

**EST305 – Assignment One**

S320094, S326012, & S960187 – Summer Semester, 2021

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# Introduction.

In a perfect world, everyone would have the same access to education and an equal opportunity to achieve personal, academic and professional goals. In a perfect world, people with disabilities would be afforded the same chance to communicate, participate, learn, and develop, as those without. There are international and domestic proclamations, declarations and legislations such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the Mparntwe Education Declaration (Education Services Australia, 2019), and Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) that aim to identify the individual needs of people with disabilities, address the barriers they face, and provide support to overcome the challenges.

This assignment will analyse and evaluate inclusive mainstream educational and professional practices in relation to the Deaf community through three different pieces of media. The critique will also touch on how deficit knowledge, normalisation, neoliberalism, social and cultural capital are viewed within the selected media. For the definitions this assignment will be working with, it is important to first refer to the appendix section.

# Description and summary of media items.

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| --- | --- |
| **Area of education:** Middle and Secondary School. | |
| **Issue of inclusion:** Deafness. | |
| **Film:** The Silent Child (Network Ireland Television, 2020)  **Reviewed by:** Dainah Howard (S320094) | |
| **Description:**  A six-year-old girl, Libby, who is deaf in a hearing family, is unable to communicate. After being taught sign language to be ‘prepared for school’, Libby's parents decide they do not want her using sign language. Libby is placed in a mainstream class without an interpreter or any extra support and cannot understand or follow the teacher’s instruction. | Addressing ***deficit knowledge***:  The film addresses the adverse effects of deficit knowledge and its impact on the access to sign language received by children who are deaf within families and education. |
| **Literature:** Falling on deaf ears (The Limping Chicken, 2016).  **Reviewed by:** Alan Hubbard (S326012) | |
| **Description**:  A short story about a Deaf person whose father has recently passed away. Notably there is no description of age, gender or level of impairment of the primary character, from the perspective of the narrator. | Addressing ***normalisation*:**  The narrator describes how their family and some others make no effort to facilitate their inclusion, especially during an emotionally impactful event. |

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| **Multimedia:** Deaf Discrimination… I’ve been rejected for 2 years (Jazzy, 2019).  **Reviewed by:** Tony Jongue (S960187) | |
| **Description:**  Through her YouTube channel, Jasmine Whipps or simply known has Jazzy, shares her experiences of trying to secure a job as a Deaf person. | Addressing ***neoliberalism*** and ***social and cultural capital***:  What happens when a Deaf person finishes school, and it is time to enter the workforce? Jazzy speaks about her personal working journey, addressing the challenges and the discrimination she has faced as a Deaf person seeking employment in a world that finds it difficult employ Deaf people. |

# Film: The Silent Child.

Deficit discourse relating to Deafness and sign language are used in Libby's family, unwittingly promoting stigmatisation, which works against Libby's personal and educational interests. Stigmatisation is particularly evident with the deficit view of sign language. The mother claims she does not want Libby to learn sign language because she wants her to be “normal”; and focuses on speech therapy. This deficit model of thinking reflects the ‘medical model’, which prioritises speech and hearing in the case of deafness, often to the detriment of language development (Hall et al., 2017; Brown University, 2014).

The deficit and inaccurate view of sign language as not linguistically equivalent to spoken language still prevails today. Historical prejudice and deficit discourse have led professionals to believe that sign language acquisition will interfere with deaf children’s development of speech skills, despite research showing that all deaf children demonstrate better speech development when accompanied with signing. Unfortunately, most medical professionals see signing as a last resort for the “worst-case scenario” (Hall et al., 2017). These views become instilled in many parents and educators, impacting the amount and type of accommodation offered in schools and at home. Many hearing teachers, even those working in ‘schools for the Deaf’, hold subconscious to overt biases for the medical model, believing their hearing reality as the one the Deaf community should aim to assimilate into (O’Brien & Placier, 2015).

In schools, while it is unlawful to not provide students with disability reasonable adjustments (United Nations, 2006), the quality of the adjustments provided are not monitored (Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association ASLIA, 2019). Consequently, the practices and policies in place do not protect many students who are deaf from exclusion and discrimination in practice. An example of this is the state of educational interpreters (EIs) as shown the film. Although access to EIs is increasing, as the case with Libby most deaf students still do not receive adequate EI support, especially in primary school (Hyde et al., 2005). There is no standard or mandated requirement for EIs to be certified. Consequently, they are often inappropriately skilled, even learning while interpreting (ASLIA, 2019; Schick et al., 2005). EI positions are classified as teacher aides, so the pay does not reflect their expertise, and certified interpreters are not attracted to the positions (ASLIA, 2019). Poor quality interpreting results in diminished outcomes for students, leading to deficit framing in which teachers believe the fault is in the child, not the quality of communication (ASLIA, 2019; Schick et al., 2005).

According to Foreman and Arthur-Kelly (2017), Inclusive education begins with “embracing inclusion” at all levels of the school community. At the students’ level, the film The Silent Child could be used in the following context to educate students on exclusion and inclusion in education. Before watching the film, the teacher could ask a series of questions relating to deafness and introduce inclusive education discourse by asking if giving everyone the same is fair. After the students watched the film, they would be asked to wear earplugs and earmuffs, and then taught a concept without adjustments. Discussed would be if it is fair to test them against someone who was not wearing the earplugs and how this relates to Deafness, equity, and inclusion in education.

# Literature: Falling on Deaf Ears.

Consistent with the first view of Normalisation, it seems that the family has not made any effort to accommodate the narrator, by learning sign language or even learning how best to speak to them when they are lip reading. The narrator has been treated as if they had no disability and have been expected to interact with the world as if this was the case. Even though a Sign Language Interpreter was arranged for the funeral service, when it was evident that they were going to be late, there was no attempt to adjust the schedule to accommodate this. Whilst an effort has been made to reduce speaking speed and accentuate word formation, this is clearly not done with input from the Deaf character, therefore making it more difficult for them to understand. Further, when not directly speaking to the narrator, they make no effort to include them.

Previously, communicating using Sign Language was banned in school, due to the misconception that students would learn to talk and communicate as “normal”. As such, Sign Language was only allowed as a last resort in school. The belief that students that are deaf would learn to speak fails to understand their diversity of communication ability and, rather, focus on their inability and a method to fix their deficiency. (Dinishak, 2016).

Children that are deaf from families that are also deaf were generally more successful writers and readers, as well as more socially and culturally knowledgeable than children that are deaf with families with no hearing impairment (Dinishak, 2016). This refocus of attention towards strengths in diversity rather than deficiencies is critical to inclusive practice and creating a rewarding environment for students with additional needs and those without, instead of fixing a perceived deficiency.

The view that student who are deaf, lack the ability to communicate effectively, is a poor assessment of their cultural capital. Whilst these students may not be able to communicate in the same way other students can, that is verbally, they are able to interpret their environment in a diverse method, not a worse one. For example, in Tedx Talks (2018) the presenter provides an example about how he used sign language to interpret for two people that spoke different spoken languages but could not understand each other. Through this encounter, he was able to explain what each person was trying to communicate using only non-spoken modes of communication.

Major family events, such as the passing of a loved one, are stressful for everyone involved; this can be compounded through a lack of communication and understanding between family members. It is likely that one or more students have first-hand experience in in loss of a family member, therefore will be able to relate to the situation. They can then expand their experience to understand how the exclusion of an individual family member, due to the inability to mutually communicate, would exponentially exacerbate the situation. This activity could be enhanced through role-play, where one student is required to explain or understand a situation without the use of spoken language or hearing.

# Multimedia: Deaf Discrimination… I’ve been rejected for 2years.

Before she was a famous Deaf YouTuber and earning income from sharing her experiences and content as a Deaf person, Jazzy, now 22, had to do what most people did to afford a living – she had to get a job. The job application process is difficult enough for most, but as a Deaf person, the barriers and challenges faced are exponentially more stressful and often disheartening. Challenges the hearing community are not limited by and barriers which can be traced back to society’s neoliberalist practices and how human capital is viewed.

Jazzy (2020) details her feelings of frustration and resentment at the process of applying for employment and rejection that followed. Jazzy included examples where businesses would respond to her applications with, “But you are deaf?” disregarding her skills and abilities and focusing on perceived inabilities. They assumed her inability to communicate would lead to avoidable costs. Jazzy shared incidents where businesses knew of her deafness yet still refused to do one-to-one interviews or provide BSL interpreters, examples which would have violated the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth). Often, there would be no response to her applications and believes it was simply because she disclosed her “deafness” honestly and upfront. Companies who refused to employ Jazzy or employed her but hid her away in a non-customer-contact role saw deafness as a disability or deficit. That is how hearing companies viewed Jazzy’s cultural capital. Deaf culture is proud, rich and vibrant with localised languages that are expressive and highly communicative (Aussie deaf kids, 2021). Even though the Deaf Community is proud of their ability to communicate effectively, they also know it is a view not shared by other parts of society, as evidenced by Jazzy being told to remove “deafness” from any job applications to ensure a better chance to progress to face-to-face interviews. For Deaf people, the lack of opportunities in the hearing community affects their social capital by limiting the ability to develop new connections and relationships outside of the Deaf Community. However, within the Deaf Community, Jazzy was able to harness her existing networks to secure positions within Deaf organisations, and whilst many were unpaid roles, they did provide opportunities to further develop her social and cultural capital (within the Deaf community).

Sharing Jazzy’s video with students would hopefully bring awareness to how the Deaf community experiences a world built for the hearing, using the example of languages and how languages are viewed and valued. For instance, Australian students (sometimes at their parent’s recommendation) choosing to learn Mandarin over other languages based on perceived future economic opportunities. A thinking very much in line with neoliberalist ideals. Showing Jazzy’s video and teaching some basic Auslan would hopefully encourage students to pursue Auslan as an additional language, a language that is inclusive, emotive, expressive, and available as a subject under the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Agency, n.d.).

Jazzy was employed as to assist a Deaf student for a period of four months. NT Department of Education (2019) articulates that educators are to cater to the needs of all children. The regular mainstream staff are unlikely to have specified skill sets to suitably assist these students, nor the resources to obtain those skills. This is mitigated through professional development activities and courses for those facing students with additional needs. However, teachers believed that they were unable to sufficiently meet the needs of all students, due to time constraints, class sizes and lack of practical professional support in and out of the classroom. (Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). The availability of specialised staff to interpret or assist Deaf students is a scarce resource for educational institutions to employ. The establishment of bilingual schools, with suitable tertiary education courses seeks to meet the gap in education. (Humphries, 2013).

# Summary.

Deficit knowledge fails to adequately appraise the diverse views and lived experience of people with disability, by focusing on their inability to do the same, finite, functions as able-bodied people. Specifically, with Deaf people, their ability to observe their environment from an alternative perspective. This deficit perspective, may, lead educators to misinterpret the abilities of Deaf students, due to their own biases. This is exemplified in The Silent Child, where Libby is expected to learn to speak, by her parents, and is sent to a mainstream school with no adjustments.

The first view of normalisation is evident though each of the media, where people are expected to meet the same requirements in society, without adjustment. This is particularly evident through Jazzy’s journey to seek employment. In particular, when she was expected to join a group interview process, with no interpreter.

Due to the Deaf community’s strong cultural identity, many Deaf people are able to build social capital within a community, as was seen in Jazzy’s employment. This does not preclude the requirement of the broader community to seek methods to further enhance the lives and interactions of people with disabilities and special needs, especially within the classroom. (Aussie deaf kids, 2021).

Although considerable progress has been made to examine the principles that drive inclusive education awareness, much of society and education still need many reforms to create an inclusive education for students who are deaf.

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# Appendix.

## Definitions.

### Auslan.

Australian Sign Language (Auslan) is form of visual communication for the Deaf Community that uses hand, arm, body and facial movements (Stokoe, 1980; National Disability Practitioners, 2015). Users of Auslan include Deaf people, Deaf students, sign language interpreters, students of Auslan, or parents of Deaf children (Auslan Signbank, 2021). Sign language is localised (Stokoe, 1980) meaning Auslan is unique to Australia the same way British Sign Language (BSL) is unique to the United Kingdom and American Sign Language (ASL) is unique to the United States.

### Deafness.

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2021-a) describes being deaf as having little or no hearing and having to often rely on sign language as a form of communication. The WHO estimates 34 million children have “disabling” hearing loss and believes by 2050, 2.5 billion people will have some form of hearing loss (WHO, 2021-a. WHO, 2021-b).

### Deficit.

Deficit knowledge or deficit discourse refers to the discouraging and disempowering views, language, and practice that focuses on the perceived deficiency and limitations of a person or a group. Deficit discourse draws attention to the discriminative mode of thinking that places the person or group at fault, rather than the environment or circumstance that create barriers. An example of deficit knowledge is how the Australian government indirectly represents First Nations people and their culture in a negative, failing, and deficient manner throughout many policies and legislation by framing Aboriginality as the ‘deficit’ (Fforde et al., 2013; Fogarty et al., 2018; Freeman & Staley, 2018).

### Neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism or new-liberalism, centres around a political and economic ideology that promotes deregulation of the economy in favour of a self-regulating free market (Steger & Roy, 2010). It is important to note that whilst neoliberalist thinking does not advocate for the complete replacement of the state’s role, for example, providing defence, policing and legal functions or establishing health care, education, and social security (Harvey, 2007), it does encourage privatisation and marketisation of government-owned assets and services (Kandiko, 2010; Savage, 2017; Steger & Roy, 2010) and has driven policy to frame and justify education as “primarily a site for building human capital and contributing to economic productivity” (Savage, 2017, p.150). In basic (and neoliberalist) terms, economic health drives education policy.

### Normalisation.

(or Normalization – used interchangeably).

Largely based on the concepts of Danish reformer and intellectual disabilities advocate, Niels Erik Bank-Mikkelsen and physician and educator for persons with disabilities, Bengt Nirje, the principles of normalisation refer to how persons with disabilities should be able to live their lives as close as possible to the norms of society. In 1985, Nirje rephrased his initial workings to “The normalization principle means making available to all persons with disabilities or other handicaps, pattern of life and conditions of everyday living which are as close as possible to or indeed the same as the regular circumstances and ways of life of society” (Nirje, 1985, p. 67).

Obtaining its origin from The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), the other perspective of normalisation was framed as an inclusive education design process that aimed to facilitate and accommodate the diverse needs, characteristics, and abilities of every child. The framework included establishing specialised schools and making reasonable adjustments to mainstream education facilities to include, encourage, and support children with disabilities to help achieve their full learning potential. In this instance, the principle of normalisation aimed to make meaningful adjustments to the educational environment to prevent disadvantage from any real or perceived disability or difference.

### Social and Cultural Capital.

The concept of social and cultural capital, in its most basic form, is *who you know and what you know*.

Social capital has been described as a person’s actual and potential networks and interaction (Baker, 1990; Bourdieu, 1986; Monkman et al.,2005) and refers to what those relationships and group-memberships can be used to achieve (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). A hierarchical form of human capital that can be measured by strength of ties and include such functions as social control, family support, or benefits through extra familial network (Monkman et al.,2005).

In terms of cultural capital, Bourdieu (1986) believed it existed in an embodied, objectified, and institutionalised form that represented the practices, resources and knowledge of a culture. Whilst the embodied state included styles, manners, and cultural preferences and affiliations, the objectified state encompassed literature, dance, music, and art, and the institutionalised state consisted of academia and qualifications.