CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

IDEOLOGY AND DEAF COMMUNITY FORMATION IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF CHISHOLM HALL, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in

Geography

by

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December 1994

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Lilian Inger Nielsen.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the California State University, Northridge, Geography Department faculty and staff, in particular Dr Bowen, Dr Orme, Dr Newcomb, Dr McIntire, Timothy Boyle, and Robert Provin, for their encouragements. I also wish to thank the Readers of this thesis, Alan Sondheim and Dr Gohstand. Most of all, heartfelt thanks go to my Academic Advisor, Dr Darrick Danta.

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ABSTRACT

IDEOLOGY AND DEAF COMMUNITY FORMATION IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF CHISHOLM HALL, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

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The built environment of a deaf support center on the campus of a large mainstreaming university is examined. Spatial aspects such as scale, perspective, and engagement with the users are analyzed for traces of the ideological context which suffuses this building. Indeed, this analysis serves to clarify the existing connections between public and private expectations. An emerging Deaf identity has gained broad public recognition, particularly since the acceptance of ASL (American Sign Language) as an integral language with full syntax and the much publicized uprising of deaf students at Gallaudet University. The conflation of interests, not least of which are those defined through national policy, that are negotiated within such a space make it a key setting to discern national ideology from the private needs for group identity according to one's reality. The simultaneous but seemingly contradictory presence of identification and integrative ideologies in this facility indicates a coexistence of effects that transgresses official functions.

The result is a redefinition of both ideologies by active participants. This redefinition is displayed in the built environment of Chisholm Hall in several ways, most importantly through contradictory interpretations of the landscape and attachment to the facility despite its limitations.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Context and Thesis Statement

This thesis examines the built environment of Chisholm Hall on the California State University, Northridge (CSUN) campus in order to determine whether its role as a deaf student support center facilitates the definition of a deaf community on campus in any way, and if so, whether this community exhibits spatial attributes. Indeed, this study is an examination of the built environment both as a site of determinance and as a repository site of conflicting ideologies. The layers of the environment of Chisholm Hall have been shaped by each person who has brought it about and is using the facilities. This includes architects, administrators, staff members, students, visitors, and faculty, past and present. More than any other, a spatial perspective is useful for accomplishing a contextualized analysis of the concrete and daily environment of Chisholm Hall.

The interpretation presented in this thesis has been realized through a study of various contexts of Chisholm Hall that include the constructs and layers of meaning fashioned by the environment of a state university, the federal and private funding that support the center, and the changing status of the deaf as historically viewed from within and without. The interpretation is also based on the observation of activities occurring at Chisholm Hall, and on interviews, both open-ended and specific. Several respondents wished to remain anonymous for reasons that are significant

and which are addressed. Components of this study include these important layers of interpretation, and how they are reflected and refracted through this landscape, in an effort at teasing out meaning.

1. 2 Issues

Several issues are of importance to the present study, the first being whether a deaf community exists at CSUN. Some deaf people elsewhere have suggested that they constitute a minority community with identifiable characteristics, such as distinct language, customs, and political empowerment. On the basis of this status, they demand to be recognized and claim that their views have been underrepresented particularly in matters of education. The unusual size and homogeneity of the deaf population at CSUN, along with the purpose of gathering, namely education, are two factors that offer propitious conditions for the awakening of a similar minority identity.

The second issue raised in the thesis is whether the built environment reflects such a separate group identity. Observed characteristics are analyzed in order to ascertain what significant visible patterns of distinction are represented. These characteristics include: tight community bonds; public display of symbols; celebration of separate holidays; unusual behavior and usage; language choice; unifying history; common political institutions; ways of achieving power status; accommodation to environment; and attachment to site and educative practices.

The environment of Chisholm Hall though may reflect a deaf community differentiated from its hearing counterpart. One reason for this could be that deaf communities at large may not be discernibly reflected in the

built environment. Another reason may be that as a recent construction Chisholm Hall does not yet show signs of deaf distinction. Furthermore, this site may simply not be the place where self-ascription on the part of the deaf students reflects itself most on campus. Of course, even if differentiation is visible, deaf students may in fact not form an ethnic community.

1. 3 Relevance

Such a case study of the deaf community offers an opportunity to better understand group identity and the processes of community formation, to analyze how conflicts are manifested and mediated in the built environment, and to look at deafness in the context of forming a separate linguistic minority. All three topics have gained much understanding through recent research, and an examination that attempts to gather evidence for these topics is thus timely. This work supports the notion that built environments are social objects. As such constructs, their daily use and placement can reveal power relationships and indeed help elucidate the nature of struggles, giving a more accurate picture of motives and hidden victories. Importantly, much of the recent work related to the built environment has linked particular attributes of place to commerce, less so to ethnicity. This dimension is likely due to the fact that the critique proposed is issued of Marxist writings; however, other perspectives are possible.

1. 4 Overview

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows: chapter 2 consists of an analysis of how communities are displayed in the built landscape. This analysis is accomplished through a discussion of the built environment and of geographic concepts of space as being reflective of social developments. The discussion is nested within a postmodern perspective, a contemporary approach that is particularly valuable for the purpose of this thesis for several reasons, which are explained. The third chapter defines the broader deaf community in terms of cohesiveness of education, language, customs, and exclusivity, and apprehends its separate self-ascribed status. The fourth chapter offers a specific overview of Chisholm Hall in terms of its history, functions, and physical characteristics, in order to see if deaf students at CSUN can indeed be identified as belonging to the greater deaf community. The fifth chapter is an analysis of Chisholm Hall in light of the concept of space, through description, usage, and interpretation in order to determine if a separate community is indeed reflected in its built environment. Finally, conclusions are drawn in the sixth chapter. The analysis is ultimately made in terms of form and function, and focuses on several contexts aforementioned as layers of conflicting ideologies are clarified.

CHAPTER 2

GEOGRAPHIC CONCEPTS OF SPACE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

2. 1 Introduction

The analytic background to the built environment is given in this five-part chapter. First, a clarification of what is generally referred to by built environment is given, in terms of a constructed site that serves specific functions and is also imbued with supporting, simultative, or conflicting meanings. The topic is approached through the perspective of postmodernism in order to better understand each of these factors. An overview of current concepts of space follows and is elaborated upon as this concept is the basis for much of the postmodern critique. The process of clarification leads to a discussion of prominent factors that have had the most impact on the built environment, and are thus clearly visible; namely, the national agenda and the university. These factors have also broadly prefigured higher education of deaf students and represent meaningful indices of state and citizen relationships.

2. 2 The Built Environment

> "I take the stand that buildings are not primarily art, technical or investment objects, but social objects." (Markus, 1993, XIX)

The built environment is the human constructed landscape. It includes not only skyscrapers in San Francisco and roman churches in Brussels, but

also fire hydrants, paths, flags, landscaping, signage, and buoys, to name a few. The built environment is a crucial testimony of the activities that take place in any site, and as such is a resource to the identification and understanding of the undertow of human endeavors.

No matter how seemingly ordinary, the built environment has been interpreted as being indicative of the traditions and daily practices that transform space into place. Geographic perspective performs the important role in human sciences of clarifying the relationships among people, daily practice and spatial design. Indeed, methodologies between social science and architecture, for example, have often been at odds with each other. This difference is "...clearly expressed in a comparison of the scientific method using an abstraction of data with the dynamic and particular act of design" (Malnar, 1992, p. 290). Within the last two decades, geographic approach has been refashioned through postmodernism and through the concept of space, a concept which obviously was at the basis of the geographic discipline, but one that has been re-edified by researchers in other fields, such as anthropology and history.

There are many ways by which to understand the built environment. The significance of a particular setting is first established. Receptive observers are likely to note patterns and location of features, functions, and aesthetic qualities of structures and objects, and relate these to the users, passersby, and to themselves. Activities and hierarchies are more or less easily assumed. For geographers in particular, a constructed site is viewed as serving specific functions in relation to other places and as being imbued with meanings, in unison or not.

2. 3 Postmodernism

Postmodernism is relevant to this study for several reasons. First, it is the postmodern critique that has re-evaluated interest in the struggles of people previously seen as marginal to societal progress. Second, and perhaps more important, postmodernism offers the means to address these people's concerns on equal footing with advantaged populations. But there is another reason for the relevance of postmodernism to this study. Chisholm Hall is designed within the aesthetic style of postmodernism, as indicated by its emphasis on multiple grand entry ways and with the highlighting of functional features through whimsical and vaguely historical and geographic references. Through postmodern debate, form, function, and style are incorporated with information on the economic, social, and urban structure of this particular place.

What is postmodernism? A geographer and a main thinker of postmodernism, Harvey (1989), along with Lyotard (1984), believes that postmodernism is a "condition" embodying multiple contemporary constructs that emphasize play, chance, and process in contrast to purpose, design, and integrity (Harvey, 1989, p. 43). Postmodern philosophy consists of the "vigorous denunciation of abstract reason and a deep aversion to any project that sought universal human emancipation through mobilization of the powers of technology, science and reason" (Harvey, 1989, p. 41). Specifically, this critique is the largely disillusioned response to earlier "large-scale, comprehensive, [and] integrated planning models" (Harvey, 1989, p. 40). Other prominent commentators of this timely critique have included: philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Henri Lefebvre, and Jacques Derrida; art historians such as Frederic Jameson and

John Berger; economist Ernest Mandel; and geographers such as Michael Dear, Anthony Giddens, Michael Curry, James Duncan, Robert Sack, Denis Cosgrove, and Ed Soja.

Postmodernism has emerged from the study of various colonial relations and from an awakening to landscapes of shifting marginalities, together with a desire to make the study of culture more relevant to contemporary complexities. Postmodernism has served to uncover apparently benign interpretations for the authoritarian depictions that they really are. These interpretations are based on paternalist and ethnocentric ideologies that have fashioned attitudes, perceptions, and behavior, effectively disguising them behind a veil of normalcy. Through postmodernism landscapes of resistance have been identified, people who were previously seen as victims of circumstances are now hailed as hidden heroes, and their spirited daily battles are recognized. The significance of these landscapes has been heightened through semiotics, the analysis of displayed symbols, as if constituting the decor of a theater set (Barth, 1994). The result of this emphasis has been a renewed awareness in the "political" and the "spatial," and, in that sense, this study has been inspired by the works of political geographers. Rather than focusing on the artifacts and relics that have been left behind, recent cultural and social research has exhibited greater sensitivity to various contextual agents, be they people or organizations, that affect the seen and experienced landscapes through struggle (Anderson and Gale, 1992, pp. 3-5).

Postmodern critique has also served to unveil the spatial hierarchies of the processes of production, especially the spatial consequences of late capitalism. Soja (1989, p. 6) writes, "we must become aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline

are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology." In particular, post modernism has served to identify the mechanisms by which the system repeats itself through spatial processes. Questions are posed as to the function, purpose, and meaning performed through the built environment, and implications as to the maintenance and reproduction of the larger economy are scrutinized.

The modernist rationale was prominently and widely espoused by architects such as Mies Van der Rohe, Richard Neutra and Le Corbusier. Architects such as Frank Gehry, Charles Jencks, Emilio Ambasz, and Peter Eisenman are those who have contributed significantly (and tangibly) to defining the postmodern aesthetic. This style is typified itself in a spoof of modernist purism. Instead of the institutional aloofness of modern structures, in post modernism sense of place is consciously nurtured or fabricated through exaggeration and paradox, our human attributes par excellence, in postmodernism. The materials used, including those that are used for decorative purposes, are consciously pretentious or ordinary, preferably mixing those attributes, and added on to late modernist structures, corrupting them inexorably. Affixed trimmings may consist of shiny copper and glass to chain link fence or machine parts or corrugated cardboard; as long as they glorify the ordinary, debase the glitter, and allude (however distantly) to the functional, for they are purposefully irreverent of the modernist's search for Truth and Essence in aestheticism.

In Los Angeles, favorite appropriated postmodern elements are issued of early International Style. The "high tech" image of the machine is added in bits and pieces to many postmodern landmarks of architecture of Southern California, such as Frank Gehry's fitting design of the State of California

Aerospace Museum in Los Angeles. These added features are seldom integral to the total design of the building, except for the entrance, which is always dramatized in postmodernism.

Architects, art historians, and social theorists have described and fashioned a critique that denies the neutrality of ordinary (or grandiose, for that matter) landscapes. Their resurging interest has generated the examination of factors that enhance or subvert community formation within a built environment. The university is a significant site of engagement that is organized to convey information, ideals, and hierarchies (Giroux, 1981, p. 157). Chisholm Hall, on the CSUN campus, is a site where these processes coexist. Postmodernism has affected the study of Chisholm Hall in several ways, one being through the design of this facility. In terms of architecture, several buildings on the CSUN campus fit the modernist definition (for example, the Richard Neutra Fine Arts Building), a confident style that rejected the weight of historical tradition, and added emphasis on flexibility and functionalism. The fact that CSUN embraced such expression was especially innovative for its time, for many other colleges had largely resisted this style (Turner, 1985, p. 251). However, aside from several strikingly graceful examples, modernism connotes institutional dullness at CSUN and elsewhere. Chisholm Hall, on the other hand, is one of the first postmodern buildings on campus. More on this topic will be discussed separately in the fifth chapter.

Postmodernism has specifically affected the study of Chisholm Hall in one other way: namely, through the changing intellectual discourses on exclusion and inclusion. Motives based on the subjugation of those seen as different are unveiled through such a critique. Indeed, the "other" who is thus referred, in this case the "disabled" person, was previously excluded

from critical debate. This exclusion is changing, and more than ever the dilemma for the Deaf community is one of self-definition. Indeed, the emergence of deaf people as a distinct and separate group has generated increased interest within this community in the stories they have in common. In turn, story telling is embraced in postmodernism as is ambiguity and unending reconstruction. Postmodern perspective welcomes the "marginal" voices (particularly within political contexts) and the ordinary routines for they are reedified as acts of rebellion and of power.

Needless to say, postmodernism (academic and architectural) has also turned on itself, irreverence giving way to superficial and offensive treatments, where diversity has become stylish. Also, when all is equally different and have little temporal value, as in postmodernism, and when diversity fits within conformity, then this critique runs the danger of rendering everything indistinguishable. The perils of spatial relativism is that if anything goes, then how is anything authenticated, grounded, theorized. As Harvey writes (1989, p. 321), distentions are born of "the whole issue of how to handle the aesthetic qualities of space and time in a postmodern world of monochromatic fragmentation and ephemerality." Ultimately Harvey (1989) calls the postmodern condition a "malaise" (p. 323), denouncing its depthlessness and nihilism and he notes an alarming lack of responsibility due to a "free-wheeling denial of the complexity of the world," and a "re-emergence of charismatic politics and even more simplistic propositions than those which were deconstructed" (p. 350).

2. 4 Concepts of Space

Recent developments in concepts of space are having a considerable influence on the understanding of built environments. Changes within spatial theory are indeed an integral part of postmodernism. Radical changes have occurred in terms of understanding the effect of the environment, especially the built environment (whether temporal or permanent) through the meshing of these theories' various components. Principally, space was long seen as a key determinant of human existence; however, space is now understood to be the site where choices are vigorously exercised as to how a place is used and by whom. The struggle for power over space may be imperceptible yet exists in a very real manner, for example through tacit agreement such as the apportionment of tasks performed and the access thereby achieved, or through temporal displays of effusion, digression, or communality within established rituals. The display of choices reflect, through specific attachment to place, that ideologies are alive and well within context. These ideologies might otherwise be imperceptible within verbal communication because they are so much part of daily habits. Visual observation of structures and environmental elements are boosted by the observation of the pattern of activities that take place at more or less regular intervals. Space itself can thus be said to consist of the surroundings of daily life within which all things exist.

Briefly, the study of space within social theory has been led by works such as *The Practice of Everyday Life* by Michel de Certeau (1988), *The Order of Things* by Michel Foucault (1973), *Rabelais and His World* by Mikhael Bakhtin (1984) and most importantly *The Production of Space* (1992) by Lefebvre. Both cultural geography and political geography are encompassed by space study. In

as much as shifts have occurred, planning and location theories, chorology, and the study of cognitive and mental maps have changed the focus of geography. A growing impetus for the creation of other spatial theories has emerged. Interdisciplinary academic discourses on space specificity, on placeness, on domesticity, and on community formation have arisen within a broader critical debate.

Spatial analysis in geography has taken many forms, and geographers are, as can be expected, fond of the subject all the while acknowledging the many difficulties of establishing satisfying methods of investigation. Some of the geographers who have written most eloquently in the postmodern critique of spatial analysis have been Harvey (1989), Sack (1980, 1992), Agnew and Duncan (1989), and Relph (1976). Their works have taken various courses from positivism to, more recently, theories intent on deciphering the hidden and fragmented functions of space. Landscapes of political struggle have been identified in this fashion (e.g., Nemeth, 1987), looking at homelands (Roark, 1993), at sacred lands (Mercer, 1993), at gendered spaces (Winchester, 1992), at cyberspaces (Starrs, 1992), at geographies of hegemony within academic discourse (Rose, 1992), at the spatiality of conflict resolution of ethnic disputes (O'Loughlin, 1984), at border studies (Rumley and Minghi, 1991), and generally at the articulation of identities through space reconfiguration. More intimate landscapes have also been the object of geographic study, such as domesticity and the kitchen (Rapoport, 1969), political spaces created by populace during carnivals (Shields, 1991), or other private domains of resistance.

The understanding of space has its roots in movements such as the long-standing tradition in cultural geography of "reading the landscape." Such a study of landscape is achieved by the interpretation of the many layers

of which it is composed, as those of a palimpsest. The Berkeley School of cultural geographers was most active in the 1920's, under the leadership of Carl Sauer. According to this school of thought, artifacts that remain in the landscape, no matter how ordinary, are indicative of the factors that have transformed space into place. Today, space theories generally consist of both objective and subjective conceptual studies of the built environment. They bear specific emphasis on how space is manipulated by various agents of power and of resistance, within people's space of daily activities. Place in fact becomes geographic and ideologic territory. The formation of a people's identity is thus most relevant to the formation of place.

In social thought, space is considered to be culturally created. Space is understood as an axis of what is taking place, as is time. Thus, "identifiable causal chains" (Sack, 1980, pp. 9-10) are substantiated through observation of the cultural phenomena of space creation. Built settings are the objects of the study of function and form. Indeed, space is largely manifested through objects in place (except in cases such as electronic transmittals). Recently, such analyses have broadened and now encompass many histories of the location and also experiential factors, such as daily use by people involved in a variety of phenomena of space creation (Goss, 1988, p. 394). Complex codes, or symbols, connote functions assigned to objects. These functions are further defined by the contexts within which they exist.

French philosopher Lefebvre has influenced the study of space in the particular mindfulness that is now paid to the various struggles played out in the built environment of daily places. Through this analysis, the standing of people who were previously seen as victims and mere pawns (women, for example) have been re-evaluated. Indeed, it is useful to pause and consider Lefebvre, as he questions Western notions of social conflict. He believes that

we view conflict today in an essentially negative manner, as an aberrant, or transitory phenomenon (as Williams wrote in 1985: a "premodern" form of expression that is often perceived as "disruptive, traditional and misguided" (p. 111)), and that this attitude is a consequence of Humanism, when human calamities were increasingly controlled. He writes that the differentiation, between pleasure and pain, "entails the separation of things that cannot or must not be separated" (1992, p. 200). However, it often is, if nothing else in order to achieve civility. Indeed, according to Lefebvre, any promise of security inherently necessitates violence (1992, p. 388), a violence that is commonly cloaked in the rationality of consensus (1992, p. 282), one that is based on persuasion, and on political legitimization and delegitimization (1992, p. 227). He writes (1992, p. 358):

> "... practical space is the bearer of norms and constraints. It does not merely express power -- it proceeds to repress in the name of power (and sometimes in the name of nothing). As a body of normative and repressive efficacy -- linked instrumentally to its objectability -- that makes the essentially deceptive space, readily occupiable by pretenses such as those of civic peace, consensus, or the reign of non-violence."

Lefebvre calls upon a return to the contradictions issued of the body (namely those of needs and desires) for a breakdown of homogeneity (coherence and reductionism), and for a fractioning of the space according to immediate and simultaneous use. This space would readily display the contradictions, pleasures, and immediacies that reflect the expansion of all individual creativity, in dealing with their specificities of needs and desires, within their surroundings. Certainly Lefebvre is not alone in his appeal, in

The uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City, Sennett (1970) (as have others) writes in defense of creative disorders and pleads for a tolerance for ambiguity.

Whether intentional or created in an ad hoc manner, space is arranged as a response to needs and wants. A site may be the result of highly contrived and ingenious planning as in commercial establishments such as restaurants or shopping centers (Goss, 1993, p. 18). Space may be "camouflaged" in order to hide the response to subconscious need. For example, the distance between shops in shopping malls is carefully apportioned or concealed (through turns or distractions), lest shoppers are discouraged and leave (Goss, 1993, p. 19). What is decipherable by users, and what is in turn exploited to subvert the codes, functions, and symbols, depends on several factors. It is primarily determined by how difficult they are to defy, by the level of discrepancy between need and response to need, and by whether language of access exists to effectively articulate dissension. In terms of the present study, because many deaf people do not have a thorough command of English, access to dissension itself is at the root of their struggle. Space can thus be assumed to be an even more important site where mediation is vividly performed, and indeed it is, through sign language for example. Identification of key players situates human needs within those of social institutions, clarifies whether these needs can be met within the social institutions, gives credit to human expression, clarifies the structure of conflict, and perhaps allows for a more satisfying resolution.

Undoubtedly, the study of space serves to dovetail information about isolated phenomena into a common frame of reference. This ability enables us to pose more relevant questions and to generate new hypotheses. These questions and theories hopefully make Human Sciences, and geography in

particular, more helpful for the practical purposes of organizing space for more just and liberal societies.

2. 5 National Agenda and the University

> "Education is the battleground where linguistic minorities win or lose their rights." (Lane, 1992, p. 105)

As examined previously, geographic analysis provides the understanding of space as an important component of human context, geographic analysis also brings in scale as a crucial factor. Indeed, scale exhibits the extent, or lack thereof, of ramifications involved in the object studied. Quite clearly, Chisholm Hall is a site with national ramifications, in terms of originating source of funding, representing contested educative policies, performing unique functions, achieving degrees of success in formal and informal goals, representing various interests, establishing a forum, and having an impact on a large segment of the deaf population. It is a landmark for the nation, and serves as a model to emulate or critique.

What Chisholm Hall stands for has much to do with policies established through national ideology in education, across time. The rationale of national ideology in the United States has its basis on territory, where leaders have aimed to create a homogenous population with "unique ties," rather than a political community, as Smith (1981, p. 18) describes it, that relies on "an identifiable community of culture." Within this rationale, progress depends on the degree and speed with which people of many ethnic backgrounds integrate into a common culture. Schooling and education is intended to promote this ideology, as well as provide literacy and

information, encourage mental discipline, and build vocational, social, individual, and civic development. In the recent past this was achieved through the exclusive use of English. Many Americans emphatically believe that bilingualism creates ethnic dissension, and, as can be expected, education has been at the vanguard of the Americanization of the foreign-born.

But individual development has come to be more emphasized in education during the later part of the 20th century; and civic and social aims are emphasized to a greater extent. Other recent trends in education have been the increase in adult education and the removal of illiteracy. National agenda is fashioned in a consensual mode, where majority perspectives prevail. This perspective is in turn reproduced according to the selective memory of its adherents, the citizens of the nation-state, and mirrored in the schools themselves. Education and language policy are two principal means by which national agenda has influenced deaf people. National ideology has determined the prescriptive organization of Chisholm Hall, through legislation, building regulations, feasibility reports, design guides, grants, and other federal and state guidelines. Processes such as these have come under scrutiny from diverse critical theorists in linguistics, sociology, and architecture. The debates they have occasioned are explored, in order to examine if the hearing and deaf perspectives make sense and are synchronized. Consequences of previous resolutions have indeed resulted in radical changes in deaf education.

Perhaps the state has of late been most vilified for its homogenizing functions and hegemonic powers. As mentioned earlier, the modernist notions of progress have been criticized, especially, for example, the monumental government projects that were typical of the 1950-1970's. Stemming from the Civil Rights movement, mounting hope has been placed

in grass root movements, interest groups, and resistance efforts across the world. Indeed, the empowerment potentials they offer have been perceived as more democratic *per se*. This populism in turn has given small groups of people the necessary impetus for the identification of communities based on a variety of commonalties. Minority and ethnic demands have brought on an increasingly wide array of research on issues of community-building and conflict research. The language of the Civil Rights movement has been readily appropriated when speaking of the rights of the disabled community as a whole, and for that matter, by the deaf themselves for they know it is one which the public understands. However, it is one they are not particularly familiar or comfortable with (Padden and Humphries, 1988, p. 44) and the enactment of various laws issued of the Civil Rights movements has in fact brought them mixed blessings.

Change and flux are part and parcel of social content and dissent. Circumstances that can escalate changes range from cultural, political, and economic distress to changes in interactions within the power structure, in particular between those agencies who mediate for the general population and for the state. Education, and particularly standardized education, has been a main tenet of the nation-state beginning with the French Revolution. Since then at least, education has played a large part in mediation, in terms of uniformity and of the legitimization of knowledge. The history, values, and beliefs of a community are passed on in schools, where future educators are also formed, thus passing state tenets onto the next generations. The relationship of national interest and private interest can be meshed and disguised, especially through a uniform education that minimizes differences, and a bureaucracy that attempts to solidify the system in place. The shaping of the citizenry, through public education, thus crucially

reproduces state ideology. The paradox between the passing on of knowledge and the legitimizing of nationhood is fraught with contradictions.

For long the deaf were seen as unable to participate in the induced process of state creation through standardized education and employment, so their schooling was tacitly permitted in segregated residential institutions that used signed communication and where deaf teachers served as role models. The establishment of separate deaf communities, and indeed a sovereign state, were briefly discussed by deaf leaders in the mid 1800's. While these ideas were deemed preposterous, there were many who called for self-determination (Van Cleve, Vickrey and Crouch, 1989, p. 65). In the nineteenth century, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, a surge to adapt deaf people to the hearing world, where they could be productive, was largely initiated by proponents of oralism.

The official policy of the United States had been one of tolerance until the late 1800's. Schools were often taught in the community's dominant language, such as German. The power and significance of language became an issue in the contest of group allegiance, and the means to restrict language practices in schools were manifested. The use and significance of English increased in the 1880's (Leibowitz, 1984, p. 451) with the institutions of, for example, boarding schools for Native Americans. Claims in favor of assimilationism were rooted in functionalism and homogeneity, rather than on factors such as democracy or pedagogy. After World War II, protective texts, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, opened the way for the safeguarding of individual rights rather than those of people in groups (nation-states for example). While a distinct emphasis on assimilationism remains, there have been shifts in tolerance towards linguistic difference in the last decades. The Supreme Court has attempted to address questions of

bilingualism on numerous occasions, with for example the promulgation of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. Minority language is now officially sanctioned in public education in the rare instance that it is deemed the most appropriate pedagogical tool (Safran, 1992, p. 551). However, American Sign Language (ASL), an ideographic manual language with its own syntax used by deaf people, has no official federal recognition, and thus receives no funding for bilingual education program (Lane, 1992, p. 120). Simultaneously, increased tolerance for ASL in deaf education, as can be demonstrated in the adoption of total communication, fits within a more broad-minded attitude that reflects recent research done about communities and bilingualism; however, this new attitude has not yet come to be reflected in federal law. At its worst the more broad-minded attitude has come to mean that deaf people are proficient neither in English nor in sign language. Recent debates instigated by proponents of the Deaf community have favored bilingualism and biculturalism. This controversial approach is based on the teaching of sign language first as the most logical and effective approach to deaf communication. But in order to define itself as a distinctive community, deaf people have been divided over language issues, namely, whether to use a pure form of ASL, or an ever modernizing version. The nationalist postulate has endowed ethnicity with self-consciousness, fighting spirit, and political direction, while simultaneously shaping an appropriate strategy for the community's particular situation (Smith, 1981, p. 18). In essence, there are two processes at play. The first one entails the national agenda and the unified governance of what is becoming a pluralist society; while the second heeds the exigencies of the creation of a discriminate culture. Primarily, the physical site of these currents and of research done about communities and bilingualism has been the university.

Universities are by definition the institutions of highest learning, and in essence, their purpose is visionary and utopian. They are the sites of embodiment of national beliefs about progress for society, and through accreditation the national government gives them the authority to confer degrees. The research effectuated under collegiate aegis does much to define past, present, and future conditions. Arguably, campuses have been fashioned for the performance of these tasks, and the academic and administrative hierarchy supports these as well. In America, campuses are often built as ideal cities in microcosm (Turner, 1985, p. 305), with facilities that include shopping center and dormitories. Those built in the 1950-60's were often created in order to absorb the rapid influx of veterans who were taking advantage of the G.I. bill for education, and the baby boom era that was coming into college age (Turner, 1985, p. 249). The state of California was particularly affected by these currents, and in the early 1960's state universities were irremediably restructured by the California Master Plan for Education, a plan devised to prioritize the allocation of moneys.

CSUN operates as an open university with the philosophy that higher education should be available to nearly anyone, and that students should be able to choose any type or program they want. John Broesamle, a CSUN historian who in 1993 published *Suddenly a Giant: A History of California State University, Northridge* for the occasion of CSUN's thirty years of existence, noted that in the early years CSUN was lively with the hopes for an exciting academic environment. When the Master Plan was instituted, some feared that collegiate spirit would be dissipated on the CSU campuses. This plan indeed has given CSUs second ranking in terms of academic expectations within a tri-tiered system. The Universities of California are placed at the top and focus on research (and thus support smaller teaching loads through

larger allocations of funds for example), while community colleges occupy the third echelon for students whose education is less ambitious. CSUs, and CSUN in particular, largely aim to mold teachers and professionals. Some efforts were made by CSUN early on to control the damage exacted by this plan and to this day classes are taught in the most part by professors rather than graduate students, and faculty offices are conveniently accessible in close proximity of classrooms (Broesamle, 1993, pp. 286-287). Nevertheless the varied and qualitative differences of state support are readily visible on these campuses, for example in the ambitious architecture, and the displays of art and commemorative plaques that honor philanthropists or celebrated scientists on the University of California campuses, while the California State Universities tend to showcase student projects or teaching tools. The structure of power is reflected in the constructed space (Winchester, 1992, p. 142).

Not much was written on the history of the physical planning of universities in the United States until the last few decades. Turner, who in 1985 wrote a rich compilation on campus architecture entitled *Campus: An American Planning Tradition*, attributes this neglect to the assumption that no overall planning per se existed, and that American campuses developed haphazardly in response to localized needs (Turner, 1985, p. 4). Such a viewpoint remained unchanged until the 1950-60's, when campuses were widely built in order to generate progress and educate masses of people with the result that a stifling bureaucracy was created (Markus, 1993, p. 4). Of course such large scale construction also supported the modernist approach and ideology of democratic access. In any case, the monumental works thus generated roused the interest among planners and historians of architecture, who began to consider universities as particular environments on a more

managerial level. Since 1974 their interest has generated the publication of a periodical entitled *Planning in Higher Education*. The university buildings that date to the 1950-60's typically conform to a uniform landscape, where the university as a whole is considered. Few universities are presently being built, although many are enlarging their facilities, including CSUN. These additions more readily display diversity, in various competitions of showy confidence.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEAF COMMUNITY

3. 1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on deaf people. Members of the Deaf community are identified by several criteria over and above lack of hearing. Some of the definitions that have emerged are based of characteristics such as the growing recognition of ASL and of "things deaf," including recognizable patterns of deaf behavior. These patterns and their possible imprint on the built environment are the subject of this chapter, rather than whether deaf people form a culture that fits one of hundreds of definitions elaborated by anthropologists and sociologists. In the first part, issues of definition are examined, as well as the origin and impact of various significant perspectives. In the second part, an overview of deaf education is given in terms of the shaping of a distinct deaf identity. And in the third part, various aspects of the deaf community are discussed, as the Deaf community claims that these aspects form the basis of their separate culture. This background is investigated in order later to recognize the patterns that have imprinted the landscape of Chisholm Hall.

3. 2 Issues of Definition

More than 22 million Americans are hearing impaired. The etiology of deafness varies widely, and exact causes are unknown in up to 30% of the cases. Overall incidence of deafness is stable, but in the mid 1960s a rubella

epidemic caused many pregnant women to give birth to deaf children. The university enrollment of these children began in the mid 1980s and substantially increased their presence on American campuses. While a number of deaf people have multiple disabilities which can complicate and severally impact their educational achievements, this is not the case of the deaf students at CSUN, who have relatively few other disabilities (Boutin, 1993, p. 1).

There is no strict definition of deafness, but the experience of living with hearing impairment can be greatly influenced by several factors, which in turn have an impact on self-identification. One of them is the extent of hearing impairment, and in a related manner whether deafness is progressive or sudden. Secondly, and perhaps more crucially, the age at onset of hearing loss, and when a correct diagnosis is established, are factors in shaping the deaf person's future. If late deafened, a person has a better chance to adjust for this loss within the hearing world. On the other hand, children who are born deaf and have never heard spoken English will be likely to have great difficulty in that world. Their development depends overwhelmingly on the possibility to communicate proficiently in another way. What lies at risk is not only the satisfaction of basic needs such as socialization, but also that their successful development of conceptual and abstract thought may be threatened (Lane, 1992, pp. 181-2). Whether and how such children receive access to language depends on their environment. Perhaps more so than with any other, this factor affects deaf people in how they feel about themselves, and how they relate to others. In 90% of cases, deaf children are born to hearing parents, and are most likely encouraged to be as "normal," that is hearing, as possible (Lane, 1992, p. 158). On the one hand parents understandably desire to have progeny that are as similar to

themselves as possible, and on the other they are concerned that, although deaf, their child learn to live in a hearing world. Partly because of these reasons, hearing families of deaf children remain unfamiliar with much sign language (Dolnick, 1993, p. 38).

Most people consider deafness to be a disability. Coping with the inability to hear or speak is indeed painfully difficult, and deaf individuals are often drastically set apart due to communication barriers. But some deaf people have attributed the negative impacts of deafness to the widely held belief that deafness is a disability. In fact, they blame the perception that deafness is prevailingly seen as an unfortunate condition that must be corrected to the radical adaptive practices in pedagogy and in medicine. This particular group of deaf people claims to have a language, namely ASL, that permits them a fully satisfying mode of communication and they assert that they share an identifiable culture. They refer to themselves as "Deaf" (uppercase), in contrast to "deaf" (lowercase) which merely indicates an audiological condition. For the purpose of clarity, this appellation has been adopted throughout this thesis. While "Deaf" is used to identify the specific group of deaf people who believe to form a separate cultural group, "deaf" refers to the broad population of hearing-impaired people.

3. 3 Deaf Education

While this thesis is not about the education of deaf people, the origins and changes that have taken place in their education are important to note for several reasons. First, the education of the deaf has largely defined the struggles between hearing and non-hearing. Second, deaf education has been the single most important factor in shaping Deaf identity. And last, the

examination of deaf education provides an appropriate background to the very study of one of its important representative, namely CSUN.

The history of deaf education is broadly divided into periods when sign language was prominently favored, or when the use of English was promulgated, until present day practice, which attempts to bring together both efforts with a slight favor given to sign language in several western countries. The history of deaf education has been told with several varying emphasis, according to which side was favored.

Proponents of the existence of a separate Deaf community prefer to recount the history of deaf education as beginning when sign language was first formally adopted. American deaf education has its roots in eighteenth century Paris, where a priest named Charles Michel de l'Epée used a manual alphabet to instruct a small group of deaf children (Padden and Humphries, 1988, p. 27). His school gained great notoriety and his students opened schools for the deaf in other parts of Europe. He published compilations of signs that reached America, through the intermediary of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet (Van Cleve, Vickrey, and Crouch, 1989, p. 33). Gallaudet's son, Edward, opened a national college for the deaf, also in Washington, D. C. in 1864. For about sixty years ASL, or American Sign Language, was used throughout an expanding network of schools here. Gallaudet believed that ASL was the indispensable language of growth, education, and expression of the deaf. But compromises were made even at his college, especially after he died.

The dominance of oralism, or the pedagogy that affirms the superiority of speech in deaf education, was first established at the Congress of Milan in 1880 by an international meeting of hearing educators. This movement was intended to normalize deafness by emphasizing the use of English (through "enhanced" speech), and by forbidding the use of signs. It was conceived

when bilingualism was believed to be "bad for the brain," and when sign languages were thought to reflect "the poverty of cultures and immaturities of personalities" (Neisser, 1990, p. 30). Now widely discredited as a nineteenth century idea issued of Victorian science, oralism first inspired enthusiastic confidence in unremitting work, in the absolutism of the English language, and in gadgetry and technology.

Alexander Graham Bell, a proponent of this philosophy, led much of its development in the United States. He insisted that children who sign inevitably lose the motivation to speak and he thus favored the close monitoring of deaf children, whose hands were often tied in order to prevent them from signing. In fact, because Bell assumed that deafness is hereditary, he went as far as discouraging the association of deaf people with one another (Van Cleve, Vickrey, and Crouch, 1989, p. 151). Teachers who were educated in oralist schools began to regard ASL as a lesser language. The growing ambivalence about ASL, and the fact that it is nearly impossible to speak English and sign ASL at the same time (and, after all, teachers who were educated in the oralist tradition "spoke" English), were two factors that progressively prompted the transformation of signs into what has become Signed English, or SE. Hearing teachers who believed that ASL was affecting their student's English changed ASL in this manner instead of correcting the faulty English. Considered a purist by many, Lane today compares this method to teaching French by teaching franglais (Lane, 1992, p. 47). In time, even Gallaudet College dropped ASL, but it was one of the few schools that continued to use a manual communication of sorts through the century of oralism (Van Cleve, Vickrey, and Crouch, 1989, p. 141).

Of patriotic and missionary intent, the Volta Bureau opened by Bell in Washington, D. C., in the 1890's still serves as the headquarters and library of

the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and for the Volta Review, the monthly magazine of the oral establishment in America (Van Cleve, Vickrey, and Crouch, 1989, p. 122). Ross, a retired professor of audiology and Director of Research and Training for the New York League for the Hard of Hearing and editor of *Hearing-Impaired Children in the Mainstream*, brushes over the century of oralism (1990, p. 318). He looks upon this era as a mere "experiment" in pedagogy and a "qualified failure." The ill success he blames on the lack of support services, and writes: "[O]ur colleagues of the past had a good idea, at least for some of the children, but the time was not right" (1990, p. 317). And in fact, oralist methods, such as enhanced speech and lip reading, were not very successful. The consequences of these drastic methods were that deaf people were made to hope for a state they could not achieve; they suffered from lingering feelings of inadequacy for not fitting into the hearing world, and were castigated as "oral failures." However, because schools for the deaf were residential, deaf children were brought together and, although the use of sign was discouraged, socialization through this language did occur. More so, teachers were often deaf and this, in itself, gave students significant role models to emulate, as well as giving them opportunity for employment later on.

Nearly a century of oralism was brought on by the belief that the exclusive and forced use of English, and thus homogenization, was preferable for deaf people. Today, examples of oralism persist. The John Tracy Clinic in Los Angeles (whose origins are closely linked to those of the establishment of deaf education on the CSUN campus) encourages the oral development of preschoolers and has received much praise from grateful parents, who feel that their child will have a chance in the oral world. Reportedly operating on a $2 million budget, the Director of Development, Philip Strout, proudly

declared in an interview for the Los Angeles Times that at the clinic "the word deaf is rarely used" (Mann, 1989, p. 12). In the mid 1970s, a similar emphasis was given to deafness as a disability, this time the focus was on equal access to the hearing world, a seemingly benign endeavor. But deaf people have adjusted in ways that have been characterized as less than successful by many parties, both in academic and social terms.

The 1970's saw an assimilationist wave in deaf education. Mainstreaming, that is, integration in regular schools, is intended to open access to all disabled students to broader fields and career choices, this in proximity of the general population of hearing students. The idea of mainstreaming is rooted in the beliefs that a unified pedagogy is essential for national unity and is a crucial tenet of civil justice, because deafness is a disability that must be corrected. Several legal changes supported this effort to open access to the hearing world for all disabled people, beginning in 1968, when the U.S. Congress passed the Architectural Barriers Act (Public Law 90-480). This law directed the federal government to ensure physical accessibility in public buildings and facilities. These buildings have since been designed or altered so as to be accessible to disabled people, including the hearing-impaired. This mandate overlaps with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Title V), which is generally regarded as the first "civil rights" legislation for persons with disabilities at the national level. Section 504 prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified disabled persons on the basis of disability. This mandate has promoted the development of disability support service programs in universities over the last decades. Doors have been widened, ramps built, and acoustical features reconsidered. Significantly broadening the definition of disability, this mandate included the perceptions of others as a criteria of disability. In terms of education, this new perspective

increased the number of students who qualified under the new designation. Soon thereafter, in 1975, a Federal Court ruling entitled the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, PL 94-142 became effective, extending the concept of equal education opportunity as argued in Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 to all handicapped children. It mandated the right to free education at public expense, and required that it be done in the least possible restrictive environment. The interpretation of this mandate's terms was vague, especially as far as deaf children were concerned, because residential schools were pejoratively regarded as restrictive institutions (Neisser, 1990, p. 272) with low academic standards. At CSUN, the concept of mainstreaming was seen as progressive, while that of residential schools was seen as a throw back to the days of segregated schools.

From the vantage point of hearing parents and educators, the impulse to assimilate students into public schools was seen as beneficial for all parties involved, especially perhaps because public schools were suffering from declining enrollments, reduced budgets, school closings, and teacher unemployment (Commission on Education of the Deaf, 1988, p. 9). Hailing the economic argument, school boards argued that educating two groups of pupils within the same physical setting would be more cost effective than separating them in two facilities. Hearing parents of deaf children were relieved that their deaf child would live close to home, and would be in a "normal" environment. The visibility of deaf children also would generate acceptance on the part of hearing people, and their infirmities would eventually be minimized in everyone's mind (Lane, 1992, p. 18).

At best, mainstreaming is successful, in the context of educative institutions, if enough support is provided for sign language interpreters and if enough opportunities exist for deaf students once they leave schools. In the

few instances where mainstreaming has been positive, the deaf have the advantage that they do not have to do all the adjusting, that they can have in-depth communication with hearing people, that they see themselves as equally capable, and can understand conversations between others without necessitating their own involvement.

Practice, however, has not generally followed this model for several reasons. One is that because deafness is rare, deaf people are thinly scattered across the population, and deaf students are thus isolated in local schools. Another reason is that because mainstreaming schools tend to funnel any deaf students through disabled students channels, and into the general student population, there is little consistent, qualified interpretative support, and contact with other deaf people is postponed. While sign language is allowed, their ability to communicate is reduced since they are unlikely to make use of it, their reading skills of English do not improve significantly, and their careers in teaching and crafts progressively erode.

Most deaf children in mainstream schools are introduced to Signed English (SE, a generally non-orthographic sign-language mode which follows the syntax and word order of grammatical English while not being a language per se). While SE seems like a useful alternative, especially because it has a written form, it is arduously slow, and because the fingerspelled letters tend to run together, it is difficult for the receiver to "read" the words (Neisser, 1990, p. 50). In addition, because English is an auditory and vocal language, which does not make sense if one has never heard sounds, deaf children generally score poorly on tests of English skills. With their English faltering, and their hopes broken, they are then at last taught ASL. Because of this delay, many deaf children are denied a native language, one which they can acquire to a good degree of proficiency while young. This may have tragic social and

intellectual repercussions. According to Wheeler, who writes on the death of languages, it is not unusual for many linguistic minority groups to feel "an unjustified sense of shame about their language" (1994, p. A9); deaf people have not escaped from this feeling.

The deaf have internalized their academic failures and have tended to hide their maladjustment, while in fact educational policy is to blame. In a book on the psychological implications of deafness, Furth (1966, p. 226) wrote that while intelligence "is remarkably unaffected by the absence of verbal language," deaf students lack information, have less opportunity to think because their opinions are not often requested, they seem passive, and are insecure in unstructured situations. Deaf people in these circumstances later recall the frustration in making themselves understood, the mortifying misunderstandings, and the isolation of being left out (Higgins, 1980, p. 26).

Deaf children spend a lot of time practicing speech and lip reading at home and in special education classes. Lip reading is not a very satisfactory method of communication, however, least of all in large groups, where exchanges are rapid, or among the deaf themselves. A comprehensive understanding of English is necessary to read lips and even so, a talented lip reader (and indeed, it seems that lip reading relies most on innate talent) can on average read one word out of four (Neisser, 1990, p. 23). Years of practice improve this capacity only slightly. More so, the time spent on improving communication skills delays the academic development of these children.

As a result, many deaf students leave mainstream high school with what amounts to a fourth grade education, and arrive to the universities lacking not only ASL as a native language, but also English, signed or otherwise (Dolnick, 1993, p. 40). Indeed Lane, who cites six studies published by various authors from diverse perspectives, reveals that "[t]he average

sixteen-year-old deaf student reads as poorly as an eight-year-old hearing child. Even in his best subject, arithmetic, he is four grades behind" (Lane, 1992, p. 130).

In 1988 the Commission on Education of the Deaf made recommendations in a report entitled *Toward Equality* to members of Congress that changes be made in terms of refocusing the least restrictive environment concept, and for taking "positive action to encourage practices under the Bilingual Education Act that seek to enhance the quality of education received by limited-English-proficiency children whose native (primary) language is American Sign Language" (xvii). While its membership is small, the National Association on Deafness has also strongly advocated similar reforms.

For the purposes of instruction, ASL and SE have been incorporated into a deaf pedagogy called total communication. This method integrates every means to make oneself understood, such as lip reading, writing, and signing within mainstream education. Schools that adopted total communication recognized that many deaf children really needed sign language to communicate and that speech is simply not possible. At first, proponents of total communication were delighted that speech was encouraged, while Deaf advocates were relieved that signs would be used. But total communication has not been without controversy. Hardly anyone is pleased now, for the academic achievements of the deaf are cause for concern (Commission on Education of the Deaf, 1988, 9). The children are not learning to speak well enough to fit in the hearing world, or to other deaf children for that matter, and teachers still do not sign properly (Lane, 1992, 116). The few signs that are used are rough, and sentences lack grammar. For these reasons,