

parental homes; they must learn to be the adults they become from others, in other places, and often without their parents' knowledge or approval. This strange and melancholy circumstance reverberates through the entire life and history of deaf people all over the world.

Nor can most deaf people pass on their cultural membership to their own descendants. Almost nine out of every ten children born to deaf parents hear normally. They might be honorary members of the deaf community while children, and a high percentage of the professionals in the field of deafness seem to come from their ranks, but ultimately their fate lies in the general society of the hearing, not in the small, special one of their parents. The deaf culture, therefore, in all but rare cases recruits its new members in a very unusual way. Young people learn basic cultural identity and most social skills from contemporaries rather than elders. The school—the informal life of the dormitories—takes on some of the functions of family. Thus the immense cultural importance of age of onset and attendance at a school for the deaf. They alone largely determine who will be culturally "deaf." No one not educated as a deaf child ever becomes a "native" of the deaf culture. "I am not a real member of the deaf community," says I. King Jordan, a Gallaudet graduate and faculty member who lost his hearing in a motorcycle accident at the age of twenty-one. "I am a deafened hearing person."³

Not only age of onset but degree of impairment is culturally crucial. Most children with impaired hearing have losses in the mild range—between 26 and 40 decibels—and an additional third fall into the moderate group, between 40 and 55. Nearly all of the first group and a good number of the second can attend regular schools, if not wholly successfully, then at least not disastrously unsuccessfully. Only one hearing-impaired child in 200 has a severe loss (greater than 70 decibels), and one in 400, a profound one (greater than 90). From these two categories, and especially from the last, come most of the recruits for the deaf community. It is not uncommon to meet culturally deaf people of middle age or older who suffer hearing losses that today would qualify them for regular schools rather than for special education, but they were young before the development of portable, high-powered hearing aids and are now beyond the age

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. p. 30.
2. p. 250.

CHAPTER 2

1. *The Deaf Population of the United States.*
2. *Deafness and Learning*, p. 2.
3. *Washington Post*, February 26, 1978, p. 61.

CHAPTER 3

1. Whetmell and Fry, p. 49.

CHAPTER 4

1. p. 255.
2. *Youth in a Soundless World*, p. 8.
3. *Deafness and Learning*, p. 21.
4. p. 11.
5. p. 58.
6. p. 5.
7. p. 5.
8. "Social and Psychological Development," p. 74.
9. *Educating the Deaf*, p. 100.
10. p. 51.
11. Quoted in Meadow, "Sociolinguistics, Sign Language, and the Deaf Subculture," p. 25.
12. p. 268.
13. Loc. cit.
14. Loc. cit.
15. p. 86.
16. "Deafness and Mental Health," p. 9.
17. p. 130.
18. "Deafness and Mental Health," p. 12.
19. *Deafness and Learning*, p. 79.

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