your life?
Does any organisation have a role in your life?

Do you have hearing people that hold important place in your life
Do you think the broader community can understand Deaf organisations?
Do you use any services of Deaf Australia or other organisations?
Are organisations for Deaf people in touch with life-styles today?

Do you have problems that you might need outside help to solve?
Does any organisation respond to your needs, if you have any?
What are your specific needs?
What are the problems facing clients or members of organisations these days?

Do you feel that you are a target for bad behaviour or second-rate treatment?
Are organisations out in the community looking for members?
Do you feel any kind of social exclusion?
Do you feel represented anywhere, in any way?
How could organisations help you?

Do the broader Queer, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender scenes mean anything to you?
Do you feel that you have any voice? Any opportunity to contribute to the wider or preferred community?

Do you think your identity as a Queer, or Gay or Lesbian or Bisexual or Transgender person is a disadvantage to you in your life?
How could an organisation do the things that you think need being done?
Is there any such thing as a Queer, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender identity for Deaf people?

There are many ways that people can become d/Deaf: is there a different 'status' for people because of these differences?
What is the status of Queer, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender persons who are Dear or Hard of Hearing?

Have you read the stories in 'Eyes of Desire' – the two collections of Deaf Queer, Gay and Lesbian stories edited by Raymond Luczak, an American?

Is it a 'double discrimination' to be Deaf and Queer, Gay, Lesbian?
How do you think your experience as a Deaf Queer, Gay or Lesbian person is different to the experience of someone who is not Deaf?
Do you feel you have to work your life out in two minority groups? Deaf and Queer, Gay, Lesbian?
How has your family reacted to your differences?
Do hearing Queer people have some kind of attitude towards d/Deaf queer people?
Do 'straight' Deaf people have some kind of attitude towards Queers, Gays, Lesbians, Transvestite and Transgender people?

Are there any ways that life might be more exciting being Deaf and Queer, Gay, Lesbian? - compared with being a hearing person who is Queer, Gay, Lesbian? There's Deaf identity and there's Queer, Gay and Lesbian identity. Do you have any thoughts on these identities?

Do you think some Deaf people feel 'grief' or sadness at not being 'hearing'? Does being Deaf restrict the amount of information you get on Queer, Gay, Lesbian issues? Do you use the internet a lot? And for what do you use it, if you use it? Would you call being 'Deaf' a disability, or a Culture, or something else?

Would you call being Deaf and Queer, Gay, Lesbian a big disadvantage in life, or just another issue in life? Have you ever found it convenient to pretend you were a hearing person? Have you ever found it convenient to pretend you are not Queer, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transvestite or Transgender?

Do you feel you have been overlooked in life because you are Deaf? Do you feel you have been overlooked in life because you are Queer, Gay, Lesbian? What have Deaf organisations done for you? What could they do for you better than they do at this time?

Has religion any place in your life? What kind of religion? Do you think religion is a big part of the lives of some Deaf people? If it is, do you have any opinion on how that happens? Who has power over you, if anyone has power over you? Do you feel that any organisations have power over you? Who has not accepted you in your identities? Who has not accepted you as Deaf?

Who has not accepted you as Queer, Gay, Lesbian? Have you felt responsible for the way people feel about you? What is the biggest issue that you think still needs to be resolved? What would be an ideal future? How could we build towards an ideal future?
Appendix Five (b): Questions asked of Deaf Australia, but not answered

To karen.lloyd@deafau.org.au

Dear Karen Lloyd

It is some time now since you kindly agreed to consider questions that might arise from PhD research I have been undertaking at Griffith University. Your comments in the June 2009 *Outlook* about feedback are encouraging (quote):

We are interested in feedback on how we consult and include people. We understand that Deaf people want to be consulted, but sometimes our consultations are not well attended. We want to know what will work better for Deaf people. How do you want to be consulted? What is the best way for us to get information from you? How can we involve you more in what Deaf Australia does? (Unquote).

An impression of the research has been that there may be many people who want organisations to do things for them, but those very same people are often reluctant to join the organisations and pay even small amounts of money for membership. It seems that some prefer to criticize from a distance than actively take part in helping organisations achieve their ends.

For this research, I used an on-line set of questions www.netsurvey.com.au – which has now been taken off-line. I also conducted some person-to-person interviews with Auslan interpreters who were chosen by the interviewees.

The research has had wide response, with about 60 interviews being analysed. Most people responding had knowledge of Deaf Australia, and many had in-depth knowledge of d/Deaf community history.

To balance the results of this research, I am hoping you will have time to make some responses to the following questions. I am happy to conduct this interview with you in person, but I also appreciate your work-load and the many demands on your time.

1. There is appreciation for the work of Deaf Australia among respondents, but some feeling that Deaf Australia does not wish to promote harmony among all persons who are d/Deaf. This has implications for people who arrive at being Deaf later in life – even as quite young adults.

Can you comment?

2. There is some feeling that, while Deaf Australia will co-operate to a limited degree with other service organisations for d/Deaf people, Deaf Australia is not interested to create or promote harmony with other organisations for d/Deaf people. This seems to have a flow-on effect: on the surface, it seems to help maintain separate Deaf and deafness experiences. However, it also seems to create unhappiness for those who need or want to live in both communities, for physical or emotional reasons.

Can you comment?
Do you have an opinion on this?

3. It has been expressed that, sometimes, anger and rage seem to be a feature of the broader d/Deaf community, and that Deaf Australia has no interest in helping to subdue these feelings.

Is that how Deaf Australia sees the situation?

4. Respondents to Deaf discussion groups and on-line blogs seem to get very excited over political issues, and often resort to personal insults over these events and gossip. The research understands how reputations can be wrecked over the internet. Your own Deaf Australia discussion forum was closed apparently due to unmonitored comments getting published, and Deaf Australia was criticized on other blogs for shutting the forum down.

Is it difficult to get volunteers for un-biased monitoring of on-line group discussion?

5. The word 'backstabbing' featured in interviews: respondents sometimes felt that belonging to a d/Deaf advocacy or service organisation might put them at further risk of gossip and harm to reputation.

Do you, or does Deaf Australia feel that malicious chat about others happens in Deaf Australia, or that it is more of a feature in d/Deaf organisations than other advocacy and service organisations?

6. Privacy and security of confidential information: it has been expressed that there are doubts about privacy of information given to certain d/Deaf service organisations.

Has privacy been an issue that Deaf Australia has thought about recently?

7. Recently, the Deaf Australia magazine published objection to claims made by the Deafness Forum of Australia – you are probably familiar with them [quote of one dot point follows]:

Deafness Forum is the peak body for deafness in Australia. Established in early 1993 at the instigation of the Federal government, the Deafness Forum now represents all interests and viewpoints of the Deaf and hearing impaired communities of Australia, including those people who have a chronic disorder of the ear and those who are DeafBlind [Unquote].

That has been the statement for more than a decade. Could this politically difficult situation between Deaf Australia and Deafness Forum ever be resolved? And if so, how could it be resolved?

The following was a statement by the Deafness Forum as at 29 November 2001 [quote of two dot points follows]:

405
The Deafness Forum had 99 organisation members and 139 individual members. The Deafness Forum exists to improve the quality of life for Australians who are Deaf, have a hearing impairment or have a chronic disorder of the ear by:

- advocating for government policy change and development
- making input into policy and legislation
- generating public awareness
- providing a forum for information sharing and
- creating better understanding between all areas of deafness.

The Deafness Forum avoids becoming involved in individual advocacy and in issues that are not national. However, it has found itself unavoidably involved in a small number of individual advocacy cases. It also sometimes takes up issues with State Governments when the issue exists throughout Australia. An example of the latter would be an issue relevant to State Government Education Departments throughout Australia. The Deafness Forum is very aware that another national peak body exists to represent the interests of people who are signing Deaf, namely the Australian Association of the Deaf [now Deaf Australia] and seeks to work with the AAD on issues of concern to both organisations’ constituencies. Examples of such issues would be captioning and telecommunications.

That sounds conciliatory, as if Deafness Forum would like to have an organisational relationship with Deaf Australia.

8. What do you think? How would you describe Deaf Australia's relationship with the Deafness Forum at this time?

9. Does Deaf Australia have particular relationships with other organisations providing services for d/Deaf people?

10. Is Deaf Culture still experiencing acts of cultural genocide? Is the Deafness Forum 'part of the problem' for Deaf Australians? If it is, are there any ways it could be reformed to be an asset to Deaf culture? Without the Deafness Forum, who would deal with the technologies?

You would be very familiar with the new Deaf Australia Mission Statement [quote]:

Deaf Australia is the national peak organisation for Deaf people in Australia. It represents the views of Deaf people who use Auslan (Australian Sign Language). It is a true consumer organisation – only Deaf people have the right to vote on Deaf Australia business and to be elected to the Board. The Deaf community can be recognised by their unique sign language - Auslan. Deaf Australia is committed to promoting and preserving sign language as the official and indigenous language of the Deaf community. Deaf Australia believes that Deaf people belong to a linguistic minority group and are disadvantaged by a lack of access to communication, education and services. Deaf Australia works with and on behalf of Deaf people in seeking their rights as citizens of Australian society. Deaf Australia was established in 1986 at the National Deafness Conference in Adelaide, South Australia to improve the quality of life of Deaf people in Australia. Since then, Deaf Australia has made many positive changes, but there
is still much work to do to achieve equal opportunity and full participation in the community for Deaf people. Deaf Australia has six state branches: New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia and is a member the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) [unquote].

One organisation is the 'peak body for deafness in Australia', and the other is the 'national peak organisation for Deaf people'. That might not be clear to many people, even though we know what it means.

11. Do you think this creates any real confusion in the minds of the public and potential supporters? Are a lot of mature-age people acquiring deafness potential supporters? What do you think the future holds for both DA and DFA? Will they both prosper and grow? What about funding in the future?

12. Do you have a vision of what the advocacy and service organisation scene will be in ten years’ time for people who are Deaf and for people who have acquired deafness?

I believe that organisations are the way to get things done for those of us in minority groups, and for some years have been a member of DA / AAD. However, I believe it is quite a problem to get people to pay for representation: they often think they are not getting help when in fact they benefit from the activities of their advocacy or service group, without paying membership and even while actively denouncing their representative organisations. This leads me to the last questions:

13. How many paid-up members does DA have at this time? How many corporate, how many individual persons, and how many Life Members? And how might DA persuade people to become paid up members in the future?

From my observations, it seems that Deaf Australia as an organisation is very inclusive, and does not discriminate against people who are different in other ways, for example: different sexualities. But it may be that individual members feel free to gossip about others who might not be heterosexual.

14. Therefore: what about 'double diversity'? Will DA make any statement to show that it supports people in their individual diversity? That DA does not agree with members of the Deaf community who might discriminate against people who different in other ways? Or is that too difficult, keeping in mind that some members might have strict religious or other beliefs that DA does not want to offend?

I hope you can give your perspective on these issues to the research. Respectfully, Warwick.Abrahams@student.griffith.edu.au

Important further questions:
Are there any indigenous or ethnically diverse persons who are members of Deaf Australia? Does DA reach out to contact Deaf persons in disadvantaged indigenous environments?
Appendix Six: Cochlear implant group for Qwir persons

Group Email Address [23 November 2009]

Subscribe: LGBTQ_Cochlear_Implant_Group-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

List owner: LGBTQ_Cochlear_Implant_Group-owner@yahoogroups.com

This group will be a group of LGBTQ folks and our supporters who have or are thinking of having a cochlear implants We are here to provide support, fun and friendship for all.

This is not a group for people who are opposed to cochlear implants.

Yahoo! Answers, a new Yahoo! community, is a question and answer exchange where the world gathers to share what they know...and make each other's day. People can ask questions on any topic, and help others out by answering their questions.

Questions in Society & Culture > Cultures & Groups > Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered

Theories on how people are bisexual?
Asked By Hello - 8 answers - 1 day ago

Why is it more accepted by the public to be bisexual than gay/lesbian?
Asked By Object - 16 answers - 2 days ago - Answer Now

What's the best way to get over someone you can't have?
Asked By Rubber Soul - 6 answers - 5 days ago

To you does sexuality matter?
Asked By Sam P - 17 answers - 6 days ago
Appendix Seven (a): Number of signing Australian Deaf persons

The (USA) Gallaudet Encyclopaedia of Deaf People and Deafness estimated the size (1980s) of the signing Deaf ‘community’ was between 7,000 to 9,000 persons. Johnson (2004) calculated approximately 16,000 persons, including those who had assisted hearing, oral education, and those who did not sign, with those who signed being a subset included in the total. In 1989 the Deaf Society of New South Wales estimated 5,000 persons as existing and ‘possible’ clients of the Society. By 1998 the estimate by the same Society had fallen to a more vague parameter of between about 1,261 to 2,522 persons. The national extrapolation was given as being between 3,900 to 6,900 people. The 2001 Australian national census did not clarify the picture. In it, 5,305 people were recorded as using "some form of sign language" but another classification of “non-verbal communication” which recorded 11,860 people, is problematic as it is about 9 times the number reported in 1996.

The Deaf community, its educators and some professionals who work with Deaf persons are of the opinion that Deaf community numbers were previously underestimated (Johnson 2004, p. 364). Johnson’s article was contentious in DeafWorld (Hyde, Power and Lloyd, 2006, pp. 190-201). In the AAD magazine Outlook of March 2003, the number of Auslan users was put at 16,000.

As with blind persons population to estimate the Australian environment of d/Deaf persons in the absence of reliable statistics it is opportune to extrapolate from USA figures, but those to hand are very dated. Schein & Delk (1974) estimated that 75% of deaf adults had become deaf after 19 years of age. A census figure for deafened adults was 670 per 100,000 of population (approx 1 : 150). Extrapolating to Australia with a population convenience figure of 20 million would equate to 133,000 persons being ultimately deaf. Based on such figures as Johnston (2004), there were an estimated 6,500 Auslan-using (totally Deaf) persons, which would equate to about 4.89% of Auslan users out of the total persons ultimately deafened. Quir (QLGBTI) Deaf signing persons are another minority within that minority.
Appendix Seven (b): Qwir Deaf persons and cyber social networking

In the USA

[As at January, 2012, these are slightly edited quotes from the internet site]

There is not much up-to-date news or comment on these sites

http://news.deafqueer.org/category/deaf-queer-news/page/3. May 26 2009, Published by DQRC under DQRC, Deaf Queer News:

The Deaf Queer Resource Center (DQRC) is now on Twitter. Follow us at http://twitter.com/deafqueer #deafqueer

Jun 28 2009, Published by DQRC under Deaf Queer News
Don’t miss the opportunity to attend this workshop at the upcoming Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf (RAD) Conference!
LGBT Social Networking and Activism on Facebook
Presented by Drago Renteria
Thursday, July 2, 2009
1-2:30 pm Colorado Room  Chicago Sheraton Hotel & Towers

About the Workshop: Facebook is a popular social networking website with a massive user base that can be used to unify the Deaf LGBT community and our allies, share information, bring visibility to our organizations and help create social change. Among the things you’ll learn in this workshop include information about the little-known tools that can help you protect your privacy and how to use Facebook to network, raise funds and promote your organization’s visibility.

The DQRC Facebook page had 1,436 ‘likes’ in January 2012.

Since 2008, Deaf Queer Men Only (www.DQMO.org) has had a Facebook page. In January 2012 it had over 640 ‘likes’.

The pages for DQRC and DQMO are sophisticated with lively content, but postings are spasmodic.

DA and (T)DFA - d/Deaf Australian presence on social media

January 2012, the DA Facebook page registered 481 subscribers, and that of (T)DFA, only 284 ‘likes’. It was also being ‘migrated’ to a new format.

On the international Facebook page titled Stop Deaf Cultural Genocide, Telstra’s International Business Woman of the Year (2011) was subject to considerable invective, because she advocates early intervention in childhood deafness using technologies. In January 2012, the page had 882 followers.
Appendix Eight: Marshall's “Goodness Criteria” (Marshall, C. (1990)).


Method is explicated in detail so the reader can judge whether it was adequate and makes sense ... The methods for attaining entry and managing role, data collection, recording, analysis, ethics and exit are discussed. There is a running record of procedures (often done in an appendix) [sic].

Assumptions are stated. Biases are expressed, and the researcher does a kind of self-analysis for personal biases and a framework of analysis for theoretical biases.

The researcher guards against value judgments in data collection and in analysis.

There is abundant evidence from raw data to demonstrate the connection between the presented findings and the real world.

... definitions of phenomena are provided, with explicit references to previously identified phenomena ... the research challenges old ways of thinking.

The study is reported in a manner that is accessible to other researchers, practitioners and policymakers.

Evidence is presented showing that the researcher was tolerant of ambiguity, searched for alternative explanations, checked out negative instances, and used a variety of methods to check the findings.

It is clear that there was a phase of "first day in the field" in which a problem focus was generated from observation, not from library research. In other words, it is a study that is an exploration, not merely a study to find contextual data to verify old theories.

Data are preserved for reanalysis.

Methods are devised for checking data quality, for example: informants' knowledgeability and ulterior motives.

The researcher is mindful of interviewee sensitivities.

People in the research setting get some kind of benefit: ranging from an hour of sympathetic listening to a free meal [sic].

There is evidence the researcher is a finely tuned research instrument [sic] whose personal talents, experiential biases and insights are used consciously. The researcher is careful to be self-analytical and recognize when she or he is getting subjective or going native.

The study is tied into the big picture.
Appendix Nine – contestation around language

Producers of media content use words such as ‘(ab)normal’ and ‘black’ pejoratively: as in 'abnormal sexuality'; 'black Friday'; 'black day'; ‘blacklist’, ‘black books’. Expressions that utilize ‘black’ to denote sinister, even horrific events are demeaning to black persons, yet they have become routine: clichés employed by journalists and newsreaders. In such ways, even political correctness indulges white, hetero-defined, arbitrary, ableist and often tacitly malign parameters and usage, against which political correctness should campaign, not selectively ignore and indulge.

Equally, the loaded emotionalism conveyed by the word ‘normal’ prejudices the lived experiences of persons who may not be ‘average’ but who are ‘normal’. For example: being a genius is not ‘average’, but it is normal to have persons of genius inhabiting the human race. Yet the idea of ‘normal’ should not be taken for granted as 'an ideal'. An Ice Age is normal as are earthquakes and volcanic eruptions – just not ‘average’. Murder is a normal experience, be it individual, genocide, or random and impersonal - perhaps institutionally perpetrated from great physical and emotional distance. It may not be desirable or socially acceptable – too often it is acceptable - but it is anyway ‘normal’. Thus, ‘being human’ can certainly be termed ‘pejorative’, for the unspeakable horrors humanity has perpetrated.

Similarly, a desire to be “ordinary” has been idealised by the blind author Michalko, as if it is a virtue. The world has been made evil by the crimes of “ordinary men”,126 so one may arguably be more worthy if not ‘ordinary’. The eyes being characterized as 'windows to the soul' places blind persons as alien, limits access by and to the sighted, and being blind intimates dependency and vulnerability. ’The blind leading the blind’ denotes incompetence and ineffectuality. So while blackness may convey bad luck plus negative notions of power, motivation and experience, blindness connotes a kind of bumbling helplessness – a symptom of inexperience with intimation of incipient disaster.

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Appendix Ten – Profile information from d/Deaf respondents to the research via www.netsurvey.com.au

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you?</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Do you identify as?</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Where you are living?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Deaf</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>With parents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deafened</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Deafened</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Renting</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impaired</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hearing impaired</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Own home</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoDA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>CoDA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>With lover</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>With friend</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*undisclosed can</td>
<td>just mean: not answered</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undisclosed*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Undisclosed*</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Undisclosed*</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You have? You are?</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
<th>% Undisclosed*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>other Deaf family</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from a hearing family</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the only Deaf person in the family</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-declared diversity % of d/Deaf persons - no Transvestite or Transgender persons declaring in sample. It is possible to think of oneself as ‘straight’ and also indulge sexual diversity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Queer</th>
<th>Lesbian</th>
<th>Gay</th>
<th>Bisexual</th>
<th>Straight</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

78% of respondents were comfortable with their sexual identities. 2% were not, 20% did not answer. 78% of respondents felt their d/Deaf identities to be positive, 2% did not, 20% did not answer. 14% of respondents felt conflict with their various identities, 64% did not, 22% did not answer; 30% felt isolated being d/Deaf and of diverse sexualities. 44% of respondents claimed to wear hearing aids, no one claimed having a cochlear implant. 74% of respondents used sundry electronic means of communication, but only 44% claimed to have a mobile phone. 46% of respondents belonged to a d/Deaf organisation, 36% felt there was homophobia in these organisations, 24% thought there was not. 52% maintained that a Deaf Lesbian and Gay ‘scene’ exists, 18% did not think there was such. 18% belonged to a Hearing Lesbian or Gay group. 46% had no problem interacting with Hearing environments, 52% felt comfortable with them.
Bibliography


Sadownick, D. (1997). Faggot Psychology: Encountering the Gay Shadow and the Gay Soul Figure in Faggot. In L. Mass (Ed.), We Must Love One Another or Die (pp. 144 - 171). New York: St Martin’s Press.


