

**HEARING LOSS , TECHNOLOGY and COMMUNITY
AT THE START OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY.**

**A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement
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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores ways in which technology is influencing the lives of hard of hearing people at the start of the 21st century. The thesis develops and is grounded in a distinction between people who referred to as 'deaf' and those who are referred to as 'hard of hearing.' It is argued that there is a lack of recognition of the special needs of hard of hearing people in deaf and disability discourses and more generally in everyday communication. This lack of recognition is analogous to the absence of women from many forms of social analysis until the latter part of the 20th century. In light of this clearer specification of the people under consideration, attention shifts to a consideration of the various technologies they can access. The context within which these technologies are used is one in which, unlike many deaf people who form an integrated community that is differentiated and separate from the general society, hard of hearing people have tended to become socially isolated within the hearing community. This understanding of the potential for social isolation allows the specific significance of generic computer technology for this group to come to the fore. As a consequence the thesis focuses upon a detailed examination of the place of a hard of hearing online real community in the lives of a number of hard of hearing people.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1:	1
Introduction.	1
Thesis Aim and Scope	1
Hearing Loss: Statistics in the Western World	2
Hearing and the Medical Condition of Hearing Loss	3
Hearing Loss and Deafness	6
Social Difficulties Confronting the Hard of Hearing	9
Social Exclusions	11
Structure of the Thesis.....	14
Chapter 2:	16
A Brief History of Hearing Loss and of Hearing Technologies	16
History of Hearing Loss	16
Development of Hearing Technologies.....	24
Hearing Aid Technology.....	27
Stigma of Hearing Aid Use.....	28
Cochlear Implant.....	30
Computers.....	32
An Alternative View of Technology	34
Chapter 3:	37
Theoretical Perspectives: Understanding Disability.	37
Common Understanding of Disability.....	37
Disability – A Political Framework.....	38
Theorising Disability.....	43
Disability Models	44
Medical Model of Disability.....	46
Social Model of Disability	49
Commercial Aspects of Hearing Loss	50
Chapter 4:	52
Theoretical Perspectives: Conceptualizing Community.	52
Definitions of Community.....	52
Historical Community Theory.....	53
Virtual Community	57
Example of an Online Community.....	59
Chapter 5:	61
Research Methodology and Plan	61
Research Methods.....	61
Research Plan	61
Instruments	63
Questionnaire / Survey (Appendix 2)	64
Participant Observations	64
Aspects of data collecting	65
Face to face interviews with hard of hearing persons	65
Online Participation	66
Feminist Techniques	70
Data Organisation and Analysis.....	72

Chapter 6:	75
Interview Analysis	75
1: Participant Description.....	75
Interview Procedure and Observations.....	77
Interview Description	79
Alice's Interview	80
Brenda's Interview.....	83
Clare's Interview.....	85
Reflections	87
2: Participant Observations.....	89
3: Personal Stories	93
Susan's Story	93
Other stories.....	100
Alice's Story	100
Doris's Story	103
Gloria's Story.....	113
4: Participant Observations of Online Conversations	115
1. Ritual practices.....	115
2. Acceptance of common rules	116
3. Mutual aid.....	117
4. Mutual respect.....	119
5. Authentic communication.	124
Chapter 7:	126
Conclusion	126
Appendix 1.....	134
Appendix 2.....	135
Appendix 3.....	136
References	137