Dialogue: A connection of roots and branches

An Enquiry into labeling discourses through the use of multi-stakeholder Dialogue in Dis-ability Services

Aileen Tierney

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through the use of multi-stakeholder dialogue
in disability services

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Aileen Maria Tierney

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"Analogy where we have the ground here the roots here and the branches above and we could apply it to this process where the roots were just content with what was being offered …Things that allow everyone to contribute from their own experience and value everyone's experience equally that's really powerful. I think it's a very useful way to go on".

Cover Art work By Artist Greg Tierney

www.gtierney.com

The Front cover art work was specially commissioned and painted by Artist Greg Tierney, following a conversation in relation to those trees which simultaneously makes visible both their roots and branches. The inspiration derives from a metaphor offered by one of the participants in the dialogue in this project. The metaphor is in relation to the idea that through collaborative co constructed multi-stakeholder dialogue, the roots become more visible to the branches.

For my Daughter and Son

Amy and Alex

Who have both taught me so much about "Insider" and
"outsider" perspectives and the importance of creating root
and branch connections.

Abstract:

This Research thesis discusses a method of using a "multi stakeholder dialogue' approach in the context of dis-ability services. This method allows exploration of the possibilities inherent in language and conversation for the creation of new understandings of dis-ability and new possibilities for eliciting stakeholder feedback in dis-ability services.

This enquiry utilised cross sectional stakeholder conversations to explore major questions arising in relation to dis-ability services and particularly those concerned with 'labelling practices'. A key characteristic of this study is an engagement with multiple diverse dialogue partners. The dialogue participants came from all areas of the field including, parents, service users ie. people who live with dis-abilty labels, educationalists, therapists, managers and voluntary organizations

The research approach taken in this enquiry was a responsive one in relation to a) constructing the dialogue, b) reflecting upon it and c) in considering the voices of all the participants across distinctions. Reflecting this approach, this paper re-presents and responds to the voices and written quotations of participants, who were considering the 'meaning' of labeling in the field of dis-ability. Responsivity and dialogue are used together as an epistemological methodological framework through out this research project.

The enquiry concludes that a multi-stakeholder dialogical approach in dis-abilty services has the potential to both create new understandings and for participants to experience each other differently.

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Thanks to all those who have supported me in this project, especially to my dissertation supervisor Imelda McCarthy, whose own work on the fifth province was a source of inspiration to me. To all my friends and colleagues in Clanwilliam Institute: Philip Kearney, Ines Collins, Corry de Jongh, Valerie O Brien, Ruth Eustace, Carmel O Hara, Mary Callanan, Alan Carr, Luminita Buzescu, Ray O Sullivan and Aine O Reilly, who I have learned so much from in so many diverse and interesting conversations over the years. In particular I would like to also acknowledge Bernadette O Sullivan, who supported me to get this project finished. To the administration team Michelle McCafferty, Aaron Pollock and Geraldine Cahill, who I could always rely on to keep the office going. Thanks too to the board of Clanwilliam: Arlene Healy, Nollaig Byrne, Helen Haughton, Koos Mandoos and John Finnegan, who saw the importance of this project and supported my need for a space in which to work.

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PART ONE

Chapter 1. Introduction

Project Focus

The objective of this project was to involve stakeholders in dialogical forums, with a view to considering labeling discourses and the construct dis-abilty.

Dialogical Forums

The use of dialogical *forums* refers to large-scale facilitated conversations amongst stakeholders, who have an interest in the question(s) under consideration.

Stakeholders refers to all those with a particular interest in the area, which may include the general public, educators, parents, learners, special needs coordinators, multi- disciplinary professionals, employers, health services, dis-ability organisations, voluntary organizations and people who live with dis-ability labels.

Dis-ability

The word dis-ability is hyphenated throughout to deconstruct and provide challenge to the application of static constructs of dis-ability and to examine/highlight, the simultaneous multiple occupancy of other positions. It is also used in this way to highlight the disabling nature of labels, and places a focus on the dichotomies of ability and dis-ability.

This project initially sought to consider how cross sectional dialogue(s) amongst stakeholders, in the dis-ability sector, have the potential to create enriched reflections. These reflections can contribute to, and help facilitate a more inclusive approach to the planning of new services and the review of the provision of existing services.

The enquiry was compiled using a combination of literature reviews, and documentation and a presentation of and response to transcripts of participative dialogue(s) amongst a cross section of stakeholders from health, education, Voluntary organizations and service users in the specific area of learning dis-ability. The term specific learning dis-abilty is generally seen to encompass the diagnostic categorise of Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD and Aspergers syndrome.

The enquiry argues for the capacity and potential of stakeholder dialogue(s) to make a significant contribution to service developments, and for the conversations to be both generative and transformative. It is hoped that this enquiry will add to the growing development of emancipatory and inclusive methodologies for planning and reviewing service delivery in the disability sector.

A Responsive Dialogical Approach

The approach taken in this enquiry is a responsive one to both the emerging enquiry and the emerging social products (data). It is an approach, which also highlights and pays attention to my own journey and shifting positions in and through the narration of the enquiry story. This 'responsive dialogical approach' is reflected in the narration of the meandering path of the enquiry, the review of the project dialogues and in the descriptions of the 'in -the moment nature' of the enquiry itself. I use the term responsive dialogical approach to describe an 'in -the moment response" as opposed to a pre-planned approach or a retrospective analysis. The approach is dialogical, in the sense that it engages in a response to and with what is emerging. In considering this type of approach. I was also very influenced by TS. Eliot's ideas (1944 p.3) in relation to time. "Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future and time future contained in time past " and therefore responding in the moment as if all is present to us. Eliot (1944) also speaks to multiple discourses 'what might have been is an abstraction remaining a perpetual possibility'. It was this idea of holding open space for all possibilities as opposed to closing down possibilities in abstraction or reductive forms of analysis, that suggested a responsive dialogical approach as being the best fit for this particular enquiry. A dialogical responsive approach was more coherent, particularly given the more fluid nature of constructing and deconstructing labeling discourses, with which this enquiry is engaged. Systemic ideas also influenced this enquiry, particularly the ideas in relation to mutual influence. Systemic practitioners and writers consider the systems in which people reside (Dallos and Draper 2000). A Systems theory view sees the person as embedded in a social and emotional world, which s/he is constantly being influenced by, and is constantly influencing. This approach takes account of the multi-layered complexity of the many systems in which we live. In this enquiry by taking a responsive dialogical approach was coherent with attending to these ideas of mutual influence and as a consequence the constant constructing and de-constructing which takes place in the space between people.

 As a metaphorical analogy, the approach taken in this enquiry was more closely aligned to Indra's net than to Ockham's razor. The former is a web like net in which jewels are spread across it and are infinite in number. If one jewel is selected and examined, its polished surface reflects all the other jewels. Each jewel is reflects all of the others and so in this way the process of reflection is infinite. While it is not possible in this enquiry, which is finite, to hold all the reflections of reflections infinitely, a responsive dialogical approach in my view holds open more possibilities. Occam's razor on the other hand, more closely reflects an analytical approach to data analysis based on catagorization and abstraction. Occam's Razor is attributed to a 14th century theologian William of Ockham who wrote "entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity" This is also phrased as *pluralitas non est ponenda sine*

necessitate "plurality should not be posited without necessity". In this enquiry, by being responsive, I am attempting to encourage the 'multiplication of entities' and support the expression of pluralistic views of the meaning of dis-abilty.

The style of writing utilized in this enquiry is conversational, in keeping with the dialogical nature of the project. A responsive dialogical approach is utilized, in particular, as one way of being coherent with the project dialogue itself, whilst simultaneously keeping faith with the principles of collaborative dialogue throughout the whole enquiry.

 The views of those involved in this project both in relation to dis-ability labels and in relation to the dialogical process in which they had participated, are re=presented and responded to. I use the word represented hyphenated here, to highlight the fact that I am not purporting to represent the perspectives of the participants but that instead I am presenting them again with a response as author/narrator as opposed to an 'interpretation' as researcher.

Some of the other significant features of this enquiry are the accounts of 'sideways glimpses' glimpsed observations of self in the process of the enquiry, together with an account of the ways in which I have both influenced and been influenced by this enquiry process and the attention to fluidity and movement as responses both throughout the enquiry and in the deconstruction of dis-ability as a static construct.

These glimpses of self, in many ways, form part of the myriad of reflections on reflections, in the process of engaging in a responsive approach to the research enquiry.

Structure of the Enquiry

The structure of this enquiry presentation is in three parts and consists of seven chapters.

PART 1

This section outlines some contextual factors and theoretical ideas, which influenced this enquiry. The project itself is also introduced and outlined. An introduction to and rationale is provided in relation to participatory approaches for eliciting stakeholder feedback. The latter part of this section focuses on dis-ability discourses and marginalization, with an emphasis on themes of insider and outsider perspectives being elaborated.

Chapter 1: -The Introduction outlines some contextual factors, which influenced the enquiry and it outlines my initial interests in this area. From my perspective, it does not seem possible to ascertain all the components of contextual influencing factors, in any one domain, given that we can only speak to those of which we are aware. As a consequence of this, I have chosen to highlight a few contextual factors, which I am conscious of as having influenced this enquiry. In this chapter, the contextual factors outlined relate predominantly to my professional background and experiences in working in the field of dis-abilty. Other contextual factors are outlined in later chapters and in the use of 'sideways glimpses'[1] i.e. observations of myself on the enquiry path.

Chapter 2: This Chapter outlines the project itself, the methods used and the format and structure of this enquiry. This chapter provides the rationale for inclusive approaches, which reflect greater participatory citizenship, and considers participatory citizenship and service user involvement in dis-ability services. It also highlights the ways in which the approach taken in this particular enquiry differs from other methods of service user involvement.

Chapter 3: Presents a deconstruction and challenge to the application of static constructs of dis-ability. It does this through the use of insider/ outsider ideas and in the presentation of a more   fluid and transient approach to the application of labels such as dis-ability.

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[1] This term, which is further elaborated in chapter 5, I resonated with and adapted from Joyce, (1947, p. 119) for use as an observational tool in this enquiry, as a way of explaining self-observational glimpses.

PART 2

This section considers theoretical influences and further expands dialogue as a methodology. It also elaborates further the methodology of this enquiry and the epistemological stance, which has influenced the approach taken.

Chapter 4: Considers the construct, philosophy and attributes of dialogue together with a multifaceted exploration of both the influences on and what constitutes dialogical exchange. This chapter, also, considers contexts, which create the possibility for transformative dialogue to occur.

Chapter 5: Outlines the particular methodological approach designed and used throughout this enquiry and the rationale for the use of this approach. This chapter also presents some ideas in relation to emancipatory responsive research methodology.

PART 3

 In this section responsive approach to the data is taken. In an ongoing dialogical manner, I offer some personal written reflections and responses in relation to both the content and process of the enquiry and provide visual responses from the dialogue participants as an invitation to consider 'ways to go on' from here in the hope of further contributing to contexts where all stories are given 'equal voice'.

Chapter 6: This Chapter re-presents the voices of the participants and a response from the author.

Chapter 7: Presents reflections on the whole research enquiry. Reflections are included in relation to the actual process of the enquiry itself and the personal resonances and reflexivity of the author. It documents some further reflections on the content emerging from the actual dialogue itself, the process of the enquiry and ideas from the literature. This chapter also invites reflections on some possibilities for further consideration.

Influencing Contexts

In the early 80's, as a young social work student, I began working as a volunteer with a young boy called Michael, [2]who lived with a label of severe learning disability. Michael didn't talk much but he reflected love in his gaze and in the ways in which he engaged with me. I grew to really love and care about him in a way that I hoped responded to the most basic of human concerns i.e. to be loved and understood. In so far as I could, I was always   trying to imagine how he saw the world and what was important to him, with a kind of 'in the moment responsiveness' [3]

My experience, at that time, of the stories told about this little boy, was that they were not congruent with my own relationship and experiences of him. The stories told were ones of deficits, of difference, of othering. Those stories caused me considerable anguish and pain, as it was so difficult for me tell a different story- one of relationship, of joy, and one of human connection. It was 'as if' one story retained dominance, leaving little space for an integral understanding of experiences that embodied more Bahktins (1984) view of life. A view where "the single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human existence is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium" (Bahktin 1984, p.293).

In telling the story of dis-ability as one of deficit and of difference, the stories of soul, spirit, embodiment, relationship possibilities and alternative accounts of lived experiences can remain silenced. I have been curious to consider the stories we omit to tell on the basis of our assumptions, for example, ' a knowing stance' (Anderson 2005). Just as in the following description of Helen Keller's visit to Japan and the assumptions the Potter made about her which were based on his assumed knowledge of what it means to have a visual impairment.

The story is told by the late Japanese potter Higoshi Eugichi, of a visit by Helen Keller and her teacher Ann Sullivan, to his pottery store in 1948. Blind and deaf since birth, Keller picked up an imari pot and examined it with her hands, remarking on how lovely it was. At the time, the Potter was silently indignant about how she could

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[2] I have changed his name to preserve confidentiality, as I am currently unsure of his whereabouts and whether he or his family might wish him to be named or not.

[3] A concept developed by Tom Anderson and outlined in his work   'Innovations in the reflecting Process' Karnac 2007

possibly understand the beauty and value of the pot. Seven years later, Helen returned for a second visit and asked him to show her the same Imari pot. At this point Eugichi realized he had misjudged Helen's capacity for appreciation. He later wrote, 'it is not by our eyes that we appreciate pottery it is our hearts that feel the beauty' [4]

I believe that sometimes the stories told about people who live with dis-abilty labels have the capacity to suppress part of their lived experiences. As a consequence, I became more curious about stories not told. Garfinkel (1967) suggests these stories are often seen but unnoticed. I became curious about the capacity of a dominant discourse, or a singular worldview, to create oppression and marginalization.

In my own work and in my reflections about it, I began to consider ways to provide challenges to singular dominant discourses (Gergen 2006) in relation to dis-ability. By attempting to introduce 'news of a difference' (Bateson 1972), I was seeking mechanisms within dis-ability services, which might reduce oppression through the creation of a space for silenced stories to be given voice. I wrote my first article in Frontline journal for learning disability entitled "Parents as Partners "(Tierney, 1985). I was concerned about the predominantly expert models, which were available to professionals working with parents in the disability sector at the time. As a social worker, hearing the stories of real lived experiences of ordinary every day families, my concern at that time was to give voice to parents perspectives, in ways that were not filtered through the voice of 'the professionals.' I began to advocate within the services for the inclusion of parents at case conferences regarding their children, the right for adolescents to be asked about their own options and the need to elicit the views of parents about what they perceived their own needs for support to be. At the same time, a global shift was occurring. Dis-ability rights movement activists emerged with the mantra of "nothing about us without us." This movement had a profound impact on my own thinking in relation to inclusion, marginalization and dis-abilty.

In the mid to late 1980's, professionals began to consider ways in which to further elicit the voice of service users. I was then involved in a small research project on parental views (Mc Evoy et al.1988). One of the areas that emerged from the research was the need for more leisure activities for young adults who lived with labels of learning dis-ability. Another area that emerged was the need for more respite care for family carers. As a consequence of this research project, I became involved in setting up and developing a club for teenagers. To provide breaks for

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[4] Story as told by Catherine Ingram (2003 page 122) Passionate Presence diamond books

carers, we set up a short term fostering service, called "breakaway"[5], for children with learning disabilities.

I have always been aware of, and been an advocate for, the need to include the voice of those who use services, in planning and reviewing services and in their future development. In my view, this creates a much more responsive approach to service delivery. It was my experience, as a social worker working in learning dis-ability services, which in the face of limited resources in particular; parents sometimes feared taking what they believed to be a critical lobbying stance. I believe they did this out of fear that doing so might adversely affect the services they already received or might receive in the future. Parents of children with dis-ability labels often expressed the view that professionals knew more about what was required than they did. These contextual influences, as a consequence, often resulted in their voices being silenced and marginalized. One of the more significant findings of an Irish research study undertaken (Redmond 1996) in relation to parental views and expectations and concerns about their teenage daughters who lived with dis-abilty labels, suggested that there was a strong perception amongst parents that their expertise was not fully valued by the professionals who worked with their children. The research concluded that, until a genuine working partnership with parents was achieved, parents would continue to experience degrees of isolation, frustration and anger which may only serve to further distance them from the professional staff whom they encountered (Redmond1996: 78-79).

One of the possibilities in relation to parents own perceptions of their abilities and expertise at that time as Sampson's (1993) work might suggest, is in how we are socialized into certain ways of thinking about ourselves and others. The dominant discourse about dis-abilty at that time was one that required 'Special treatment'. As a result, many parents lost confidence in both their own capacity as parents, and in their belief in their own knowledge to speak authoritatively about their lives. Parents often found themselves deferring to expert knowledge's. By virtue of bearing witness to this loss of parent confidence, myself and another professional (Ni Cholmain, Tierney 1992) were involved in both writing about parent participation and in the co-ordination and delivery of two parent projects: Let's play and Let's talk.[6] Both projects encouraged parents to continue to hold a belief in their own inner resourcefulness in the face of the birth of a child with a dis-abilty. At that time, the prevailing model, generally and particularly in relation to service delivery,

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[5] Breakaway was a collaborative interagency short-term fostering project, set up by social workers who were working in learning dis-abilty services. I was a member of the-coordinating team.
[6] These Parent projects were initially developed by Roy Mc Conkey, Psychologist, based in St Michaels House services in Dublin and adapted for use in our own context.

was a medical model. New ways of thinking about partnership with parents and services users were beginning to evolve. In the late eighties through to the mid nineties, the dis-ability rights movements worldwide was also beginning to significantly influence and lobby for the right to be heard. This movement profoundly impacted my own ideas about inclusion.

I continue to be grateful to all those parents who privileged me with the honour of sharing their homes and their stories, and allowing me to be a witness to aspects of their lives. It is because of those many conversations I have reached this destination. Therefore, I remain grateful to all those families who were my teachers. They were willing to take risks by sharing their heartfelt life experiences and views that enabled services to be shaped from both within and without.

The Context
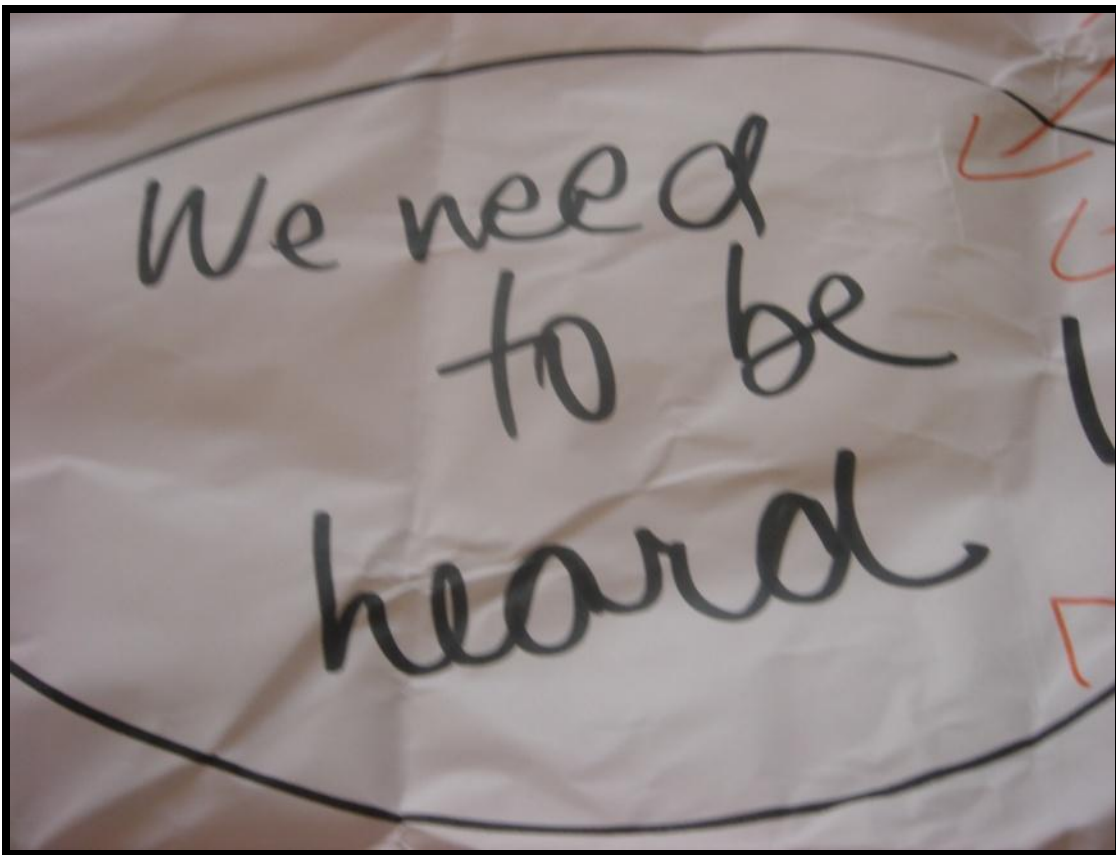
Figure 1. We need to be heard

Since the early eighties, I have continued to work and be involved in a variety of capacities in dis-ability services. I have always been conscious of voice and privilege. As a white middle class educated woman, I am cognizant of the fact that I speak with, and from, many voices of privilege. The communities with which I have worked

often do not speak from voices of privilege. They are frequently the recipients of social injustice and marginalization. I also speak from inside the experience of marginalization, and have had at times simultaneously occupied both spaces. One of informed professional and the other of marginalized parent of a child who lives with a dis-ability label. Given both my personal and professional experiences, it has felt like a privilege to walk alongside clients both in solidarity from within the experience and hopefully in ways that bridged access for many people who did not have my professional credibility or knowledge when negotiating their way around a complex fragmented health and education service.

Background to the Project Enquiry

This project emerged from and was influenced by a number of personal, professional and contextual factors. A few key influences included:

A) My own desire to experience and utilize inclusive methodologies to facilitate stakeholders and service users to engage in dialogue together, as a way of creating a space for responding to and understanding each others views and concerns.

B) The influences of my professional background as a systemic family therapist, social worker and consultant in dis-abilty services, and subsequently my personal experiences as a service user, as parent of a child who lives with a dis-abilty label.

C) My Professional and personal experiences with the fragmentation of service delivery in the field of dis-abilty led to a desire to bring people into conversation with each other

This multi-stakeholder dialogue, presented and responded to in this enquiry, arises from a culmination of all those conversations, and from all those personal and professional experiences of many years working within the dis-abilty sector. I was also motivated by a desire to find a way to include and work in solidarity with all the parents, professionals and people who live with dis-abilty labels who are involved in this area.

> A position of solidarity invites us to work alongside other workers to serve people better, and not to compete or diminish the work of others, as that does not serve clients. This makes space for the dignity of other workers, housing workers, doctors, and mental health workers. From this position of solidarity a conversation that includes useful critique can emerge. (Reynolds 2010 page 15)

As Reynolds (2010) states, a position of solidarity invites us to work respectfully alongside each other. The inclusion of the voices of both service users and people, who are significant in their lives, in authentic ways, is essential to do justice to these perspectives. Given the inherent dangers of subjugating certain views and privileging others, speaking with the voice of the other can bring forth the capacity

to become the oppressor. If we attempt to speak 'as if we hold the possibility' of speaking with a voice of another, this position may not be truly representative of the needs and experiences of people who live with dis-ability labels or their families.   In this project, I sought ways to create spaces where mutually respectful dialogue could take place between service users and service providers. I do not suggest that these dialogues were of 'equal voice', although this may be the reported experience of some of the participants.   My own view is one in which I believe society confers on us, through a socialization process which commences from the moment of our first inhalation, the right to speak and the need to remain silent. These rights/positions are conferred on us, based predominantly on socially constructed preexisting categories of distinction into which we are born or move into, such as woman, person of color, member of travelling community[7], person who lives with the label dis-abilty. Sampson (1993 p.142) acknowledges some of the limitations of dialogue in terms of delivering social justice as he suggests that rather than a friend and equal partner much of the story of human endeavor involves dominant groups constructing serviceable others. He goes on to suggest that there is a gap between what some of the major dialogic theorists tell us and the "actual terms of living of the majority of people". Here, Sampson (1993) is suggesting that although a dialogue is taking place it may not be one of equal voice.

This multi -stakeholder dialogue project emerged from many years working within dis-ability services and a personally held concern arising in relation to differences among discursive communities and their capacity to suppress, pathologize, or silence others. In this project, it was my intention to attempt to create spaces for silenced and marginalized stories to be heard and given voice, without silencing other stories. It was my intention to continue to seek to construct ways in which conflicting stories can co -exist and are equally valued. While the dialogues in this project were set up in such a way as to confer the right to participate and be heard equally for all participants, the social, cultural, political and historical contexts of speaking (i.e. the dominant discourses) must also be given due consideration.

The Right to Participate

The UN Charter for human rights (2006 Article 1) recognizes the right of inclusion for people who live with dis-ability labels in all aspects of their lives. I believe this requires the development of responsive inclusive methodologies in planning and reviewing service delivery in the dis-ability sector. This project was one such attempt, to lean towards an emancipatory (Oliver 1990) inclusive methodology.

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[7] The travelling community are an Irish indigenous group who have experienced discrimination and marginalization

Influencing Theoretical ideas

This enquiry is situated predominantly within a social constructionist theoretical framework and is influenced by systemic ideas. The nature of this project is dialogical. Dialogue is one of the ways in which social constructionist theory arises in practice. A dialogical approach to practice, which is often referred to as collaborative or postmodern approach, (Anderson & Gehart, 2007) is also sometimes referred to as discursive (Strong &Pare, 2004). "This approach to research enquiry is one of shared enquiry blurring distinctions between "observer" and "observed, " between "researcher" and the "subject" of the research" (Gergen & Gergen,2000,p.135).

The idea of collaborative enquiry (Anderson & Gerhart 2007) was an important one in this particular enquiry, given my desire to avoid the replication of the dichotomous positions of researcher and researched, which has historically so frequently permeated research in the area of dis-abilty (Oliver, 1990).

Dis-abilty has often been characterized as a personal issue, located in the individual. Many writers who seek to expand the terrain to include wider perspectives have described this characterization. (Olkin 1999, Barnes 1990, Oliver 1990). Social constructionist theory provides an opportunity 'to widen the lens' to include a wider perspective of context, relationship and meaning making, as it moves beyond the limitations of locating difficulties within the individual. From a postmodern or social constructionist perspective, Individuals are not seen as possessing individual pathologies or diagnoses. Therefore, from a social constructionist perspective both behaviors and "diagnostic" labels are considered to be relational responses. (Gergen, et al.1995). It was these ideas in particular: of considering dis-abilty as a social and relational response and the attention to the construction of the label dis-abilty, which interested me. In my own approach to this enquiry, I have considered the relational and contextual construction of dis-ability and taken a non-pathologising perspective with regard to the meaning of dis-abilty.

Systemic ideas also influenced this enquiry, particularly the ideas in relation to mutual influence. Systemic practitioners and writers consider the systems in which people reside (Dallos and Draper 2000). A Systems theory view sees the person as embedded in a social and emotional world, which s/he is constantly being influenced by, and is constantly influencing. This approach takes account of the multi-layered complexity of the many systems in which we live. This focus on context and relationship pays attention to the relational context within which people are living their lives ((Hoffman 1993). This enquiry attends to these relational contexts, with particular reference to my own position as enquirer engaging in relationship with the

enquiry, a position of Influencing and being influenced. The relational context of the dialogue participants is also considered, with regard to wider social discourses and practices and in their relational orientation to the construct dis-ability. Foucault (1975) has highlighted that in any given culture or societies there exists dominant narratives. In this enquiry, I was particularly interested in exploring the dominant narratives in relation to labeling discourses and in how those particular narratives influenced and were influencing locally constructed ideas, in relation to what constitutes dis-abilty. These ideas are highlighted and demonstrated by the documented conversations of the dialogue participants.

The Social constructionist theoretical position attends to both relationship and context in relation to meaning making. Social constructionism considers all meaning (and thus identity and problem descriptions) as being generated in language between people (McNamee & Gergen, 1992. Burr, 2003., Anderson & Goolishan 1988., Goldner,1991). Influenced by the idea of co constructing meanings in relationship, I was interested in exploring meaning making 'in conversation' about the label dis-ability. This deconstruction of the label dis-abilty is articulated by the participants in the diversity of the views expressed both in relation labels and their usefulness and in relation to the locally and culturally situated construct, dis-abilty. I was also influenced by the idea that new meanings emerge in conversation, and as a consequence, I chose to utilize a dialogical approach to consider the construct dis-ability and labeling discourses.

Rationale for and Implications of the enquiry

This enquiry is an exploration of the use of multi stakeholder dialogues in dis-ability services as a methodology for service users and providers to be in conversation together. In using the term dialogue I am referring to it in the same way as Seikkula and Arnkil (2006 p.3) as "a way of thinking together where understanding is formed between the participants, as something which exceeds the possibilities of a single person".

  In part, the rationale for considering this particular exploration arose out of a perceived gap, in both the literature and the practice, in the use of inclusive dialogical approaches in the field of dis-ability, as a means to include the views of service users. Service users views have more generally been elicited in monologic ways e.g. questionnaires, themed focus groups of cohorts of people based on category distinctions around a particular set of questions. This enquiry is situated in a multiplicity of perspectives through the use of dialogue and in the diversity of the group in conversation together. As Seikkulu and Arknil (2006 p3) state 'the more voices incorporated into a polyphonic dialogue the richer the possibilities for emergent understanding"

Through engagement in a responsive, as opposed to analytical approach to the emerging data, it was my intention that this positioning would facilitate my capacity to hold a more responsive position throughout the research enquiry

I invite consideration, both in the final reflections and throughout this enquiry process, in relation to the question of 'ways to go on' from here in order to make further contribution to spaces where all stories are given equal voice. The project dialogues, in this enquiry, go some way towards the emergence of inclusive methodological approaches in dis-ability services, which create a context for 'authentic' participatory citizenship.

The enquiry therefore contributes to the emerging emancipatory methodologies in participatory citizenship in the area of dis-ability. This project was the first of its kind in Ireland, in bringing service users and service providers, in the area of dis-abilty, into conversation together in an unfocussed open-ended conversational manner (i.e. without a formal agenda). As such it contributes significantly to new understandings about how service users and service providers experience each other differently in a responsive dialogue context. It also contributes to an emancipatory research paradigm, one in which "knowledge cannot be owned or discovered but is merely a set of relationships that may be given a visible form " (Wilson 2008 p127). Much research about marginalized groups takes place by "outsiders". While I feel to a certain extent I have some experience as a parent of a child with dis-abilty to more easily move across the domains of insider /outsider, I remain an outsider to many peoples experience but have also been to an extent 'inside' some of the experiences of dis-abilty. The value of both my own positioning and of this kind of responsive research is that it offers further learning between cultures and group. A dialogical approach means the study lends itself more easily to taking place with people and not about them.

Chapter 2. The Project

'Some people don't like labels… being put in a certain box'

'A Box needs to be flexible not just a box you are more than your label" (Quote from the dialogue from a service user)

The Purpose of a Dialogical Forum

The main underlying purpose /intention for using a dialogical forum, as a methodology in this enquiry was to create contexts, in dialogue, where key themes, questions, ideas and opinions could emerge, which more closely reflect stakeholder views. It was hoped if this methodology was considered useful as a way of eliciting stakeholder feedback, that the views expressed might be utilized as reference points in planning future service delivery.

In addition to the main objective, the following subsidiary objectives were also included:

❖ To generate and explore questions that matter to stakeholders in the provision of services.

❖ To listen together for new emerging insights and new questions.

❖ To provide a network for exchanging views, for all those working, and with an interest in, the area of learning difficulties.

❖ To exchange views and collaborate on the development and review of best practice models for service delivery, in the area of specific learning difficulties.

❖ To create a context for expression of difference and create contexts of understanding amongst the diversity of perspectives.

❖ To consider labeling discourses in dis-ability and their impact on those whom the labels are held about.

❖ To reflect on issues of marginalization, subjugation, knowledge construction and the politics of disablement.

❖ To exchange information on research, new inclusive initiatives and service development in the area of specific learning difficulties.

❖ To provide a reflective forum for the evaluation and development of services attempt to ensure the developments of services are in keeping with best practice models and provide services that respond to and work in collaboration with existing services and service users

❖ To provide service planners with reflections and collective decisions/discoveries which emerged from the dialogical forum.

These were all aspirational in relation to what might emerge in such a dialogical forum and were ideas at the outset and were re-shaped in the course of the enquiry as new ideas emerged.

The recognition by the UN Convention that `dis-ability` is an evolving concept, acknowledges the fact that society, and opinions within society, are not static. Consequently, the UN Convention (2006) does not impose a rigid view of `dis-ability` but rather assumes a dynamic approach that allows for adaptations over time and within different political and socio-economic settings. Given this contextual framework for understanding dis-ability, dialogical approaches would appear to offer the 'best fit' for service reviews, as   constructions are more likely to emerge 'fluidly' in the interaction between people.

Inclusive Approaches

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that the purpose of the Convention is "to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity"

UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2006)

Given the UN Convention (2006) and a basic human rights agenda, it is imperative that a variety of inclusive methodologies are developed and more frequently utilized in both the planning and review of services in the disability sector.

Commenting on the then current provision of inclusive methodologies in disability services, Niall Crowley CEO of the equality agency, (2007) stated:

> Equality mainstreaming is about introducing a consideration of equality and diversity into the design stage of planning, policymaking and programme development. It involves gathering and analysing relevant available data on the identity, experience and situation of groups experiencing inequality across the nine grounds covered by our equality legislation, assessing the likely impact of the new plan, policy or programme on these groups by examining its capacity to take account of the practical implications of diversity and to achieve greater equality for these groups consulting with organisations representing these groups about the data analyzed and the quality of the impact assessment made deciding on necessary change to the plan, policy or programme on foot of this equality mainstreaming monitoring implementation of the plan, policy or programme against the impact assessment made. (Crowley, 2007, p. 3)

He goes on to suggest that:

> Embedding equality in decision making in organizations requires the organisation to develop evidence based decision

making by collecting data on groups experiencing inequality and by this ensuring stereotypes of false assumptions about groups do not influence decision making to be participative in their decision making by involving organizations representing groups experiencing inequality to conduct equality impact assessments at design stage on new plans, policies or programmes. (Crowley, 2007, p. 4)

While it was the recommendations of the equality agency in Ireland, in 2007, that those who experience marginalization are included in participative decision making processes, and some progress has been made in this regard, the mechanisms for doing so I believe require further elaboration and consideration.

The Project dialogue(s)

In this particular project the dialogues, which informed this enquiry, consisted of three different groups:

Group one

A large Scale multi-stakeholder dialogue which provided an invitation to a consultation group made up of diverse stakeholders including employers, health providers, educators, service users, service providers, voluntary organisations and students who live with labels of specific learning dis-ability. The dialogue was to include a broad agenda to discuss inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, with particular reference to constructs of disability and inclusivity. [8]

Group two

A dialogue, amongst a group of conference participants, in relation to the label dis-ability.

Group three

A small Cross-section of the members of dialogue one.

Influencing Principles

A number of principles influenced me in both in the rationale for the dialogue, the structuring of it, and the administration of the process of the dialogues. These included the following:

The Principle of Collaboration

Historically, dialogue has formed part of the ways in which we come together to understand each other, to engage socially, to resolve difficult questions and ongoing

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[8] The word inclusivity here is used to refer to creating contexts that support full participation of all members of society, in keeping with the UN declaration of Human rights (1948)

dilemmas or explicit conflict, or to gather information with and about each other's worldviews. Dialogue seems the most natural way to consider issues of significant importance, in relation to dis-abilty services.

The Principle of Participation

"The principle of participation and inclusion, as the underlying values base of the UN code, aims to engage persons with disabilities in the wider society and in participation in decision making in relation to issues which impact on their lives" (UN Code, 2006). I believe this principle is intended to be realized through the support and encouragement of active participation, whilst simultaneously recognizing the need for the existence of inclusive practices across all sections of society and community.

The Convention specifically recognizes the right to participate in social, and in particular political and cultural life of the community. However, the right to participate frequently requires the need for specific actions that promote non-exclusionary practices. Often, reviews of services have offered tokenistic methodologies such as questionnaires and focus groups, for the inclusion of stakeholders, and in particular the inclusion of service users in planning and reviewing services.

The Principle of Mutual Understanding

The inclusion of people who live with dis-ability labels and those who do not, in conversations together, enhances the possibility for the creation of contexts which have the potential to reduce the emergence of dualistic[9] categories of distinction. A collaborative conversational approach has a greater capacity to recognize dis-ability as a fluid-evolving concept, and to perceive all people as individuals, each possessing a unique set of needs. In conversation together, participants begin to recognize each other as fellow citizens with a specific set of individual needs, which require a response.

The Principle of joint problem solving approaches

In dialogue, through the creation of contexts of mutual understanding, collaborative co constructed problem solving approaches to the dilemmas facing both service users and planners can emerge, that better reflect the needs of all those involved.

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[9] Dualistic used in this way refers to the possibility of 'us and them' distinctions

Service Delivery Reviews

Service reviews have, historically, been more frequently based in individualistic approaches, such as questionnaires, surveys and service user forums, and much less frequently in participative dynamic relational approaches. If we hold the view that dis-ability constructs generally emerge in and through language, collaborative dialogue can then contribute to a potential deconstruction of fixed ideas and descriptors of disability.

Historically, in some of the more frequently utilized approaches to service delivery reviews, the concept of what dis-abilty means was frequently taken as a 'given reality', and impacted on the ways in which questions were formulated and therefore responded to.

Consequentially, we currently need to continually consider, in both our reviews and planning of services, how we construct the concept 'dis-abilty', and in what ways we create inclusive opportunities to bring about generative and transformative dialogue(s) amongst all those involved. I generally hoped, by constructing the dialogue in this manner, that each participant would experience a sense of equal participation. In holding this idea, I was drawing from some of the theory about dialogue, which suggests that in conversational dialogues, people have a greater capacity to reduce categories of distinction. This was reported on specifically by some of the participants of the dialogical forum.

> 'Experience of meeting others made a difference and I was
> very struck by that' Dialogue participant [10]

By creating dialogical forums we can elicit more inclusive approaches for reviewing services, whilst simultaneously holding an ongoing awareness of the capacity for certain stories to be marginalised and silenced. These forums have the potential to create a context where the tension of multiple worldviews can be held and valued. These forums equally have the capacity to replicate patterns of oppression. [11]

The Process of the multi-stakeholder dialogue

Invitations to participate in a multi-stakeholder dialogue were issued to 75 people. The Seventy-five people who were invited to attend the dialogue group were selected on the basis of some previous involvement or interest in the area of specific learning difficulties, or were involved in the provision of dis-ability support services.

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[10] The consent of all participants was obtained by the author to reproduce verbatim some of the recorded dialogue quotes

[11] This enquiry does not afford sufficient space to review the many ways of attending to the potential for oppression in conversation;

The invitation became generative in the sense that many conversations about the dialogue took place well before it happened. Some pre-generative conversations took place with both others and myself about the dialogue and the nature of it. Some of these conversations were very welcoming of an opportunity for people to come together in conversation, across what they perceived to be a fragmented system of service delivery. Other conversations welcomed in particular the inclusion of service users voices and views. It was difficult to capture these many conversations as they took place in a variety of settings and also by phone. However it seemed as if the dialogue began when the invitation to attend was issued.   This oral tradition is very much in keeping with Irish culture, [12] in that many people contacted me to ask could they attend, as word spread that this event was taking place, with considerable interest in it.

The final dialogue group of 25 individuals was made up of diverse stakeholders including employers, health providers, educators, service users, service providers, voluntary organizations and students who live with labels of specific learning dis-ability.[13] The conversation had a broad agenda to discuss inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, with particular reference to constructs of dis-ability and inclusivity[14]. The agenda for the meeting was broad, with a set of focused questions, which is in keeping with ideas emanating from world café and social constructionist thinking, where conversations are co constructed and emerge in the space between people. By keeping the agenda broad in this way, the questions did not entirely frame the domain of the response(s). [15] Some pre-generative conversations took place amongst stakeholders about the importance of bringing people together who work and/or live with labels of specific learning dis-ability, to share knowledge, ideas and to create a context of mutual support. These conversations were informally reported back to me. In addition to this, many comments were made to me on the phone. This pre dialogue commentary was used in both informing the shaping of, and reshaping of the dialogue, and both the participants and my own ideas about it. I began to become more aware of how the invitation to participate, in itself, can bring forth new insights and understandings and self-perceptions. For example, one of the young people, who lives with a dis-

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[12] In Irish culture 'word of mouth' and storytelling are key ways in which information is and has been historically transmitted across communities.
[13] See appendices for a full list of participants and their affiliations

[14] See appendices for invitation- the word inclusivity here refers to creating contexts that support full participation of all members of society in keeping with the UN charter of Human rights.
[15] John Burnham(2005) idea that people can only respond to what they are asked

ability label, experienced the invitation as a shift in his own self perception. His comment was 'Are you sure you want me to come?' and on being reassured he further added, 'I am delighted that someone thinks I can make a valuable contribution to the thing'.   Others spoke of the significance of this type of dialogue in terms of sharing knowledge and mutual support, but particularly emphasized the importance of service user involvement.

> 'Great idea service users' voices always silenced' Service Manager
> ''Poor services - no voice' Parent

One agency declined to attend on the basis that it was outside of their remit, while others were very enthusiastic about the project, but were unavailable due to other commitments. Through these pre -dialogue reflections, comments and conversations amongst the participants, some themes already had begun to emerge in the invitational space. Themes such as silence and voice, honoring and privileging, and inclusion and marginalization were emerging in the pre-dialogue conversations. The conversation had begun and took on its own life form, outside of the dialogue itself.

'The Yoke In Blanch' – The Naming Ceremony

The dialogue was given a name by one of the participants a few weeks before it commenced, on issue of the initial invitation. It was called 'The Yoke in Blanch', Yoke in local dialect meaning a thing, anything that can have any shape or form, but we are not quite ready to fully define it and perhaps want to keep it loosely defined, but equally have a vague common agreement about some of its attributes. Blanch being a shorthand for Blanchardstown, the name of the area in which the dialogue was to take place.

This naming of the dialogue is entirely in keeping with the way many sculptures in Dublin have been named by the local community[16]. Naming in this way perhaps gives both a sense of ownership and reduces the subject /object dichotomy. This was one of the underlying principles inherent in the objectives of the dialogical process. In Dublin, as each sculpture was named, it became more a part of the community. It belonged to Dublin, to the people, to the community.   People spoke of it with laughter and pride and some degree of community ownership. Prior to the naming, it was a sculpture apart from the people. At that point, many would say the sculpture was imposed on the city, but the person made it their own in the naming, and it was integrated into the vibrant living of the community of the city. In the same way, the naming of the dialogue became a significant event, as it was about taking ownership, embracing it and making the dialogue that of the participants, not just of the

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[16] See appendix for names and historical descriptions of sculptures in Dublin that have been given names by the community

sculptor (i.e. myself as author). It seemed at that point, 'as if' the dialogue could be shaped by the participants, and was one of joint action[17].

The reflectors– Contributory reflections

In the week prior to the dialogue, I consulted with some reflecting partners[18] to consider key issues of importance to keep under consideration in relation to the dialogical process.

There were four reflecting partners to the process: A dis-ability trainer, a senior manager in a dis-ability service, a parent and an organizational Consultant (co facilitator to the process). I spent an hour in conversation with each of them individually. They all offered some reflections and useful questions for me to consider.

Some of the reflections and questions I was particularly struck by were as follows:

The trainer in dis-abilty awareness offered suggestions about user involvement and asked some crucial questions in this regard:

❖ What would it be really useful to find out about?

❖ How will you ensure you use plain language to make the dialogue accessible at all levels?

❖ Had I ensured that the venue was physically accessible for all those with mobility difficulties?

❖ How and in what ways have you ensured that all participants could access the dialogue?

❖ Have you consulted the National Disability Authority [19] to review the experience and their recommendations about the inclusion of service users in service reviews?

❖ The senior manager in a dis-abilty organization offered some of the following questions:

❖ What are the social constructs of dis-ability that you will be making visible?

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[17] John Shotter(2004) refers to ideas of joint action

[18] I borrow the idea of 'reflectors' from the work of Tom Anderson on reflecting teams and Michael White on outsider witness groups as a way of offering reflections on my own reflections and giving consideration to ideas that created resonance for me.

[19] NDA National Disability Authority - key disability agency in Ireland

- ❖ What questions will you ask, as questions frame the domain of the response?

- ❖ How will you consider the issues of empowerment, equality of voice, researcher position and hierarchies of position?

The Parent of a young person with a disability label asked the following questions;-

- ❖ What will happen to the information? Will it make a difference? Will anyone listen to it?

- ❖ Are you aware that the young people are both delighted to have been asked to participate but nervous about how they can contribute?

- ❖ Will you let us have the research when it's done? We badly need research in these areas.

The organizational consultant offered some key ideas and questions about structuring the process:

- ❖ How will you welcome people? Have you considered the importance of planning, timing and creating a facilitative context? How will you explain the questions?

- ❖ How will you record the data? What equipment do you need?

- ❖ How will you create an environment conducive to dialogue?

- ❖ Consider the questions and if they will bring forth the information and if they are interesting questions for this group to consider.

While I had considered some of these questions, they added some extra dimensions that required further pre dialogue consideration. They also provided a helpful focus around which to consider and structure the dialogue.

Providing accessibility and structuring dialogical spaces to make them accessible to all, is a challenge that is not well articulated in the world café methodology, which is focused on equality of voice and equal access to language and to language processing.

As a result, in using a world café methodology, I needed to creatively consider how to ensure as much as possible, that the voices of all participants were heard equally, and those patterns of oppression were not replicated in the dialogue itself. This was not discussed in a very comprehensive way in world café methodology, and required of me the need to emphasize the importance of each person's contribution, both verbal and non-verbal. One of the ways of doing this was that as co facilitator, I took responsibility for verbally presenting any written material, and attended to the

variety of learning styles of the participants by including the possibility of drawing a response.

Recording the Dialogue

Audiotape recording machines and microphones were placed at the centre of each of the five tables   Group discussions were recorded using two central microphones.

A record of written doodles, drawings and words was also kept. Participants were encouraged to write and draw on paper tablecloths covering each table, in order to create a visual representation of the emerging conversations. I later both photographed and transcribed   these written records and pictures to make a response or to include in the written enquiry.

Dialogue 1: The Process

The dialogue took place in an Institute of Technology in Blanchardstown, Dublin. This venue was used as the size of room was conducive to the setting up of an informal café style space, and was also a familiar venue for many of the participants, although access via public transport was an issue. I attended to this issue of access by organizing car pools [20]. Directions with arrows to the room were posted from the college entrance to facilitate access for people who find it difficult to locate and orient themselves in space. Tea and coffee was provided on arrival and music was playing in the background as people arrived. I personally greeted each person as the host for the conversation. The room was set up with five tables and five participants at each table. Participants were initially directed to a table and were seated to ensure a mix of participants form a variety of settings. The tables were covered with a white paper cloth and participants were invited to write on the table. Chocolate mints were provided for participants in the centre of each table as well as water, tea, coffee and biscuits. I introduced the dialogue and the reasons I had come to consider such a conversation. My co facilitator introduced the structure of the dialogue such as the host at each table and the need to create space for each person to contribute. The dialogue lasted approximately two and half-hours and was co facilitated by an organizational consultant experienced in the facilitation of large groups.

Facilitation

Both a business consultant colleague and myself facilitated the dialogue. My professional background includes being trained in systems ideas, and having experience in the facilitation of groups and the creation of contexts conducive to

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[20]   Car sharing was set up linking participants who lived in the same area. it had the impact of some people having already met on the way! This was interesting as some pre-conversation took place outside the dialogue itself.

collaborative dialogue. The co facilitator, a business consultant, has considerable expertise in facilitating groups and in utilizing large group methodologies, such as World café (Isaacs & Brown, 2005). In this process, the creation of collaboration and the ability to simultaneously attend to diverse and multiple views, was of significant importance. Both facilitators had considerable training and experience in attending to, and holding multiple and often conflicting perspectives, and in the creation of contexts where all views can be articulated and reflected upon.

Structuring

Providing accessibility and structuring dialogical spaces to make them accessible to all, is a challenge that is not very well articulated in the world café methodology. The methodology assumes equality of voice and equal access to language and to language processing. As a result, in using a world café methodology, I needed to creatively consider how to ensure the voices of all participants were heard equally, and that pattern of oppression were not replicated in the dialogue itself. One of the ways of doing this was that, as co facilitator, I took responsibility for verbally presenting any written material such as verbally speaking through the consent forms to participate to ensure anyone with a reading difficulty had understood the process. I also was attentive to the language I used, to ensure that it was not idiomatic or metaphorically which can be difficult for some people who interpret language in more literal ways. I made sure that that the chocolates on the table did not have complex wrappers, which might create a difficulty for people with fine motor co-ordination difficulties. I also was aware that balancing cups and saucers could pose a difficulty for some people and so I paid attention to ensure that anyone who required assistance would be assisted in a way that did not draw attention or create a sense of difference. Having many years of experience, both professional and personal experiences, of disabling environments gives me a heightened sense of awareness to environments that has become an innate response and so it becomes difficult to describe the myriad of issues I was attending to simultaneously. It is akin to being a very attentive host. I therefore held the role of attentive host; facilitator gives the impression that the role was one of facilitating conversation. Facilitating conversation requires a relational stance that is both attentive and respectful to the other.

The dialogue group commenced with some participant stakeholders at each table addressing some predetermined questions. The questions were framed by the researcher and emerged from prior experiences working with dis-ability services as a consultant, and were informed by the pre dialogue consultations with the reflecting partners.

The three key questions under consideration were structured as follows:

- ❖ What is working well in current support services in the area of specific learning difficulties and how can these services be improved?

- ❖ How helpful are the current labels in the area of dis-ability?

- ❖ How has being in conversation today impacted on your ideas? What surprised you/ challenged you? What question would you like to ask now?

I had developed the questions with a view to those particular three questions, also possibly bringing forth responses to further underlying questions, which included the following:

- ❖ What questions are the most important ones for this group to address in considering dis-ability services?

- ❖ In what ways might users of this service and providers define dis-ability and inclusivity differently?

- ❖ How does the definition of dis-ability or inclusivity shape the delivery of the service?

- ❖ How are constructs of dis-ability shaping and being shaped by services?

- ❖ In giving attention to an inclusive agenda how do individual needs get defined?

- ❖ How do services need to be delivered in order to avoid replicating patterns of oppression?

- ❖ In what ways can services contribute to already existing discourses of pathology?

- ❖ How will service providers ensure diversity of needs and views are held in the delivery of the service?

- ❖ In attending to an inclusive agenda, how do service providers avoid dichotomies of distinction in the ways in which the service is planned and delivered?

- ❖ How is the service delivered in ways that do not colonise and replicate patterns of expertise?

Planning and collaborating -joint facilitation

The dialogue was co facilitated with an experienced business consultant, who is well versed in large group methodologies, including world café methodology. [21]The facilitators met a few days beforehand to consider and establish their respective roles in a co-facilitated process.

The context for the conversation was set by both facilitators through the articulation of the rationale for this method choice, and through setting some ground rules for participation. The facilitators had previously agreed to this approach, in their own planning, as part of creating a context for collaborative dialogue.

By way of introduction to the process, the group was informed that through network conversations, people could make sense of things together, implement decisions and consider collectively how to get things done.

The facilitators suggested that part of the rationale for this method choice was that sometimes-regular meetings have predicative tedious outcomes. As a result, this approach was being used with a view to creating new and different opportunities for people to engage in conversations in a livelier engaged manner.

The key ideas articulated by the facilitators for establishing this dialogue were as follows:

- ❖ Focus on what matters- important stuff -focus on important questions.

- ❖ Everyone has something valuable to say- respect all contributions.

- ❖ Listen to each other and make sure everyone has an opportunity to contribute.

- ❖ Link and connect ideas.

- ❖ Doodle and draw on the tablecloths to reflect what you want and to keep track of your thinking.

- ❖ Listen together for insights and deeper questions.

    Dialogue structure

The process was elaborated as follows:

There are five tables of five people at each table. Each table would nominate a host to take notes of key issues and ensure each person got to speak. A twenty-minute

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[21] Eamonn O Dwyer, Sheppard Moscow Consultants, co hosted the dialogue see appendix for detailed description of the work of Sheppard Moscow and details of Eamonn's biography

conversation would take place around a specific question. At the end of the conversation everyone would move to another table, except the host, who remained and summarized the ideas from the conversation that went before, for those joining the table, and then allow new colleagues to continue the conversation with a new question.

To ensure equality of voice, the facilitation of the process was crucial, particularly given that many participants in this process had already experienced marginalization and patterns in society where their contributions had not been valued. The groups were, both collectively and individually reminded, by both facilitators, at regular intervals throughout the process, of the importance of everyone's contribution. Groups were subsequently reminded of the remaining time available, in order to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to contribute. I circulated amongst the tables to remind participants. Participants were also reminded by both facilitators to listen to hear and respond, but not to agree, disagree or attempt to convince others of an alternative viewpoint.

Participants were also offered refreshments and an opportunity to socialize informally at the end of the more formally structured conversations. While I received much positive feedback in relation to the structuring and experience of the participant's involvement of this type of dialogue, this information was not recorded or included in this enquiry.

Dialogue 2

A further dialogue group was held. This group consisted of professionals who were attending a conference workshop, which I had facilitated. This professional workshop conversation provided some supportive documentation to some of the ideas already emerging from the data, in addition to acting as a reflecting group to me, by providing further reflections on my own emerging ideas and responses in relation to the data.

In this workshop, I introduced myself in context in terms of some of the values, ideas and strongly held beliefs that had been influential in shaping my own thinking about dis-abilty and dialogical approaches to stakeholder involvement.

These Included the following beliefs:

❖ A Collective social responsibility for Injustice and discrimination.

❖ Language as being a form of social action.

❖ A need to avoid colonization.

❖ Research as having failed people who live with dis-abilty labels.

❖ A belief that Dialogue can lead to more emancipatory research paradigms and can change the social relations of research production.

The Questions the professionals were asked to consider in this workshop using the same small world café style conversation were:

❖ In what ways can we and do we attend to the needs of everyone in our communities without creating marginalising categories of distinction?

❖ How has being in conversation impacted on your ideas? What surprised you challenged you? What questions would you like to ask now?

Some of the ideas that emerged from this conference workshop conversation as documented below, focused more on the process of the dialogical experience than actually on the content of the questions. This provided me with further ideas about the nature and value of stakeholder dialogues, for both service users and providers. It also provided me with ideas in relation to the formulation of further questions for the review dialogue that was due to take place with some of the original stakeholder dialogue participants. The following are some comments the participants made about the process and its impact on their thinking /positioning.

❖ 'Diversity in conversation'

❖ 'Conversation opens up new ideas always broadening'

❖ 'Reconstructed my way of thinking about this issue learned something new'

❖ 'Gives hope to hear others are challenged by same questions'

❖ 'More curious about my own biases now'

On review of these ideas, I considered reflecting on some of these issues with a cross-section of the original stakeholder group (Dialogue 3), to ascertain if it was also their experience that the process itself had been significant, or if their experience had been different.

Dialogue 3

A year after the original dialogue, a representative sample of participants from the original stakeholder dialogue group was convened I had reviewed the transcripts and oriented myself to the themes that had emerged. This group was comprised of two service users (i.e. people who lived with disabling labels), a teacher trainer and a centre manager/psychologist. The dialogue included further reflections on some selective content from the previous dialogue, commentary on some of my reflections on the dialogue, and the participant's views of the dialogical process. It also contributed to new ideas, which emerged in the process. The original rationale for

this dialogue was to consider whether my own reflections about the original multi-stakeholder dialogue were consistent with the themes and experiences the group might suggest. It was also to provide an opportunity to consider any further emerging ideas and responses in relation to the original questions, the process and a selective sample of content from the first dialogue. It moved to becoming a dialogue in itself with many new thoughts and ideas emerging. Being responsive in the moment meant in some sense I abandoned any pre-ordained ideas about what this dialogue might be and just engaged in its emergence.

We met for two hours. The conversation was recorded using both a voice recorder and a video camera. The group reviewed some of the emerging themes from the previous stakeholder dialogue. The group also reviewed some of the content and reflected on the process of the dialogue. The focus of this conversation shifted quickly to the theme of inclusion, and how the dialogue in itself in some participant's views had promoted an inclusive methodology for considering the questions. This is elaborated further in chapter 7 and in my response to the dialogue content.

Some of the comments from the participants emphasize this attention to the process as follows:

> ' more a case for me of the whole discussion on the labels – sort of what's the whole idea of what labels mean to different people

> Like I always took the label as being something you would use to for lobbying for help rather than it being a hindrance to some people.

> 'Just hearing a lot of people say one thing and then hearing others saying well its not working in my case "

> "Sort of everybody is not the same is what struck me'

> 'I moved from being position sort of labels being good which I still think to but its sort of they have to be sort of applied and used correctly rather than sort of people saying this is what this label means say need for a big broad definition rather than a narrow definition'

> "They were different from those I have to say I came with- I suppose my job is mostly to talk about dis-abilty as it relates to schools and educational settings and things like that so I usually go in to talk -so it was a very different experience for me to be in where I went in and everybody had a voice not just a voice but an equal voice.

History of the Evolution of 'the Stakeholder dialogue'

The rationale for utilizing the approach of stakeholder dialogue in the research process, grew out of my involvement with a number of organizations including founder and Chair of the Dyspraxia Association of Ireland [22], consultant with The National learning network, coordinator of the Bua[23] advisory board and as participant and member of the project management team for the PACTS project (Partners collaborating in training for individuals with specific learning difficulties). These projects are described fully in the appendices.

The National learning network, Bua and Pacts project advisory panel sought to bring together diverse voices and views, in an attempt to advise on the development of a dis-ability assessment service, and to assist in providing reflections to the delivery of an inter-regional dis-ability awareness project between Wales and Ireland. The Advisory Panel, while addressing the issues of inclusion and diversity, did not, in the my view, quite reach its full potential in terms of the integration of the emerging ideas from the panel conversations, as advice to the developing project. While the panel comprised of a diverse cross sectional representation within the area of specific learning difficulties and included the voices of parents it did not fully include the voice(s) of service users. The conversations of the advisory panel, in effect, were frequently constrained by the questions being asked. The structure of the panel was as in standardized meeting format, with a set agenda. As a result, the potential for transformative interactive dialogue were not fully realised.

I was however enthused by the cross-section of participants from various domains and the diversity of views, in the advisory panel. As a consequence, I became further interested in exploring and developing the capacity to create transformative and generative dialogues amongst stakeholders in dis-ability services. Often, in my experience, service reviews take place within the framework of a particular set of questions or through questionnaires or focus groups. Dis-abilty services reviews in Ireland, to date, have generally not taken place amongst stakeholders in open dialogue. By drawing on ideas such as world café, open space technology, public conversations project and other dialogical processes, I became interested in the creation of further possibilities for both the cross pollination of ideas, and the potential to create dialogue that was transformative and generative and that would inform service developments.

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[22] Dyspraxia Association of Ireland was founded in 1994 by the author and has become a national organization with over 250 members

[23] This center was known as the Bua center (which is an acronym for building on achievement but also an Irish word meaning victory – As a member of the planning team in naming the centre we looked for a word, which would reflect achievement.)

The Overarching Purpose of the Dialogue group

I hoped and anticipated that in utilizing a dialogical approach, it could possibly render more visible practices, and consider the impact of processes, which are less readily accessible in other forms of review.

Practices which might be more visible in this type of approach included:

The potential for the exclusion and marginalization of service users voices in service delivery and planning.

Processes such as:

❖ Co- construction in dialogical space- participant (s) in equal voice

❖ The potential for the creation of new alternative understandings, through witnessing and experiencing 'the other' both for professionals and service users.

As Bahktin says (1984), "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (p.110).

Dialogue as a method choice

The predominant underlying rationale for choosing dialogue as a method was based on the premise   that we are all relational beings and that we make sense of being in the world in our conversations with others. These ideas go back to Socrates and Plato and cross cultural boundaries, in that dialogue, both historically and multi-culturally, has been considered as a means to resolve issues, make sense of ourselves in the world and to engage with others.

Dialogue as participation

One of the principles for this method choice was based in an inclusion and participation ideology, which is particularly significant for people who live with dis-abilty labels, as the experience of participation in the life of community, for many people, can be one of marginalization due to issues of accessibility.

The principle of participation takes us beyond merely feeling connected, to a realization that the world is not simply out there, but is in fact in each of us as well (Isaacs, 1999). Isaacs (1999) suggests that the principle of participation takes us back into a more direct experience of the world and of ourselves, where "At the center of the principle of participation is the intelligence of our hearts, the freshness of our perceptions and ultimately the deep feeling of connection that we may have with others and our world" (p. 57).

I was interested in the' in –between', the relational flow, the movement back and forth, the metaphorical space, and the movement away from the binaries. Johnella Bird (2006), who has developed a linguistic approach to therapy practice, refers to this as a relational consciousness and a relational language making. She describes the places as you move, not the places you occupy. I was interested in exploring with the participants, and in the dialogical process, the movement between the inside experience and the outside experience of reflecting on it, and the subsequent creation of new constructions and relationships in the process.

Process of Dialogue

Wittgenstein's (1953) key question about how we go on together, and his theory of usefulness, as opposed to a theory of truth validity and rationality, was helpful in considering how a world café approach fits with these ideas. World café creates a context for dialogue within a conversational domain of a co evolutionary force (i.e. with no fixed agenda or pathway). In creating stakeholder dialogues in this way, in dis-abilty services reviews, it was my intent to hold curiosity about emergence and not to create, but to only consider how to go on together.

By creating space for multiple viewpoints in dialogue, it becomes the tension between simultaneously holding your own ground, while letting the other happen to you.

In this way, dialogue is considered to have the qualities of openness and curiosity, and a willingness to suspend personal assumptions and taken for granted meanings (Hoskings, 2009).

Rather than constructing separate, fixed or closed realities e.g., of self (other) and one's own (others) position on some issue, dialogical practices open up to relationality and to possibilities. This means that space is available for self and other to co-emerge. Dialogue is sometimes spoken of as the practice of a collective discipline - which is learning how to learn. (Hoskings, 2009)

Equipped with this view of the world, I selected participants from diverse backgrounds and viewpoints with the intention to connect people together who might otherwise be polarized in their responsiveness to each other.

Bateson (1972) also influenced me in relation to his view about how to look at the familiar in unfamiliar ways. Often we can think we know, but when we are invited to take a different stance, things we think we know can look different. Therefore, it is much less about a method, and more about a stance. As Christopher Robin says to Pooh "Its funny Pooh how things look so different in the Mist' (Milne, AA)

Tuning into the voice of the 'other'

 Diversity of perspectives as well as creating a context for authentic participation are both essential prerequisites in order to include the voice of 'the other'. I believe we need to create a space conducive to respectful, collaborative engagement with each other. Perhaps it is a space akin to a meandering river with little preexisting shape or form, one that creates the capacity for movement and fluidity. A river has the freedom to flow and meander, engaging responsively with both its internal contents and those new encounters on its trajectory, contained by the parameters of the riverbanks. In the same way, in order to create collaborative, dialogical, responsive moving possibilities, some parameters from within which conversations can emerge, some rules of engagement may need to exist. In considering stakeholder dialogue and service user involvement in dis-ability services this requires of us, in my view, consideration of the creation or use of inclusive methodologies for participatory citizenship such as dialogical methodologies: the parameters for engagement.

Thinkers such as Friere (1978) have contributed to our understanding of dialogue and the forms of dialogue that lead to less oppressive possibilities i.e. one where the space for all views to be heard is created. Paolo Freire, (1978) Brazilian educationalist, applied advanced dialogue to educational contexts. His view was that dialogue created a context in the classroom in which pupils and teachers could learn from each other and in a context of mutual respect and equality. Jung (1958) also contributed to our understanding of dialogue in suggesting the ways in which either/ or distinctions and polarised positions are not helpful. In his discussion on the plight of society, in terms of the individual's struggle for moral and spiritual integrity in the face of mass psychology, political fanaticism, scientific and technological globalism, he points us to the importance of creating the character of irregularity. He suggest that 'the resolution of conflict of diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive attitudes of knowledge lies 'not by either or 'but by two way thinking *i.e.* doing one thing while not losing sight of the other'.

The commission of enquiry into the future of civil society in the UK and Ireland (2010) foresees the further development of inclusive methodologies, to enhance greater citizen participation in decision-making processes.

There is, it would seem, already an emergence of much greater participatory representative democracy, which is reflected in many examples, such as parliaments being more open to petitioning and greater participation by citizens in debates about key societal issues. Due consideration is also being given, by some authors (Emerson 2007, Taylor 2005, Bell 2007) and social choice theorists (Salles 2007, Nurmi 2002), to voting procedures used by parliaments, councils and committees (Emerson 2007) that reflect diversity and by their nature are more inclusive. These authors amongst

others are considering voting methodologies, which include participatory citizenship approaches, which reflect diverse perspectives and are based on the generation of multiple options as opposed to either or voting methodologies. Bell (2007p.123) in discussing one such voting methodology, MBC [24] suggests that creating a connection between the governors and the governed is not just about "creating a point of connection between competing views and political opinions "but is also about "creating connections between themselves." She goes on to say that this approach is about "creating a form of self- determination in which the question is not 'which self' gets to determine the future, but rather how the "self' can be constantly re-defined through the attempt to reach agreement with the 'other'." She does however; suggest movement towards a compromise position. For this particular research enquiry project, I was interested in dialogue amongst competing discourses, in relation to labeling in disability and like Bell (2007) was also interested in how "self" or ideas are co constructed and redefined in the process. This, interest of mine however, was with a view to creating a context in which all perspectives might be heard, respected and responded to, without the need to compromise ideas and thereby potentially silence certain stories in the process. A descriptive metaphor for this view is reflected in (Kearney & Tierney 2007 p132) in the following statement "metaphors which reflect the complexity of modern society, such as an interactive network or a mosaic of multiple perspectives, would more closely fit with the multiculturalism and pluralism that is found in most societies". In creating an inclusive dialogical methodology, for participatory citizenship, in the field of dis-ability, I was interested in creating a context for the articulation of this "mosaic of multiple perspectives".

It seems "as if' global developments and shifts are occurring in common agreements about the merit of participatory inclusive approaches for Citizen participation. These developments, which for the most part embrace diversity, reflect to an extent the predictions of the Commissions (2010) report in relation to further developments in inclusive methodologies, for participatory citizenship, across many domains of political, social and economic life.

 One of the recommendations of The Commission of Enquiry report (2010) is an investment in the development of skills within communities, to support initiatives, which work towards overcoming conflict or mutual distrust, while encouraging greater citizen participation.

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[24] MBC modified de borda count, is a voting methodology based on the generation of multiple options and is viewed as an alternative approach to majoritarianism by its Proponents

The research enquiry project of this dissertation has been about bridging differences in perception and as such the methodology chosen was an inclusive participatory approach. This is reflective of the more generalized developments and recommendations for the future development of civil society across many domains of public and political life.

This generalized interest in the development of citizen participation is not new, what is new is attention to the need for diversity and dissent. Previously, not least in the area of disability, questionnaires, focus groups and other similar mechanisms for eliciting the views of citizens were considered sufficient. The desire to utilize more inclusive participatory approaches, which reflect diversity and dialogical engagement, is now more evident in both funding support and legislation.

Citizen juries have been piloted in the UK. A number of local authorities in the UK have been piloting participatory budgeting initiatives at local government level. In 2009 the Scottish government, initiated a community partnership project to encourage greater involvement in parliament from blind and partially sighted young people, difficult to reach young people and people from black and ethnic backgrounds. These groups would decide which issues to address, and would then bring the issues to government in any way that the group believed would effectively communicate the issues to their parliamentarians.

This focus on greater public engagement and of eliciting views from more marginalized groups to be welcomed, but remains in the realm of what I would refer to as disengaged engagement. While the UN Charter for human rights (2006 Article 1) recognizes the right of inclusion for people who live with disability labels in all aspects of their lives, the ways in which this participation has taken place has often been exclusionary by its nature.

Frequently, service user involvement has been 'management centred user involvement', with service users taking part but within an agenda constructed and defined by the organization, which often privilege the objectives of the organization.

In a study on developing user involvement in voluntary organizations, (Robson et al. 2003) some key factors, which were found, to be influential in promoting service user involvement included:

A focus on user priorities
Change was found to occur in organizations, which not only encouraged users to participate in decisions but also focused on the issues the users identified as being important.

While these changes in service user involvement are admirable, what in my view continues to present a methodological gap in approaches to services. What are

missing are dialogical exchanges amongst all stakeholders with mutual exploration of goals and priorities. In my enquiry, I sought to create that kind of forum by inviting all the stakeholders to participate in dialogical exchange together. This was not as a mechanism for one group to communicate their needs to the other, but rather as a space to co construct possibilities. It is in this way that the methodological approach to this enquiry and the underlying philosophy differs from many other approaches to service user involvement.

Other factors in this study (Robson et al.2003) which were found to be important, such as the emphasis on the importance of the role of leaders in promoting and encouraging service user involvement, have also influenced me in my thinking in relation to my own enquiry.

The Role of Leaders

The commitment of leaders was found to be important. 'Leaders' were considered to be chief executives, user representatives and middle managers. The study found that change occurred where leaders gave a strong sense of direction whilst allowing sufficient opportunity for change. It was generally found that the successful leaders negotiated the principles of user involvement, which enabled others to translate principles into action. In my own enquiry, in the stakeholder dialogical group, I facilitated the creation of a dialogical context and framed the dialogue within certain parameters and rules of engagement.

The Quality of Dialogue

Good quality two-way communication between users and decision makers was seen to benefit service users and promote change in organizations. Where an emphasis was placed on dialogue, the study found that it was more likely to highlight the views of both parties as equally valid. This study highlights many of the core elements I have considered to be essential for meaningful dialogue to occur between parties. Meaningful dialogue, in my view, occurs when all views are equally valued and considered. Attention is drawn, in this particular study (Robson et al.2003), to power differentials, unequal access to resources and knowledge and to encouraging participation amongst service users. The principle of inclusion is the underlying philosophical disposition. Little attention, however, in my view, is given to a dialogical methodology for engaging service users. Therefore, while the idea of inclusive participation by service users seems to have common agreement in principle, little attention has been focused on the creation of contexts for multi-stakeholder inclusive participatory dialogue. This has been a contribution, to the development of   inclusive participatory methodologies for service user participation, by the approach taken in my own enquiry.

Presence of Users

In this study (Robson et al.2003) it was discovered that the presence of users at an event or meeting or simply through their use of a service did not necessarily mean they were engaged or influential. However, opportunities were sought to offer the potential for service users to influence formal decision-making. The focus however, in relation to service user involvement was predominantly in relation to eliciting the views of service users as opposed to creating contexts for engaging in dialogue across stakeholders. This is the focus of my own enquiry.

What was interesting in this study (2003) was that it highlighted, across most of the organizations involved, a general trend of a shift from management centered user involvement to user centered user involvement. The distinction between these two being that in the first service users take part in existing structures with the agenda defined by the organization, where in the latter approach the objectives and priorities of service users become those of the organization.

While this shift from one voice of dominance to the previously marginalized voice is to be welcomed to an extent, it is my view that account needs to be taken of mechanisms for another possibility. The kind of possibility, I am suggesting, would be one in which services users, managers and other interested stakeholders can be involved in dialogue together, to co create new possibilities, as reflected in the approach taken in my own enquiry.

The Irish Context

In the Irish domain, particularly in more recent years, there have been some developments occurring in the emergence of participatory approaches for the inclusion of service users more generally. Some of these approaches attempt to create inclusive contexts were all perspectives can be given equal voice. Others attempt to circumvent the researcher/researched dichotomy in the utilization of participatory research methodologies. This is reflected in some recent developments in participatory research methodologies, such as those of the National Institute for Intellectual Disability[25], which has a research agenda that promotes an inclusive research approach. This approach is one in which the research problem is one that is owned (but not necessarily initiated) by people with intellectual disabilities. Some of the principles, which inform the research approach of the NIID, are reflective of an inclusive participatory orientation to research and include the following:

❖ The research activity should further the interests of people with intellectual disabilities;

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[25] This Center is based in Trinity College, Dublin.

❖ Non-disabled researchers should be on the side of people with intellectual disabilities

❖ The research process should be collaborative - people with intellectual disabilities should be involved in the process of doing the research.

❖ People with intellectual disabilities should be able to exert some control over process and outcomes.

❖ The research question, process and reports must be accessible to people with intellectual disabilities.

The National Disability Authority[26] have also recently commissioned a research study (Weafer July 2010) using a consultative process to elicit the views of service users. It is disappointing, nonetheless, to note that the consultative forums, utilized as the methodological approach in this enquiry, involved the segregation of users in to focus groups based on categories of distinction such as: People with Intellectual Disabilities, People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities Self-advocates, Parents of children and young adults with a disability, Frontline staff, and Advocates.

"The consultation was conducted by means of focus groups, which may be described as 'a loosely constructed discussion with a group of people brought together for the purpose of the study, guided by the facilitator and addressed as a group. The research was conducted by means of 15 focus groups, which were held during March 2010" (Weafer 2010 p.5)

The methodological approach taken to his research study was disappointing, in my view for many reasons but most particularly for the following ones:

1. That these kinds of divisions into separate consultative forums, based on dis-ability label or a designated status, did not allow for exchanges across the stakeholder groups.

2. That these kinds of divisions based on labels or role status, in my view, contribute to the creating of categories of distinction that are static and definitional. I consider that this can contribute further to 'us and them', potentially marginalizing distinctions.

3. That this research, although qualitative in nature, is predominantly manager center led, as opposed to user centered or co constructed. This view is based on the fact that the consultative forums were invited to respond into set of predetermined

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[26] The NDA is one of the leading organizations in Ireland in relation to dis-ability issues and universal design and in the provision of independent advice to government on policy and practice

questions, which they had not, been involved in constructing. "An important feature of the present set of focus groups was the underlying inductive strategy that was designed to hear and have documented the views of people who may not usually have their views and opinions represented in relation to issues concerning independent living and participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the community. Within the parameters set by the key concepts of independent living and community participation, the participants were given scope to interpret and comment on areas they believed to be important to them. Accordingly, the themes that emerged during the analysis developed from the initial questions set by the NDA and the participants' response to these questions."

4.That in 2010, given the recommendations of the UN charter on human rights' for inclusion (2006 article 1), the recommendations of the commissions report on citizen participation (2010) and the extensive literature on emancipatory research in the field of dis-ability (Oliver 1990, Barnes& Mercer 2003) to find these kinds of manager centered approaches to service user involvement in research continuing to being utilized by a leading national agency in the area of dis-ability, is a little disheartening.

The rationale provided for this methodology, as outlined below, resides, perhaps, in the difficulties inherent in 'equality of voice' and I hypothesize might also relate to concerns in relation to power issues in research more generally. The use of consultative forums in this research study (Weafer 2010) might therefore have been an attempt to circumvent those difficulties. The following statement, (Weafer 2010, p.18) leads me to deduce that this might form part of the rationale for the chosen methodology:

> The policy documents of the NDA also endorse the use of
> focus group discussions facilitated by an independent
> facilitator for consultation with marginalized groups that have
> 'little experience of involvement in consultation processes'
> (National Disability Authority, 2004, p.17).

While the inclusion of service users voices and perspectives (and indeed the views of many stakeholders) in relation to service and policy developments in the area of dis-ability and the resultant shift from one voice of dominance to the previously marginalized voice is to be welcomed, some key issues might benefit from further consideration.

Account, perhaps, needs to be taken of methodologies which present   another possibility, one in which both services users, managers and stakeholders can be involved in dialogue together to co create new possibilities. This was the methodology used in this enquiry.

In this enquiry, it was my intention to create a context in which we could move past the dichotomous distinctions of whose agenda gets privileged, the service users or the service providers. I intended to create a dialogical forum of equal voice, where both service users and service providers could engage in conversation in relation to their own ideas about the meaning of dis-abilty and the delivery of services. It was my hope that by creating an open agenda in relation to the dialogue, some of the key issues of importance for all stakeholders might emerge both in their diversity and commonalities of concerns and perspectives. This type of approach, I think, lends itself more easily, than consultative forums, questionnaires and surveys to "Tuning into the voice of the other"

Chapter 3. Deconstructing Dis-ability

Elephants and Boa Constrictors – Vantage points and Worldviews

'My drawing was not of a hat it was of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant but since the grown ups were not able to understand it, I made another drawing I drew the inside of the boa constrictor so the grown ups could see it clearly " (Saint –Exupery p6 1945)
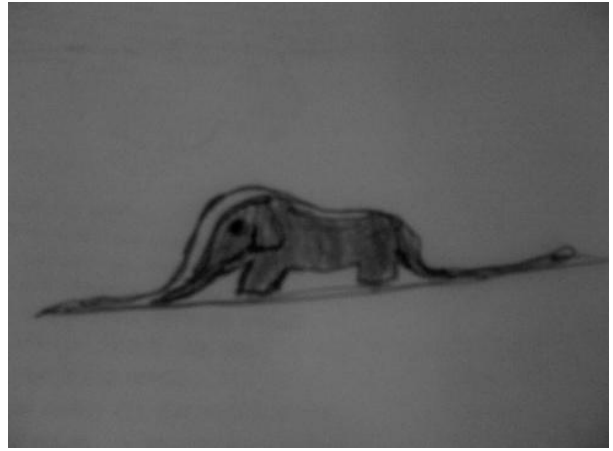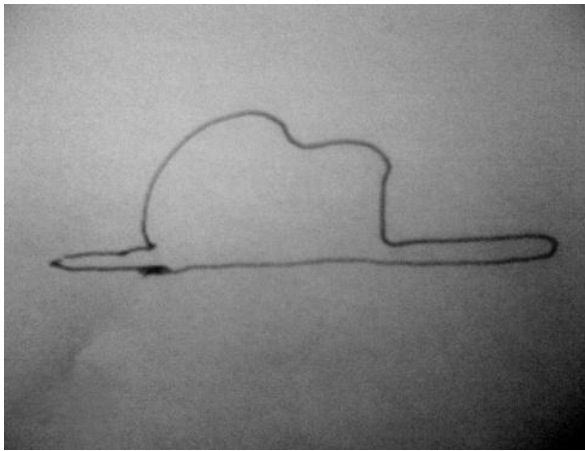
Figure 2. Elephants and boa constrictors

What you see really depends on your vantage point. In the story of *The little Prince*, the grownups' view of the world is entirely different from the view inside the world of the little boy. The boy wonders how something as obvious, as an elephant inside a boa constrictor, is not visible to the grownups. I think the views we have of the world depend on our vantage points and our experiences of being located inside and outside of the story.

In a similar way Terpstra (2005), in his narration of the lives of three boys who lived with muscular dystrophy, highlights the complete incredulity of the boys' sister at the constructions of shame and pity in relation to her brothers disabilities.

> "It's a real shame about those boys.

> "I was stunned how could he say such a thing? Is it true? Shame had never occurred to me and it made me feel disloyal simply hearing the word said, if I nodded in agreement would that not somehow diminish who my brothers are? "(Terpstra 2005 p.99)

The story of dis-ability often looks different from the inside. The boa constrictor may not be visible until it is made explicit. It is these different worldviews, the silenced

stories of dis-abilty experience, which encourages and challenges us to deconstruct our taken- for granted assumptions, and create spaces for new descriptions to emerge.

Oliver Sacks (1995), in his book *An Anthropologist on Mars*, explores and challenges many of our assumptions of what it means to live with dis-abilty. Sacks (1995) says "for me as physician, nature's richness is to be studied in the phenomena of health and disease, in the endless forms of individual adaptation by which human organisms, people adapt and reconstruct themselves faced with the challenges and vicissitudes of life" (p.14).

Sacks (1995) highlights how there is no singular story in the accounts of his patients all of whom have responded differently to what we homogenously label as neurological disorders and diseases. Sacks(1995) also highlights how the very existence of certain conditions, which are labeled as disabling, can occasionally lead to bringing forth latent creative talents in the process.

It would seem that the vantage point and the predominant worldviews we hold construct how and what we view and consider to be dis-abilty. The view from the inside may be a markedly different perspective. Often by constructing from the outside, the view becomes a partial account, and the lens from the outside may place focus and emphasis on different viewpoints. This is highlighted in the following quote by Terpsra (2005,p.99) 'When you live at the working everyday end of disability or disease you tend not to show as much respect for its limitations as others feel it is proper to show, it leaves others at a disadvantage…. you can't help but feel a bit sorry for them'

Terpstra (2005) also suggests that living inside dis-ability stories and constructions, leads to certain irreverence for the limitations. This as perceived and often articulated by those who reflect in- wards from more distant external positions. Terpstra(2005), in considering these limitations which may be less significant given their day to day familiarity from an insider perspectives, also highlights how the societal responses may be considered more disabling or disabled. That is in either direction looking outwards or looking inwards depending on how you view the world.

From personal experience, my son has often commented on how he has felt sorrow for others who do not share our 'insider knowledge' (of living with everyday perceived dis-ability. He also talks about the alternative discourses and richness of certain aspects of living experiences, which are not always shared, appreciated or fully understood from an outsider perspective. So who is to be pitied? Who is inside dis-ability and who is outside dis-abilty? Who holds the outsider perspectives and experience? Is the boa constrictor visible from the outside, or are the grownups to be

pitied for their inability to see? Perhaps the little prince is mistaken in his view of the world? What should and does a normative life look like?

It is interesting that the perspective and views from the outside locates dis-ability in the individual, and places an emphasis on the aspect of Dys-function.

Williams (1996), as a person who has been variously ascribed the label Autism, also describes her own experience of speaking from the inside. "I have lived these things from the inside in a non Autistic world which can only view and describe them from the outside" (p.8).

Often, as the story of dis-abilty is voiced outwards, it can call forth the construction of responses of rehabilitation, debilitation, sympathy, fear and occasionally an implicit superiority of a privileged status by virtue of not believing in our own occupancy of dis-ability spaces. These kinds of responses can leave little room for the acknowledgment of alternative discourses.

Williams (1996) has stated in relation to this outsider view, "I speak as a person who has had to learn many things in different ways from most people and who, therefore may only dare, but be able sometimes to view things in a way others are sometimes blinkered from daring to imagine or admit."

Speaking and not speaking and inside and outside stories, create binaries. It is in the emergence of the possibility of fluid dynamic movement between these positionings that I am particularly curious about in relation to dis-ability discourses.
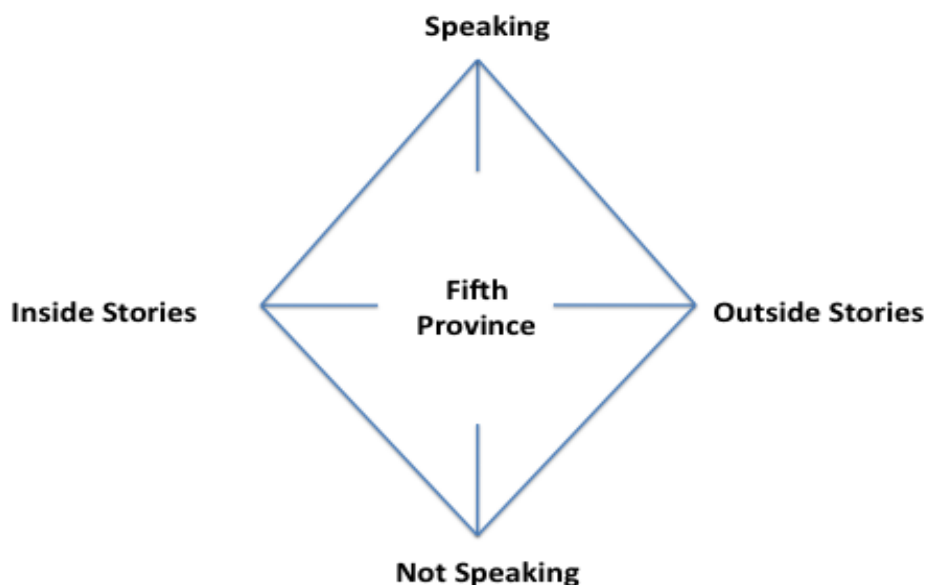
Figure 3. Insider / Outsider Perspectives

Figure 9. above, drawing on the work of the fifth province associates (Mc Carthy et al .1989), constructs these positions statically, 'as if' we are positioned in one domain or the other, but nonetheless highlights the extremities and the possible domains of movement. The Fifth Province model developed from a practice base, where issues in relation to sexual abuse disclosure where being explored and considered. The major theoretical influences underpinning the approach were post Milan systemic ideas that utilized a cybernetic relational and discursive framework to conceptualize relational and thematic configurations that were produced in diagrammatic form and included the therapist/ researcher as participant. The analysis and mapping here in figure 9, is in part being applied to the dichotomous positions and polarized ideas and themes in the area of dis-ability. As I am particularly interested in considering the gray area and the potential for the co-existence of ability and dis-abilty seemingly conflicting positions, the fifth province is a useful metaphor. The idea of the fifth province is evoked as a space where according to Hederman &Kearney (1977) is a province apart from other provinces; a province where oppositions are held simultaneously.

According to Hederman and Kearney (1977), a fifth province is an ethical position that speaks to the possibility of openness, transforming the inter-subjective space of divided and enclosed perspectives.

Fifth province model is utilized here to map the polarities and distinctions and encourage reflections on positioning at the extremes.

None of us inhabit these positions in static ways. There are times we view from the inside and times we view from the outside and there are times when we can hold both perspectives. There are times when we dwell in dis-ability experiences and times when we do not. The difficulty is when we position ourselves in a static manner (i.e. either inside or outside either disabled or not disabled). The impact of doing so restricts our capacity to describe experiences outside those descriptions and it prevents us holding and being open to another perspective.

Nonetheless, it seems important to have a mechanism to describe experiences in each of the domains, even if they are temporarily located. Some people, by virtue of a disabling society and marginalizing practices, may find themselves located more in one domain than the other. It is more predominantly in the outsider positions that voices can become marginalized and silenced. Kennelly (2009) in his two poems, '*Insider*' and '*Outsider*', highlights aspects of lived experiences in both positions. He acknowledges some realities of the experiences for those people situated in either domain, either by virtue of their own construction of the world, or by virtue of the constructions made about them by others.

> "No matter where I go, I know I'm not there. I look at those
> who know they belong. I live in a place called nowhere.

> Sometimes I think my name is difference" (Kennelly, 2009, p.
> 87).

Here, Kennelly (2009) is highlighting the pain of the experience of difference, the sense of not belonging and of being adrift. Later, in the same poem, however, he highlights some of the unique vantage points, which are experienced by virtue of outsider status, which I believe are not always well articulated:

> "I know there are others who sing it too, who also live in a
> place called nowhere. It's a privilege to see what's beautiful
> in worlds that ignore me"(Kennelly, 2009, p. 87).

In his poem *Insiders*, Kennelly (2009) speaks to the privileged status, which a sense of belonging can bring:

> I belong, I know I belong to a special place, a special people,
> a special knowledge of every other place and people
> surrounding me, I know my neighbors they know me, we
> accept each other ….

> "We know when to speak, when to be silent "(Kennelly 2009
> p.85)

> "No need to be silent about outsiders, blow-ins.   They simply
> got it wrong. They don't belong "

Here Kennelly (2009) describes a culture of exclusion, a sense of knowing how to be from the inside, a knowing the rules of engagement and knowledge of when to speak and when to be silent. It is in these differences among discursive communities and their capacity to suppress, pathologise and silence others, that is of particular interest to me.

Co- constructing Power relationally – a Question of equal voice

The other issue which requires due consideration is in relation to the capacity to elaborate our worldviews, either from inside or outside (i.e., power and equality of voice). The significant question at issue is whether we all have the same capacity to speak, and in which contexts does equality of voice exist. It is my view that to participate, we must have equal access to participation, and not have been socialized in ways that make it difficult for us to do so. The stories that are told about us begin to constitute and describe our experience and often become the stores we internalize and tell about ourselves. As a consequence, those people who have certain stories told about them, and have less privileged life experiences, can have less privileged access to participation and less ability to speak with equal voice.

This is highlighted in a comment made by one of the young people, who lives with a disability label, when invited to participate in this stakeholder dialogue.

"Are you sure you want me to come?" Upon being reassured he added, "I am delighted that someone thinks I can make a valuable contribution to the thing"

Plummer (1995) speaks of this in terms of culture as "an ensemble of stories we tell about ourselves" (p. 5), and states "not all people have equal opportunities to have their particular stories prevail" (p. 5).

He continues:

> The story telling process flows through social acts of domination, hierarchy, marginalization and inequality. Some voices …are not only heard much more than others, but are also capable of framing the questions, setting the agendas, establishing the rhetorics much more readily than others….certain stories hence are silenced from saying (p. 60).

If equality of voice was further enhanced, it might create greater potential for more and richer accounts, such as those of Williams (1996), of the experiences of dis-abilty to be heard and voiced. These accounts might in turn influence the dominant discourses to a greater extent, with a shifting   focus based more on similarities not differences, and possibility not disability, creating greater potential for a more balanced worldview of the experience of dis-abilty.

Donna Williams (1996) in her book on autism, refers to the difficulty of finding ways of speaking as follows "perhaps it is not that I dare to speak about other people who share conditions like mine but how I dare that is important" (p. viii).

It is difficult to tell even one story. Any account has the potential to become a template for the experience of others and reduce the description to a commonality of symptoms, and a classification and categorization of what it is to be human.

Williams (1996) circumvents this dilemma by declaring "ultimately I cannot speak for anyone but myself" (p. viii). As authors and narrators of disability experiences, we can only take responsibility for how we tell the story, and not how it is viewed. The lens with which we view the world may or may not be refocused in the listening.

Vantage Points –inside out
Neither Elephant nor Boa constrictor – Is it a Boa-phant ?

When confronted with somewhat familiar yet unknown territory, we may take the view of dis-abilty as being 'not of myself', but as residing in the other. This location of attributes in the other creates a distance between self and other. Kearney (2003), who has been influenced by psychoanalytical writers, suggests that our projections outwards about others may be located in our own fears. This is a more individualistic worldview, in contrast to the perspectives of constructivist and social constructionist thinkers. Nonetheless, his views contribute substantially to some

understandings of cultural/historical contexts for the emergence of 'us and them' positions. Kearney (2003) also provides an overview of how various philosophical thinkers have contributed to our understanding of the emergence of dichotomous thinking, in relation to others who we do not experience as the same as ourselves (i.e. strangers). Kearney (2003), in tracing the philosophical emergence of ideas of good and evil from early western thought, suggests that notions of self identity and sameness were equated with good. The experience of evil was often linked with exteriority. "Almost invariably, otherness was considered in terms of estrangement which contaminates the pure unity of the soul" (p.65), and "most nation states bent on preserving the body politic from alien viruses seek to pathologise their adversaries"(p.65).

This idea of stranger /outsider also appears in the literature in relation to cultural minorities.

Bahktin (1984) and O'Sullivan (2010) also refer to the idea of stranger and the experience of outsideness in their discussions on culture.

"In the realm of culture, outsideness is the most powerful factor in understanding it is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly' (Bahktin, 1984, p.7).

In reflecting on Bahktin's ideas here, in relation to how aspects of culture become more visible in unfamiliar environments and reveal themselves more, it is in the unfamiliar that the potential for creating a more curious stance and for mutual understandings to develop becomes greater. Through dialogue and curiosity about the nature of the experiences of the perceived outsider, the territory can become more visible.   Identity, however, could be construed as fluid dynamic and multi - located. The question of where the territory lies then becomes an interesting one, as situating ourselves in one culture, country or experience may silence the experiences of the other aspects of who we are.

The young boy in Hamilton's (2004) account of his struggles with his nationality highlights the kinds of positions we find ourselves in when we attempt to statically locate ourselves. The young boy was struggling with nationality as an identity and the question of whether he is German or Irish and where he should locate himself. He resolves this dilemma for himself in the following way:

> I can hear the bells I am not afraid of being German or Irish or anywhere in between. Maybe your country is only a place you make up in your own mind something you dream about and sing about, maybe its not a place on the map at all but a story full of people you meet and places you visit, full of books and films you have been to (Hamilton, 2004, p. 295)

Hamilton (2004), in his book *The Speckled People* is bringing our attention to the ways in which we are all speckled people. Our colorful stories and our experiences become our country, our territory, and as a consequence we do not need to choose to locate ourselves in a singular domain of description.

In the same way I am suggesting that the dis-abilty story is a fluid one, and when the construct of dis-ability becomes located in the individual, that is 'the other', experience could then be viewed as a singular static and temporally frozen phenomena.

How do you become un-disabled?

Many writers (Barnes & Mercer 2003, Oliver, 1990) amongst others in the field of disability, have circumvented the dilemma of acknowledging impairments and their impact on life experiences, while simultaneously highlighting the construction of disability in 'the space between' (Mc Carthy,et al.1989), by predominantly drawing on the social model of disability. This reliance on the social model of dis-ability has its own limitations.

The Construction of dis-ability

The Social model locates dis-ability within the social context, whereas the medical model locates disability in the individual. Yet many authors who themselves live with or live with people who hold labels of dis-abilty, consider the cultural, spatial and temporal nature of dis-abilty and disabling discourses. Some refer to this as bi-cultural (Olkin, 1999). Others refer to this as as bi -location (peer counselors, 2003), and yet others call our attention to the need to attend to the impact of impairment in very real ways (, Barnes & Mercer 2003; Oliver, 1990).

Naturally, all of us simultaneously occupy multiple domains of existence, as a consequence of our roles, networks of connection, and by virtue of how we live in living dynamic communication networks. Gergen (1991) outlines the phenomenon of the simultaneous existence of multiple selves, in his descriptions of our multiplicity of selves' co residing and interacting with the world, in what we commonly refer to and label as a singular entity 'personhood'. The differences and contrasts however, between worlds being described by people who live with dis-ability labels, appear less fluid and more constant in terms of frequently being described in binary dimensions of either /or. These distinctions are more marked in terms of the impact of choices of personal location, for the person who lives with these dis-abilty labels. It would seem as if the movement between worlds and personal locations affords less choices and opportunities to people who live with disabling labels, and more often is one that is externally imposed. The following excerpt, (peer counsellors, 2003) of some voices of people who live with disabling labels, describes these lived experiences of living a simultaneous existence in two domains.'

Many of us live between different worlds – the world of able-bodied people and the world of people with physical or visual impairments. Some of us when growing up would ask ourselves the question, 'Which world do I really belong in?' For those of us with hidden disabilities, the boundaries are not clear. For the most part, it makes sense for me to live and operate in a sighted world, as a sighted person, but this requires an awful lot of effort. My visual impairment is not obvious to others, and because of this I run into people who don't believe what I'm saying, who think perhaps I'm making it up, or that I am looking for sympathy. I do understand why it is difficult for people, because while I might tell them I can't see very well, then they see me reading a book. There are difficulties in explaining my experience. There is also the difficulty sometimes of trying to hide my disability, times when there is no need for others to know or when I want to see how far I can go in a sighted world. There are different efforts involved in living in these different realms. When working with people with hidden disabilities I try to find ways that their experiences can be acknowledged.' (Peer counselors, 2003).

Living between two Worlds
Acknowledgment without pathologising discourses of categorization

A potential difficulty inherent in any model of disability is its capacity to silence and marginalize other discourses. It seems that humans have an inherent need to label and create frameworks for understanding in order to make sense of our world. I think one of the biggest challenges in making sense of the experience of dis-abilty is to source language which does not create categories of distinction, but one which attends to both the impact of the social context in the creation of emergent disabling discourses, whilst also acknowledging the experience of 'impairment' in non pathologising ways. The concept of impairment is also fraught with difficulties, as it brings forth subjectification, ideas of corporeal integrity and   distinctions based on beliefs about what constitutes normative experiences. Excavation of how disability constructs come into being, combined with the application of Foucauldian conceptualizations to the construct 'impairment', serves to elucidate and highlight both the structures of power and the social evolvement of what we commonly refer to as dis-abilty. Nonetheless, even with acknowledgment of how dis-abilty comes into being in language, and holding an awareness of the limiting factors associated with the concept impairment, the challenges, which inhibit equal participation in society, remain. As highlighted above "there are different efforts involved in living in these domains" (Tremain,2005)

Tremain (2005) suggests, that from a Foucauldian perspective, "disability nor impairment neither refer to nor represent essences of particular individuals nor of a certain population" (p. 81). Considering Tremain's ideas, it would seem that becoming responsive to individual needs is the best avenue available to us. We can

do this instead of creating pathologising categories of distinction that provide us with little information about desired response or individual needs.

Focauldian ideas are helpful to us in their application to disability theories models and frameworks of understanding. Focauldian ideas can be seen as a useful method for analyzing the construction of certain knowledge's, disability identities and in analysis of the formation of knowledge. Tremian (2006) argues that the social model of dis-ability obscures the productive constraints of power he states:

> A foucauldian approach to disability would hold that the governmental practices into which the subject is induced and divided from others produce the illusion that they have a pre-discursive or natural antecedent (impairment) which in turn provides justification for the multiplication and expansion of the regulatory effects of these practices (Tremain, 2005 p.83).

If we examine and consider some of these worldviews, which have come to dominate the disability terrain, from a Foucauldian perspective, we can begin to see more clearly how they have come into existence.

World Views

In relation to the ways in which we think about the world and how those distinctions come into existence   Illich (1976) has the following to say:

> Every society classifies disease – the nosology mirrors social organization. The Sickness that society produces is baptized by the doctor with names that bureaucrats cherish 'learning disability' hyperkinesias or minimal brain dysfunction explains to parents why their children do not learn, serving as an alibi for schools intolerance or incompetence" (Illich, 1976,p.174).

Illich(1976) would not be alone in considering both the social contexts of disease classifications and their consequential impact. Authors such as Gergen (2006), Tomm (1990) and others have written extensively about the nature and impact of these categorizing, labeling discourses.   The DSM IV has a proliferation of categories of distinction for human conditions. In this regard, Gergen (1996) highlights the continued growth of the rapid expansion of labels for human conditions as is demonstrated in the increase in numbers of recognized illnesses from the DSM III to DSM IV. Gergen (1996) outlines how a person can now be classified as mentally ill by virtue of cocaine intoxication, caffeine intoxication, the use of hallucinogenics, gambling, academic problems, antisocial behaviour and bereavement, to name but a few. Many conditions of ordinary living have now become classifiable. Gergen (1996) suggests that we need to ask what are the limits to classifying people in terms of deficits.

The impact on disabling discourses is not exempt from the phenomena of growth in labeling. The increase in labels in the field of disability has kept abreast of the developments in the mental health classifications.

Strong (1993) refers to the dilemmas of the impact of internalized labeling discourses on his interactions with his clients, within a mental health therapeutic context. The same questions can be applied to the language and field of disability.

While I don't choose to be a closet post-modern therapist, I find myself swimming against the tide in working in a system that increasingly embraces a modernist language to administer the business of psychotherapy. Similarly, my clients (who are understandably keen to become fluent in the expert language of mental health) present their difficulties in the same language with similar certainty. I feel my 'clinical reality' and that of my clientele is increasingly becoming dominated by the modernist view and language of the DSMIV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) and I am wary of how the implications of this increased dominance will silence the development of alternative views and languages for describing the problems brought to psychotherapy. (Strong, 1993)

The dilemmas of the postmodern psychotherapist in a predominantly modernist world, as outlined by Strong (1993)are not dissimilar to the difficulties for both people who live with disabling experiences and for the multi-disciplinary professionals who attempt to support them. The post-modernist view is, in part, founded on the premise that our understandings of our world and ourselves are derived from outcomes of social processes based in language (Anderson & Goolishian, 1986; Gergen, 1996). Labels, on the other hand, inform a modernist approach and constrain the accessibility of responses available to us. Many people internalize the labels proliferating in dominant discourses, and as a consequence, have applied a constraining discourse to their own lives. Often we appropriate and internalize this 'expert based language' to create understandings of our own inner worlds, with a consequential belief that there are 'particular responses' as opposed to 'individualized responses' required for particular 'conditions'.

From a social constructionist perspective, the idea of self is constructed in language and through language, and in the dominant stories we here told about ourselves (e.g., from a young age we formulate ideas about who we are based on constructions of society based on gender, class, race, culture and on individual descriptions and stories told about us in our networks of relationships (e.g. you are musical etc.). Stories about what constitutes dis-abilty permeate our world and are internalized. As Mead (1934) states "Mind arises through communication by a conversation of gestures in a social process or context of experience – not communication through mind" (p. 50).

Barnes & Mercer (2003,p.1) suggest the dominant ideas of disability throughout the 20th century relate to a deficit based conceptualizations: "For most of twentieth century in western society disability has been equated with flawed minds and bodies".

If we consider human nature as socially constructed in dialogue, the dominant discourse shapes how we come to know others and ourselves. In western cultures, monologism/individualism has been our preferred way of thinking about self, where self is seen as distinctive/separate and bounded. The boundary of the individual is seen to be co-incident with the boundary of the body. The body therefore is considered to be the container that houses the individual.

From a western individualist tradition, Sampson (1993,p.17) states "Conventional wisdom has suggested that each individual must become a coherent, integrated, singular entity whose clear cut boundaries define its limits and separate it from other similarly bounded entities". He goes on to suggest (Sampson 1993, p.19.) that monologic theorists fail us by asking us to direct our focus 'to look within the individual when our attention needs to be focused between individuals ". This idea has an impact on the ways in which we create the construction of the other, and how we as one individual can project ideas, thoughts and values as belonging in the other and not to ourselves. As westerners, we don't always think relationally. When we do, we often find that our relational constructions are difficult to articulate due to the limitations imposed on us by language. How we co -construct the space between us, and often our thinking about self, is limited by our language and our capacity to find relationally based descriptions in language that have a better fit for the co- constructing spaces that we inhabit.

When we think in individualistic terms, we ascribe values to individualism, which are socially and culturally determined. In western culture, a high value is often placed on what we consider to be independence, freedom and autonomy. Human development is frequently constructed around the idea of a developmental process beginning in dependence at birth, and progressing in a linear sequential manner to independence. The relevance of placing such a high value on what we perceive and agree to be independence, impacts on the ways in which we construe disability. Maturity in western cultures is often constructed around the idea of self-reliance. Western society often cautions us against losing or ceding parts of ourselves to others (e.g. we are frequently reminded in media and literature of the negative consequences of co dependency and the importance for young adults to move towards independence). This is a culturally situated idea that is not replicated across the globe. Many cultures place value on community living and mutual support which

relationality supported in language such as the samoan we-dentity[27]. Geertz (1979) encourages us to become aware that our western ideas of individualism are as equally unusual in other cultures as the idea of we-dentities and the privileging of dependence and social community are to us.

The western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe organised into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes is however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the contexts of world cultures (Geertz, 1979, p. 229)

Ideas about self are culturally determined, with some cultures being more socio centric and others more egocentric. Collectivistic cultures place the emphasis on community, while individualistic cultures place more emphasis on the individual. In particular, Samoan language and culture allow for the idea that in every commendable action there is a reciprocal response. For example, "I have done something well, but I recognise your contribution to bringing forth the outcome as the other as supporter". (Sampson 1993, p.68) Some cultures predominantly use the 'we' position in language and in action.

Shotter(2004) refers to what happens between people as joint action. His focus is on the co -construction of relationships, knowledge and meaning making. Social constructionism is not so much a theory, but a tradition of linguistic exchanges that feeds into ongoing dialogues within communities. These dialogues construct a "reality" for its participants. Social constructionist theory thus lends itself to relational thinking as a means of placing emphasis on shared meaning making through relationships (Gergen, McNamee & Barrett, 2001).

In both individualistic and collectivistic cultural traditions, there is a 'construction' of the other (i.e. as not myself or not part of my collective). This takes place in dialogical constructions of reality. These constructions of the other, or the other group, lead to ideas of privilege and power and have particular impact in the creation of marginalizing discourses such as race and ability.

The Social Construction of Self
Cultural Identities – Power and privledge

In considering categories of distinction and marginalization, we may also need to consider privledge and power. Without examining how privilege is conferred, we may be unable to see the circumstances that create constraints on people's lives. As a

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[27] In samoan culture the concept I does not exist in the same way as in western culture – for I to do anything it must be supported by others aand so it is more of a we-dentity – Sampson 1993p.68

consequence, we may become unable to appreciate people's daily efforts to work and live in the context of these constraints, or to appreciate their efforts to resist such constraints. Constraints, in relation to marginalized status, are often based in how the constructs of self and other are created. When we examine power and privilege, we may become more aware of our own capacity to oppress, and more tuned in to the existing ways in which patterns of subjugation, marginalization and oppression exist within our communities.   In attending to and making explicit the way in which constructions of power and privilege are created, we may heighten our own awareness of the capacity to silence. We may learn the ways in which some voices, knowledge and views have been given more credibility and are heard. If we do not attend to the manifestations of power and privilege, even if we perceive them to be culturally, linguistically and co constructed, we may contribute to oppression.   We could do this by lacking an awareness of the possibilities that exist for us to inadvertently impose our own expectations, our own cultural values and ways and constructions, on the other.

As we begin to examine our own privilege, we may become more conscious of the possibility of our own potential to subjugate, marginalise and replicate potential patterns of oppression. We may also become more aware of the capacity to silence certain stories and privilege others. Voices that speak from within the experiences can be marginalized and silenced by virtue of lack of access to particular academic and other privileged constructions of knowledge.

"We have unique knowledges that are not accessible to people who don't have disabilities. These insider knowledges have not been accessed through reading, but through living, through personal experience, through relationships.(peer counsellors 2003)

Therapy, and indeed societal responsivity, has the potential to become a process of colonization, where we professionals indoctrinate and become experts [28]on the person's unique culture rather than one of enculturation where we enter their culture in a respectful way.

Texts Of Identity

As already outlined, the concept dis-abilty is difficult and value laden,, which is socially and culturally specific. People are too complex to slot into categories. Therefore, we may need to ask ourselves some reflective questions. Is it helpful to freeze the frame? By using disabling labels, does it create an 'us and them' phenomena, leading to greater potential to colonise peoples lives by becoming

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[28] Using the term expert here is not in the sense of professional expert but a knowing stance based on categories of distinction ie when we use a label we tend o have a set of characteristics associated with the label and a set of generalized prescriptive responses.

'experts' on their lived experiences? By emphasizing difference, do we create further marginalisation? Should children, people with disability, and people of different race and culture be seen as marginalized groups requiring and particular stories to be told about them? Do our very discourses about these groups further marginalize them by moving them to a `them and us` position, while colonizing their experience by our very need to be seen to be inclusive? It is my belief that what do we do by categorizing them, by defining them as something different, by offering them the status of `special`, requiring special approaches, we are still creating marginalizing discourses about them, but just in a different way.

Perhaps a question we might need to consider is how do we begin to interact with them if we make them special, rather than just people whose voices need to be heard and paid attention to, just like any others? By making them `special`, do we reify them and isolate them further?

The stories that a person tells and has told about themselves and their lives can be seen as their way of making sense of their lives (Sarbin 1986). On grappling with the confusion and complexity of the human condition of the positioning of one's self in the world (Epston,White & Murray (1992), describe this process as `self-authoring' by which the individual might be seen to take control of the stories governing his or her identity.

From a social constructionist perspective, the stories that people tell about themselves, their lives and their culture, go beyond sense making of life and experience, but are also constitutive. In the telling of our personal stories, we formulate ourselves as persons in relationship to others. We formulate a social identity. Identities are contingent in the sense that they are historical and cultural formations. As such, the meanings that are attached to certain identities can shift with time and vary from place to place. As Kotre(1984) suggests, stories place people's social lives in the context of collective meanings.   Within social constructionism, the focus is on the construction of the self in conversation. Storytelling is an interaction between a teller and a listener, a writer and a reader, and it occurs in dialogue. The construction of one's identity occurs in interactions with others. The stories we tell about our lives do not simply reflect events, but actively shape who we are and the kinds of choices we make. This social identity provides the basis for our actions. If the story told about us is a disabling one, then it creates the potential for us to become dis-abled.

While we all have a certain capacity to resist the stories told about us, to be marginalized is to tell a story about oneself that does not fit with the stories that are told about us to hold a local story that is at odds with the stories around us. How possible is it to resist the stories told about us, and tell a story differently?

In our responses to disabling discourses, I would suggest we need to be constantly aware of the possibility of colonizing peoples' experiences by becoming experts on their lived experiences. We need to remain curious and to continually hold our ideas as more or less useful, and not as singular truths. This positioning creates a more conducive context for remaining respectful of peoples' expertise in relation to their own lives. We need to be careful about creating an 'us and them' phenomena in our application of label, and in doing so, create a further polarization of positions. Rather, we need to continue to see ourselves as human beings, with our own strengths and weaknesses, in the same way as we perceive all those with whom we engage. Being open to creating a context for storying our experiences with others, without privileging or silencing any aspects of individual experience, but from a position of respectful curiosity, allows us be truly open to the hearing and acknowledging the voice of the other.

Here, (peer counsellors 2003) a group of people who live with dis-abilty labels share something of their experiences;

Many of us have relationships with shame. We know how shame can take one's voice away. My parents would never speak about my disability. I knew I was different in some way, but I didn't know why I couldn't do what others did. We know what it is like if a family makes it clear that you are a topic that is not to be talked about. At the same time, we know how unhelpful expressions of pity can be. Those who consult us are not simply victims of devastation or hopelessness; they are people who are actively seeking and creating ways of living with pride. (Peer counselors, 2003)

Perhaps one of the only ways to avoid turning dis-ability into a rigid category of identity is to attend to these fluid personal narratives in time, space and relationality. The social model focuses predominantly on the relational, whereas the medical model focuses on the personal static descriptors of impairment. Narrative approaches to the ways in which we story our lives and make sense of our experiences, have much to offer in terms of de-constructing our static descriptors and offering more fluid dynamic responses.

Identity politics

Dis-ability can be seen to be a political act, which has consequences for both the individual and society. As when any sociopolitical category is applied to individuals, it also acts as a reductive agent, circumscribing one's identity, and reducing one's potential to be otherwise. The same can be said for dis-ability distinctions. Nonetheless, as Barnes and Mercer (2003 p.131) suggest this politicization of people with dis-ability has led to a mobilization, which has influenced politicians, policy markers and the population at large. Supporters of identity politics suggest that strategies of collective action have advanced campaigns in relation to poverty,

housing, employment and education to combat the multidimensional oppression matrix (Humphrey, 1999, p.175).

While dis-abilty in collective identity politics organizes people on the basis of categories of distinction a cultural model attends to the locations of dis-ablling discourses. Snyder and Mitchell (2006 p. 6) argue for a theoretical framework, which simultaneously attends to cultural sites of oppression as well as locating dis-abilty outside of the individual. They suggest a model which does not obscure the degree to which social obstacles and biological capacities impinge on lives but rather suggests that the result of those differences comes to bear significantly on the ways disabled people experience their environments and their bodies.

Wendell (1996, p.35) points out that" the distinction between biological reality of disability and social construction of disability cannot be made sharply. The definition of disability must incorporate both the outer and inner reaches of culture and experience as a combination of profoundly social and biological forces"

Synder and Mitchell(2006 p.9) elaborate these ideas further by suggesting that 'the term disability recognizes that there exists a necessary distance between dominant cultural perspectives of disability as tragic embodiment and a politically informed dis-abilty subculture perspective that seeks to define itself against devaluing mainstream views of disability". I consider this engagement with identity politics in some ways to be political act of resistance and while social constructionist views aim to understand the complex processes that shape and bring dis-abilty into existence the sites of resistance remain important to circumvent the potential for oppressive practices to flourish   in a disabling society.

Gergen(2001) refers to identity politics as a form of political activism, which he says "is typically though not exclusively initiated by groups excluded from mainstream politics as a consequence such groups generate self designated identities" (Gergen, 2001 p169). Gergen sees "the dominant rhetoric of identity politics as divisive" (2001 p169).

Gergen(2001) recognizes this contribution of identity politics in terms of the purposes it served but calls for a new way forward as identity politics is under siege. He also proposes any future relationship between identity politics and social constructionism needs to be an approach situated, in relational politics.

Gergen (2001) is not denying the need to attend to changing circumstances in our society but sees it more in the domain of a relational responsibility and collective accountability. He suggests that the way forward is paved for a 'rhetoric of responsibility' (p.173) in so doing he does not suggest the abandonment of existing traditions of identity politics, the discourses of oppression, justice or equal rights he instead proposes a new set of relationships with them, situated in collaborative and relational practice. (2001 p.182)

The Colonization of marginalized groups

While the focus on a relational understanding of disability creates new possibilities for both experience and response, one of the realities that we have to contend with is the impact of a modernist world, and the consequential impact on individuals who are subjected to marginalizing discourses and experiences. The following excerpt describing the experience of someone living in a residential home, which markedly highlights these differing lived experiences.

You reside.
I am a resident.

You move in.
I am admitted.

You may be rude.
I have a behavior problem.

You make up your own mind.
I am non-compliant.

When I go to the restaurant with someone it is an outing.
For you, it is a date.

I don't know how many people write about me or look at my file.
You get mad if someone peeks at your journal.

I make mistakes during my check writing program and a meeting is called.
You make a checking error and the bank calls with a reminder.

I am told not to talk to strangers.
You met your spouse while grocery shopping.

I celebrated my birthday with five other residents and two staff.
You had a surprise party thrown by your family and friends.

I have a report written about me each month which is read by my parents. Sometimes it says what I am doing wrong.
You get letters from family and friends.

I am on a special diet because I am five pounds above my ideal weight.
You are planning to go on a diet, some day.

I have my room inspected every day.
You clean up once a week, if there is time.

I have a goal to learn leisure skills.
You are a couch potato!

I may have enough money at the end of the week to go get a hamburger.
You eat out often because you hate to cook.

I have a case manager, psychologist, social worker, nurse, OT, PT, nutritionist and teaching staff who set goals for me every year.
You are still trying to find yourself.

I will be discharged someday......maybe.
You will move onward and upward.

<div align="center">-Contributed by ARCA of New Mexico</div>

The importance of attending to the very real experience of dis-abilty might be sidelined if we think only relationally and assume that in so doing that these very real experiences of discrimination and marginalization are merely a by-product of our social constructs. Knowledge about the epistemology of disability is essential for new understandings to emerge, but a phenomenological approach allows us to elucidate these experiences from the inside.

I am much more interested in ways of understanding the experience of disability within a broader social context. Frequently people with impairments are confronted with disabling environments, which serve to amplify their impairment and exclude them from society. It is this exclusion that can recruit people into depression and despair. In this way, many aspects of the experience of disability are social rather than uniquely individual. Experiences such as isolation, powerlessness, and poverty, for example, can often be linked to inaccessible landscapes, limited employment opportunities, segregated education facilities, to name just a few (peer counselors, 2003).

Language constitutes the story

Language and literature often does not tell the story of people with disability managing their lives, much of the literature is based in deficit and burden and contributes to the discourse of difficulty. The very idea of "understanding disability" confers the notion of psychological difference. The ways in which we frame our curiosity can brings forth disabling discourses as outlined by Oliver (1990):

Can you tell me what is wrong with you? Does your health problem/disability effect your work in any way at present?

These questions effectively locate causality of the functional problems experienced by disabled people at the subjective level. They could have been reformulated as follows.

Can you tell me what is wrong with society?

Do you have problems at work because of the physical environment or the attitudes of others?

Perhaps, one of the only ways to avoid turning disability into a rigid category of identity is to attend to these fluid personal narratives in time, space and relationality. The social model as outlined by Oliver (1996) focuses predominantly on the relational:

> ...it does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society. It is not individual limitations of whatever kind, which are the nature of the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation (Oliver 1996.)

The medical model places a focus on locating dis-ability in personal static descriptors of impairment. Narrative approaches to the ways in which we story our lives and make sense of our experiences have much to offer in terms of de-constructing our static descriptors and offering more fluid dynamic responses.

While shifts in people s occupancy of disability spaces occur temporarally shifts in thinking about dis-abilty occur across time thereby impacting on our social and relational responses.

The Impact of Temporal -Changing perceptions of dis-ability
Some Social Cultural and Historical locations

Over time, a variety of perspectives have been applied to thinking about disability. Predominant influences on thinking about dis-abilty come from moral, medical, social, social creationist and marginalization theories.

In order to be considered disabled under the American disabilities Act, an individual must have a condition that significantly impairs one or more of the individual's functions of daily living. Many disabled people have advanced arguments that challenge this medical perspective.

In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault (1965) traces the course of madness through centuries. This historical route can also be traced for marginalized groups such as people who live with disability labels.

> Just as segregation and control of madness as described by Foucault (1965) took place a similar trajectory was the experience of people with disabilities who experienced segregation, placements in asylums rehabilitation disabled people were confined to spaces of unable.

> The social constructionist view perceives the problem of dis-ability situated within the minds of individual non-disabled people as prejudice, and collectively as the manifestation of hostile social attitudes and practices based upon negative assumptions of impairment. The social creationist view

perceives the problem of dis-ability as the outcome of the institutionalized practices of contemporary society (Oliver, 1990)

The social model of disability grew out of dissatisfaction with individualistic medical pathologising definitions of the meaning of disability, and ideas about curative stances and interventions. The social model of disability was a move away from predominant models and constructions of disability based on moral or medical The shift was to begin to consider disabling environments and disabling attitudes that inhibited participation of all members of society in aspects of social and economic life within communities. The social models shifted the location from the individual as possessing the dis-ability and being individually responsible, to locating dis-ability in the societal response being responsible for creating disabling environments. Much of this shift in thinking was influenced by the disability rights movements. In this way, dis-ability is seen to be a minority group issue. Issues of social oppression and marginalisation are placed in the realm of the social, political and economic arena.

In my view, some of the difficulties with the social model of disability is that the model continues to create 'us and them' distinctions. The very positioning and stance of the social model of disability inadvertently contributes to ongoing categorizations of people. It continues to speak of integrating minority groups in a mainstream society, and in so doing construes the totality of the group in a construct of sameness. The ongoing attention to minority grouping in this way, allows little room for diversity, except within a category of distinction.

The proliferation of dis-ability studies courses also contributes to this genre of expert positioning, and ongoing expertise on lived experiences. Dis-ability courses in their very existence suggest that there are particular ways of responding to particular groups of people. The merits of courses, in the field of dis-abilty, are that they provide modules on social inclusion, personal constructs and attitudinal implications, which challenge particular disabling positioning. The politics of oppression continues and proliferates when we continue to categorise people, and polarize and construct particular expert responses.

Whilst the discourses have shifted to being ones of civil rights, the resultant effects are that people living with dis-ability labels have gained greater control and autonomy over the own lives. This is an essential and welcome change, and we need to continue be alert to, and aware of, the possibility of replacing some forms of oppressive practices with new forms of oppression.

 Currently, western society, dis-ability discourses are generally more rights based. The challenges for people with dis-ability labels are more generally perceived as located clearly in the space between people (i.e. socially). Nonetheless, we often continue to define disability in ways, which are political. New concepts require

definition of exclusion / inclusion, leading to marginalisation. Have we just developed a social model of impairment to replace individualistic ones?

The social model has been criticised by authors, such as Finkelstein (1993), for being too simplistic and not adequately attending to the social position of people living with disability labels in modern society.

Others have criticized the social model for not sufficiently including a concept of impairment in its framework. Barnes & Mercer(2003) suggests that any critiques of the social model should include the argument that it neglects the everyday experience of impairments. Consequentially, the social model from this perspective is said to ignore a major part of people's lives.

Like Oliver (1990), however I see no rationale for this inclusion, which has the potential to shift the location of dis-ability back to the individual, and to evoke a more curative medical response. The question we should be asking is how can individual aspects of the experience of dis-ability be acknowledged, while simultaneously locating the responsibility in society for disabling responses.

Oliver (1996) suggests we should not abandon the social model of disability because it does not have an overarching all encompassing explanation of disability, but that perhaps a dialogue between people living with these labels and medical sociologists might enrich our understandings.

According to (Tremain, 2005,p.9), "The social model is the formalized articulation of a set of principles that a group of activists advanced in 1976 in order to counter the individual and medical conceptions of disability".

Oliver (1990) distinguishes between impairment and dis-ability as if they were conceptually distinct categories with little causal relation. Dis-ability in this formulation is considered to be restriction and disadvantages of living placed on those who live with impairments caused by society.

Proponents of a social model (Oliver, 1996; Shakesphere, 1996; Priestly, 2003) often argue that impairment is not always a consequence of dis-ability, and disability is not always a consequence of impairment.

While the evolution of dis-abilty theory has been extremely useful for making disabling discourses and disabling environments transparent, it can also paradoxically be disabling. Tremain (2005) states that most existing disability theory obscures the productive constraints of modern bio power.

Perhaps Laing (1967,p.17) had something to offer us when thinking about the abandonment of theorizing about any group of people, and placing our focus on relationship. "The task of social phenomenology is to relate my experience of the

others behaviour to the other's experience of my behavior - its study is the relation between the experience and experience its true field is inter-experience".

Others, like Thicht Nhat Hahn (2008) from eastern spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, also have much to offer us in terms of thinking about refocusing our attention to the inter-being, the space between people. As Del Monte (2006,p.405) says "freedom comes from letting go of defensive and reactionary views and from moving above polarized construing, as in them versus us attitudes".

Drawing inspiration from spiritual ideas, my own perspective would be one, which embraces ideas of oneness. As such, the idea of separateness becomes an illusion, leaving the need to create distinctions such as dis-ability irrelevant.

As Persian mystic Mahmud Shabistari says in his poem *God Wants the Heart*:

> Every particle of the world is a mirror
> In each atom lies the blazing light of a thousand suns
> Cleave the heart of a raindrop
> A hundred pure oceans will pour forth
> Look closely at a grain of sand
> The seed of a thousand beings can be seen

-(Shabistari 1250-1330)

When we begin to see others as mirrors of ourselves, we have greater potential to create contexts of mutual support and a loving responsive stance. While many in the field of dis-abilty might not embrace the philosophical teachings of Buddhism, dis-abilty theory might benefit from attention to an 'in- the -moment' responsive positioning, that neither categorizes nor temporally locates people, but allows for what is emerging in the moment Chapter 3: Participatory Citizenship – Tuning into the voice of the 'other'

In order to include the voice of 'the other', I believe we need to create a space conducive to respectful, collaborative engagement with each other. Perhaps it is a space akin to a meandering river with little preexisting shape or form, one that creates the capacity for movement and fluidity. A river has the freedom to flow and meander, engaging responsively with both its internal contents and those new encounters on its trajectory, contained by the parameters of the riverbanks. In the same way, in order to create collaborative, dialogical, responsive moving possibilities, some parameters from within which conversations can emerge, some rules of engagement may need to exist. In considering stakeholder dialogue and service user involvement in dis-ability services this requires of us, in my view, consideration of the creation or use of inclusive methodologies for participatory citizenship such as dialogical methodologie: the parameters for engagement.

Thinkers such as Friere (1978) have contributed to our understanding of dialogue and the forms of dialogue that lead to less oppressive possibilities i.e. one where the

space for all views to be heard is created. Paolo Freire, (1978) Brazilian educationalist, applied advanced dialogue to educational contexts. His view was that dialogue created a context in the classroom in which pupils and teachers could learn from each other and in a context of mutual respect and equality. Jung (1958) also contributed to our understanding of dialogue in suggesting the ways in which either/ or distinctions and polarised positions are not helpful. In his discussion on the plight of society, in terms of the individual's struggle for moral and spiritual integrity in the face of mass psychology, political fanaticism, scientific and technological globalism, he points us to the importance of creating the character of irregularity. He suggest that 'the resolution of conflict of diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive attitudes of knowledge lies 'not by either or 'but by two way thinking *i.e.* doing one thing while not losing sight of the other'.

The commission of enquiry into the future of civil society in the UK and Ireland (2010) foresees the further development of inclusive methodologies, to enhance greater citizen participation in decision-making processes.

There is, it would seem, already an emergence of much greater participatory representative democracy, which is reflected in many examples, such as parliaments being more open to petitioning and greater participation by citizens in debates about key societal issues. Due consideration is also being given, by some authors (Emerson 2007, Taylor 2005, Bell 2007) and social choice theorists (Salles 2007, Nurmi 2002), to voting procedures used by parliaments, councils and committees (Emerson 2007) that reflect diversity and by their nature are more inclusive. These authors amongst others are considering voting methodologies, which include participatory citizenship approaches, which reflect diverse perspectives and are based on the generation of multiple options as opposed to either or voting methodologies. Bell (2007p.123) in discussing one such voting methodology, MBC [29] suggests that creating a connection between the governors and the governed is not just about "creating a point of connection between competing views and political opinions "but is also about "creating connections between themselves." She goes on to say that this approach is about "creating a form of self- determination in which the question is not 'which self' gets to determine the future, but rather how the "self' can be constantly re-defined through the attempt to reach agreement with the 'other'." She does however; suggest movement towards a compromise position. For this particular research enquiry project, I was interested in dialogue amongst competing discourses, in relation to labeling in disability and like Bell (2007) was also interested in how "self" or ideas are co constructed and redefined in the process. This, interest of

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[29] MBC modified de borda count, is a voting methodology based on the generation of multiple options and is viewed as an alternative approach to majoritarianism by its Proponents

mine however, was with a view to creating a context in which all perspectives might be heard, respected and responded to, without the need to compromise ideas and thereby potentially silence certain stories in the process. A descriptive metaphor for this view is reflected in (Kearney & Tierney 2007 p132) in the following statement "metaphors which reflect the complexity of modern society, such as an interactive network or a mosaic of multiple perspectives, would more closely fit with the multiculturalism and pluralism that is found in most societies". In creating an inclusive dialogical methodology, for participatory citizenship, in the field of disability, I was interested in creating a context for the articulation of this "mosaic of multiple perspectives".

It seems "as if' global developments and shifts are occurring in common agreements about the merit of participatory inclusive approaches for Citizen participation. These developments, which for the most part embrace diversity, reflect to an extent the predictions of the Commissions (2010) report in relation to further developments in inclusive methodologies, for participatory citizenship, across many domains of political, social and economic life.

One of the recommendations of The Commission of Enquiry report (2010) is an investment in the development of skills within communities, to support initiatives, which work towards overcoming conflict or mutual distrust, while encouraging greater citizen participation.

The research enquiry project of this dissertation has been about bridging differences in perception and as such the methodology chosen was an inclusive participatory approach. This is reflective of the more generalized developments and recommendations for the future development of civil society across many domains of public and political life.

This generalized interest in the development of citizen participation is not new, what is new is attention to the need for diversity and dissent. Previously, not least in the area of disability, questionnaires, focus groups and other similar mechanisms for eliciting the views of citizens were considered sufficient. The desire to utilize more inclusive participatory approaches, which reflect diversity and dialogical engagement, is now more evident in both funding support and legislation.

Citizen juries have been piloted in the UK. A number of local authorities in the UK have been piloting participatory budgeting initiatives at local government level. In 2009 the Scottish government, initiated a community partnership project to encourage greater involvement in parliament from blind and partially sighted young people, difficult to reach young people and people from black and ethnic backgrounds. These groups would decide which issues to address, and would then bring the issues to government in any way that the group believed would effectively communicate the issues to their parliamentarians.

This focus on greater public engagement and of eliciting views from more marginalized groups to be welcomed, but remains in the realm of what I would refer to as disengaged engagement. While the UN Charter for human rights (2006 Article 1) recognizes the right of inclusion for people who live with disability labels in all aspects of their lives, the ways in which this participation has taken place has often been exclusionary by its nature.

Frequently, service user involvement has been 'management centred user involvement', with service users taking part but within an agenda constructed and defined by the organization, which often privilege the objectives of the organization.

In a study on developing user involvement in voluntary organizations, (Robson et al. 2003) some key factors, which were found, to be influential in promoting service user involvement included:

A focus on user priorities

Change was found to occur in organizations, which not only encouraged users to participate in decisions but also focused on the issues the users identified as being important.

While these changes in service user involvement are admirable, what in my view continues to present a methodological gap in approaches to services. What are missing are dialogical exchanges amongst all stakeholders with mutual exploration of goals and priorities. In my enquiry, I sought to create that kind of forum by inviting all the stakeholders to participate in dialogical exchange together. This was not as a mechanism for one group to communicate their needs to the other, but rather as a space to co construct possibilities. It is in this way that the methodological approach to this enquiry and the underlying philosophy differs from many other approaches to service user involvement.

Other factors in this study (Robson et al.2003) which were found to be important, such as the emphasis on the importance of the role of leaders in promoting and encouraging service user involvement, have also influenced me in my thinking in relation to my own enquiry.

The Role of Leaders

The commitment of leaders was found to be important. 'Leaders' were considered to be chief executives, user representatives and middle managers. The study found that change occurred where leaders gave a strong sense of direction whilst allowing sufficient opportunity for change. It was generally found that the successful leaders negotiated the principles of user involvement, which enabled others to translate principles into action. In my own enquiry, in the stakeholder dialogical group, I

facilitated the creation of a dialogical context and framed the dialogue within certain parameters and rules of engagement.

In this enquiry, as previously stated, it was my intention to attempt to create a context in which it might be possible to transcend the dichotomous distinctions of whose agenda gets privileged, i.e. the service users or the service providers. Through facilitating a dialogical forum of 'equal voice', where both service users and service providers might engage in different types of conversations with each other and thereby experience each other differently It was my hope that both diversity of views and commonalities of concern might emerge as well as creating a context for the co construction of new ways of thinking and being together.

Part Two

This section considers theoretical influences and further expands on dialogue as a methodology. It also elaborates further the methodology of this particular enquiry and the epistemological stance, which has influenced the approach taken.

Chapter 4. Theoretical Influences

Historically, the field of therapy and human sciences relied on linear descriptions and linear causal explanations for human experiences (Goffman, 1963, Illich, 1988). Individuals were labeled and seen as possessing certain characteristics. From a postmodern and systemic perspective individuals are no longer labeled but rather are seen as displaying sets of characteristics or behaviors in relation to others or in relation to their contexts. (Gergen et al.1995., Gergen, 2006). These theoretical ideas provided me with both the interest and impetus to explore this de-construction of labels and to pay attention to the influence of relational contexts and dominant discourses, with regard to the label dis-abilty.

Similarly, a central organizing thesis of the systemic paradigm places focus on interpersonal relationships. (Gorrell-Barnes, 2004), Individual distress is not seen as the product of individual psychology, but as a complex process. A process understood in terms of relational dynamics. A systemic approach simultaneously attends to multiple discourses, and includes the views of all involved from the perspective of their relational contexts. A systemic therapy practitioner promotes interaction and dialogue between participants (Dallos & Vetere, 2003). Social constructionist theory also places emphasis on relationality and attends to contextual understandings such as the influence of social, cultural and historical contexts (Goldner 1991:Hare Mustin 1991). Through the creation of a context for dialogue, the systemic practitioner opens up the possibility for mutual understandings to emerge. From this perspective, as a systemic therapist, I was influenced to consider the relational systemic patterns of interaction and discursive contexts when considering the construct dis-ability. Anderson and Goolishan(1988)have elaborated the concept of discursive contexts, which create and maintain problem descriptions and described it as 'the problem determined system'. In describing it in this way they are suggesting that a problem comes into existence in the minds of all those who are in conversation about it. I was particularly influenced by this idea in my thinking about the construct dis-abilty and in considering the ways in which our discursive practices create and sustain labeling discourses. This idea is also discussed by some of the participants in the dialogue in this enquiry, when they consider some of the factors, which maintain labeling discourses. They referred in particular to the need for diagnoses in order to access resources in Education[30].

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[30] In the Irish Educational context, support resources such as: - remedial and resource teaching and special considerations for States Exams, can only be accessed by application of diagnostic categories. Schools receive a Department of Education circular outlining supports available which are based on a hierarchy of needs and dependent on the diagnostic label applied.

When considered from a social constructionist viewpoint, the relationship and relational meaning systems bring forth different descriptions and experiences in how we generally label and understand the development of any construct, including the construct dis-ability(Hoffman1993;Gergen1985;Goldner1991). "Social constructionists share with systemic theory an emphasis on the centrality of relationships. We only become people by being involved in a social world of meanings and through our interactions with others". (Dallos & Draper 2000 p.100) Our assumptions are often situated in common understandings of what we believe to be mutually agreed constructs and yet the dis-ability experience is shaped by and shapes the relational contexts within which it is believed to exist. A systemic understanding of dis-ability attends to the relational contexts of the dis-ability experience. It attends to the patterned interactions and meaning systems, which are co-constructed in families, society and, for individuals, in their experience of disabling contexts. In this regard, a systemic or social constructionist practitioner might be interested in exploring, with an individual or family, the stories about how the dis-abilty label came into existence. They might also be Interested in both the individual familial and wider social contextual understanding of the meaning of this label. For the purposes of this enquiry, I placed more focus on exploration of the wider social and contextual meanings in relation to the label dis-abilty. I had awareness that each family and individual, including myself, also ascribe and create meaning based on his / her relationships and experiences in relation to the construct dis-abilty.

The approach of Social constructionist thinking does not view knowledge as separate from those who generate it. Instead, social constructionist thinking considers the interconnectedness of both, and espouses the view that all knowledge is considered as emergent and contextually situated. These theoretical ideas provided me with both the interest and impetus to explore this de-construction of labels and to pay attention to the influence of relational contexts and dominant discourses, with regard to the label dis-abilty.

 Some of the central tenets of social constructionist theory according to Burr (pp3-5 1995) are a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge, attention to historical and cultural contexts, a belief that social processes sustain knowledge and that knowledge and social action are inextricable linked. In this enquiry I paid attention to giving consideration to how knowledge is constructed generally and more particularly to how I have come to "know " about the world. I was most specifically interested in the world commonly described as "dis-ability". Throughout the enquiry, I have given attention to the contexts, which have influenced both the construct dis-abilty and the contextual influences on my own constructions of knowledge. At the outset of this enquiry, I was interested in exploring what constitutes dis-ability. Shaped by the enquiry process and moving to a "Critical stance" (Burr, 1995) in relation to my own taken for granted knowledge" in my

relationship with the idea of the construct dis-abilty, I became much less curious about the "world of dis-abilty" and more about interested in how dis-ability is constructed socially and relationally. In this enquiry, I have, presented a deconstruction of a static view of the concept dis-abilty, to a more fluid dynamic evolving one.

Social Constructionists are concerned with how reality is constructed (Gergen, 2006). In this enquiry I was interested in how reality of dis-ability is constructed and in what are the factors and contexts, which create and maintain a particular view. In the creation of a dialogical exchange between people, in relation to labeling discourses, some of these processes were made more explicit. This occurred, in this project enquiry dialogue, as the understandings of participants in relation to what constitutes dis-ability were discussed and new understandings emerged and were co constructed 'in the moment' (Anderson, 2007). The premise of social constructionism is that "reality" is created through social interaction (Gergen, 1999). Meaning construction therefore is seen to be as a consequence, or a product of social interaction. Social constructionist and Narrative theorists suggest what are considered as "facts" or truths are dependent upon the language communities and cultural contexts, which create and sustain them. (Foucault 1975., White and Epston 1990). From a social constructionist perspective, meanings are constructed and situated within communities of interaction; people generate their truths from the languages available to them, which are developed from within a cultural context. From this perspective, when cultural contexts and communities of interaction remain stable, meanings remain agreed and commonly understood. (Mc Namee & Gergen, 1992) It was both with awareness of Bateson's (1972) ideas of 'news of a difference' in systems, and social constructionist ideas in relation to the construction and maintenances of 'truths', that I sought to create a dialogical context of diversity of ideas across communities. Bateson (1972) suggested that for change to occur in systems that enough new information needed to be introduced in order to create a perturbation but not so much difference that the information would be too difficult to integrate. The participants in the dialogue in this dissertation enquiry included dis-ability service managers, voluntary organizations, educators, parents, professionals and service users in conversation together. In an Irish Context, these stakeholder groups, as seen from some of the research outlined in chapter two (Weafer, 2010) rarely, if ever have had occasion to be in dialogue together and more particularly in dialogue together in relation to labeling discourses and constructions of dis-abilty. Influenced by these theories of change (Bateson1972, Anderson, 2007, Shotter, 2004) I was encouraged   to explore the possibility of new meanings arising in the diversity of participants in conversation. By constructing the conversation/ dialogue across diverse groups, I was hoping to create some 'news of a difference', and widen the conversation in relation to the 'locally agreed truths' about dis-ability. These groups, while from the same dominant culture, inhabited different sub

cultural groups and so as a consequence may not have had shared views in relation to the construct dis-abilty. The premises and principles of social constructionist ideas give rise to an understanding of contextualized descriptions of experience, and a critical stance in relation to claims on universal truth. Influenced in particular by theories of change from systems thinking and ideas about meaning construction from a social constructionist perspective, in this enquiry I sought to create a context in which the meaning of the construct dis-ability could be considered amongst a community, who had sufficient divergence in views, to allow for new ideas to emerge. This deconstruction of the label dis-abilty is articulated by the participants in the diversity of the views expressed both in relation labels and their usefulness and in relation to the locally and culturally situated construct, dis-abilty.

Some further influences, of the tenets of social constructionist thinking, on this dissertation enquiry are outlined below:

That reality is created through Interaction

Social constructionist thinkers reflect on and expound on the ways in which linguistic exchanges feed into ongoing dialogues amongst communities. These dialogues construct a "reality" for the participants. The social constructionist framework establishes a position of acknowledging multiple voices for their capacities to contribute to perspectives on reality or meaning. The linguistic community shapes the meaning. For example, what might be considered to be dis-ability in one community might not be in another. At one point in history, many deaf people lived in the community of Martha's Vineyard (Sacks, 1991). The deafness was hereditary, and almost everyone in the community had the ability to use sign language. At least one member of each extended family was deaf. As a consequence, the construct 'deaf' ceased to exist as the community responded to communication needs in an inclusive way.

Contextualized truths

Social constructionist theory thus lends itself to relational thinking as a means of placing emphasis on shared meaning making through relationships (Gergen & McName,1992)Participants in any conversation are considered to be speaking in historically, socially and culturally informed ways. Individual's viewpoints are not constrained "by anything accepted as true, rational or right (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, p.12). Influenced by both relational thinking and contextualized truths, my enquiry focuses on how the construct dis-ability emerges between people. I also paid attention to some of the agreed local conventions, which exist for naming and labeling what we collectively and locally construct as dis-ability. As outlined by Gergen and Gergen, (2004, p5), in any culture there are local conventions for describing and explaining. I was curious about how particular understandings we come to hold about dis-ability influence our practices and engagements with people

we come to label as disabled. While, to some degree, shared meanings exist in relation to the concept dis-ability in certain domains and communities of understanding, meanings shift across groups and communities. Anderson and Goolishan(1988) as previously outlined, speaks of 'the problem determined system' and that in conversation we construct our world. The construct dis-ability can only come into existence when there is a shared agreement about what it constitutes. These concepts of contextual and relational understandings and co-constructed meanings influenced me to explore dis-ability constructs from a dialogical perspective. It is in dialogue that meaning is constructed and relational responses occur. I was drawn to the idea that dialogical approaches offer the possibility of openness and curiosity.

Dialogical Methods of Enquiry

Friere, (1978) suggests that authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality, which they seek to transform. He suggests that only through such praxis, in which those who help and those who are being helped help each other simultaneously, can the act of helping become free from the distortion in which the helper dominates the helped.

In choosing a dialogical approach for this enquiry, I was particularly struck by the words of Friere, (1978 p.8) in relation to 'the praxis of mutually growing together". I see this idea of holding a collaborative, mutually influencing, stance (Anderson & Gerhart 2007) as being one way of avoiding the potential for the helper to dominate the helped. It was the avoidance of the potential replication of this helper /helped pattern, which I sought to circumvent in the construction of a dialogical approach to this enquiry. Frequently, in approaches within the dis-ability services, managers and staff in agencies are positioned as "helpers" to resolve difficulties and provide support. I was attempting to create a context of mutual exchange and expression of worldviews that circumvented this dynamic as much as possible. This in my view, is a context in which both views were more equal not as helper /helped but as two world views with the capacity to mutually influence each other. The avoidance of binaries and dichotomous thinking has the potential to be reduced in any domain where multiple worldviews can be bought forth and explored. Dialogue has the capacity to create contexts for the exploration of multiple stories respectfully. Dialogue also has the capacity for the exploration of competing discourses 'the both and space' as opposed to either/or. The fifth province associates (Mc Carthy et al 1989) developed a mechanism for conceptualizing and mapping the 'both /and space' based on the metaphor of a mythological fifth province in Ireland, in which all ideas could co –exist. This method of mapping (fifth province diamonds) and of exploring ideas in the extremes or simultaneously holding competing discourses, influenced my thinking about de –constructing dichotomies such as able bodied

/disabled. The Fifth province disposition (Mc Carthy et al .1989)"permits engagement and movement within domains of contradiction and exclusion". It was these domains of living that I was interested in this enquiry, the simultaneous existence in two worlds. The two domains which I was considering being both the worlds of dis-abilty and ability. I was interested in the need to hold space for both and in allowing for movement between the domains so that people's varied experiences of living could be bought forth. Alternatively, by locating an individual in one domain, such as dis-ability, the experiences of ability and living moments in which they do not experience themselves as disabled become silenced. In this enquiry I was more particularly interested in the idea of movement and the fluidity as opposed to more static descriptions of the construct dis-abilty.

Personal theoretical contexts

Given my professional background as a systemic Family therapist, I have been influenced by and have witnessed many shifts in the theoretical orientation of family therapists. The span includes the early models of the 1980's, which considered therapists as expert, such as Structural (Minunchin 1974) Strategic (Haley 1976) and the early Milan (1980) models, to the more postmodern dialogical positioning of McNamee and Gergen (1992) and Anderson(1997), and others. These theoretical shifts to a postmodern paradigm have been both influenced and influencing in relation to the global contextual factors in which they were situated. Theoreticians and practitioners who hold systemic /social constructionist worldviews have, in their thinking about participative dialogical approaches, also drawn from some key contributions of many earlier thinkers in the fields of philosophy, education and linguistics. One of the contextual global influencing factors, which impacted the shift away from 'Expert' status to more of a collaborative decision making one, was a generalized global demand for greater accountability, transparency and inclusion. Democracy in the UK and Ireland, according to the final report of the commission of enquiry into civil society (2010), was created in a large part by pressure from civil society. This report argues for an investment in deliberating skills, where the right to dissent needs to be reinforced, with a greater focus on development of skills for active listening and citizen participation in all decisions of civil society, at local and national levels.

In my view, this demand for greater personal inclusion in decisions and issues, which affect our lives, is a welcome one. It is especially important to me in its application in the area of disability, where voices of service users have historically been silenced and marginalized. This shift in thinking inevitably led us to a consequential requirement for greater inclusion in many domains of living, which called for a different type of response a more dialogical participatory response. In using the word dialogical, I am referring not just to ordinary every day conversations, but to conversations in which respectful listening and mutual exchanges occur.

Many authors in the systemic family therapy and social constructionist fields have contributed to this move towards more dialogical approaches to therapy and systems conversations, whilst frequently drawing from the philosophical writings of authors such as Wittgenstein (1953), Derrida (1976), Foucault, (1975), Bahktin (2008) amongst others. These authors in Linguistics and Philosophy contributed greatly to many discourses. The ones which where most influential in this enquiry were in relation to; the grammar and structure of communication, dialogue, the de-construction of knowledge and discourses on social relations of oppressive practices.

When speaking with and about populations who have experienced marginalization, I chose to use a dialogical approach throughout. In my view, this choice reflected more closely the ideology of inclusion, which I consider to be paramount. Much research, particularly historically, in the field of dis-ability has replicated researcher /researched paradigms and the resultant subject /object dichotomies. In choosing dialogue as an approach to this enquiry, it was my intention to create a methodological approach, which would go some way towards circumventing, some of these difficulties I perceived as being inherent in other methodologies. I am not purporting to suggest that Dialogue is a panacea in all situations nor am I suggesting it as a method or technique, which is likely to be useful, in all forms of social interaction. Equally, I am not suggesting that dialogue was experienced as a useful methodology by all of the participants in the context of this enquiry. It may not be a useful methodology in many contexts nor experienced as helpful by everyone. There is also value to be found in many other methods for engaging groups in conversations and there are also many tasks in-group contexts, which require leadership and a clear organizational structure. In this regard I am using the word leadership in a relational sense, as an aspect of community (Drath 2001) but am referring to those moments when a leader needs to take the lead by creating "a relational ground on which they can stand "(Drath 2001 p.xviii). Dialogue does not always create the space for this kind of leadership as leadership tasks can differ at times from the goals of dialogue. The goals of dialogue may not always, in every context, fully reflect the needs of organizations, individuals and groups.

I am however suggesting in terms of inclusion and participation, it appeared to me to be the most coherent methodology choice for this particular enquiry.

Dialogue

What do we mean by dialogue?

Mothomang Diaho, [31] in a forward address (Bojer et al.2008), argues that with the growing complexity of global challenges today and our increasing interdependence to seek solutions through engagement with each other, the need for cultural participation and democracy has never been greater. It would appear, and it has been variously demonstrated globally, that achieving participation and resolution in decision-making has more frequently occurred in dialogical exchanges. During the Northern Ireland Peace process, 'The good Friday agreement'[32] arose out of many such conversations. Divisive communities were brought together, and all views were voiced, acknowledged and respected. Dialogue, therefore, has been the means to bring diverse and often divisive views together and has facilitated the creation of mutual understandings and shared resolutions.

What do we understand or consider dialogue to be and in what ways does dialogue differ from ordinary every day conversations? Dialogue could be considered to be a reciprocal conversation between two or more persons. The etymological origins of the Greek word are dia through logos speech. Dialogue is generally understood to be a communicational exchange between people. More fundamentally, what are the differences between dialogical exchanges and conversation?

When I consider the word 'dialogue' from the perspective of its Greek origins, concepts like 'flowing through' come to mind. For me, it brings forth a description of dialogue as an ongoing transformative, generative, dynamic one, in which words flow through as opposed to becoming fixed, static, stagnant positioning. A dialogical approach could therefore be defined as a responsive, dynamic, fluid approach, which is the predominant definition of dialogue, which influenced my thinking in this enquiry. Dialogue emerges, seems to emerge more 'in the moment', and therefore a dialogical approach is coherent with the overall philosophical positioning of this enquiry, which is less situated as a static enquiry process and more as one of fluidly engaging in ongoing emergence. In considering the word dialogue, I am making a distinction between dialogue and discussion/debate which is similar to the distinctions made by Elinor and Gerard (1998) as documented below:

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[31] Head of dialogue Program, Nelson Mandela Foundation

[32] On May 22nd 1998, the majority of the people of Ireland endorsed the Good Friday Agreement. The Agreement is the product of inclusive negotiations involving the parties and the Irish and British governments. It is an all-Ireland Agreement, which recognized the failure of partition and commits us to building a society based on equality and justice.

Dialogue	Discussion /Debate
Seeing the whole among the parts	Breaking issues/problems into parts
Seeing the connections between the parts	Seeing distinctions between the parts
Inquiring into assumptions	Justifying /defending assumptions
Learning through enquiry and disclosure	Persuading/selling/telling
Creating shared meaning among many	Gaining agreement on one meaning

Figure 4. Dialogue and Debate

Pearce and Littlejohn (1997 p.124) have also written about the distinctions between dialogical conversation and other types of conversation. They suggest that some of the attributes in having a dialogical conversation are valuing understanding more than explaining, and valuing respect more than explaining.

I have attempted to situate this project more closely in the domain of dialogue than in that of discussion/debate. I am cognizant of the fact, that by its nature, dialogue also brings forth some discussion and debate, so in that sense these distinctions are somewhat arbitrary. Nonetheless, by making these distinctions of dialogue /discussion and debate more stark, it allows for the possibility of highlighting the areas on which I wished to place focus and give attention. These areas included, in particular, the idea of holding open a curious stance in relation to assumptions about others and their perspectives, and the possibility of creating new understandings in dialogue by virtue of this open disposition.

Dialogue by its nature has the capacity to bring forth meaning. It is partially in conversation that we make sense of our world, construct new meanings and create alternative ways of moving on together. We live in a network of social relationships based predominantly in language, networks of communication and meaning systems. These relationships, meaning systems and communication networks contribute to the construction of our internal and external worlds. Given this understanding of the importance of dialogue and language in constructing our worlds, the choice of a dialogical approach to this research enquiry was consistent with the enquiry question. The enquiry question related predominantly to an exploration of the possibilities inherent in language and conversation for the creation of new understandings of dis-ability. The question of the enquiry also related to the

capacity of dialogue for the creation together of potential new possibilities for service delivery, planning and review, through the utilization of a cross sectional stakeholder dialogical approach. I was also interested in the consideration of differing worldviews in relation to dis-ability, and in the capacity for mutually influenced transformation /co construction of these worldviews to occur through large-scale stakeholder dialogue.

One of the key constructs I was interested in considering in this enquiry was a dialogical exploration of the construct of dis-ability. I was also interested in the following subsidiary questions:

- How stakeholders construct of dis-ability shapes and are shaped by the delivery of services.
- Whether an alternative methodology, such as stakeholder dialogue, could be useful in facilitating the inclusion of service users views in planning and reviewing dis-ability services.

While dialogue is one way of experiencing and understanding our world and will be the focus of this enquiry, it could be considered nonetheless to be a partial account. This enquiry is a partial account in many ways particularly in relation to the accounts that have not been privileged. However, in addition to this there are aspects of the connections between the participants and myself and between the participants themselves that I will make no attempt to account for. They are those moments of non-verbal exchanges and also those experiences that are outside of language.

Language as a Partial understanding of our World

In thinking about dialogue as conversation, I am fully cognizant of the fact that language can be considered to be merely a partial understanding of our world, and that from this perspective language is not considered to be experience. From this perspective, experience and sense making are considered to be embodied processes. While some might argue that all our constructions are linguistically based, some research in neurology and the neural underpinnings of reasoning and consciousness might suggest otherwise (Demasio, 1994).

Damasio (1994 p.xx) suggests that feelings can originate in our body prior to becoming cognate and that the interplay between mind and body is significant in the development of a schema of self.

> "The Soul breathes through the body and suffering, whether it starts in the skin or in a mental image, happens in the flesh"

> "mind exists in and for an integrated organism: our minds would not be the way they are if it were not for the interplay of body and brain during evolution, during individual development, and at the current moment"

Social constructionist theory suggests that language constitutes experience and that we mediate our experiences linguistically. I do not deviate from this view, which suggests that the ways in which we construct ourselves is predominantly through social interaction. However, based on my own experiences with people who live with neurological labels, I might share Demasio's (1999) view that not all experience is linguistically mediated but may be sensed and outside the realms of language.

Demasio (1999) having reviewed many patients with a variety of neurological conditions suggests that the brain as a neural device does not require language. He states that the meta-self construction is purely non-verbal and that the narrative of self can be produced using the elementary tools of the sensory motor systems in space and time. Demasio (1999) controversially suggests that animals without language could possibly also create such narratives.

Demasio (1999 p.11) argues for the existence of a non-verbal self. He draws conclusions from a variety of experiences of patients with considerable damage to both language and communication centres in the brain, such as global aphasia, who nonetheless retain consciousness and emotion connected to ongoing events. "Here is evidence to suggest with these particular patients that theirs is a wordless thought process." (Demasio p.11). He goes on to argue that core consciousness is not based on language but that it is clearly associated with emotion. Maturana (1991 p.58) might take a slightly different perspective in relation to language and the brain "I am not denying that you need a brain to participate in language. What I am saying is that the phenomenon of language does not occur in the brain, rather it occurs in the recursive coordination of interactions in the flow of living together." However, he is not commenting here on the possibility of sensed interaction, which might exists outside a linguistic domain he is merely suggesting that language itself develops in interaction. Gergen (2006 p.154) also suggests that the brain is culturally constructed. He does also say that brain state terms may be legitimately employed to explain various behavioural movements of the body when neurological conditions are constituents of the movements them selves.

The ways in which these ideas have influenced this enquiry relate to my consideration of language, communication and non-verbal communication.

I both constructed the dialogues and responded to them with an awareness of this potentially wider lens, one outside of language, which could be seen to also constitute our experience of the world. I personally held a view that those aspects of the exchanges between the participants were lost to us. Those aspects, which included both, the non-verbal exchanges, which were mediated linguistically in the

internal dialogues of the participants, the sensed non-linguistic, and dispositional[33] based exchanges.

Therefore, for the purposes of this enquiry, I have confined the presentation of information and responses to sense making and experience, which occur in language. I did however; attempt to capture other forms of expression in the use of drawing and visual representations.

Internal and External Dialogue

Dialogue, while relational, could also be considered to be both an internal and external process. Bra°ten (1997) described how the nervous system is organized to allow the person to shift fluidly between engagement with the external Actual Other and engagement with the internal Virtual Other. Karl Tomm (1997) in his internalized other interviewing, utilizes a method based on the premise that we all have an internalized views of both ourselves others and how we consider others to perceive us. He refers to this as a social basis for the self. He suggests that the psychological self may be regarded as constituted by an internalized community and the patterns of interactions among the members of that community. I have considered briefly the polyvocal-internalized dialogues in which we all engage and how those multiple internal dialogues have shaped my own approach to this project. Anderson (1995, pp. 32-33) also amongst others suggests this possibility of being in conversation with one's self and uses the term 'inner dialogue' to refer to this.

Dialogue therefore, was simultaneously the object of the study, the conceptual framework for the methodology and formed the research design in both gathering and re-presenting and responding to the data.

Having briefly discussed some of the distinctions I am making in this enquiry in terms of what constitutes dialogue, and some of the limitations of scope of this enquiry, I will now give some consideration to the following aspects of dialogical processes:

- ❖ The attributes of dialogue

- ❖ Constructed dialogues in particular World café methodology

- ❖ Dialogue with self, the self of the researcher, the internal dialogues that are shaped by both the written and spoken word together, and with the internal reflections on the process of engaging in this research process.

- ❖ Dialogues and reflections with others

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[33] I use the word dispositional here, in he same way Demasio does, to convey a covert non-conscious, as an abstract a record of potentiality but not as a word more as waiting to become an image or an action. This relates to the dispositional space of the brain the areas in and around the arrival points of auditory, visual and other sensations.

❖ The nature and process of the project

❖ The capacity of dialogue for transformation

The Attributes of Dialogue

Hoskings and McNamee (2009) suggest that what distinguishes dialogue from debate and general conversation are a number of key attributes including curiosity, reflexive enquiry, co-ordination, stories, reflection, coherence, and coordinated action. They elaborate these concepts as follows:

❖ Curiosity- entering into conversation with a curiosity for the coherence of another's stance

❖ Reflexive enquiry – a willingness to suspend ones own certainties and entertain alternative possibilities

❖ Co –ordination – focus on coordinating with others rather than arguing your own position

❖ Stories – awareness of cultural narratives values and assumptions which are multiple and variable

❖ Reflection – reflection on social processes as a way of opening up new possibilities

❖ Coherence – which emerges through dialogue rather than being imposed

❖ Coordinated action – participation in emergent processes

Dialogue, therefore, can be considered to be a relational practice and differs from conversation only with regard to the orientation of the participants. These distinctions in relation to what constitutes the attributes of dialogue, I consider to be somewhat arbitrary, in that many conversations move in and out of dialogical exchanges, and many constructed dialogues contain elements of both debate and conversation. Perhaps it might be more relevant to refer to moments of 'dialogical exchange' (Shotter & Katz 1998) as the idea of a 'dialogue' conjures images of an object with somewhat static properties. Conversation and dialogue are in constant flux, and in my view, dialogical exchanges are momentary. Despite the fact that I refer to the conversation between stakeholders as a 'dialogue', it was more these moments of dialogical exchange, whether fleeting or otherwise, where my own enquiry interest was focused. I consider those moments of dialogical exchange to occur when there is a reciprocal, meaningful, responsive exchange, between people in which mutual understandings arise and where an open disposition and orientation towards the other exists.

Katz, Shotter & Seikkula, (2004, p. 33) suggest that the context which creates a moment of dialogical exchange in any interaction between people, is the capacity for us to engage with each other in a mutually meaningful exchange. " There are certain kinds of involved reciprocally responsive meetings with others which can give rise to a special distinctive feelings in us which can tell us something about the unique nature of another's inner world and which can shape our response in ways that matter to them".

What is a responsive reciprocal exchange and how do we need to position ourselves in order to orient ourselves towards the other in this way? McNamee & Hoskings (2009) suggests that a relational disposition in organizations requires a move away from foundations of practice, to flexibility of standpoint, from organizational expertise to collaborative knowledge, from exploration of the real to consciousness of construction and from valuing neutrality to valuing consciousness. This description would seem to suggest a personal disposition of presence in the moment, an openness to whatever emerges without rigidly holding beliefs but with a willing flexibility to reflect on and be influenced by new ideas and knowledge's as they emerge.

A Dialogical Ethic

As dialogue forms part of relational practice, it brings with it a relational responsibility to each other. In other words it could be described as a relational ethic. (Mc Namee & Gergen,1999). In this regard, it requires of us to hold responsibility for what we bring forth in our conversations together, a relational responsibility.

Gergen, (1999) suggests that we need to consider how we can take responsibility for the establishment of new contexts of relational responsibility and dialogue, towards the creation of a better world together.

It is in dialogue that we have the possibility to bridge apparently dichotomous positions. As a consequence, we have considerable individual and collective responsibility for how we engage in this process, and for the products of our conversations. Dialogue has the potential to be both transformative and/or to create and replicate patterns of oppression. In this enquiry I was particularly concerned about the danger of creating oppression and marginalization.

Many people who live with dis-ability labels have experienced marginalization. Marginalization is culturally and historically located, and occurs in communicational and relational exchanges. Therefore, as meaning is co constructed between people, dialogue has the capacity to create oppression. The stories people tell about themselves and their lives, and the stories they hear told about themselves, can be

seen as a way of making sense of their lives (Sarbin 1986). White (1995) described these personal accounts as self-authoring. These personal stories and collective stories, which are culturally located, also have the capacity to suppress and marginalize identities and create oppressive social identities such as 'the disabled child'. Marginalization occurs in many ways not least in the stories we hear told about ourselves, but in particular, can also occur when the stories we tell about ourselves are different from those stories that exist and are replicated in the dominant social and cultural discourses. White and Epston (1990)refer to the possibility of telling a different story as 're-authoring'. The fifth province associates (Mc Carthy et al.1989) speak of this as bringing forth the 'not yet said'. In holding a relational ethic in our dialogues, I believe we need to hold space for new stories to emerge and attend to the possibility of the need for deconstruction of dominant oppressive narratives. Dialogue in this sense may also have a political dimension. Other Authors such as Waldegrave (1990) and McCarthy (2001) have written about this political dimension in therapy conversations. A relational ethic in some senses connotes a moral responsibility to the other to discontinue oppressive practices in both our co constructed discourses and our responses in action. The difficulty of course arises in relation to what constitutes the construct 'oppressive' and for whom? Dialogue and speech are action, in the sense that they produce social products. It is the product of social interaction for which we hold relational responsibility that I am referring to as a relational ethic. What we bring forth in conversation has consequences for those whom we speak about a responsibility, which we cannot hold too lightly. Given this responsibility, and the potential differences in worldviews as to what constitutes oppression or negative consequences of how we speak, it would seem that a relationally responsible ethic is an invitation to be reflective and to engage in reflective practices. Drawing from ideas in therapy about self reflexivity and relational reflexivity (Andersen, & Jensen 2007., Burnham 2005) reflective practice in my view involves a reflection on our own personal narratives, and holding a reflective stance about how constructs were brought into existence in the wider socio-political domain. A Dialogical ethic does not arise, in my view, just in the creation of respectful, communicational, responsive exchanges. Often those dominant narratives have become internalized, and so embedded in our sense making that they have become 'our taken for granted' explanations of the world. As a consequence, those explanations impact on what is co constructed between people in conversation. Respectful responsive exchanges may occur in dialogue but that quality does not entirely circumvent the possibility that those respectful (i.e. respectful to each other) exchanges may replicate or bring forth patterns of oppressive practices.

 Therefore, a relationally responsible ethic in dialogue, requires of us, I believe, to engage in both internal reflective dialogue (i.e. with ourselves and our own multiple internalized discourses), and external reflective dialogues about that which we are

bringing forth in conversation, and about how those ideas we hold about the world came into existence. Bohm(1980) also refers to this idea of reflective dialogue. In this enquiry, I was particularly conscious of the need to attend to the creation of a context where new stories and silenced stories of dis-ability experiences could be given space to be voiced, heard and acknowledged, in so far as is possible. I am, however, aware that not all stories are possible; as we are born into a preexisting socially constructed and locally agreed discourses and categories of distinction.

Bohm[34] (1980) suggests that respectful dialogue allows people to retain a sense of self, while simultaneously creating space for the voice of the other. This challenge was one I wished to address, in the context of this particular enquiry project. A key question for me in both constructing the space for dialogue and facilitating the process is as follows. How can we hold the space in between, in ways that respect the multiplicity of views and voices in relation to dis-ability, and thereby circumvent the possibility of some views and voices being subjugated or marginalized?

Privileging and silencing are both political and ethical processes. They are political processes in the sense that silencing perspectives subjugates them and ethical in the sense that we have responsibility for both what gets spoken about or privileged, and that, which gets silenced. Privileging one perspective inevitably silences another. In a world constructed in discourse, it may be possible to simultaneously hold many competing discourse. In this enquiry, my own relational ethical position was one, which attempted to explore this possibility with awareness that not all perspectives have been given equal voice. Perspectives have been filtered through the subjective lens of myself as researcher and the wider social and cultural discourse, which I have inhabited.

This relational ethic was particularly important in this research project, in attending to the ways in which I as respondent researcher both privileged and silenced certain stories in both the dialogues, the response to the data and in the reader/ author relationship. It is my hope that this reader/ researcher relationship will be seen as an ongoing conversation and dialogue, as opposed to being punctuated by definitive positioning(s). I have attempted throughout, to create a 'response in motion' while holding my own ideas as tentative. Ideas that is more or less useful in context but not fixed. In thinking about the research project as a dynamic dialogical process, I

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[34] David Bohm was one of the world's greatest quantum mechanical physicists and philosophers and was influenced by both J. Krishnamurti and Einstein. In his theory of "wholeness and the implicate order", Bohm   proposed a model of a new reality that was a revolutionary challenge to physics. He believed in a world that was meaningful, clear, intelligent and spiritual, where the implicate order is expressed as a living force in our explicate lives.

hoped to reduce the potential to silence voices, by inviting in the views of the other in an ongoing relational way. Dialogue by its nature is relational and dynamic.

While there clearly are some limitations in relation to the capacity of dialogue for transformative discourse, it would seem that holding a relationally reflective ethical stance, and an orientation towards the other, has the potential to allow for responsive respectful exchanges to occur between people. This kind of orientation in dialogue has the power to build positive connections between people and bridge diverse divisive perspectives.

Facilitated dialogical methods – World café

In this project, I considered facilitated dialogue as a means of opening up conversations. In particular, conversations were created in relation to categories of distinction in the area of dis-ability. The particularly methodology that most influenced my approach was the World Café approach (Brown J. et al 2002). I was interested in the capacity of dialogue to reduce the potential for oppression and marginalization. As suggested by the national conference for community and justice (2008), dialogue can assist in situations where marginalization, discrimination and stereotyping can occur.

"Facilitated dialogues foster new, respectful relationships, informed by a deepened understanding of the role of prejudice and stereotyping in discriminatory behavior and characterized by individual commitments to fight against personal, cultural and institutional racism" (NCCJ 2008). I was interested in a dialogical forum, which created an accessible context for participation across distinctions such as professional, parent and service user.

Elinor and Gerard (1998 p.281) state that 'Diversity is an absolute necessity for the power of dialogue itself to unfold. Dialogue gains depth and opportunity for learning from the diversity within it, while simultaneously providing a way for that diversity to be honoured"

In issuing invitations to participate in the dialogical forum, in this project, I also paid particular attention to diversity and to the inclusion of leaders and participants from across the community and voluntary sector.

World café

While there have always been large-scale group conversations, the world café is a particular methodological approach to group conversation. Juanita Brown and David Isaacs formalized the actual methodology, for this particular approach, in 1995. While this approach was significantly influential in shaping my own approach to the project dialogues in this enquiry, I did not apply it as a template but used the ideas to influence the structuring of my own conversational spaces. One of the attractions for me being that the world café approach does allow for a suspension of judgments

of others, and a letting go of assumptions by virtue of the informal structure and the opportunity for each participant to make a contribution.

The World café methodology is a large group approach, which facilitates conversations across diverse groups. (Isaacs 1999). Key questions are used to focus the conversations. The World café is an intentional way to create a 'living network of conversations'. It is a methodology, which enables people to speak, think and reflect together to gain collective insights (Brown., Isaacs et al. 2002). The underlying beliefs of a world café approach are that we create our worlds together in dialogues and through dialogue, and we have the potential to gain new insights and understandings and innovate responses through conversations. It is founded on an assumption that all people generally have the capacity to talk together.

"We create our world and its future through a process of connecting with each other, sharing knowledge and know-how, and building relationships, all through the process of collaborative conversation. When we consciously focus attention on 'questions that matter'–for our families, organizations, and communities–we are contributing to the evolution of the knowledge and wisdom that we need to co-create the future. We 'grow what we know' individually and collectively. We notice the possibilities for mutual insight, innovation, and action that are already present, if only we know where to look." (Brown *et al*. 2002).

The World Café Methodology

The world café approach (Brown *et al*. 2002) is seen to be a conversational process, which is an innovative yet simple methodology for hosting conversations. The conversations usually link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions or issues arising. The ideas are collected, or 'harvested', based on a culmination of ideas and thoughts from the collective conversations, which have taken place. As a process, the World Café is considered to evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of the group; The World Café is described as 'a living network of conversations' (Brown *et al*. 2002) that is continually co-evolving. While I considered many aspects of the world cafe approach useful in structuring the dialogues in this enquiry, there were some areas which I thought needed further consideration in order to adequately attend to the concept of equal voice /equal participation. Perhaps, world café methodology does not fully address the idea of equal participation, in so far as it does not attend to contexts of literacy, prior experiences of marginalization or the lived experiences of silence and privledge of the participants or to issues of access. It predicates the idea of equal participation on having an opportunity to speak but in so doing does not attend to the social and contextual relations associated with having and giving voice. Little attention is focused, in the descriptions of methods (Brown *et al*. 2002) on physical access in terms of space

and/or adapted processes for creating engagement possibilities for people who process auditorily, visually and kinesthetically in ways that this methodology does not create universal access for.

Aldred (2009 p.1) has critiqued The World café approach as a research methodology. She suggests 'the world café approach affords interesting and innovative approaches in research but presents a number of problems within the field of community development'. One the key issues she outlines which also raised some concerns for me and had implications in relation to this enquiry was the potentially stigmatizing interpretation of 'empowerment', and the questionable assumptions about social change inherent in the world café methodology. I did not assume that the dialogues in this enquiry would necessarily lead to social change except in so far as we are changed in our meetings with others (Shotter 2004 p.94). I was equally conscious of the fact that we cannot assume that any one   particular methodology can eradicate the issues associated with prejudice, marginalization and discrimination, inherent in the fabric of many societies.

The world café approach, I consider however does set a context for creativity both in its informal café style structure, and in the way in which it creates a context for each person's contribution to be heard and valued. These were important characteristics in adapting the methodology for the purposes of this enquiry. The attraction in terms of providing a context where creativity might flourish was important in the context of this enquiry as I was attempting to find ways in which people who had experienced marginalization might find a voice. Informality and creative environments are one way of making a contribution towards the possibility of engagement. Sometimes by utilizing methodologies, which measure innovation, we can inadvertently obfuscate creativity. The world café approach on the other hand is one, which allowed for a fluidity or emergence in the moment within a contextual structure like the banks of a river, which create the boundaries, within which the river or conversation can flow. (Brown et al. 2002). I believe this approach allows for a dynamic   cross-pollination of ideas in short conversations, which move in space. It was this moving, living conversational aspect, which appealed to me most as I began to think about how to structure the dialogues.

Creating Contexts for Transcendent Discourse

World café was the method I adapted to explore dialogue across a diverse stakeholder group. While retaining an interest in the actual conversational structure and components, I was more interested initially in the ways we create the capacity for transformative dialogue to take place. I have already elaborated how a respectful orientation towards the other and a relational ethic are important dispositions in engaging in and entering into dialogue. It is however, perhaps in dialogue itself that the possibility of sharing and exploring multiple perspectives

exists. Eisler (1988) suggests that movement away from a hierarchic, over compartmentalized mechanistic approach; to an ability to draw conclusions from a totality of simultaneous impressions is in many ways a more feminine approach. I think Eisler (1998) speaks about feminine values as opposed to women. As such, she is speaking about the way in which women, intuitively and as a consequence of sexually stereotyped socialization and roles, process information in more holistic ways. She argues that women are more inclined to see their lives in terms of relationships, and be attuned to the needs of others. I consider this quality of simultaneously holding space for multiple viewpoints, and the ability to privilege relationallity, to be important in creating contexts for transformative dialogue to occur.

Not all conversations, or respectful communication exchanges, bring forth difference or divergence of perspective. It is in being open to differences it is my belief that our perspectives have the capacity to influence and be influenced. Where all participants in conversation hold a shared view of the world, the capacity for the emergence of new descriptions or a new story is considerably reduced. In this enquiry I was interested in divergent views about what it is that constitutes dis-ability. The potential for diversity of perspectives, was, in part, my rationale in seeking to invite participants, who although for the most part were of Irish cultural descent, resided in different sub cultural groupings such as teacher, professional, students, service users, managers.

Discussion of ideas enables those in conflict or with differing viewpoints to move beyond the belief in a singular truth. It also enables them to live with a multiplicity and plurality of ideas. (Gergen 2006). Public discourses and dialogue have the potential to enrich our ways of understanding each other. Each contribution to the process of public discourse generally arises out of personally held sets of beliefs, and each response then becomes as a response to the contributions of the other. The meanings of what is said alter as it moves from the social reality of one participant to another. In the process of dialogical exchange, which is mutually respectful the possibility of a shift in positions and the creation of new understandings exists. Shotter (2004 p.94) speaks to this in which we way we are shaped in our encounters with others suggests that 'in our meetings with others we cannot simply be ourselves. We become ourselves through others.' In this regard, Shotter (2004) is highlighting how we are transformed in our conversations and in our meetings with others.

 While this is a useful way of thinking about dialogue, I was also curious to consider if all our meetings with others are transformative. Yet I am aware that we cannot meet others without being impacted on in some way by the exchange, if even just to confirm our own worldviews. I was more curious to consider whether there are certain kinds of encounters that have greater potential for our ideas and worldviews

to be shaped, reshaped and transformed. I was interested in this question in relation to this particular enquiry, only in so far as giving consideration to the particular ways in which we might structure dialogue or conversation to create contexts, which are more conducive to transformative exchange. Equally, I considered the possibility that those moments of transformation are situated more in the 'living moments of dialogical exchange' (Shotter & Katz 1998) than in any structure or form of conversation. Throughout this enquiry   I came to place less emphasis on the methodology such as world café and more on the connection- in- relationship and orientation to collaborative participation.

Bahktin (1986 p.91) suggests a reponsivity that exists in communication that is outside of our control " Each kind of utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication"(Bahktin, 1986, p.91). Yet, while expression can be seen to organize our experience to open up to new possibilities in our relationships with others, we need Shotter (2004) says we need those otherness's and others to call out to us ways or styles of responding to them that we cannot call out from ourselves.

In this regard, the need for diversity and for dialogue is important to generate new possibilities. It is as we hear the views of others this creates the possibility of calling forth a different response in ourselves, and calls forth our attention to the voice of the other. In collaborative dialogue greater openness exists towards diversity. By shifting away from binary distinctions, for example those over and against positioning, both ideologically and through the dialogue that takes place, a different response becomes possible.

Some of the underlying values and ideals that I consider to inform and create contexts for collaborative and potentially transformative dialogue include:

- ❖ The avoidance of oppression and conflict,

- ❖ Granting a voice to all parties,

- ❖ The avoidance of binary distinctions that marginalize ideas in the extreme,

- ❖ The possibility of exploration of the grey areas

- ❖ Generation of alternatives ideas

These are all underlying ideas, which also inform postmodern discursive practices (Anderson, 2008, Anderson, 2003). Transformative dialogue creates contexts, which are less competitive, and thereby making possible less fragmented divisive relationships. In postmodern discursive practices, there exists the freedom not to have to hold 'a position' in relation to one set of ideas over another. Shotter(2008

p.205) speaks to this idea in his discussion of poetically structured texts suggesting that that 'they are a set of sign posts staking out a journey over a shared landscape of possible places to go.' It's these possible places to go or 'landscape of possibilities' (Wittgenstein 1953) in the range of our possible responses, to which I am referring here. This capacity to hold the multiplicity and complexity of all ideas and positions simultaneously, affords us a freedom to choose to live with the best fit without necessarily having to hold a belief in a singular truth (Gergen 2003).

In a world where conflicts rage in relation to divisive issues, any methodology that encourages us to hear and see the other in our discourses can only enhance our ways of living more harmoniously. While conflict is not overt in the field of dis-ability, the differing worldviews of service users, parents of children who live with dis-ability labels and professional teachers and managers of services, can create considerable frustration and tension. This can result in fragmentation and reduction of the potential for collaborative cooperative relationships.

Dialogue and Public participation

Including the voice of service users and the general public in decision making processes and dialogue has sometimes created fears and concerns. This can happen particularly amongst those who have more traditionally been decision makers, but also amongst those who have previously not been invited to articulate their concerns and viewpoints.

Historically, there has been a suspicion of the ability of the masses to reach intelligent decisions. Nietzsche reflects this sentiment by stating that madness is the exception in individuals but the rule in group's. (Nietzsche, 1966). Gustav le Bon (1895) was appalled at the rise of democracy and suggested that groups always made decisions that were intellectually inferior. He deplored the idea that a judge would agree to the decision of a jury. His concern was that pressure to make a collective decision might override the concerns of any individual juror who might have originally disagreed to the outcome. His view on parliament was that they often adopted laws that each individual member might reject. Embedded in our history may be a generalized mistrust of the ability of people to consider a range of options in making collective decisions, and so often we have deferred to the wisdom of the leaders. I would share some of these concerns, if we were to consider collaborative dialogue as an attempt to reach consensus, as in so doing certain perspectives might be silenced and marginalized at the extremes. If however alternatively, we consider collaborative dialogue to create contexts for respectful exchanges to take place between people, whilst remaining open to all possibilities we may circumvent some of these concerns.

Pearce and Littlejohn (1997) suggest that we treat the people as consumers of political products, rather than as citizens active in the process of self-government.

Pearce and Littlejohn (1997) argue what is at issue is not that the differences are so great that they cannot be bridged, but whether the participants, holding opposing viewpoints, choose to develop and exercise a wider range of ways of relating to each other.

Public participation requires of us a desire and willingness to privilege collective participative approaches to discourse and decision-making. In my view this is key in achieving equality. In May 2004, the Democracy Commission in Ireland launched its progress report titled 'Disempowered and disillusioned but not disengaged'. The report was a response to concerns about the state of democracy in Ireland. Participatory citizenship, in the view of this report, requires accessible opportunities and mechanisms for participation, which value the core principles of tolerance, interdependency, civic self-restraint, responsibility and openness to deliberative argument. In a world, which requires of us more active citizen participation, dialogical approaches across communities are a useful inclusive methodological approach for attempting to achieve greater democratic participatory citizenship. It is my perspective that awareness of the contextual influences in engaging in dialogue creates a context for more reflective dialogical practices. It is therefore interesting to consider both the question of what is currently happening globally which is leading us to a greater shift in the demand for more participatory inclusive approaches, and what are the personal contextual influences which impact on each of us in engaging in participatory dialogue.

Glimpses of Personal Contextual Influences
Internal /External reflective dialogues – Glimpses of self

In considering Dialogue as an approach and my own positioning in this enquiry as one which privileges an ethical relation stance, it was significantly important for me to also consider my own perspectives and contextual influences. In doing so, I considered how my perspectives and the contexts out of which I live and have lived, both influenced and was influencing my position as enquirer engaged in a dialogical approach to this enquiry. I am influenced to consider this as both a generative and dynamic process by Anderson (2007).

Figure 5. Personal and Contextual Influences

Here in figure 3. I am illustrating the complexity of the relationships between culture, both personal and wider cultural contexts, and our internal and external dialogues. I am also attempting to illustrate how our previous experiences, which have become embodied but retain a dynamic quality, impact on our responses to the external world. This Yin/Yang illustration does not allow for an illustration of the dynamic interchanges, interplay and fluidity of relationships with all these interwoven aspects. The dynamism I refer to here is more akin to the qualities of amoeba[35], which engage in adaptogenic responses to internal and external stimuli.

The influence of personal, cultural and social contexts on researcher position is an ongoing dynamic process, which is influenced by multiple internal and external dialogical and embodied processes. Researcher internal dialogues are influenced by wider social, political, cultural and personal contextual dialogical processes, and as such, are dynamic and fluid. As a consequence, it becomes difficult to freeze the frame and state positions. However, for the purposes of this enquiry, I reflected on some personally significant current beliefs and influencing factors on my own researcher position, not as static properties, but as ongoing influenced and influencing positions.

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[35] Amoebae will prevent the influx of salt in saline water, resulting in a net loss of water as the cell becomes isotonic with the environment, causing the cell to shrink. Placed into fresh water, amoebae will also attempt to match the concentration of the surrounding water, causing the cell to swell and sometimes burst.

Internal /external dialogues: 'Glimpses of self'

In this discussion of personal contextual influences, I am cognizant of the idea that knowledge of the self is more of an embodied dynamic process, situated in both language and experience than a static description of key beliefs and personal assumptions allows for or extends to. While Cartesian (Descartes) divisions of mind and body can be useful to a certain extent, in terms of being one way of making sense of our world, they are nonetheless constructs about the nature of being. Almost any reflections on self can only form partial accounts in language. Views of self are partial, given that they are constructs and the self is fluid and dynamic (Gergen 2001). Reflections on self are also limited by being linguistically constructed. It is difficult to incorporate temporal or kinesthetic descriptions of experience or to include all the elements of a social and relational self in our reflections, observations and descriptions. The limitations of language and our experience of describing a multi-dimensional self do not always allow for this possibility. Gergen (2006 p.209) in conversation with Elkaim suggests that the self or individual is a construct, which is better elaborated as an 'assemblage' or 'assemblages' within assemblages of an interrelationship of elements. Here he is referring to all of the diverse social and relational elements that coexist in what we commonly refer to as a self. These elements could be genetic, organic, cultural etc. It was some of these elements within an assemblage of elements, which I am describing as a partial view of the elements of self. I refer to my view of these elements as 'glimpses'. I am aware that these are temporary glimpses of particles of what we refer to as self or a self- in- action. I drew on Joyce's work Ulysses (1947 p.119) to develop a term for these observational moments of aspects of self. I refer to this as 'doubtful sideways glimpses '.

Doubtful Sideways Glimpses

Joyce (1947) draws attention to the capacity for self observation in his description of the character Mr. James Duffy, who according to Joyce, "lived at a little distance from his body regarding his own acts with doubtful side-glance's … and who had an odd autobiographical habit which led him to compose in his mind, from time to time, a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense" (Joyce, 1947, p.119).

It is from the perspective and with awareness that we cannot 'separate ourselves to be at a short distance from our bodies', into a removal from any immediate presence, that I make some cognitive observations with 'sideways glimpses' as author, about the possible influences on my own positionings. I will use the term 'side ways glimpses ' throughout the enquiry to refer to these doubtful glimpses of self I make from a distance. The idea of 'glimpses' is to highlight the partial nature of any observation of the elements of assemblages that constitute self. I use the word   'doubtful' in recognition of the fact, that like Mr. James Duffy, I am narrating

the story of self in a tentatively autobiographical way.   However, my narration is not intended to be considered in a sequential linear developmental manner but as a constant authoring and re-authoring(White 1995) dependent on my vantage point, of the elements which constitute the assemblage of self. While Joyce(1947) did not elaborate to suggest that Mr. Duffy reviewed these internal authoring's of self in any retrospective or ongoing way, I imagine that it was an ongoing process of authoring and re-authoring with each glance from a distance.

Glimpses of the Cultural context of Dialogue

The cultural and historical context of the geographical location where the dialogue takes place undoubtedly impacts on what is privileged and how participants engage with each other. (Gergen, 2006., Sampson,1993.,Geertz,2000). Situated in an Irish cultural context whose history is one of colonization, has I imagine influenced my own personal desire, and perhaps the desire of the participants, to avoid oppressive practices. 'Irish'ness' (if such a concept exists) and an Irish attitude to life, were described by Le Brocquy (1982) as having characteristics, which differ from an Anglo Saxon view of the world. He also queried the possibility of ever uncovering the attributes of what constitutes the nature of the distinctive Irish literary intellectual tradition[36]. James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, Samuel Beckett, Seamus Heaney, George Bernard Shaw amongst others, all form part of an Irish cultural intellectual heritage, and yet it is almost impossible to fully discern all of the cultural components contributing to this literary tradition. This tradition forms part of the cultural history of the context in which this enquiry took place, and has influenced my own thinking, particularly as I have drawn from the ideas of many of these writers and thinkers. This Irish literary tradition influenced me in particular in this enquiry, to draw reference from authors across both literary and academic areas. The historic influence of Irish language traditions, such as a strong oral tradition of legends and stories also impacted on the way in which I narrated this enquiry. Drawing on   my own familial and cultural heritage of stories and story telling, I often illustrated points with poems and excerpts from novels and stories. The participants in the dialogue also used metaphor and story and visual representations to highlight particular aspects of their experience. The interplay between the Irish and English languages has resulted in a language with its own syntax. The language Irish itself could be considered to be dialogical in its call and response in language.

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[36]   For a comparatively small population, Ireland has made a disproportionately large contribution to world literature. The most widely known literary works are those of James Joyce, Oscar Wilde and Ireland's winners of the Nobel prize for literature William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney. Irish the irish language has the third oldest literature in Europe.

The ways in which Irish people communicate in English in a circular less directive manner lends itself to a dialogical methodology such as world cafe. A dialogical approach in this enquiry, therefore, was not culturally at odds with other cultural traditions embedded in the Irish history such as story telling. A world café approach equally fitted for the experiences of many Irish people in coming together at family and community gatherings where songs and stories are exchanged. There was therefore a sense of the familiar in the world café approach in an Irish cultural context. It would seem important to me in choosing a dialogical method that it would be one, which is culturally sensitive. Having spent some time working with marginalized groups in Thailand, I became aware of a reluctance inherent in Thai culture in both expressing opinions and in particular in expressing dissent (Niratpattansai, 2004). As a consequence, I consider that some cultural adaptations are required, in any dialogical approach or method, with respect for the local cultural traditions of communication.

Glimpses of Current influencing Personal Assumptions and Beliefs

Our beliefs assumptions and values influence how we orient ourselves to the world and to others, and what particular ideas we privilege (Gergen 2006). It is difficult to articulate all those beliefs and influences, as some remain implicit and hidden to us. However, there are certain beliefs about which we are aware and which influence our choices. I have outlined some of my current assumptions and premises, which I believe influenced me in the process of this enquiry, and in the ways in which I constructed the dialogue.

I use the term current here, as while some of our beliefs and assumptions remain constant, most are constantly in flux and are being shaped by and are shaping new information and experiences.

My rationale, at the time, for considering a dialogical approach to this research enquiry, was based on a number of underlying core assumptions, which included some of the following:

❖ Considering language and meaning as being generated between people.

❖ Considering meanings as being contingent on context and dynamic experiences.

❖ A belief that discourse and dialogues are partially constitutive and therefore hold the potential to be both generative and oppressive.

❖ The idea that people co ordinate their actions with each other based on conversational realities and active experiences of each other, and that those experiences of each other are often shaped by previous experiences and anticipated responses.

- ❖ Awareness that Polyvocal dialogue, and experiencing each other, can create a greater capacity for new understandings to emerge between people. (Shotter 2004., Katz et al., 2000 Bohm 1980, McNamee.2004., Anderson 1995., Andersen 1991., Tomm 1999., Gergen 2006)

The potential for reducing dichotomous positioning or holding both/ and positions can be created through the articulation of extremes and retrospective or ongoing way, I imagine that it was an ongoing process of authoring and re-authoring with each glance from a distance.

Glimpses of Dance as ongoing movement

I am influenced by experiences as a dancer and the idea that "in improvisation I am in the process of creating the dance, out of the possibilities which are mine at any moment of the dance that is to say that I am exploring the world in movement, that is, at that time that I am moving, I am taking into account the world as it exists for me here and now in this ongoing ever-expanding present" (Sheets Johnstone, 2009, p. 31).

In the knowledge of dance, and my kinesthetic experiences as dancer, I was influenced to seek an approach to enquiry, which incorporated the dynamic fluidity of in- the -moment responsivity. A dialogical approach incorporates, in my view, a level of immediacy of responsivity, and the possibility of co creation or a more improvisational stance. The constraints of both the academic tradition, in what is permissible in the presentation of materials, together with the limitations of the linearity of language, do not allow for the inclusion of the more experienced, sensed dimension, of this research enquiry.

Glimpses of Multicultural Meaning making

My own interest in language, words and meaning making, was to some extent influenced by growing up in a European multicultural city and simultaneously being educated in two languages. My working career began in services for people living with disability labels, who often challenge mainstream views of communication and meaning making, in the ways in which they contribute to relationship. I became curious about sign language systems and non-verbal forms of communication, and began to notice the similarities in all communication systems. It seemed to me 'as if' alternatives to verbal communication were often marked by, and described in their differences. I became more curious about the similarities, particularly in relation to missed-understandings in verbal communication, and in the ways in which we often assume taken- for granted shared meanings. However, it appears, 'as if', when we are confronted with language and communication systems that are less familiar to us, we can more easily hold our curiosity to communicate, understand, and to make sense of things. I became interested in those moments of curiosity, the points at which new understandings could emerge between participants in dialogue. It

appeared to me that these communication moments, in which co- constructed understandings emerged, seemed to be points of tension often around perceived differences. I considered these moments in conversations to be the discordant points of suspension between two divergent worldviews, or in dance they might appear as the moment of temporary suspension of movement between movements. These are moments, which seem to occur for all of us 'in our dialogical interactions', as we attempt to find ways of sharing our ideas and understanding each other, without oppressing the voice of the other, a convergence of views. 'Dialogue is a form of conversation in which two participants attempt to acknowledge the differences and the otherness between them. (Campbell & Groenbaek, 2006, p.24).

Often, in my early attempts at mastery of a second language, my curiosity of understanding was more fore fronted, particularly when it appeared to me 'as if' I inhabited another linguistic domain. Within the perception of difference and temporary suspension of judgments, may exist an opportunity for new understandings and experiences of each other to be brought forth. It is perhaps at this point we can step out of our comfort zone of familiarity and suspend our belief.

> 'Man is made by his belief as he believes so he is' Bhagvad
> Gita

When we hold our beliefs more loosely, we remain open to new possibilities. In this way we more easily hold the capacity to reinvent our worlds and ourselves.

Glimpses of theories: Landscapes of difference betwixt and between

In considering the space between, I have been influenced by the work of the fifth province associates (Mc Carthy et al.1989) and in particular the exploration of the place in which two opposing worldviews collide (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997). It is in this space, where the co existence of polarities arises, where the possibility of holding a both/and position as opposed to either or distinctions exists. In approaching this enquiry, from a dialogical positioning, I have been particularly influenced in my thinking by the work of the public conversations project (Roth, 1993), Jaakko Seikkula's (2002) dialogues in mental health settings, and the world café methodology (Brown et al.2002).

One of the significant influences on my thinking is reflected in my attempts to both construe and construct dialogical communication possibilities, which have the potential to create spaces where differences can co- exist. As a result, I became more hopeful about the possibilities of creating contexts with the potential for competing ideas and discourses to co-exist and/or to be transformed in and through dialogue. I also became more aware of the possibilities inherent in dialogical processes to generate new meanings and experiences, both in the conversations themselves and in influencing the wider social context. In my own view, and in the views of many of those who have been involved in considering collaborative

communication, such as Anderson (2007) not all conversations create the context for transformative and generative dialogue to emerge. Transformative conversations take place when respectful listening exists. Respectful listening relates to how we position ourselves when we enter into the conversational / relational space. If we listen only to speak and not to hear, we may create a context, which does not leave space for 'the voice of the other.' I was particularly interested in considering which kind of contexts create space for a multiplicity of views to co-exist, and also to constructing and creating spaces in which respectful listening might occur.

Dialogue – historically

Historically, dialogue has formed part of the ways in which we come together to understand each other, to engage socially, to resolve difficult questions, ongoing dilemmas or to reduce conflict. Dialogue has always been part of the way we attempt to resolve our differences. Plato (428Bc) used dialogue, mostly between himself and Socrates, to resolve disagreements. The way in which Plato often used the dialogues was to elicit further information about his dialogue partner's beliefs, in order to better understand their positioning. Frequently, this was with a view to undermining their hypotheses and was not always about expanding the dialogue. Regardless, in this process new ideas often emerged. The principle of engaging with the other to better understand their viewpoint is a useful one. This idea influenced my own thoughts about what kinds of contexts create the possibility for respectful dialogues to take place. Attempting to understand the voice of the other seems an important premise on which to base a mutually respectful dialogue. For some, dialogue, in order to be transformative, needs to be respectful of multiple perspectives and not attempt to reach conclusions about singular worldviews. It allows for the co existence of difference.

Buber(1937) outlined a philosophical thesis based on an Ich-Du (I /You) Ich Es (I-It) relationships. In the Ich-du relationship, it is the encounter between two people, which he emphasizes, a connection in which people meet each other without objectification. On the other hand, in the Ich –Es relationship, people treat each other in terms of how they can serve their own interests. In the field of dis-ability, with its multiplicity of labels and constructs, people often enter the conversational space with an objectified view of the other. In our meetings of each other that are influenced more by lch- Es orientations, the potential for the other to be defined, as 'it' as opposed to 'you', exists. I was interested, in this enquiry, in the deconstruction of this objectification of 'the other', which often, I consider is as a consequence of labeling discourses in dis-abilty.

The Capacity of Dialogue for Transformation

The Russian philosopher Mikhail Bahktin's(1981) theory of dialogue emphasizes the power of dialogue to increase understanding of multiple perspectives and create a

myriad of possibilities. His view was that relationship and connections exist between people, and that dialogue can bring forth new understandings.

In dialogue, the possibility for incorporating alternative worldviews and experiencing less familiar forms of engagement with each other can be brought forth. The possibility of deconstructing and understanding dichotomous worldviews becomes more available to us in dialogue. Through a shift in emphasis to the person- in-conversation, new opportunities for understanding may be created. Change is then perceived as a dynamic dialogical process, or as deconstruction of meaning systems, which occurs in and through conversations. In this regard, both the process of this project, and the dialogues constructed, brought forth the possibility for the creation of new meanings. It also brought forth the possibility for voices to be subjugated and differences to be further polarized.

Not all communication creates a context for transformative dialogue to take place. Certain prerequisites exist which create more conducive context for the emergence of mutual acknowledgment and shared. One of those prerequisites is positioning ourselves in our speaking in ways that are open to listening.

Speaking to listen – "communicative virtuosity"

The manner in which we communicate is significant in relation to our capacity to create spaces for emerging new constructions. Riikonen (1999) suggests, "A prerequisite for genuine dialogue is allowing, to some degree or another, the expression of individual and constantly changing perspectives and individual or shared inspirations, enchantments and desires" (Riikonen, 1999, p.141). In thinking about the quality of communication Pearce (2005) also makes a suggestion that we need to take responsibility for communicating differently with each other. He refers to this as communication virtuosity.

In summary then it would seems as if our orientation to the other, an openness to diversity and diverse viewpoints, and our capacity to engage in reflection and the quality of our engagement with others are all components that create possibilities for mutually respectful dialogue to occur. Our ways of being open to others, how we communicate with each other, and an understanding of ourselves, create possibilities for different kinds of communication exchanges. How we position ourselves in relation to another and to ourselves can set the context for either mutually respectful exchanges or marginalization and oppression

Meeting ourselves Coming backwards – influences on Personal positioning

We are the world. The world is you and me".... "We are educated to conform to the divisions of the observer and the observed but the actual fact is that the observer is the observed". (Krsihnamurti 1996 p.99)

Our beliefs about others and ourselves influence how we position ourselves. What Krisnamurti (1996) suggests here is that if we take the time to understand ourselves and our world we may change our perspectives in terms of considering distinctions in relation to self and other. We may begin to recognize ourselves in the other and the other in ourselves.

Understanding of self may be both an internal and external dialogical process. Understanding others is more often inherent in holding an open disposition, one that welcomes differences without categorizing them or basing them in pre-existing assumptions – a position of openness and curiosity.

As Laing (1967) says "the invention of 'Them creates Us, and we may need to reinvent Them to reinvent ourselves" (Laing, 1967p.85).' In order to do so, perhaps we need to be curious about both others and ourselves? Often, in the context of disability, we create 'them and us' distinctions, a sense of separateness. When we do this, it creates a false sense of knowing the characteristics of the other, as if they were bounded and separate from ourselves. In so doing, our curiosity is often diminished as we assume a knowing disposition.

Throughout Lewis Carroll's (1999 ed.) tale of Alice in Wonderland, the characters hold a curious disposition in relation to each other, and sometimes in relation to themselves. This disposition of curiosity brings forth multiple possibilities, and in so doing, deconstructs pre existing assumptions about what or who anything is.

> *'Well what are you? Said the Pidgeon 'I can see you are trying to invent something !'*
>
> *I-I'm a girl said Alice rather doubtfully as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through in the day (pg 85)*

We all undergo many changes, in an ongoing way, in relation to who we are. Yet frequently we resort to more familiar static fixed descriptions of self and others. Rather than seeing and describing self as a more fluid dynamic possibility, or holding a doubtful stance, which is   more congruent with and reflective of these changes, as Alice does, we resort to the more linguistically familiar static descriptions of self.

Consideration of self as static often leads us to place others in more static descriptive categories, and in so doing, creates differences and distance between others and ourselves.

Kearney (2003) suggests that friendship begins by welcoming difference. He refers to the possibility of 'by sounding out certain borderlands separating us from others we may become more ready to acknowledge strangers in ourselves and ourselves in strangers'. Kearney, (2003, p.68.). It was my belief that through dialogical exchanges, in relation to concepts of disability and ability, the differences become less marginalised and the category of dis-ability can become more fluid, less fixed and the distinctions more blurred.

James Stephens (1995) also draws our attention to the potential for ideas and thoughts to be shaped and reshaped through dialogue and experiences of each other. In his book, the Crock of gold, he demonstrates how the philosopher, one of the main characters, becomes intrigued by how his ideas about right and wrong had transformed in his meetings with others, and his own internal dialogues on his journey:

> Right and wrong were meeting and blending together so closely that it became difficult to dissever them, and the obloquy attaching to one seemed out of proportion altogether to its importance, while the other by no means justified the eulogy wherewith it was connected" (Stephens, 1995, p.85).

Stephens appears to be demonstrating how our strongly held principled positions, ideas and concepts, can blend and be shaped and transformed when introduced to other perspectives. It is in this meeting with others in openness, that our strongly held views and positions can become more tentative. This process of allowing ourselves to be shaped and shape the other may require of us a temporary suspension of our assumptions. For dialogue to be transformative, these examples would seem to suggest that holding a more open, curious disposition in relation to others, and ourselves allows for the possibility of alternative possibilities to be co created.

Stepping in the river – Suspension of assumptions

In order to suspend assumptions, it is helpful to consider what constitutes our understanding of assumptions and in what circumstances they are either maintained or altered. Elinor and Gerard state that, 'Assumptions are those things we think we know" (Elinor and Gerard, 1998, p. 80).

Our assumptions and worldviews generally remain unchallenged when the information we have about the world and our relationships continue to remain constant. It is Bateson (1972) who suggests that when we introduce "news of a difference that our thinking and beliefs undergo the greatest shifts" (Bateson, 1972, p 453). Bateson does, however suggest that too much difference might present too much of a challenge to our beliefs and worldviews. Perhaps it's like the Scandinavian expression ' lagam', just in the right measure. Where sufficient differences exist and there is enough challenge to create a perturbation but not so much to create chaos worldviews and assumptions might be influenced and transformed.

Assumptions are generally maintained by shared cultures and shared worldviews. It is difference that brings about novelty. If we consider scientific discovery, many new ideas emerged from experimentation or the cross fertilization of ideas from other domains.

"In the same way as individuals share sets of assumptions so too do entire groups, organizations, communities and nations. When we gather with other like-minded people and form collectives that hold the same values and behaviours as good and true, we create cultures based on collective agreements. These cultures reinforce the values and behaviours we choose to focus on and as time passes become universal truths" (Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, p. 95)

Opportunities for transformative dialogue are often circumvented and limited by our constructs and by our own attempts to seek similarities in both our social engagements and confirmation of our worldviews. Gergen, McNamee and Barrett (2001) suggest, "the problem of difference is intensified by several ancillary tendencies. First, there is a tendency to avoid those who are different, and particularly when they seem antagonistic to one's way of life. We avoid meetings, conversations, and social gatherings. With less opportunity for interchange, there is secondly a tendency for accounts of the other to become simplified. There are few challenges to one's descriptions and explanations; fewer exceptions are made. Third, with the continuing tendency to explain others' actions in a negative way, there is a movement toward extremity. As we continue to locate "the evil" in the other's actions, there is an accumulation; slowly the other takes on the shape of the inferior, the stupid or the villainous" (p. 697).'

It would seem as a consequence, that it is in the introduction of diverse thinking and in the creation of opportunities to experience each other differently, our perspectives have a greater capacity for change. It was for this reason that I selected a multi cross sectional stakeholder dialogical forum as a method choice for this enquiry, with a view to creating a context of exchange for differing perspectives and multiple viewpoints. However, while it may be clear that our ideas shift and reform with new information and exposure to alternative perspectives, as a consequence they are constantly in process.

Change, in some respects is ongoing, in certain ways, for all of us all the time. As we gain new knowledge, and experiences occur for us in an ongoing way, and that we live our lives constantly situated in a fluid responsive domain, our ideas about our world and ourselves, as a consequence, are constantly in flux.

Oscar Wilde (quoted in Redman 1952) alluded to this idea of ongoing transformation of self in his discussion on conversations "I may have said the same thing before but my explanation I am sure will always be different " (p.161)

In this regard, Wilde (1957) was very attuned to the ongoing shaping and reshaping of his own thinking and assumptions. Individuals generally hold sets of assumptions about the nature of the world, themselves and their relationships, but do not always articulate the shifting nature of their ongoing positionings and repositionings in the way that Wilde has done.

It would seem that an open disposition to new knowledge, experiences and worldviews, creates a context for transformative dialogue to occur. In using the word transformative, I am referring to the capacity in dialogue to allow the other 'to happen to you' (Shotter & Katz 1998). An openness to allow the ideas of the other to influence and shape your own perspectives, as opposed to rigidly holding and attempting to convince the other of the 'truth' of your own position.

The Spirit of Dialogue

In summary of some of the ideas presented, it is where the held intention, in entering into dialogue, is one of open heartedness and availability to truly hear the other. This is where distinction between collaborative relational dialogue and discussion occurs.

As Bohm (1980) suggests the differences between dialogue and discussion reside in the ability to loosen your perspectives.

> A key difference between a dialogue and an ordinary
> discussion is that, within the latter people usually hold
> relatively fixed positions and argue in favor of their views as
> they try to convince others to change. At best this may
> produce agreement or compromise, but it does not give rise
> to anything creative.

In dialogue unlike debate, which seeks to convince and to persuade, the goal is mutual understanding and respect and the ability to hold and explore multiple perspectives simultaneously.

Dialogue does not necessarily lead to a resolution of conflict or a consensus viewpoint, but can lead to a transformation in the way the conflict is expressed. Dialogue can transform viewpoints from positions, which are destructive and divisive, to viewpoints, which are constructive and respectful of multiple perspectives. The Dali lama, in a speech to the "Forum 2000" Conference, (Prague, Czech Republic, September 4, 1997) acknowledges that differences in perspectives will always exist., What remains important is how we can find ways of allowing a multiplicity of views to co- exist in peaceful ways. The Dali lama considers dialogue to be the best way forward to both resolve our conflicts and understand better the perspective of the other.

Expanding the Terrain

Dialogue, therefore, has the capacity for deep collective reflections. When we enter it in a spirit of mutual exploration, questions can be considered in more profound expansive ways. Elinor & Gerard (1998), also suggests possibilities within dialogue, which allow us to further explore our humanness and our relationship with each other in the world.

" Dialogue is about what we value and how we define it. It is about discovering what our true values are, about looking beyond the superficial and automatic answers to our questions. Dialogue is about expanding our capacity for attention, awareness and learning with and from each other. It is about exploring the frontiers of what it means to be human, in relationship to each other and our world" (Gerard 2007 p.1)

Dialogical knowing

Wittgenstein (1953), saw language and communication as being limited by the rules of engagement, in other words, the ways in which we enter conversations in preordained ways. Wittgenstein (1953) suggested that language both constructs and limits our world.

While undoubtedly there are constraints to how we can engage in language and communication based on the pre-existing rules of the grammar of communication, knowledge is both relational and dynamic. We generate knowledge with each other in language. Knowledge is a social phenomenon, a socially constructed in interaction and in communication between people.

As Bahktin (1981) suggests knowledge is created between people in dialogue. John Shotter(1993) refers to this co construction of knowledge as 'joint action'. Social constructionist ideas also provide a challenge to the idea that science leads us to truth. Social constructionist thinking allows us the freedom not to have to position ourselves in relation to one political ideology over another, or one set of ideas over another, but to simultaneously hold the multiplicity and the complexity of all ideas and positions. Social constructionist ideas provide a way to both deconstruct and explore the origins of particular sets of ideas, and then choosing to live with the best fit in the awareness that knowledge is both individually and collectively, fluid and evolving.

Drawing on ideas in relation to multiple truths and from Pearce and Littlejohn (1997) ideas, which suggest that conversations tend to place focus on those ideas that are most significant, it would seem important to consider what gets silenced in the process. Reflection on this question may assist us in addressing the origins of the social construction of the distinctions we make, and the ways in which those constructions prevent us from creating space for other discourses. This is particularly relevant in the area of dis-ability, where singular truths and constructions have so long dominated the field of thinking and research. Research generally tended to take place from a researcher / researched perspective.

Gergen (1999 p.149) suggests that these 'tendencies towards divisions and conflict are normal outgrowths of social interchange. Prejudice is not, then a mark of flawed character-an inner rigidity, decomposed cognition, emotional bias". Gergen (1999 p149) suggests, "as long as we continue the process of creating consensus in relation to what constitutes real and good, classes of undesirable are under construction. He

further elaborates to suggest, " Whenever there are tendencies towards cohesion, brotherhood commitment solidarity so is alterieity or otherness under construction." It was for this reason that I had concerns about the types of research (Weafer 2010) taking place in Ireland in the field of dis-abilty that replicated and reinforced the brotherhood but also the otherness of dis-ability, by meeting people in groups based on categories of distinction.

The silence between sounds

Like Gergen (1999) I am interested in the deconstruction of categories of distinction in relation to dis-ability, and in the creation of contexts where things might look different. I am interested in the possibility of what we consider to be familiar becoming unfamiliar. Like Gergen (1999) I am also interested in a context for bridging perspectives and creating new ways to move on together. I consider that it is in the space 'in- between', the tension point between worlds where both are visible that change can occur. It reassembles the point at which Alice (Lewis Carroll 1999 ed.) descends into the tunnel, when she is still connected with the old world but can also envision the new world. It is the space where both worlds remain visible but not quite a panopticon. It is also the quiet space, the point of reflection or integration, the silence between sounds in music, the point where there is a rest and the experience of the last note grows louder in your head, with the anticipation of the next one but with an unease, an excitement and uncertainty about how it might sound. This space, in my view is the space where the possibility of difference the potential for creation of something new and different resides.

In terms of the quality of dialogue, I am interested in both the tension between ideas and worlds, but also the point at which all thinking and acting stops before movement happens again. This seems like the point at which things can look different, the familiar can look unfamiliar, and there is an anticipatory hopefulness/excitement about what might emerge. I am also interested in the ability to simultaneously hold the constructions of both ability and dis- ability. The social model of disability can silence the voice of marginalisation. The disability rights movements have the potential to polarize people further into categories of distinction. These seem like static unyielding positions. Mc Namee & Gergen, (1999) in their elaboration of the social construction and politics of texts of identity, suggests we need to move away from categories of distinction and into relational understandings of each other. Gergen (1999 p.149) suggests that categories of distinction and the grounds for conflict are constructed in dialogue. In his reflections on our challenge of how to live well together on he globe, he proposes that it is in dialogue that the possibility for treatment of contentious realities exists. Gergen (1999 p.149) uses the phrase" treat contentious realities". My own preference here is to say relationally deconstruct contentious realities, as treatment in my view is an 'action on' position as opposed to a more dialogical 'being with" positioning.

Relationally deconstructing fits more for me with a dialogical relational understanding of the world. Nonetheless, I share Gergen's(1999) concern for the need to find ways of living well together without the need to create distinctions about what it is to be human, as in Krishnamurti's words(1996,p.299) 'we are all the world' and we exist both in and as a reflection of each other.

Summary

In this Chapter I have attempted to address some of the following questions:

❖ What is it that we consider dialogue to be and what are the influences of theorists and writers on the development of the construct dialogue?

❖ What are the attributes of dialogue?

❖ What constitutes an ethical dialogical positioning?

❖ How can we and do we engage in dialogical reflection in relation to self and others?

❖ Which are the contexts that create the possibility for dialogue to take place?

❖ What is the multifaceted nature of dialogue and what are both the personal and wider contextual factors, which influence its construction.

❖ In what contexts does dialogue have the potential to create transformation or silence perspectives?

Chapter 5. Methodology - The Research Story

Journaling the inquiry process

"Speak English! "Said the Eaglet "I don't know the meaning of half those long words and what's more I don't believe you do either!" And the Eaglet bent down his head to hide a smile: some of the birds tittered audibly.

"What is a caucus race? Said Alice "

"Why "Said the Dodo "the best way to explain it is to do it"

-Alice In Wonderland Lewis Carroll (1999 ed page 43)

In this excerpt from Lewis Carroll's story of Alice in Wonderland, Alice and the Eaglet struggle to make sense of their world. They do this in language, reflection, verbal descriptions and in the assumptions we make about shared meanings. Yet, much of how we come to know where to go on is in our being and doing. What does it mean to "speak English?" Does speaking a common language give us shared understandings? Perhaps all we can rely on are generalized and commonly agreed upon local descriptions. The Eaglet so wisely suggests that neither Alice, nor indeed perhaps any of us, truly know the meaning of much of what we say. If we consider meaning from a Social Constructionist perspective (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, Burr 2003, McNamee & Gergen 1999, Anderson 1997, and Sampson 1993.) it is considered to be socially and relationally constructed. It is only in our responsiveness and orientation to the moment, that we can develop understanding. As the Dodo highlighted in his response to Alice, sometimes we come to know things in the experience and not in the explanation. It is in our very orientations and responsiveness to the moment that we find new ways of understanding and moving onwards.

> "Understanding comes to fruition only in the response.
> Understanding and response are dialectically merged and
> mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the
> other" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 282)

Bahktin (1981), like the Dodo in Alice, also suggests that mental cognitions do not always provide us with a way forward. He is demonstrating here that understanding is a concept, not a thing with singular properties that we can attribute to it, such as the term 'mental process' might suggest. He suggests, as an alternative, that the answer to what constitutes understanding lies in the circumstances in which we experience the possibilities for movement, in the response or as the Dodo suggests in action, in doing. I might go even further to suggest that when we enter into the discourse of cognition, we may be limited in what we can say about knowledge and meaning, which in turn limit the possibilities for ways to move forward. Our knowing

how to proceed may be situated as much in a visceral reflective responsiveness, as it is in cognition.

Separating the Dancer from the Dance - an improvisational stance

In this inquiry, I chose to respond to the data as co-respondent, as it emerged, rather than to retrospectively construct a research story or to create "research products "(Gergen and Gergen, 2000). I believe this response to be more congruent with the collaborative dialogical approach used throughout this research inquiry. In dialogue, the question that needs to be attended to is, -What is it that I am being invited into by the other? This question calls forth a response as opposed to an analysis. "Dialogical speech genres require a collaborative partnership, one in which all persons meeting are full participants in a spontaneous, conversational event" (Levin,2007, p.*115),*

Dialogue places the practitioner in a more intimate, interdependent, "withness" (Hoffman, 2007, p. 9) than is common in interview modes of speech. While interview genres usually require the separate roles of interviewer and respondent, all participants in a dialogue are primarily "… responding to each other's utterances in an attempt to link their practical activities in with those of the others around them…" (Shotter 2006,p.10).

The participants in this dialogical inquiry were present to one another as respondents. My role, in order to situate myself in a consistently coherent way throughout the inquiry process, was to actively respond to the words of participants as co-respondent. A reflective collaborative researcher position requires of me a response, as opposed to an analysis or categorization of the participant's words (both spoken and written), and to their illustrations. This position also requires me to orient myself to the developing conversation between us all, with its unpredictable possibilities, demands and constraints (Hoffman, 2007). "Active embodied response extends the dialogue and invites generativity—possibility, movement, and newness, ". (De Fehr, 2009, p.*xvii*).

As co-respondent and co-participant, I do not 'close' the dialogues, step outside them, and 'de-relate' (Strong, 2004 p.215) them in order to analyze or interpret the dialogues from a non-participatory 'meta-position'. As Defehr (2009 p *xviii*) states, "Nor will I stand over the dialogues searching for patterns or structural regularities. I will similarly not attempt to establish a static thematic hierarchy requiring the classification or cataloguing of participant utterances. "Instead of adopting the role of 'translator', 'organizer', 'analyst', or interpretant (Geertz, 2000, p.17) of the dialogues, I will make a response."

Information is born out of relationship, and in response to the other. As a dancer and improviser, I am cognizant of the fact that we cannot stop the dance and

interpret each movement, because the essence and movement of the dance no longer exists.

In my view, knowledge and understanding are multilayered, multi positioned, embodied and relationally responsive. Anderson (1997) sees knowledge and language as relational and generative. This positioning in relation to creating understanding has been described as a collaborative responsive philosophical positioning (Anderson 2003).

Riikonen (1999 p.160) suggests that in relationally responsive forms of meaning, "meanings are expressed in unfolding movement " Shotter (1993,pp.63-65) states that communication is not about transmitting information from one receiver to another but is 'about creating common episodes in rapidly changing worlds'.

This responsive dynamic orientation to the complexities of knowledge and meaning is further elaborated by Riikonen (1999 p.153) who describes people as 'existing in continuous living relations with each other and their surroundings'.

Often our articulation of this multilayered responsiveness is constrained by a dearth of relational dynamic language, and as a consequence the possibilities of expanding the descriptive territory. In the following poem the author gives a multilayered personally responsive description of what heart means for him. In our attempts to explain both our own utterances and those we participate in with others, perhaps often all we can do, like this author, is to describe our responsiveness- the moments that struck us, or 'what captured our attention (Shotter & Katz 2004). In each moment, our personal response is dynamic and fluid, given that we are constantly in relationship with both the spoken word and the written text and that our responses are contextually determined.

The following poem highlights some multiple possible descriptions of heart that may be simultaneously, sequentially or variously held, about which our individual responses and interpretations may also be contextually determined. In thinking about our changing response as each new description emerges, it also highlights how in our own responses as readers, we interpret in a fluid manner, in and out of both our contextual and linguistic experiences.

> Officially the heart
> is oblong muscular
> And filled with longing.
>
> But anyone who has painted the heart knows
> That it is also
>
> spiked like a star
> and sometimes bedraggled
> like a stray dog in the night,

And sometimes powerful
like an archangels drum.

And sometimes cube shaped
like a draughtsman's dream
And sometimes gaily round
like a ball in a net.

And sometimes like a thin line
And sometimes like an explosion.

And in it is only a river
a weir
and at most one little fish
by no means golden

More like a grey jealous leech

It certainly isn't noticeable.
at first sight

Anyone who has painted a heart knows
that first he had to discard his spectacles
his mirror
throw away his fine pointed pencil
and carbon paper

And for a long while
walk
outside.

-What the Heart is Like, Miroslav Holub (Pilsen Czechzolvakia
1923).

My own response to this particular poem, when I first read it was to later paint a heart, which reflected something of the multi-textured possibilities, which exist in our multiple visual representations.[37] In art, as another mode of expression, we are less inclined to expect a standardized locally agreed view and the responses of the viewer is what gets called forth. Yet, in our conversations we often lose sight of these multiple descriptions and 'In- the- moment' responses in our search for agreed singular 'truths'

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[37] 'Golden heart ' I also painted this as a response to the memory of a therapy conversation I had with a young girl who told me her 'heart was full of holes but there were still some gold spots' so we talked about the gold spots.

Figure 6. Golden Heart

Just as I responded and continue to respond as a reader to the above poem, in this research inquiry I will respond to the data. As I speak with the participants in the dialogue and listen to the transcripts, I am invited to respond – understanding emotions is not about getting into minds, but about a collaborative participatory responsive stance

Relationally Responsive Inquiry

I am influenced by de Fehr (2009) in thinking about how we approach research inquiries. "Constantly tuning and calibrating to the very shifting influences of the others and otherness surrounding us, we feel and sense and sometimes stumble our way forward living into our curiosities before we come to articulate them with words " (p. xx).

Garfinkel (1967) states that "a speakers meaning is not 'in' the words used by the speaker, nor in the speakers intentions, nor even in the speakers words in this, that or some other particular context, it is a 'developing and developed event' that is realized and known, by all parties involved in the interaction, only from within the unfolding course of the interaction producing it" (p. 40).

In the western world, it seems like we have become entrapped in traditional academic constructions of knowledge and methodological templates for how research inquiries should be conducted. We do this in order that they are acceptable to specific academic tradition. These approaches sometimes contribute very little to reflections on a dynamic relational knowing, which is derived more through engagement with an 'other '.

Defehr (2009), drawing from the work of Tesch (1990), elucidates the social scientific approach, which offers little to the collaborative responsive researcher. "Rooted in the mind -body dualism characterizing western post-enlightenment thought, social science inquiry is generally construed as cognitive intellectual achievement separate from corporeal being, premised on the assumed in principle superiority of social science over its lay equivalents. Privileging analytical rationality and conceptual propositional, abstract knowledge traditional social inquiry favors the construction of new systems, frameworks, theories and models" (p.xi).

Shotter (2008) also concurs with this view about more traditional social science approaches to research. He says they "entrap us in an invisible maze from which there is no escape" (p.23), Shotter suggests that within professional academic practices, when conducted as systematic enterprises within logical frameworks (as they are currently conducted there), isn't an escape "and they require of us in fulfilling our responsibilities as competent and professional academic, we must write systematic, objective texts for we run the risk of being accounted incompetent if we do not" (p. 23).

Shotter (2008) states that "theorists in attempting to represent the open the vague and temporally changing nature of the world as closed, well defined and orderly, make use of certain textual and rhetorical strategies to construct within their text a closed and finalized set of intrinsic references thinking that an open, vague, and not wholly style of writing cannot possibly represent the facts accurately" (p.23). In this inquiry I have not attempted to re-present facts, but have responded to them. As such, I resonate with Shotter when he says that any representation of facts involves silencing of others and reliance upon links with "already determined meanings" (p.23).

Methodological approaches can rely on template formats for the production and construction of knowledge, and are believed as a result to create an intrinsic coherence with the data. Nonetheless, Shotter (2008) maintains that "they rely on a body of special interpretative resources into which only properly trained professional readers have been educated – in making sense of such texts" (p. 24).

Oliver (2002) further suggests researchers can get trapped between the material and social relations of research production. He poses the challenge and dilemma to researchers, particularly in the domain of disability. "How to simultaneously expose

discrimination and marginalization without becoming involved in further classification and oppression of marginalized voices" (p. 21). The challenge in this research was to reflect on researcher positioning and response throughout the process, in ways that explore and invite the reflections of others. This is to ensure researcher repositioning wherever the possibility of subjugation and marginalization might exist. The possibility of oppression is heightened from within a chosen methodological approach, and in the analysis and positioning of researcher as outside the inquiry. In this inquiry, by holding on to a responsive non-analytical stance, I hoped to, as much as possible, remain as both insider and outsider.

One of the ways of attempting to do this was by engaging in a 'process of knowing from within' (Garfinkel, 1967). This process required me attend to the process of the enquiry as it emerged, and to avoidance of the potential towards the production of research products. Throughout the enquiry, I reflected both as enquirer, and with others, on the development of the research enquiry and how my positioning as enquirer was impacting on the development of emerging ideas.

Garfinkel (1967) summarizes this alternative responsive process of knowing from within as follows: "the matter talked about as a developing and developed event over the course of the action that produced it, as both the process and the product is known from within this development by both parties, each for himself as well as on behalf of the other" (p.40).

How to narrate the inquiry story?

Shotter (2008) offers some suggestions as to our function as a responsive researcher. He believes our function is not "to represent the state of affairs, but to direct people to crucial features of the larger situation within which the focal events of our concern make their appearance, features that show connections between things that might otherwise go unnoticed" (p. 32). As Wittgenstein (1953) said, our function as a responsive researcher is to make visible aspects of "ordinary everyday life events" (no. 435).

Within conventional research traditions, and within many qualitative approaches, methodological approaches are set out and prescribed within certain parameters. They provide researchers with a map within which to position themselves, and a mechanism to utilize in situating their inquiry.

As such, conventional research traditions constitute predetermined ways within which researchers' speak out from. As narrator of this inquiry, and in order to remain in the dialogue, I will speak from both 'within and without'. According to Bahktin (1984) "the single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogical" (p.293).Bahktin (1984) invites us to consider ways in which to narrate research inquiries, ways which reflect the characteristics of human life, as living moving dynamic and responsive.

Shotter (2008) suggests that much of our research has not yet found pathways for demonstrating the ongoing dialogue of living our lives, in how we narrate our research inquiries.

Shotter (2008) suggests that "as social scientists we have treated our topics of inquiry as if they already exist, as ready made entities out in our external world – rather than as still developing socio-historical constructions, constitutive of our own being as the individuals we currently experience ourselves as being" (p.68). He continues, "For us in the western world enthralled by the power of theory it has long seemed as if we can individually investigate the character of the world around us or as Wittgenstein (1973) describes it "our disease is one of wanting to explain" (p.333).

Responsive writing

When considering a responsive approach I have been influenced by the social poetics (Katz and Shotter, 1996), as a way of responding to emergence in this inquiry process. As David Peat (www.ouroborotrust.org) states "Western education predisposes us to think of knowledge in terms of factual information, information that can be structured and passed on through books, lectures, and programmed courses. Knowledge is something that can be acquired and accumulated, rather like stocks and bonds. By contrast, within the indigenous world the act of coming to know something involves a personal transformation. The knower and the known are indissolubly linked and changed in fundamental ways. Coming to know indigenous science can never be reduced to a catalogue of facts or a database in a supercomputer, for it is a dynamical living process of the ever-changing ever renewing process of nature.

Peat (2008) raises some interesting concerns here in relation to the construction of knowledge in western academic traditions and the underlying assumptions of knowledge as a singular presentation of one-dimensional proponents. He suggests that in indigenous cultures knowledge is seen as an evolving, dialogical, responsive, in the moment and dynamic engagement.

In the approach taken to this enquiry the construction of particular genres of academic knowledge and methodologies were considered and reviewed and raised concerns for me in relation to the potential to subjugate and marginalize, as well as concerns about their flat uni- dimensional static qualities. I was wanting to present the rich textured data and responses to the data in ways that give it more of a living form and shape: An 'improvisational relationally responsive stance', one that invites the reader to both engage and become engaged in a multi -textured response. For that reason, the approach taken has been considerably influenced by more responsive approaches to data that are multi textured, multi voiced and responsive as opposed to analytical. The approach taken in this enquiry has been very much

influenced by personal experiences of contact improvisation, choreography and personal resonances with theatrical perfomative, artographic and dialogical relational approaches as 'responsive living moments' in relation to data, as opposed to the alternative more analytical presentations or re-presentation of data. On consideration of a methodological approach for this research enquiry, it seemed important to create coherence with both the essence of the issues and themes being explored, together with the dialogical relational exploratory approach being utilized. The core issues being explored and discussed in relation to the construction of dis-ability, included the avoidance of marginalization, oppression, colonization and the avoidance of the creation of subject /object dichotomies. As a result, to be true to the participant's voices and keep faith with the themes being considered and the approach being utilized i.e. a dialogically responsive approach, throughout the research process, it was essential to consider method and methodology within a coherent framework in relation to these core issues. One of the questions being addressed by the author throughout the research enquiry was: In what ways can we and do we attend to the needs of everyone in our community without creating marginalizing categories of distinction.

I also considered emancipatory approaches to research, which suggests the importance of the politics of research and knowledge construction inherent in investigating foundationalism (Oliver, 1990).

Emancipatory approaches to research consider such questions as:

❖ What is that am I not seeing?

❖ Which voice(s) am I silencing?

❖ Which knowledge is being privileged in the presentation/re-presentation of the data?

Research is shaped by socio-political contexts. Decisions about whom or what is included or excluded have socio-political implications. Discourses compete with each other, and research highlights and obscures certain aspects of people's lives and conversations. In this work I paid attention to the ways in which research conversations create meaning. Certain groups, particularly vulnerable groups, are often only heard through the voices of more dominant groups. This is the politics of exclusion.

The questions we ask formulate the domain of responses. (Anderson 1991, p.51) "Which question one chooses will certainly influence the direction of the discussion" Our methods and methodology have the same capacity to shape and map the boundaries of the territory that can be responded into. The approach I resonated

with, seemed most coherent with both the subject under discussion, and with dialogue as a method, was one, which challenges exclusionary practices.

Law (2004), in his consideration of research enquiry in the social sciences, asks the question: what is it that we want to create together? This is in contrast to an approach that considers how one can speak, write, summarize or re-present the voice of another? I chose an approach that allows the data to speak for itself.   It is a responsive approach that generates 'a response ' as opposed to an analysis.

Choice of method and methodology is a political exercise and has ethical implications. Language is constitutive, and the stories we tell about people bring forth certain realities and construct certain knowledge's. This may   create categories of distinction. As researchers, we need to be responsible to the knowledge's that we are involved in creating. It is not only in the presentation or re-presentation of data, but also in the choice of method and methodological approach, that we bring forth knowledge and create realities. The responses to our research enquiries are structured and vectored by the questions we ask, and the approaches we utilize to undertake them. Law (2004) argues that methods don't just describe social realities,they create them. This raises the question as to what kind of social realities we wish to create.

Law and Urry (2003) wonder what the power of social science is and its methods. They argue that 'social-and-physical changes in the world are – and need to be – paralleled by changes in the methods of social inquiry" (Law & Urry, 2003, p.7)Law and Urry (2003 p.8.) also suggest that 'the social sciences need to re-imagine themselves, their methods, and indeed their 'worlds' if they are to work productively in the twenty-first century' .

They argue that 'social inquiry and its methods are productive: they (help to) make social realities and social worlds. They do not simply describe the world as it is, but also enact it' (Law and Urry, 2003, p.7)

The researcher in 21st century social sciences needs to consider the shifting social context within which they are embedded. Contexts in which performative approaches to social sciences may fit better with the emerging social worlds of globalization, postmodernism and an awareness of the transient nature of knowledge. Research may have effects, make differences and enact realties, as they bring into being what they discover not through representational methodological formats and templates, but in living responsive dynamic engagements.

The world café, a key influence to the construction of the dialogue method in this research enquiry, states:

> We are contributing to the evolution of the knowledge and
> wisdom that we need to co-create the future. We 'grow what
> we know' individually and collectively. We notice the

- The World Café, www.theworldcafe.com

Kvale (1996 p.1) suggests that "if you want to know how people understand their world and their life why not talk with them?" (p.1). I would go further and say talk to them and allow them speak for themselves. I would also propose utilizing approaches, within qualitative research enquiries, which are both responsive reflect on and represent the poly-vocality that exists in discourses and dialogue. According to Gergen(1985), qualitative research is "primarily concerned with elaborating and explicating the processes by which people describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live"(p. 266).

Social constructionist approach is not ante realist, as it does not seek to deny or confirm other processes of knowledge collection or formation. It sees them as other possible ways of construing and doing. It does not hold the idea of a grand narrative. For researchers, the question is not 'what is reality', but 'how is reality created'?

Kvale (1996) believes qualitative research allows the object to speak. The emphasis in qualitative research is on meaning making and focuses on examining the processes that create and maintain people's constructions of reality.

Mcleod(2001) offers a helpful map of differences between a modernist and postmodernist approach to knowledge generation. She highlights the emergent and evolving nature of knowledge making, and the absence of fixed and singular understandings of how we interpret the world. Mc leod also brings forward the idea of the central position of the communicative act. A social constructionist view of research assumes that we are all researchers, and that the act of research is an ongoing way of engaging in conversation. Research is a 'communicative act.'

There is no one 'right' way to research. The context in which the question is asked, the types of questions asked, the analysis of the data, and the selection of categories all inform the direction of a research approach. The research approach brings certain constraints in the way in which knowledge is brought forth and created. Writing an academic dissertation has its own set of rules and constraints. These rules and constraints are often situated in a modernist paradigm and the intellectual tradition, which by its very nature privileges some voices over others, including those of writer/ researcher.

McLeod (2001) argues that there are three ways qualitative research can produce new ways of knowing. They include knowledge of the other, knowledge of phenomena and reflexive knowing. Forms of knowing are temporary; we can never really know how the world is constructed. We can only attempt to arrive at

information that contributes to different ways of knowing and opens up new possibilities for understanding.

Oliver (2002) offers another way of looking at research paradigms by framing it as a positivist/systemic relationship.

Positivist		Systemic
Aim	Seeks Truth	Understanding
Relationship to Data	Separate data interpretation	Primacy of interpretation
Influence	Minimise	Reflexive
Social Contexts	Not Relevant	Relevant
Relationship to Knowledge	Prediction Objective	Rich Meaning Thick Description
Significance of Data	Reproducible Generalisable	Practice and Wisdom

Figure 7. Oliver's Positivist / Systemic Relationship

Within a systemic relationship to research, understanding, interpretation and meaning making have significance. In a more positivistic approach to research, the search for truth, reproducible and generalisable knowledge forms assume greater importance.

McLeod (2001) argues that qualitative research is also constrained by research traditions. He suggests that in qualitative research, operating within the tradition of western social sciences, there are two basic epistemologies that inform research practices, phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomonology attempts to put aside any assumption about the object of inquiry, and attempts to build up a comprehensive picture through the thing itself. It involves an 'in dwelling' in the phenomena until the essential features reveal themselves (McLeod, 2001). Hermeneutics, according to McLeod (2001), takes the opposite position, one, which considers understanding to be a matter of perspective which is always a matter of interpretation.

The researcher cannot be free of pre-understandings or prejudices that arise from being a member of culture and a user of language. McLeod (2001) suggests we can never get beyond our language. All the words we use to articulate our understandings, and the questions we ask, are embedded in culture. A practitioner of phenomenology tries to find ways of expressing understandings that differ from

our customized responses. Hermeneutics is more about contextualized understanding, of situating our understanding in historical, social and cultural understandings.

Although many would argue that the two ways of knowing may be irreconcilable for the purposes of this research, I will attempt to integrate and reach points of convergence between contextual and phenomenological ways of knowing.

Emancipatory research in disability enquiry

Oliver (2002) argues that most research has failed people with dis-abilities. He suggests that research has failed to capture and reflect the experience of dis-ability from the perspective of the person with the dis-ability. Research has failed to provide information that has been useful to the policy making process, and it has failed to acknowledge the struggles of disabled people by not fully recognizing the political nature of dis-ability.

He summarises the situation as follows:

Positivist Paradigm	Disability as individual problem	Engineering model
Interpretive Paradigm	Disability as a social problem	Enlightenment model
Emancipatory Paradigm	Disability as a political problem	Policy as struggle

Figure 8. Oliver's Emancipatory Research

Oliver (2002) argues that positivistic approaches to disability research have failed to produce emancipatory methodologies, frequently leading to the research of the collective rather than of individual experience. One of the difficulties is that most of the research methodologies that have been utilized in relation to disability research, have not confronted the objective structure of oppression (Oliver, 2002). Oliver (2002) argues that we need to change the social relations of research production and rather than give up researching, we need reduce the categories of distinction between researchers and researched. According to Oliver (2002), research has continued to be predominantly based in investigatory discourses.

Researcher position

The position of researcher, in relationship to the research process, impacts on the possibility of either the reduction of oppression, or the possibility of further marginalization, by 'acting on' not 'with' research participants.

Shotter (1994) in the following quote gives us some possibilities for how researchers might more respectfully reflect on and position themselves in relation to those with whom they invite in to or engage with

'Thus, the center of gravity, so to speak of what we talk of as our thinking is not deep within us at the center of our being, but at its boundaries. Where, the way in which we are a response addresser of others (actual or imagined) 'shapes' how we 'answer' for our own sense of our own position in our relations to those others. (Shotter, 2004)

Researchers need to remain cognoscente, not only of the information they receive in their research conversations, but the ways in which those conversations and further descriptions, analysis and findings can shape experiences. Research is an iterative and generative process for all those involved. Burck (2005) draws our attention to this. "Clinicians, too, are aware that questions are interventive; they know that an interview does not just elicit a story already known, but often contributes to the construction of a new account with its own effects" (p.241). It makes sense to clinicians to take these effects into account and build in ethical ways to manage them

It could be relatively easy to separate researcher from researched, given our historical, cultural and academic histories of research discourses. When we begin to acknowledge the ways in which the research process contributes to the shaping of lived experiences, we as researchers have a responsibility to ensure the methodology and the academic constraints of knowledge production, within which we operate, does not contribute to further marginalization of aspects of previously silenced and lived experiences.

Oliver (2002) suggests researchers can get trapped between the material, and the social relations of research production. Oliver (2002) poses the challenge and dilemma to researchers in the area of dis-ability. He wonders how we can simultaneously expose discrimination and marginalization without becoming involved in the further classification and oppression of marginalized people. Throughout the process of this enquiry my challenge was to reflect on researcher positioning in ways that explore and invite the reflections of others a dialogical research ethic. In this enquiry I did this relationally by engaging in dialogue about the dialogue, with colleagues, with service users, in reflections on the production of text and in internal dialogues with the many perspectives in my own chorus of constructions. In relationally engaging in this way it created a rich tapestry of reflections more readily available, which shaped the enquiry in ongoing ways. This, dialogical engagement with other voices, I hoped would go some way towards ensuring researcher repositioning, where the possibility of subjugation and marginalization might exist.

This can be either from within the chosen methodological approach or in my reflections and positioning.

Researcher positioning and reflections, as 'ongoing' in the research process.[38]

Figure 9. Personal Research Dilemmas

Researcher Positioning /Reflexivity

I have attempted to address the question of how researchers can find ways to write about people who have experienced marginalisation. Ensuring that this research enquiry did not replicate patterns of oppressive practices or create the possibility of further marginalization was a continuing challenge In order to attempt to circumvent some of the inherent difficulties in the creation of subjective knowledge, I engaged in reflective dialogues, both written and verbal, with a group of colleagues as conversational partners. These dialogues are built into the methodology as part of my reflecting internal and external dialogues. In order to attend to the ethics of writing, this question needed to be ongoing in the evolving discourses of the writing. By engaging in continual internal and external dialogue with the following questions, throughout the research process, some of these ethical concerns and issues have been addressed.

_____

[38] This diagram reflects some of my research dilemmas as I moved through the enquiry process and while represented circularly it was not a sequential process but a weaving back and forth.

I continually attended to three key questions throughout the research process:

How can I, as researcher, find a way where clients can speak with their own voice in a way that challenges the limiting discourses about them?

How can I, in the ways that I position myself as researcher, become aware of the ethical issues of further exclusion and marginalization in the information I privilege and that which I subjugate?

If participant's voices are not included in the production of the text, how can I, as researcher, ensure that this writing does not colonize their lived experiences? I was constantly aware that becoming an expert on the lived experience of others creates further 'us and them' polarizations by its very positioning.

Some of these internal/external dialogues are outlined below:

Internal Dialogue- Avoiding Patterns of oppression

Thinking about both culturally sensitive practices and my own question of how to avoid silencing and marginalizing, and creating 'us and them' distinctions in my writing and construction of knowledge's, and in my inquiry process, I reached the conclusion that what I needed to do was to begin an inquiry that is culturally sensitive.   I needed to include the voices of those about whom I am speaking, and 'act with' not 'act on'. I considered Shotter's 'withness and 'aboutness' thinking (Shotter, 2004) and realized that to feel at ease and be able to go on I needed to position and situate myself differently in the way I was engaging with my inquiry.

I commenced the research enquiry with an interest in whether dialogues can facilitate and create more culturally sensitive practices in service delivery. As the research enquiry progressed, I became concerned about the possibility of replicating patterns of voiceless -ness in convening of large stakeholder dialogues. I was also concerned about the potential for recreating monologic reviews in any analysis of the dialogic processes. The creation of dialogical writing is a challenge. Writing is often a static process, where words are seen as constitutive and fixed. Writing circularly, and creating dialogical relational writing which better reflects the nature of this research inquiry, was an ongoing challenge.

Reflexive writing

> *"It is not experience that organizes expression, but the other way around - expression organizes experience. Expression is what first gives experience its form and specificity of direction" (Voloshinov, 1986, p. 85).*

While Voloshilov (1986) suggests that expression is what gives experience its form, this leaves authors with the dilemma and responsibility of how to re-present experiences in ways that do justice to their contexts, structure, shape and form. It is

in the writing that the experience takes shape. We have no history, only multiple retellings of experience.

Recently, as I listened to an Irish schoolboy tell me about the Irish history he was learning in school, I reflected on how that history would be told so differently in an English school. There is no one his-story available to us, and so I can only claim in my writing that this is my story of the project enquiry. I have attempted to expand the view, and enrich the story description by directly including the voice of the participants. I have also included the voices of my conversational partners, reflectors and excerpts of dialogues I have engaged in, as a way of expanding the terrain away from my own singular worldview.

Writing brings other dilemmas for dialogical enquiries given an expectation in more traditional forms of academic writing to represent 'facts " and to produce findings. This request for facts and findings invites us to close down the dialogical space and punctuate the writing with definitive positions.

(Shotter 2008,p.24) refers to this in the following statement that 'theorists in attempting to represent the open, vague and temporally changing nature of the world as closed, well defined and orderly, make use of certain textual and rhetorical strategies to construct within their text a closed and finalized set of intralinguistic references –thinking that an open, vague, an not wholly style of writing cannot possibly represent the facts accurately"

Writing whilst omitting an interpretative stance and holding open the dialogue is nonetheless challenging. As Wittgenstein (1978 p.333.) Says 'our disease is one of wanting to explain' Shotter(2008 p.69) recognizes this struggle in finding new ways of writing he says "within a research tradition organized around dialogical, rather than monological practices, instead of simple Darwinian struggle for the survival of the supposedly fittest theory(representing an already existing order we can expect to see a whole host of other and new kinds of struggle".

Yet, if we are to consider the temporally unfolding nature of social relations, it becomes difficult to find ways of writing that retain a fluidity required in taking an approach that does not represent 'the facts' but instead moves with the unfolding enquiry.

Stern (2004, p.4) encapsulates this unfolding in the following statement: "the present moment does not whizz by and become observable only after it has gone. Rather, it crosses the mental stage more slowly taking several seconds to unfold"

It is this unfolding nature, which is more difficult to find ways of attending to in our writing.

Writing is quantitatively different from verbal traditions, where nuanced intonations are available to us in our sense making, and where the possibility of shaping and

reshaping the narrative exists.(Vygotsky, 1986 p.180). draws six differences between speech and writing

> 1.Writing is a separate linguistic function, in both structure and mode of functioning. "It is speech in thought and image only, lacking the musical, expressive, intonational qualities of oral speech"

> 2.Writing is also speech without an actual interlocutor. It has to be addressed to an absent, imaginary person. Thus writing requires a double abstraction: from both the sound and rhythm, and from the possibility of reply. He suggests that In conversation, every utterance is prompted by the need for a reply to what has gone before: an answer to a question; an explanation for puzzle; etc. The motives for writing are more abstract.

> 3.Writing requires deliberate analytical work, to put words and sentences we must take notice of both the sound structure of words and of word sequences

> 4.Written and inner speech have very different forms - hence the task of putting one's thought into words: While inner speech is condensed and abbreviated; predicative, i.e., about he subject of thought without the subject being explicitly present, because always known to the thinker. Written speech must explain the situation fully, in order to be intelligible.

> 5.Written speech is considerably more conscious, and it is produced more deliberately than oral speech.

> 6. Some of the essential differences between written and oral speech are reflected in the differences between two types of activity. One is spontaneous, involuntary, and non-conscious, while the other is abstract, voluntary, and conscious.

In speaking, our focus is on our living, responsive understanding of each other's words. In reading the written text, we are seeking to discover what already exists, and are not in living contact with the others and othernesses around us. Wittgenstein (1981) suggests that it is "only in the stream of life and thought do words have meaning" (p.173).   He may have also have been commenting on the written word, but for me this reflects how texts can become dead, given that they are already narrated, and as such, the words have died and become immortalized on the page. The challenge of dialogical writing and inviting ongoing engagement with the text remains, and yet I am aware of the fact that the reader forms their own relationship with the text, creating an ongoing dynamic responsiveness.

Trying to write in terms of living moments, as I have attempted to in this enquiry, is to try to write in terms of contextualized local meanings, rather than in terms of already existing, decontextualized understandings. My intention was to draw

attention to previously unnoticed aspects of our lives, particularly in relation to dis-abilty experiences, and highlighting how they are in dialogical relations with each other. My hope in the writing was to move beyond static descriptors, to a living moving, relational responsivity, and in so doing, to bring to attention the dynamism of both our verbal and written worlds. De Fehr(2009 p. 84) says 'In the production of a social poetics text, the writer maintains the role of responsive interlocutor all throughout, relating simultaneously to other textual voices, to the subject of the writing, to an imagined or known reader, to the emerging dialogues that develop. The writer continually tunes and re-tunes to the others and otherness present throughout the writing process."

One of the ways I have attempted to do this has been to respond to the voice of the participants. In letting the voice of the participants speak and making my own response, as opposed to an analysis I remain in dialogue and leave open other possible responses: including a response from the reader. Had I analyzed the voice of the participants, filtered their utterances into themes and categories I would have closed down other potential responses. In the same way, to remain in dialogue, I have invited responses into the writing both in the reflections of conversational partners but also in creating an invitation to readers to respond. These responses have opened up and continued the dialogue about the text, allowing for new possibilities of reflection. I have been careful not to consider the final chapter as a concluding chapter, but more as an offer of some ideas for going on, with an awareness that other ideas and responses are equally possible. Much writing closes down spaces by holding definitive positions. In our own expected responses as readers i.e. an expectation to be told something declarative and definitive. Holding open spaces has been an ongoing challenge, as there is a scant repertoire of experiences available as to how to engage in dialogically reflexive and reflecting writing. Anthropologist Tyler (1986) suggests we should create texts that are:

> 'of the physical, the spoken and the performed, an evocation
> of quotidian experience, a palpable reality that uses everyday
> speech to suggest what is ineffable, not through abstraction,
> but by means of the concrete. It will be a text to read not
> with the eyes alone, but with the ears in order to hear 'the
> voices of the pages' (p. 136').

While producing texts that evoke a palpable reality so that voices are heard on that page is admirable it nonetheless presents dilemmas in the domain of response. Perhaps, some of theses dilemmas relate in part to the temporal nature of writing, which is both, constructed and engaged with post event and loses something of its living vibrancy in this way. Writing differs from other art forms, which call for a more immediate response. The relationship between audience and actor/musician/dancer/artist is more immediately palpable.

Creating a *Chorus*

I decided to invite some representatives of dis-ability groups to speak together about their experiences of service planning reviews and delivery, and to comment on the question(s) I was addressing. By situating the research inquiry in this way (ie. as a way of asking 'those who know' that privileges and includes the expertise of the participants), I was attempting to attend to the idea of language as constitutive, and the creation of an ethically responsible researcher positioning. With the inclusion of the voices of those I am speaking about in the enquiry, I hoped that we would begin to co- construct and co present ideas within what I sometimes think still constitutes to an extent a positivist exclusionary writing paradigm. I say this in relation to the shifting but more historical traditions of previous constrictions and requirements of academic institutions and the culture of academia that requires us to present material and knowledge in certain ways, and in so doing reifying certain categories of knowledge production and as a result silencing others.

Internal Dialogue- Reflections on Writing

I considered the question - Why write at all? It seemed 'as if' by writing in an academic tradition I risked the possibility of further contributing to these ways of producing certain types of knowledge. I wanted to try and enact a research process, which might begin to challenge the usual social relations of research production. One of the ways in which I began to consider attending to this issue was with a critical reflexive positioning and an invitation to participants to speak with their own voice about their experiences, voices not filtered through the lens of a researcher.

To address my own emerging questions about writing in a dialogical, non-oppressive way, I considered including the following in the research process:

- ❖ Critical conversational partners reviewers for me as researcher – reflecting consultations with colleagues

- ❖ By referring to the stories that are silenced in the research enquiry, both at the outset (from my perspective), during the process (from the participants perspective), and in the final reflections, I acknowledge that the map is not the territory, just one of the landscapes, and there exist further stories not yet told.

- ❖ Ongoing collaborative, recursive discursive approach(s) to theory building and enquiry included in the process

- ❖ Methods which include dialogue and reflection

- ❖ Reviewing the ongoing enquiry and inviting reflections from conversational partners

- ❖ Inviting one or two of the participants and others into reflections on the writing process.

- ❖ Allowing the methodology emerge from the data and not shaping the discussions through the lens of the methodology

- ❖ Reflexive Writing led by and responding to the discussions.

Internal Dialogue -Silencing stories

In thinking about the possibility of silencing stories and mapping the oppositions or polarities as a way of attending to stories that are silenced, I began to become concerned about the stories we can't map, those that get silenced because we are unaware they exist or unaware how they are silenced. Drawing from ideas of Pearce and Cronen (1982) about silenced stories, I mapped the story positions as follows:
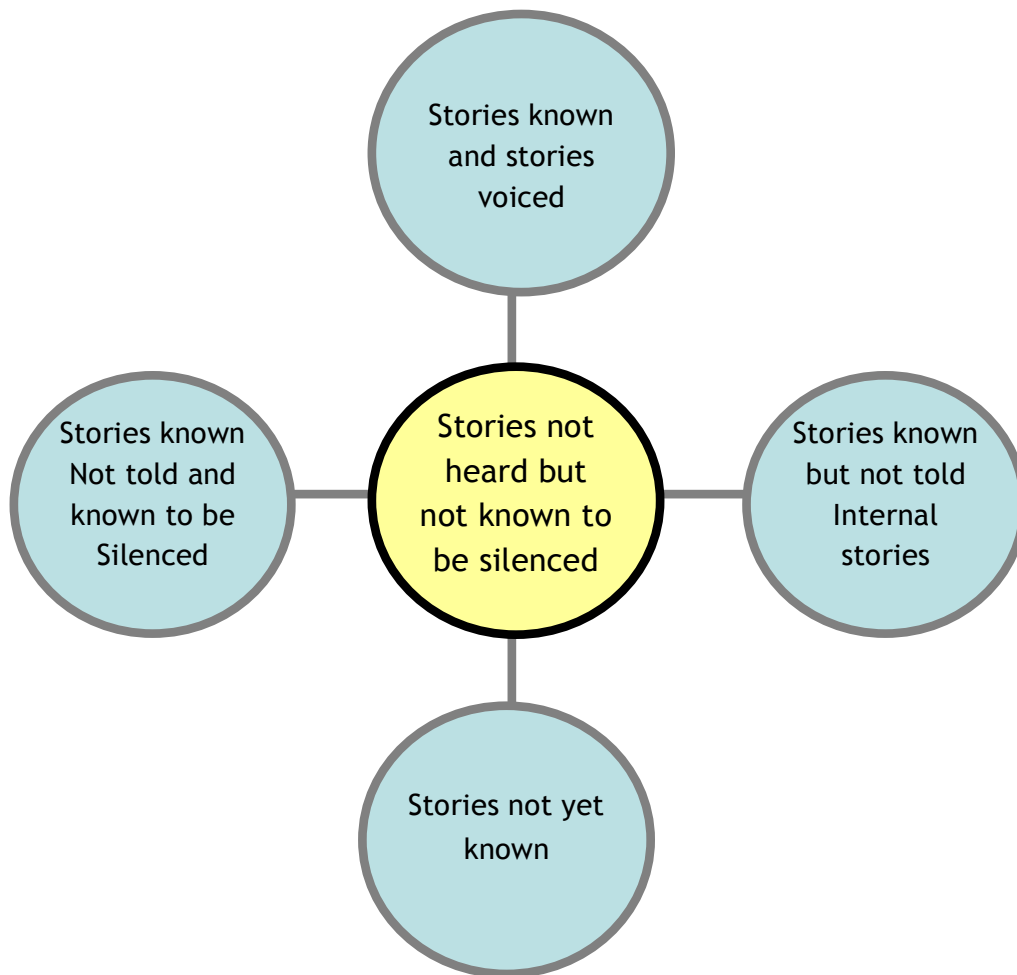
Stories known
and stories
voiced

Stories known
Not told and
known to be
Silenced

Stories not
heard but
not known to
be silenced

Stories known
but not told
Internal
stories

Stories not yet
known

Figure 10. Mapping the stories

"Man knows himself only to the extent that he knows the world; he becomes aware of himself only within the world, and aware of the world only within himself. Every new object, well contemplated, opens up a new organ of perception in us" (Goethe, SS, p.39, quoted in Amrine, p.47; Cottrell, p.257).

Relationally engaged research

When I consider relationally engaged research, it is with awareness that every stance is composed of a relational reciprocal one, meaning that there are no positions except in relation or opposition to another. For example, there is no dark without light. In considering these ideas, it allows me to temporarily hold a position, in full awareness that there are other unspoken or unacknowledged positions. It allows me to reflectively question grand narratives in the hope of avoiding the creation of one and to explore the limitations of creating arbitrary distinctions. This positioning allows me to move in and out of spaces more freely than research in which I might be positioned more statically as researcher. I am suggesting that this is a philosophical relational researcher positioning as opposed to an objectivist scientific one. Neither being more or less, just different. This kind of philosophical positioning, however, invites and creates the possibility of relational engagement throughout the research process. It is a dialogical methodology that personally resonates for me, as it is my hope to avoid the possibilities of 'othering' and subject/ object distinctions, which are more inherent in the objectivist/positivist scientific traditions of research.

In my view, a relationally engaged research philosophical position goes some towards the realization of emancipatory methodology in dis-abilty research.

Part 3

 In this section a responsive approach to the data is taken. In an ongoing dialogical manner, I offer some personal written reflections and responses in relation to both the content and process of the enquiry and provide visual responses from the dialogue participants as an invitation to consider 'ways to go on' from here in the hope of further contributing to spaces where all stories are given 'equal voice'.

Chapter 6. Response to the Data

In this research enquiry, I have chosen to respond to as opposed to analyze the data.

In taking this particular approach, I am inspired by a number of authors (Wilson 2008,Law 2004) as well as by a BBC radio talk given by Sir Peter Medawar (1964) entitled "Is the scientific paper a fraud?" Medawar, a biologist, concluded that the scientific paper is fraudulent in that it generally misleads about the process of making scientific discoveries, which are usually presented, as objective, logical and dispassionate. He wrote "Scientists should not be ashamed to admit, as many of them apparently are, that hypotheses appear in their minds long uncharted byways of thought: that they are imaginative and inspirational in character and that they are indeed adventures of the mind" By making explicit my own "adventures of mind " not as interpretations but as my hypotheses about what I believe I hear in the conversations of the participants, I am offering a transparent responsive reflection.

It is however, just that, not an interpretation but merely my reflections or responses to what the participants have said. It should not be considered to be an interpretation or analysis as it can only be one interpretation in a myriad of possible interpretations.

The Project dialogue(s)

As described in Chapter 2 In this particular project the dialogues, which informed my thinking and called for a response, consisted of three different groups:

Group one

A large Scale multi-stakeholder dialogue which provided an invitation to a consultation group made up of diverse stakeholders including employers, health providers, educators, service users, service providers, voluntary organisations and students who live with labels of specific learning dis-ability. The dialogue was to include a broad agenda to discuss inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, with particular reference to constructs of dis-ability and inclusivity.

Group two

A dialogue, amongst a group of conference participants, in relation to the label dis-ability.

Group three
A small cross-section of the members of dialogue one.

The Dialogues

"The dialogues in this project portray collaborative therapy as a vibrant, interpenetrative soundscape, one with multiple, simultaneously speaking voices, each one an 'elicitor' inviting and compelling the therapist to become something of the "other" or "otherness" present in every living dialogue "(De Fehr, 2009,p.xvii)

The quote above describes what is in other domains often referred to as the quantum theory of entanglement (i.e. If two particles collide there is a bit of A left in B and a bit of B left in A). It was these mutual influences and the idea of being present to each other that I hoped to capture in my re-presentation and response here to the dialogues. The quote above also captures the transformative capacity of the dialogical relationship. It was these soundscapes and polyvocality that I hope to capture, in responding to the data.

Responding into the dialogue

In responding to the data, I find I need to contextualize the conversation as being fluid, of making sense with each other through storying our experiences together. It is in the telling where the shaping and reshaping of both our Individual, personal and collective viewpoints occur.

It is therefore in the 'in –between' flow of energy in which we construct our lives and ourselves. Constructionism does not   advocate for a relativistic or amoral unethical positioning. Instead, it calls our attention to a coherence and logic of a positioning, and in so doing, draws attention to the coherence of response both individually and culturally, as a way of understanding it.

In my own position, as respondent to the dialogue, I am aware that I bring to my sense making a set of preconceived understandings and patterned ritualistic responses, and yet I attempt to retain a curiosity for the constructs and meaning making of the participants in the dialogue. In order to fully create a place for curiosity and the possibility of hearing the perspective of the other, it requires of us the suspension of the search for singular truths or right/wrong dichotomies. Responsivity requires a trust in, and reflection on, the process, suspending the search for a product. It is in this space where multiple endings become a possibility. In my narration of my own responses, and in my ideas about the responses of the participants, I am aware at certain points in time, that it is one story ending or punctuation which is temporarily and presently available. it is equally possible that the reader, in their own response, may seek and discover other story endings.

As an improvisational dancer, being constantly attuned to the movement of the other is necessary in order to calibrate a movement response. The dance begins and

emerges within a context, where a multiplicity of movements is possible (e.g. a movement of the hand might be responded to by a step forward or equally by a jump or a turn, all that is required is for other dancers to respond). Each response brings forth a texturally qualitatively different dance, although the context within which the dance is situated remains the same.

Duck (1997) says that Improvisation creates a space where something can happen; in a set choreography. Dance improvisation emphasizes the actual moment itself, where any moment brings forth the possibility of creating new choices. Time is experienced in a non-linear, discontinuous way. Whereas in choreographed dance the causal relations are set, every past movement has a function in the creation of future movements in a predetermined mechanistic fashion, and as a consequence, it cannot escape the linear structure of beginning, middle and end. In improvisation however many beginnings and endings occur. Time-lines are twisted and time is perceived in non-logic, disruptive way. (Duck, 1997).

Just as it is in the space and non-sequential time in which the improvisational dance emerges, Kennelly (1999) also draws our attention to space in the opening line of his poem *Too near*. "Do not come too near it is the space between that enables something to grow" (p.53) Perhaps it is in this 'space between' which holds a   lack of familiarity and unpredictability, that new ideas and creations can emerge in response.

While the context of the dialogue was formulized in its structure, the response of participants was spontaneous and non-formulaic. Just as in the improvisational dance space, the dialogue's tension is in simultaneously holding your own ground while letting the other happen to you, with a movement towards an appreciation of multiple values or as in dance, multiple movements.

It is this quality and essence of the dialogue, which I seek to respond to. Rather than a seeking of information in my own responses, I searched for an epiphany of openings to the other, and to consider which movements created movement towards the other, as opposed to movement away from. In my responses both retrospectively to the text and in my in -the -moment position response engaged in the dialogue, it was my intention to seek to speak with and respond to the polyvocality of the emerging discourses. I referred to these positions as 'within' and 'without' in awareness that we are never fully outside or inside, often being inside looking outwards or outside looking inwards, whilst seeming to occupy the internal or external spaces. When I was in responding from 'with-out" position I was reflecting from outside a dialogue I had been a participant in. In some sense, I was simultaneously 'with-in/ with-out. When the reflections were within it was my direct response in the active moment in the dialogue (any reposition or reflection was based on my own internal dialogues taking place contemporaneously).

I sought to respond to, and comment on, the collection of stories. In so doing, as a response I hoped to highlight what for me were arresting movements. As a consequence, I have responded directly to the words of the participants in this review dialogue, as transcribing and highlighting singular aspects tend towards a reconstruction. In this way, the reader has a greater possibility of formulating their own relationship with the text, one that is not filtered through the lens of the respondent authors.

Any punctuating remarks should be considered merely as provocations and invitations to reflection, as opposed to truth statements. Everything is new and nothing is new in the dialogue. It is the character of the expressive moments I wish to highlight, as opposed to the novelty of the content. Rather than seeking patterns and regularities, it is the pathways forward I wish to consider and respond to.

In so responding, I too invite you as reader, to reflect on the following question in your reading of the discourse. What most captured you in conversation? As Shotter states, "being responsive is not a dead landscape --it calls you" (Shotter, 2009)

Responses to the Voiced Multi stakeholder dialogue(s):- Dialogue one

The Participants in the multi stakeholder dialogue came from a cross-section of people involved in Education and Support in the area commonly known as specific learning difficulties (i.e. labels such as Aspergers, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia and ADHD). People living with such labels were also included amongst the participants.

Participant Codes

Given that there were 25 participants in Dialogue One, rather than ascribe an individual identifier to each participant, and in order to both preserve anonymity and to facilitate ease of reading, I have ascribed a distinction based on their representative group as follows:

Education: Included teachers, college lecturers and higher education planners

Multi-disciplinary Professional : includes occupational therapists, psychologists, and speech and language therapists

Services User(s): Includes students and adults over the age of 16 who live with a variety of specific learning difficulty labels

Voluntary organization: includes support groups voluntary and partially state funded most participants were both parents and organizational representatives

Managerial: includes Service planners and managers

Academic: includes staff who have an academic/research interest in this area

Disability support: Includes higher education disability support personnel

The dialogue took place over a two-hour period with recordings of conversations at five tables, with five participants at each table. Due to the restrictions of this work, it would not be possible to provide a response to each utterance of each participant. As an alternative, I have chosen to offer a response to a significant number of individual quotes, and to the summaries from each host at each of the tables.

Contextualizing the conversations

In order to provide a container for the conversations, the facilitators gave a brief introduction to the rationale, key features and expectations of participants in collaborative dialogue, and outlined the pragmatics of the process.

Some of the following issues were highlighted by the facilitators, in relation to collaborative dialogue:

❖ Importance of conversation

❖ Network conversation how people make sense of things, learn from each other, implement decisions, how things get done – meetings where things happen

❖ Predicative tedious outcomes of regular meetings

❖ Creation of new different opportunities for people to engage

❖ Conversations with lively engagement

❖ Structure and context facilitates engagement and contributions

❖ Café Style conversation

❖ Ground rule etiquette, listen don't interrupt or argue

❖ Focus on what matters, important stuff - focus on important questions - everyone has something valuable to say

❖ Listen to each other and make sure everyone can contribute

❖ Link and connect ideas

❖ Doodle and draw - reflect what you want – keep track of your thinking

❖ Participants move from table to table with one person remaining the host remaining and then you can quickly see and hear what they have been saying

Response to Individual quotes

Voluntary organisation: People are individuals they all have their own kind of background and ways of thinking.

Narrator response: This story is one of the need to attend to the uniqueness of each person's own individuality.

Service user: When you were younger all the choices were made for you.

Narrator response: Here the service user is re-storying aspects of her lived experiences, and alludes in particular to loss of choice, which often is associated with being a member of a marginalized group. The experience is so often one of having things done to you, as opposed to with you. It would seem, as if we can all inhabit this position at various junctures in our lives, but perhaps in the experience of marginalization is one in which choices are limited. When people are constructed into particular groups on the basis of expert outsider knowledge, this limiting of the repertoire of choices available can exist for more prolonged periods of time.

Disability support: A lot of people won't come forward although we think there is greater awareness there is still stigma.

Narrator response: It is interesting to consider an expectation of coming forward to define ourselves in particular ways. In the same way, as this disability support worker hypothesizes, the stigma may be a causative factor for not coming forward. I am reminded of how Erving Goffman's (1963) renowned work on asylums highlights the ways in which categories of distinction can bring forth stigmatizing responses which narrow our pathways for living.

Service user: Up to this Educational Psychologists looking from the outside in saying there is a problem this is what we will do to solve it.

Narrator Response: Here again we hear a description from a service user of insider / outsider positions which may possibly be influenced by Cartesian dichotomous ideology of mind and body, potentially leading to 'us and them 'positions of expertise over and expertise about the other. In this project I sought to simultaneously elicit both insider and outsider views, held in a collaborative mutually respectful non-hierarchical positioning, with an orientating towards the other.

Service user: You will always have the bullies who will use it against you.

Narrator response: I am reminded of a discussion by Richard Kearney (2003) in his work strangers*, gods and monsters*, where he suggests that in order to distance ourselves from aspects of ourselves which we fear, we project those characteristics onto the other, as if they are entirely separate from ourselves. Jung (1935) in some of his discussions of archetypes also highlights the ways in which we choose to ignore and project onto the other, negatively and attribute parts of ourselves which we do not wish to integrate or recognize.

Service user: You also need the opinion of people who have been there.

Narrator response: The service user calls us to consider the need for an insider view. This is an idea that is elaborated in the work of Reynolds (2010) in relati

on to a witnessing in solidarity stance. White (1989) uses this idea in his outsider witnessing position(s) where he listens respectfully to the voice of the other as witness and Katz (2000) in her work with a council of elders where she included the voices of the elderly and invites the geriatricians to become witnesses to their narration of their experiences.

> Service user: Label sticks you in a box. Defined, as a person a box needs to be flexible you are more than your label.

Narrator response: Here the service user invites us to consider boxes and the essence of the experience of being inside a box. I am reminded of a creative dance work by an Irish choreographer Bolger (2008) entitled *Boxes*, in which the dancers explore the experience of moving in and out of boxes. In this work, we see how being the inside box limits the movement of the dancer, and at other times, it appears as if the dancer and the box are synomonous.

> Service user: If I was a brunette I wouldn't go and join the brunette society.

Narrator response: With humour, the service user in some ways juxtapositions the whole idea of labels in a way that calls for accountability in both the lack of universality in our application of labels and our collective desire to categorise people based on perceived personal attributes. He is inviting us to consider what we do when we label and ask people to join the society associated with hat label he humorously suggests that maybe we should join the society for every aspect of our personality including hair colour. This humorous somewhat cynical response is in keeping with some of the current criticisms of the proliferation of labels associated with the DSM categories.

> Professional: What is behind the label?

Narrator response: Here the professional is deconstructing meaning.. One wonders if the professional is inviting us to consider the social, cultural and historical construct of our meaning systems.

> Education: Services big-time a label is needed for support in classrooms.

> Professional: A label is only valuable if people understand what it is.

Narrator response: Both professional and educator are in some ways considering values in relation to local usage of labels, and what can be brought forth in their use. Wittgenstein (1953) would suggest that words take their meaning in their usage.

> Service user: A lot of people in the group are saying at job interviews if we tell we lose the job and if we don't we might not get it.

Narrator response: Perhaps Kearney (2003) goes some way towards responding to the above dilemma in the following quote "between these caricatured extremes of modern communicability and postmodern incommunicabity, we would be wiser, I suggest, to continue our search for a way between" "A path which enables us to walk

at sea level, charting itinerary between the bipolar swings of cognitive binarism" (p. 187). For me this quote not only suggests the possibility of a move away from either /or dualities, but also in some ways encapsulates aspects of this project dialogue in relation to labels, placing a sea level pathway between the words 'dis 'and 'abilty'.

> Disability support: It's interesting in terms of my own job what I find is young people diagnosed early are more comfortable talking about their difficulties and their needs.

Narrator response: Here, I wondered about the impact of how the stories told about us can become the stories with which we begin to narrate our lives.   It can be difficult to tell a story about ourselves that is different from the one we hear which has narrated our lives. While the disability worker is positive about those people who can articulate needs and difficulties, it is also interesting to consider what stories get privileged and which ones are silenced. As in Whites (1989) therapeutic idea of unique outcomes, or in the appreciative enquiry (Cooperider & Whitney 2005) emphasis on appreciative approaches both seek to elicit the 'not yet heard' (Mc Carthy et al., 1989, Garfinkel 1967) thereby bringing forth-alternative possibilities.

> Service user: It's funny any one of us here at interview will sell ourselves but we won't say I don't manage my money well and my house is a mess.

Narrator response: Humor has the capacity to highlight the nonsensical and the inherent contradictions within which we live our lives. In this instance, the service user, using a humourous tone, suggests that we should all be invited to call forth our greatest weaknesses at interview, as a way of drawing attention to the absurdity of requiring or recommending that people who live with dis-ability labels should be highlighting at job interviews the areas which would be more personally challenging for them. Interestingly, in so doing, he also inadvertently provides a commentary on the norms and constructs and rules of engagement we have constructed socially around job interviews. It would be an interesting experience to invite all job applicants to speak to the ways in which life itself provides challenges for them.

> Education: Some people with Aspergers have taught themselves humor.

Narrator response: Here the commentary appears to be around normative ideas of how we need to live with recognition of difference. It also suggests the resilience and resistance of the human spirit. He is nonetheless suggesting that when we create normative discourse about what it is to be human that people measure themselves against those norms and often try to live into them. This is not necessarily a helpful societal discourse as it is not inclusive of difference but seeks to remediate it. Here in this example the person with the label Aspergers has worked hard to meet 'normative' expectations.

> Education: McDonalds advert was just nauseating you have this guy with a disability in his uniform all like McDonalds' do this look what we do for the community.

Disability support: Employers delighted with themselves tokenism.

Service user: All of the isms – sexism, ageism, and classism.

Narrator response: This part of the conversation appears centered in some ways around a charitable benevolence, which exists in our ways of thinking about charity. These ideas are possibly influenced by Victorian workhouse ideas of the deserving poor, religious moral ideas of gaining extra karma for ourselves when we do good onto others, and a medical model curative benevolent paternalistic stance. It seems as if this particular type of stance also influences, or forms, part of the current dominant discourse of many large corporations. They attend to their social and corporate responsibility, in tokenistic paternalistic ways, almost in the same way as we offset our carbon footprint to exonerate ourselves as we wreak havoc on the planet. (Freire 1978)

Professional: It's a huge issue thinking back on projects I was involved in we did deficit based presentations we presented what people can't do, we should have focused more on achievements and individual strengths.

Service user: Thing with a label is if you get stuck in it but you are much more than it.

Service user: Always think of the time I went to rugby didn't know one end of a ball from the other and the coach said do you want to play for Ireland and I was motivated by his focus on possibility.

Professional: We all need to be encouraged to be happy being who we are.

Narrator response: Re-storying and re-viewing can often invite us to reflect on the impact of the ways in which we had positioned ourselves at various points in time. John Burnham (1986) refers to relational reflexivity, when therapists together with their clients, reflect on possible discourses available to them within client conversations. Relational reflexivity opens a wider range of reflections to us, as we reflect together on possibilities. This is in contrast to self-reflexivity, which is an internal dialogue with the multiple dialogical selves. Both manners of reflexive re-viewing encourage us to consider our own position more from an external meta perspective, as a way of leading potentially to repositioning differently, if deemed useful.

Often when we review aspects of our lived experience in this way, we may become a little more aware of dimensions we had previously not had available to us within our operational frameworks. In this instance, the professional in conversation with, and influenced by, service users, is referring to a previous project she had been involved with and how she now saw impacts which she had not previously noticed.

Voluntary organization: Increase in awareness but it needs to be brought further.

Service user: Years ago it was looked at as being lazy.

Manager: Acknowledging the differences and giving the support.

Education: Not such stigma.

Disability support: People don't want to identify themselves is that because its not the main feature of their personality.

Disability support: Students coming to third level without a diagnosis more open to support others with labels don't want to know the label hasn't helped them.

Voluntary organisation: I have a son with aspergers he was delighted to get the label made sense of things for him.

Academic: We all think disabilities need to be thought about in particular ways.

Voluntary organisation: I still think if we don't name disability people will still go back into the community unsupported and have nowhere to go.

Disability support: Make sure your identity is not corroded by the label.

Voluntary organization: Not just your self-esteem as a person with a disability has to be attended to- Label shouldn't be who you are.

Professional: People should be educated to accept people who are different to them selves.

Academic: Like the man at the other table said a person with a disability is part of a family part of a community.

Manager: Now people have to get out of this medical model.

Education: teach the child not the disability

Disability support: not the label its what we perceive the label to be by using a label sometimes we think everyone is the same

Voluntary organization: not every dyspraxia person cant ride a bike don't want to be seen as a homogenous group and I have met dyslexic people who can read war and peace backwards.

Narrator response: This segment of the conversation included a representative cross-section of all the participants reflecting together on the meaning of disability labels, and a consideration of a more helpful stance of acknowledging need for support, while at the same time being aware of "how identity can be corroded by the label". It seemed as if, at this part of the process, there was a convergence of views, a holding together the tensions, but also as if each individual now held the tension or existence of simultaneous competing discourses within their own perspectives.

 Each table at the end of each round of conversation provided responses to the questions they had been discussing I call these the Host Table summaries. I do not provide the entire host table summaries for each discussion but excerpts fro m a variety of tables. I have numbered the tables for ease of reading but the participants at each table changed after each round of conversations so the summaries are not reflective of views from a static group.

Response to Host Table 1 summaries

Education- University lecturer summarizing views of one of the tables

On positive side happy to get diagnosis help them get the supports they needed but on the negative side disappointed if they didn't get supports they needed

Felt for labels when people were doing exams they were put into separate rooms to do their exams as they needed special supports transcribers extra time etc

Positive and negative some people didn't like to be put out separated- wanted to do their exam in the main room feeling people were saying oh look they are different

Converse of that was that people thought it was a good thing they had a bit of peace room to themselves and were able to concentrate on what they were doing so kind of pros and cons of having labels

Narrator response: The dialogue appears to have brought forth the competing discourses in less definitive ways, and was more tentative than at the outset of the conversation. At this point it seems as if in the reporting back that participants had begun to hold their ideas more lightly.

Response From Host at another table 2

There was a feeling that age of diagnosis mattered the point there was that the younger children who were diagnosed were living their whole life with this label and we are having to deal with kids at both primary and secondary – you know they were struggling with their peers you know kids are cruel to each other in the third level colleges if you had a label because the students were more mature people were more accepting of differences so the age mattered as to when you were found out if you weren't diagnosed until third level you were more included more accepted when you are younger you are, living your life all the time with this label and struggling with the cruelty you know they way the way kids are mean to each other We felt for labels there were pros and cons

People being put in separate rooms for exams could be stigmatizing

Oh look they are different

Some people felt it was a good thing quieter easier to concentrate

Age of diagnosis mattered

The younger children diagnosed lived their whole life with this label

Struggling with peers in 3rd level easier more included and accepted

Struggling with cruelty in education

 Labels Empowered people to access support greater understanding not bold or difficult

Parents more control had something to work with

Getting a label can be liberating

Labels can be positive

Hard to know how to define yourself

Difficult to know impact of using label

Don't always want to be labeled as different but sometimes need support

Can be positive this is my disability and I am allowed to be accepted as being different

Always known the system has to be driven by parents they put pressure on for inclusion

Perspectives parents have importance

one thing that struck me is how much people rely on support groups

Narrator response: In the summary from this table the idea of pros and cons emerges again and a shift to mutual understandings of the dilemmas of situating yourself in one domain or another. It is almost a view outwards from the inside, and a view inwards from the outside, -a making visible – as in when we shine light in the shadows new visions become available – nothing has changed in the structure or context only the shadows have been illuminated.

Summary of discussion from Host at another table 3

I gained Fresh perspectives shifts in thoughts

Leaned that label can be good and bad

Good because they explain experiences and why a person experiences certain difficulties bad because they can be reductionist

Label gives only an umbrella term strengths and weaknesses within that

I have a greater understanding of what each label actually means and the variance there can be

Importance of Social inclusion not feeling different

Feel isolated in school system

When you are working in the system it can be exhausting

Personal experiences need to be recognized as very important

Narrator response: The participants are reflecting on new ideas they now have as a result of being a participant in conversation. They are also reflecting on how the actual process has impacted on them and on what created resonances for them.

I think we are probably all talked out now keeping morning short was good

Wonderful opportunity to bring this model into disability services

It's like the speed dating of disability energizing

People forget the importance of feedback from parents and young people doing my job you need to actually hear again what the students have to say

Getting feedback from all the people working in the area is really helpful

Good to be able to write your point down

This way helped everyone speak

Liberating because you are speaking to so many people with different backgrounds at once

Gives Hope for the future

Narrator response: These reflections came towards the end of the dialogue and are predominantly centered on the process and structure of the dialogue itself, and the participant's experience of it. It was heartening. Some of my own resonances were with words like: energizing, hope, helping everyone speak, wonderful opportunity and connected me back with some of the principles and values which had seemed important to me at the outset of this project. These include inclusivity, equal voice and participation. I had not considered the idea of creating hope as being one of the possible outcomes, and it was with both appreciation and concern that I greeted this statement. Appreciation that the dialogue had for someone inspired hopefulness, and conversely, concern about the possibility that the ways in which we sometimes converse in dis-ability services may lead to a sense hopelessness.

Review dialogue
Structured Conversational Review Dialogue
A YEAR LATER

This review dialogue/conversation took place a year following the original larger scale multi stakeholder dialogue. Participants were as follows:

- ❖ **D:** An Educator in Special Educational needs, M Student with label of specific learning difficulties SPLd

- ❖ **L:** Student with label of Spld

- ❖ **T:** Psychologist

- ❖ **A**: Self

The format for this conversation was more structured than the previous open dialogue. This conversation was structured by both the questions asked and the rotation of responses with each question. This method of being conversation left that the potential for leading to new possibilities in conversation, in an iterative responsive process. There was no format for the questions, nor was there any advanced template or plan, it was an in- the- moment responsive approach . Nonetheless, the conversation was structured in such a way that each participant was invited to respond. The purpose/rationale of this review conversation had been to capture reflections of the participants on and since their involvement in the previous multi- stakeholder dialogue, and to simultaneously create a context to allow for the emergence of new ideas.

Researcher response
In my response to the dialogue, I will highlight the positioning from which I am predominantly responding, with awareness that positioning too is always partial and constantly in flux.

I have referred to these positions as 'within', when I am actually a dialogue participant, and 'without' when I am reflecting from outside of it. Although both are partial reflections, I have not provided commentary on my own internal dialogical self when I am within the dialogue, nor have I speculated on the internal dialogues of the participants or provided commentary on my own multiple repositioning as response.

> **D:** I am sure you have your own views on these things
>
> **M:** being service users ???
>
> **M:** What's the PhD in ?

My response from without (*i.e.* on reflecting upon the text).

In rereading this question I began to wonder if I explained it enough. Did people know what they were consenting to.

My response from within the dialogue.

> **A:** The Social construction of disability …how can conversations between stakeholders bring people together in conversation and how it might bring about a different conversation ?

> **A:** One of the things that happen in disability services is sometimes users voice is just accessed via a questionnaire.

My Response from without:

In responding to the comment above, I wondered if I had in some way shaped the conversation by being declarative, by not being tentative in my own response. Similarly, below in drawing attention to what it was that I had seen emerging in the data i.e. the inherent contradictions of positioning s, I wondered had I shaped the conversation as opposed to inviting a response from the participants.

> **A:** I am looking at possibilities – looking at different things one of the things I have found is that there are contradictory statements all over the place Really finding the space to hope all the ideas…….Even now sometimes teachers having awareness is important but sometimes they think that they know

> **A:** I gave you some quotes on the page Eg 'teach the Child not the disability' those kind of comments were interesting 'We are not the label ' "Different ideas about what a label means "

Response from without:

Again I reflect on how my own reification of certain pieces of information to a certain privileged status and how that might in turn shape the response of the other- a kind of vectoring.

> **A:** Response from within:

> **A:** Don't know what I will end up with – emerging themes.

Response from without:

And yet here again I find myself reflecting on the shift in my own positioning, a shift towards a more tentative stance in response to my own previous more definitive positions.

N: started off on one road and ended up on another

Response from without:

I am excited to consider how M is in some ways referring to the multiplicity of possible endings

> **A:** Interested in wider ideas

M: people's perceptions of disability

Chat ………

> **A:** Maybe hear first from you… thoughts you had after you went away from conversation… did it impact any way on you? Did it impact on how you went on? Did you have any further ideas about it ? Like to hear a bit from all of you.

Response from without:

Here I am inviting a reflection on the earlier dialogue, and in writing, remembering the moment of suspension before the conversation begins, wondering what will emerge, it is a point at which any pathway is possible. It reminds me of the post structural movie 'run lola run' in which three endings are possible, or 'sliding doors' in which two stories are simultaneously presented in parallel.

And yet at each juncture in the dialogue, multiple choices are available as responses.

B: so long ago I forget some of it

Response from without:

Here I am disappointed that due to a variety of circumstances, much time elapsed between one dialogue and another. I began to wonder what different stories might now be possible that might not have been, if the review dialogue had taken place immediately, so this is another narration on another story.

Response from within:

> **A:** Yeah I know, I had hoped to have this conversation sooner, but… is there anything that particularly you remember from it?

Response from without:

I imagine I was disappointed and still hoping to capture something of how the dialogue had been for the participants. I realized that rather than trying to re-capture, we could begin to create a new story together, which might include and build on some aspects of the previous dialogue.

N: the drawing on the tables

Response from without:

I was pleased to note that this participant in particular had found the visual aspect of the dialogue memorable. I am influenced by the multiple intelligences ideas of Gardner, and variety of learning styles and the need to respond to all ways of being in the world, as our predominantly tendency is to focus mostly on auditory learners.

> **A:** Ok yeah

N: I think that was a really good idea – good research idea.

Mm yeah

A: What about you L?

Response from without:

I am attempting to invite the wealth of possible perspectives.

> **L:** more a case for me of the whole discussion on the labels – sort of what's the whole idea of what labels mean to different people

Like I always took the label as being something you would use to for lobbying for help rather than it being a hindrance to some people

Response from without:

This commentary highlighted for me a moving towards the other in dialogue, and how the dialogue had created new constructions and mutual influences. In his response, L is drawing attention to how his own ideas in relation to labels shifted in response to the ideas of the other(s) in the

Response from within:

> **A:** So that kind of surprised you hearing other people say that?

> **L:** Just hearing a lot of people say one thing and then hearing others saying well it's not working in my case.

Sort of everybody is not the same is what struck me

> **A:** so your thinking shifted a little?

> **D:** Yeah I moved from being in a position sort of labels being good which I still think to but it's sort of they have to be sort of applied and used correctly rather than sort of people saying this is what this label means say need for a big broad definition rather than a narrow definition

Reponses from without:

Here L is referring to movement and repositioning – how his own hearing others speak of their constructions in relation to labels facilitated a shift in his own thinking to one that allowed for simultaneous multiple discourses (i.e. the idea that everyone is not the same and then subsequently his idea of how meaning is not commonly shared and a questioning of the possibility of one application or a shared understanding). I was interested on reflecting upon the context which creates possibility for allowing the other to happen to you here.

> **A-D:** What thought did you have?

Response from both within and without:

I am attempting to widen the conversation to include the views of all the participants

> **D:** They were different from those I have to say I came with - I suppose my job is mostly to talk about disability as it relates to schools and educational settings and things like that, so I usually go in to talk -so it was a very different

experience for me to be in where I went in and everybody had a voice not just a voice but an equal voice.

In fact I would say the young lad at my table had a lot to say, so people like that, their voice is much louder in that setting. I suppose I was interested in the process you were using and obviously some of the things that were said were very powerful.

But in terms of process, you know it was one where everybody said their pieces, you know, and eh, there was equal weight and value.

Response from without:

Here D seems to be highlighting how his experience of the dialogue was qualitatively different from other experiences. My response from without is one, which considers how the structure of the dialogue shaped this context of 'equal voice'. I was interested in his use of the words equal voice' and 'volume of voice' and 'powerful voice' and reminded of Tom Anderson's (2007) ideas of walking into words to look around inside them. In this discussion of voice, I was interested in considering the perspective of voice and voicelessness, and this participant's reflection on how his context had created space for voices that are not normally heard, one where personal experience gets privledged. I wonder, in reflecting on privilege, what gets silenced? I was also curious to know if in privileging experiences, did the voices of professional experience become more marginalized, or did all participants in the dialogue experience equality of voice equally.

> **A:** Em, ok.
>
> **D:** For then people who read and teach about these things from a different perspective..So I thought that was what I came away with …it just kind of struck me that it would be a really good way to approach policymaking.

Response from without:

I am again both struck and heartened that D's experience was such a positive one that he is suggesting this type of multi-stakeholder dialogue as a policy. That it might have the possibility of eliciting perspectives to shape policy. I am also concerned that my own response might relate to the danger of seeking only the answer to the question you started with (i.e. my tentative hypothesis that multi-stakeholder dialogues are a useful way of reviewing and planning service delivery in the disability sector). Cognizant of my own potential biases, I hold my ideas more lightly, as if this is one possibility amongst a multiplicity of options.

Response from within:

> **A:** It yes…so that's what I am looking at that is part of my research question. You asked me M, what was I planning to do at the beginning. I started looking at constructs of disability, and then decided what actually what might be useful so my research question is: How can you use that kind of dialogue and how can it be helpful in planning and reviewing service delivery. So I am really more looking now at the process which is why I asked you that question and…. the other

question is- was your thinking reshaped in the process. But I am also really interested in that bit about equality of voice, because I was wondering was that all of your experience- did you also feel your voice was equally heard and valued in the conversation or…

Response from without:

My initial positioning here would suggest I am seeking to confirm my own ideas and biases (i.e. that multi-stakeholder dialogue does create equality of voice), but then I shift 'as if' I noticed this positioning to widen the lens to include the variety of perspectives in relation to this particular question.

> **M:** I think it was it was very level and…..kind of ….the non users and the user's had a level playing field …..

Here M is referring to service users (i.e. those who live with various labels) and non-service users (i.e. professionals managers etc.), and the fact that the context was one of equality. For me, this was a particularly arresting moment (Shotter & Katz, 1998) and in some sense in my own response I am privileging the perspective of the service user. This arises from both my own personal experiences, as both professional consultant and parent in relation to disability services, combined with the influences of reading literature in relation to marginalization.   I sought to incorporate an emancipatory inclusive methodology (Oliver, 1990), one which might reflect more what we could create together in this project, as equal participants, given my concerns about marginalization, subjugation of voice and subject /object dichotomization I was concerned as Sampson (1993) would suggest that in our very experiences of, and socialization into, marginalized roles, it can be difficult to step out of those experiences and find new ways of both responding and being responded to that are qualitatively different. In hearing and reading this participant response, I was deeply touched by this commentary about experiencing 'a level playing field'. – Many of my ideas in this project and others, were and are concerned with, the dichotomies of voice and voicelessness and oppression and inclusion. This response suggested that in this dialogue, both the service users and service providers had found a level space from which to speak and be heard.

> **M:** To talk and discuss that this is what's going on …that this is what we feel and the response of I didn't realize you guys felt like that. You know, it's kind of like when you are in a classroom it doesn't always work.

Response from without:

Here M is referring to the idea of being heard and responded to (i.e. voicing her view) and having an acknowledging response (i.e. 'I didn't realize you guys felt like that'). In addition, she is indirectly referring to having the possibility of the other taking a way, a new understanding, of her experience. She then goes on to say how the classroom context is not conducive to this kind of exchange.

Response from within:

A: And what do you think M helped kind of create a more level equal ….is there anything?

N: on the actual day?

A: Yeah.

N: I think it was sitting around the table.

A: Ok.

A: The actual physical sitting around the table?

M: Em, as opposed to we were all kind of sitting around, as opposed to the idea coming into someone's office and they sit on one side of the table and you sit on the other side, and there is this barrier between you – where we sat at circular tables.

In a way though you could remove the tables and sit the way we are now in a circle.

A: So the informality and the physical structure

N: yeah yeah

L: its not one person sitting or standing and speaking to the whole group of us, its sort of everyone got their say like – I know there is a lot of times people sort of think that people are just trying to push their views out instead of listening to what other people have to say

A: right

L: So it sort of brought everyone down to a level playing field?

L: And letting everybody have their few minutes to speak.

A: so even that giving time for everyone an opportunity to contribute.

Response from without:

The discussion is focusing on the physical structuring of the dialogue, the context from which to speak in and out of, the lack of barriers and the circularity and structuring of time for everyone to speak. It seems while the dialogue itself was not formulaic, the structuring appears to have contributed to the creation of a context in this dialogue, one that allowed for what participants refer to as 'equality of voice'.

Response from without:

This view is in contrast to my own ethical positioning that equality of voice is not possible, as power is always in play in dialogue (Foucault, 1980).

M: Yeah, it was because its normal even with adult users, the adults will say to them this is what you are doing, this is what you have to do and for want of a better word the children users are very much told and they don't question, as obviously they are inferiors so they know they can't say anything, whereas it should be talked more saying like well you tried that approach how is that working for you that kind of interaction should be used more.

Response from without:

Here my initial response is visceral. It is one of sadness, which relates to my own ideas of justice and the right to be heard. Here M is speaking to the experiences of many people with dis-ability, in relation to the reduction of choice in their lives and the ways in which decisions are often made on their behalf. It also speaks to how children with a disability are even less likely to have a space to have their views heard in relation to their own needs. M then goes on to suggest an alternative, more helpful positioning, that both include ideas from professionals and the views of service users in a more collaborative co creative exchange.

Response from within:

> **A:** And had you ever had that experience before?

Response from without:

I think I may have been unsure of where to go next – (i.e. should I create more space for the extent of these difficult his-stories to unfold and be heard (arising from my influences of many years as a therapist) and as a way of being attentive to their impact and also try to understand more which contexts caret more collaborative spaces and which ones are experiences as shutting down possibilities s or should I just follow the lead of the participants

> **D:** Yeah in different context absolutely ….what I thought really was very good as well as the round tables, was what they were based on – like if you have something that is based on a few examples like an analogy something open ended that allows   everyone to contribute in a way that suits them, where in comparison its usually an academic process and I also look at what's been written from your perspective. . The way it then just comes through my particular perspective

Response from without:

D's appreciative focused response here moved the conversation away to the positive aspects of the dialogue context which had been helpful i.e. in contributing to creating a collaborative context.

> **D:** also suggests   ideas here analogical to Shotter's (2008)) in highlighting how even in academic texts there is little written from the perspective of service users which is not filtered through the lens of a professional academic like himself – It was for this reason I have chosen in this review conversation to allow the voices of the participants speak rather than analyze, categories or filter the texts.

> **D:** In this case and so the context in which I used this before was in exchanges between X and Y process … In Education if you wanted to look at a way of engaging people and establishing evaluating processes it's a useful process

Response from without

Here, D is commenting on a prior experience he had, of something similar and how this process might be useful in an educational context, as both a way of engaging people and as a way of evaluating. I remain curious, to make more sense and develop further my own understandings of what it is about this process that engages people more than other Processes they currently are and have been involved with. I am aware of the writings of the Public conversations Project (Roth, et. Al.1992) in terms of crafting important questions and yet here it seems the key issues seem to be more about engagement, being heard, equality of voice and the physical structures of space and time which the participants in the dialogue, are highlighting and drawing our attention to.

T joined

> **D:** Analogy where we have the ground here the roots here and the branches above and we could apply it to this process where the roots were just content with what was being offered ...Things that allow everyone to contribute from their own experience and value everyone's experience equally that's really powerful. I think it's a very useful way to go on.

Response from without:

I am drawn here to D's metaphor of roots and branches and how in some respects the roots have little awareness of the branches but with awareness of the branches the possibilities are extended outwards and upwards.

> **A:** T, I was introducing where the research has gone and then we were looking more at process than the content of specific learning difficulties ... Coming to speaking in non academic ways. . Presenting it where people are at is what made the difference so that's where we got to ... I'm interested in hearing your view

Response from without:

Here, I am trying to find away of including T in some of what has gone before as the scaffolding to the current conversation.

> **T:** in some way my own experience was the difference between using labels and what the text books say, and how people on the ground function,. . and in my own work from doing assessments and talking to adults with SPLd's,. . the difficulties at the end of the day are practical not this text book stuff that we talk about .... at the end of the day its practical strategies and recommendations that work. That's what makes the differences not labels – from listening to individuals who have say dyslexia or dyspraxia or whatever it is, from listening to them the testimonies of them

Response from without:

Here, I am interested in what is being spoken about as being people's experiences on the ground "their testimonies", 'the insider stories'. I am reminded of Wittgenstein's (1953) ideas about language in particular the idea that it's in its use that we know

words and language. I wondered if it's in the experience that we also know it too from the inside out so to speak. T speaks here about pragmatics, function, experience and giving voice to the powerful accounts of real life experiences 'the testimonials. '

Response from within:

> **A:** was there anything that struck you from being part of that conversation; that bigger conversation that you went away and thought about that was different for you? or ……
>
> **T:** it's probably more it confirmed for me that it's is so important to listen to each individual… the things that were said on the day particularly from the young people who were there …the importance of being listened to and the types of difficulties people had…. that no one person was going to be the same as the next one and their need and strengths were different.

Response from without:

Here T draws our attention to the complete irrelevance of categories of distinction in the knowledge that we are all different. She also speaks to the importance of hearing and listening to those clients' accounts of and narrations of their own lives.

> **D:** I also think we came away with the idea that we are always looking at things from our own perspective and go away thinking my god I really have to get out of this more often and broaden my perspectives more often as we keep forgetting the perspective of others.
>
> **T:** yeah yeah
>
> **D:** and people say really important things.
>
> **T:** and yeah there were parents there as well.

Response from without:

Here I am interested that both of the professionals have been so struck by the importance of what was said by the service Users and the parents of service users. It was interesting is how they both became more aware of their own positioning and the need to stay open to the viewpoint of others and move out of an expert positions. ' I have to get out of this more often and broaden my perspective more' 'often we forget the perspective of the other'. There was also a reflexive acknowledgement of professional positioning and its potential role in silencing some perspectives.

Response from within:

> **A:** that's interesting as I was also curious coming into the research wondering about challenging professional views of labels a bit – I need to acknowledge my own biases too and yes it's interesting to step out of our perspectives and I need to step out of mine too.
>
> And its very interesting to hear the views of others and I think that makes us think a bit.

So for you as service users, was there anything that was useful or different or interesting about hearing the professionals talk?

Things you might not have them say before?

Or had you been in other conversations with professionals in this kind of a way before

Response from without:

Here, I am attempting to acknowledge that perhaps we all have our biases and it can be useful for all of us, including myself to suspend our ideas as a way of being open to the other … I also in so doing acknowledge here that both of the professionals are saying as a result of taking a position they saw the familiar in unfamiliar ways (Wittgenstein (1953). Then I am seeking to ascertain if the other participants, the service users, heard or experienced anything new about professional discourses that they had not experienced before.

> **M:** I remember talking to one or two parents and those conversations stick out; of how they found their kids and worrying at the time and then for them looking at the likes of myself and L and P ….we would be a lot older and show them that it is possible to get through it and that you can succeed. And them saying little J has this wrong, not wrong little j does this and me saying yeah I did that but this is what I do now. So from a parents side showing them progression ….I don't know as much about talking to the professionals
>
> **L:** I was but I don't remember particularly…. I remember the parents more

Response from without:

Here, I am surprised that the conversations with parents that had impacted most on these two service users. In some ways it was interesting to see the ideas of hope and despair (McCarthy & Sheehan 2007). Here, it was important to these participants to give parents who were despairing a sense of hope of possibility and in their very presence they had contributed to parents finding another way of construing " M says here one of the parents says little J has something wrong and he does " and she moves on to point out how it's not necessarily wrong, she did it too but she now has more resourceful ways of managing this issue. I considered this interchange as one of inspiring hopefulness. I had not anticipated how the presence of young people living successfully with Splds and speaking about their experiences would be an inspiration to parents of younger children who lived with similar labels.

> **A:** so that struck you being a resource to them in some way
>
> **M:** yeah
>
> **L:** yeah, I can't really remember back to the more finer details but I do know that talking to people about the younger people, the parents of the younger children, there was a common delight that we got to college they were sort of had the same thing.. They had kids that were in primary school and they were sort of saying em yeah they would be lucky if they get a job at the end of it and

saying incredulously you's are in college… the parents were… sort of professionals were telling them one thing and I suppose by not trying to get their hopes up too much had disillusioned them so it's better with hope.

Response from within:

Here again, L is speaking about how professional discourses can be disillusioning and how hearing real life experience can elicit hope. This has been both a personal and professional interest of my own; the question as to; how can we speak about challenges that require support in ways that hold hope? Often the response here professionally has been to either look at deficit or to simultaneously focus on both strengths and difficulties. This approach sometimes does not touch dreams and possibilities. This reminds of the idea of daring to dream, professionals are often worried about dreaming and hoping as they have concerns not to be misleading about potential possibilities Professional discourses in dis-abilty are frequently located in difficulty or remediation talk. Perhaps if we do not situate our dreams our hopes in truth statements but live the moment in all its glory of hopefulness, these kinds of dilemmas might be less problematic (Freire 2001).

My response here comes in part out of many of my own experience including at diagnosis of my daughter being told by the consultant to 'take my daughter home and give her TLC she would amount to nothing " had I been told to take her home love her and enjoy who she was the possibilities of hope remained. Karl Tomm(1990) refers to this as therapeutic violence.

Response from within:

> **A:** so you know the way assessments can focus on gaps
>
> **D:** yeah they are very powerful telling them all the bad things rather than the good things

Response form without:

Here, D is referring to how language is constitutive (Gergen, 1999) and how the stories we tell and that are told about us bring forth understandings in the construction of selfhood (Sarbin, 1986) … D is referring here to the language of psychological assessments and how the focus is often on deficit, which then becomes the story …

Response from within:

> **A:** yeah that's what I was finding when looking at what people were saying about labels not just about putting people in boxes you are seen by what you can't do and even with the functional it becomes a list of functions that you can do and a list of functions that you can't do and parents get into that piece of looking at all the things that are difficult where I think. …That's the despair the piece I think what you were saying L is giving hope back.
>
> **T:** and as a professional you know what the right thing to do is focus on strengths and abilities s and we always do that its like that day the café what was it called?

A: dialogue??

T: You can't hear it often enough people saying stop focusing on the negatives and no matter how many times we hear it and we try …its still important to be reminded of it

M: yeah it's important

Response from without:

This was a poignant moment of exchange between a service user and a Psychologist who acknowledges how hard she tries to be positive. I speculate that maybe because of professional dominant discourses (Foucault, 1980) and the impact of the medical model, it can be difficult to hold this positioning. She states how important it is for her to have these salutary reminders to hold this more positive focus in her way of being in conversation with parents and those who live with labels. M's response here is to reiterate how important it is to hold a positive focus. Her voice tone and body language at this point was emphatic but had a note of regret as if suggesting she hoped it could be different.

> **T:** … and I suppose people are coming to me to look for help for their difficulties so if I were not to define it as a difficulty and not to help… that's difficult as well but its good to hear it from people that keep being reinforced about not focusing negatively

Response from without

Here, we see T struggle with role and the dominant discourses in relation to what it is to be a professional. She is exploring what is it that is expected of me, and how can I both deliver and not deliver simultaneously. Here, I am reminded of some of the work of Vikki Reynolds (2009) in relation to burn out in health professionals when their personal values and the values of the system within which they work are not congruent and create a misfit, resulting in spiritual pain.

> **D:** and it does happen by accident, I wouldn't like to give the impression professionals intentionally focus on the negative. As you said people come to you for help for these problems and you start off by them saying it's all difficult and you contextualise things for ages but at the end of the day, we are asked to deliver content on a number of areas, that are ultimately set by the department on resource issues.
>
> **T:** that's it
>
> **D:** and resource allocation complicates things ….So that people come with the expectation of being told about dyslexia ….
>
> **T:** And we start off by saying people see absolutely no difference between their ability to use language understand etc they are all say… but what do I do with the ones that aren't dyslexia do you know…. tell me what I need to do and I will just do it.

D: So there is a degree to which you are stuck in the situation. Say one of the teachers says 'if I bring my car into a garage and there is something wrong with it I expect to be told what it is and how to fix it –I don't want someone to tell me all the things that are right with it" …You know and the first thing I say It's not a fix

Yeah, but that was his perspective he was coming to the course with that expectation and he wants us to help him fix… what I see is wrong here in front of me.

Response from without:

Here, the discussion is between the two professionals with a focus on the inherent difficulties in the system, the expectations on them from other professionals (local professional discourse) as well as from the Department of Education (wider social discourse) and despite their own desire to situate themselves differently and the resultant stress for them working within the constraints of a resource driven system with a focus on deficits, labels and fix (curative positions –medical model) they are both struggling to find ways to address these personal and professional dilemmas. They are contextualizing here their own roles within the wider dominant discourses in relation to dis-ability. What is striking is that at this point in the dialogue is that there is a convergence of views emerging, in relation to the negative impact of disabling(labeling) discourses, not just on service users but also on the professionals who work with them.

Response from within:

A: That's a real medical model idea of it isn't it?

That's when we go back to how do we think about dis-ability anyway, do we think about understanding the broad range of diversity in human society…. everyone is different we are all unique and have individual needs or do we think about it as that that idea about fix and you know ….

And I suppose we are very influenced by the medical still. . Where doctors are trained to cure and you know we have this idea of what's normal

Response from without:

I shared some of my own views here in terms of understanding wider contexts. These are contexts that create positions arising out of culturally located dominant discourses. I shared these ideas at the time with a view to opening up the conversation and to contributing to an understanding of the impact of discursive contexts on both the people who use services and on how services are delivered. I was also in away trying to reduce the potential for blame by widening the perspective to include the cultural location of labeling discourses.

M: A lot of the time I found myself coming up with my own solutions to problems.You know em like getting around town I use the train; I type in where I am going from but I always go to the same destination station. Even when I was

coming to you today, I always type in Tara street 'cos I know Grand canal is only two more stops but I always use Tara street as my anchor because I can find it it's easier to work out Tara street... so that's what I mean ....

I work around spelling errors by using this kind of structure you know what I mean ...So a lot of the time I don't think people realize you actually have any issue

You only know this when something out of the ordinary takes place; like wanting to find the time to get somewhere else. And you realize I can do this' cos I know my way to Tara street... em I can find the same thing for a bus. . You develop your own strategies..A lot of the time people say users can get over their own problems themselves, try and they do try and work stuff out themselves. won't always need support

Response from without:

Here, M is giving us some examples from her own experience of what might be pathologised as a difficulty but how she has found her own strategies for resolution. She also suggests that many people can find their own inner resourceful solutions that work for them and may not need expert support. I am particularly interested in this viewpoint, as it relates to the lens form which we view the world. Here, M is suggesting that in some senses disability in relation to certain issues only becomes so when viewed in this way. Rose (1999) suggests that the aim of critical psychology would be to make visible the relations profoundly ambiguous in their implications, between the ethics of subjectivity, the truths of psychology and the exercise of power.

> **T:** one things I was surprised at that I heard that day is that you have set up a support group in the college and it's a great idea I just remember being impressed – I was just also impressed that the students didn't have a problem joining the society and they didn't feel a stigma associated with joining the society do they?
>
> **L:** a lot of people don't join. We know they have as we see them in exams with laptops but they don't all join, well we ask them would you like to sign up to the society? NO
>
> **M:** the likes of P he finished classes at 3 and waited 'til 6 for the meeting because he really wanted to be there and he has been very helpful and... but he is completely opposite to some of the people. He says in the common area he will walk up and say it. There are some people who don't want to but initially we have had a good response from people who wanted to join. It's like organizing any group, mixed reaction is what I would say about that.
>
> **L:** and you organise something and people don't always turn up hard to know if they are busy or do they not want people to know and then the following year they won't sign up.

Response from without:

Here, both L and M are allowing for diverse response in terms of needs to a college society that has been set up to provide support but they are also aware that in constituting itself this way that people have to define themselves by a set of characteristics they may not wish to be defined by.

> **M:** part of the problem is there is so much and come to college and its not confidential. when they are in school ms. x comes in and you are called out and then they all go what was she called out for? and it sort of makes them afraid.

Response from without:

M is speaking here about difference and being defined as being different by a practice in school of being called out form regular classes for additional support but the act of so doing results in her being defined differently and peers subsequently enquiring about the nature of these differences, possibly leading to a self description which may be neither desirable and may be forced into a public domain of self definition. Goffman (1963) speaks of the "stigma" associated with spoiled identities-identity attacks.

M is also suggesting that this experience of being forcefully defined differently has been a painful one. One from which many people would be fearful of repeating and postulates this as a hypothesis, as to why, at third level education, people do not disclose any academic difficulties they might be experiencing. Here she in some ways is calling our attention to how our experiences shape how we go on.

> **A:** do you think it could be different M in secondary?

Response from without:

Here, I am attempting to elicit her views as to what might be the difference that could make a difference"(Bateson 1972) in terms of perceptions, understanding and positioning.

> **M:** I think in secondary It's completely different and it could be ……In college It's your own, you control, it's you who decide who you tell and what you tell. You deal with it yourself, it's not through your parents… you decide yourself not like in secondary they decide… like take you out of Irish class sometimes; a teacher will knock on door and just take you out and you can't say' I don't want to go' and at 3rd level you decide and you go if you want.
>
> Emm you do this and it's up to you to say who knows. And when I was in college the others were in a in a different course from me and we formed the society and it was good to connect

Response from without:

Here, I am really stuck again by voice and voiclessness and how choices are often removed for people who are given labels.The manner in which M narrates these

experiences evokes this sense of powerlessness. While it is not possible here to reflect voice tone or demeanor (so you the reader can make your own sense), In my own response, I noticed when she begins to speak about choice being restored in her life in third level Education her voice tone lifts considerably. Oppression and marginalization occur in spaces where real life choices are reduced.

> **L:** yeah it meant we - I went to P who is dyslexia aswell - the disability officer was handing out USB sticks and I asked him where he got it and I started probing a bit as I had one too and then the conversation opened up and then I was introduced to N and then that was the week the societies were starting and we decided to go for broke and see if it would work and we got it to work..
>
> **M:** So there is something there that people do want to be identified
>
> **L:** but its also stay with in their comfort zone …It's not too bad now
>
> **A:** so it sounds like people want to support each other but sometimes is hard to identify people with same issues in their lives but also you don't want to be intrusive or be defined by a particular way of being thought about

It's very difficult for you in your society.. it's the same issues I was coming across.. at times people want support but they may not want it other times or to be identified by the label.

Response from without:

Here, I respond to the discussion between L and M about defining and not defining and the dilemmas inherent in both positions.The need for mutual support and understanding and the resources which often follow labels on one hand but equally the categorization patterned responses and constrained stories of self hood that can also occur on the other.

This discussion for me centers on how can people simultaneously live positively in both domains dis-ability and ability. These ideas are reminiscent of the ideas of 5th province associates (Mc Carthy et al.1989) in relation to the space between and the both / and positioning.

> **M:** that's why in first year we didn't really advertise as we didn't want people coming along defining us …as we all in some shape or form had experienced being asked about what you are doing for us ….It's harder in primary secondary

Response from without:

Here M is referring to the negative consequences of being defined by a label… I find myself responding to 'the underground society, the surreptitious support group and to the resilience and resourceful ways in which they managed to hold both positions simultaneously ie they defined themselves by labels sufficiently enough in a private domain to provide mutual support but held the definitions in ways that did not become public so that they would not be called to live into or live out of a particular category of distinction. Here I am reminded of Canadian response based writings on

acts of resistance (Wade 1996) People can take on a label as a site of resistance as well as labels being required in order to access resources.

> **T:** What you are saying about the confidentiality is interesting. Often, encouraged by the parents... but we had a student recently in the college and it was all about hiding the difficulties.. it was from his parents not to tell anyone and they had fears about employment and how the employers would react as he was working part time and his father said don't dream of telling your employers you have x y or z and you know it was very difficult then to work with him even though he wanted to and really wanted to tell as he wanted help and he wanted support but he was caught between not telling and I can see why and then the need to tell to get support

> **L:** yeah I know somebody that the kids in secondary and one of the parents   she went off and photocopied the Ed Psych reports; one for each of the teachers addressed to each individual teacher.. But all the reports were left in the office and only the Principal and remedial teacher were given the reports. Parents only found out at the review teachers knew nothing of the child's difficulties... you would think the English teacher at least would have been given the report

> **D:** I would have to say teachers ability to interpret these reports is varied and so teachers aren't necessarily able to interpret the reports ...But certainly the right to open someone else's mail is not good However ...

> **M:** but even if they are not skilled at interpreting they know like Johnny has something going on here.. I will go and talk to the remedial teacher about it where in previous conversations it wouldn't happen and Johnny would sit in the English class completely lost and the English teacher isn't given any feedback to remedial teacher and maybe could tell or the remedial teacher could say look structure your class in such a way do x y and z do something so he doesn't need to be taken out of class

Response from without:

Here, the discussion is centred on labels and on who should hold them who should be told what they mean and how they can be useful. We hear both the views of a parent who is fearful in an employment situation about how the employer will shift his perception in the knowledge of a label his son holds and how in a school context a teacher who is not made aware of linguistic difficulties might not provide sufficient support but also how the interpretation of reports and labels may be a subjective ill-informed one. What is interesting to me in this discourse, is the ability of both the service user and the Educator to both hold their own views and to hear the voice of the other (McNamee & Gergen, 1999). I find myself curious about these openings to the other, these both/and positions that create the possibility for mutually respectful collaborative conversations to take place. I am also aware that the discourse is around labels and not labels and wonder in asking this original question in dialogue one, how much the discourse here has been shaped. I found myself asking what question would I want to ask now? and it would no longer be are

labels useful or not? It might be: how do we construct disabling discourses? And how can people live fluidly in and out of discourses so they can, at times,   move into supportive environments?

> **A:** and maybe classes need to be structured in such a way that suits everybody … universal classrooms, and listening to you and the conversations it seems to me there is not one view. That there may be teenagers who want people to know and those who don't, everyone is individual, so if we can find a way that is respectful to all and everyone's individual need and that's very difficult …

Response from without:

Here, I maybe moved too quickly into provision of solutions 'as if' there is one universal possibility – my own experiences with universal classrooms as a way of providing education which   attends to a number of learning styles simultaneously and from personal experiences in the use of technology in Education, such as smart boards in classrooms which allow for all learners to be included, without the need for identification of   individual deficits or deficit based discourses was influencing me here.

> **D:** it's not only difficult it requires knowing and rebalancing away from your four top A 1's who you have been investing all your time into and concerns I hear in schools.
>
> **M:** teachers focus on A 1s as it makes them look good at the end of the day
>
> **D:** yeah there is an element of that… but there is also I don't really understand what the needs of the student are…. And if you do a presentation to whole staff and then they don't always find it applies to every students who seems to have a completely different set of problems and yet both students have same thing so teachers say I don't feel skilled enough to make these determinations

Response from without:

Here, M and D are considering context, educational contexts and which ones can lead to exclusionary practices. The resonances for me, here, are about inclusion/exclusion. D is considering meaning making and how this relates to certain categories of distinction vs as an alternative an individualized response that is one that involves a response to each individual. Its, as if, in having a particular label and a set of characteristics associated with that label and that teachers have assumed an expectation of a shared meaning. When a label is imposed from the outside sometimes it leads teachers to believe there is a way of being that relates to a particular label, only to discover that despite a common label, each student presents differently with a different set of needs.

> **A:** but isn't it at secondary level its difficult but isn't it about listening to the words of the person themselves? What do you need me to do here? and that doesn't always get included.

Response from without:

Here I move to consider how the voices of the person themselves are /could be included? I am influenced by my own ideas and experiences of inclusion /exclusion in Educational contexts

> **T:** might be told you were going out of class, not do you want to? and you know even at 15 you know what you want and need.

> **M:** in second level, the students that could maybe moved up to the top of the class but the parents have to be told, as the students will just go home and say miss x moved me up to the top of the class. . you know why can't they just do this subtly without including the parents so much?... and I know this but I think this kind of stuff needs to change a little bit, I think

> **D:** So on but parents are a big part of what teachers do and in everything you do you are supposed to give credence to them.

> **T:** but you can ask the students want do you think works for you and still include the parents as well.

> **D:** in fact in schools, the views of parents are taken into account but in service training the views of pupils not so much always..saying if you want to motivate a students we can by saying what do you want from our sessions together? What do you think it is realistic to achieve you know by Christmas? Where would you like to be? what would you like to focus on ? Well, I used to say this is what you might need to be doing and unless you explain to students why they are going where they are going, they are not going to really engage and who wants something done to them as distinct to something with them.

Response from without:

Here, the idea of a collaborative approach to inclusive education is emerging. A discussion takes place on including the views of parents, the voice of teachers and the voice of learners themselves. D speaks here of 'being with' as opposed to 'doing to' Harlene Anderson (1997) refers to this in her guest -host metaphors, an orientation to, and with an invitational stance.

Response from within:

> **A:** so that is a piece I am interested in…. how do we include voice in a way where there isn't that done to but a collective coming together in the way like you are here …of sharing ideas and reaching those kinds of solutions. how do you hear your voice and share your voices ? Because there is two sides… there is the piece about sometimes you know parents are complaining they are not getting resources but teachers are under pressure because they don't have the resources available so sometimes having understanding of each other experiences can be helpful ….

> **D:** I think its very good to have this kind of discussions between you and your teacher, that your teacher might be demystified …. I don't really need a separate set of skills for this student at all you don't have something mysterious and

mystical..Just I have problems with spelling. I don't want to do so much writing or whatever or maybe things they can do.

T: it's that they think they don't have the skills

Response from without:

Here, T and D are considering the ways in which labels can obscure mystify, create othering and 'us and them' distinctions. These distinctions may be demystified through dialogue, discourse and a collaborative responsive approach, one, which focuses more on the individual as opposed to any preconceived needs borne out of labeling categories of distinction.   In a sense they appear to be suggesting that labels can create barriers and leave teachers feeling deskilled, holding a view that particular labels require a particular response, which often loses sight of the individual.

> **L:** a lot of the time it's that teachers need to slow down, instead of going at the normal pace and it will also help everyone else in the class instead of rushing through the material so little Johnny doesn't get completely lost, whereas the teacher just slows down a bit …

> **D:** they are pitching to the centre because they are afraid that they need to keep the bright ones with them. you know they can't keep everybody.

> **M:** when I was doing the leaving, we had what was called the fast math's and the slow math's classes. The content was the same but the pace was completely different. I was in the higher math's class and we got our course finished by February of 6th year, whereas the other class was still learning subjects in April but you know they also had the same exam papers. I don't know what the outcome was but there was the two levels and the school provided for it.

And it could be in all subjects

> **L:** like when I started in 1st year everyone was brought in one Saturday and given an aptitude test and that predicted what class the kids would go into. You had 6 classes and they were all learning at different speeds but people got to move after the Christmas tests, depending on how they were doing in the core subjects. You moved for option subjects.

Response from without:

Here, L, D and M are considering structures within educational contexts and how some structures are more conducive to meeting the needs of all learners than others. . .yet its in the very process I am struck by how all three participants now having identified some difficulties and have moved to begin to collaboratively consider alternatives. Drawing from   ideas of how differences can create contexts for new solutions to emerge, (Roth et al . 1992) I am struck by these two groupings collaborative discourse, students and teachers, people who live with labels and educators, who might more frequently be in opposing discourses. It seems at this point in the conversation they have each taken on the dilemmas of the position of the other and begun to move towards the other in joint action (Shotter, 2004)

A: if you had a vision or a hope for how things could be if you could imagine your way into the future and how you would like things to be how would it be?

Response from within:

At this juncture I am looking less for content and more an overall sense of what it is that each person believes would make a difference to educational contexts.

D: in schools

A: yes, in schools but also in the whole area of including everybody's voice …. I am interested in both how its delivered but also how we think about delivery of services or even talk together about it,,, as it sounds to me like sometimes some peoples voices can be excluded In shaping how it is…. particularly voices that don't normally. . That's my idea but …

M: whole classroom integration

A: and how would that be

M: I am doing an assignment right now on universal learning so I am just starting into thinking about it … universality in this whole area, teachers at second level at the moment transition years, I am just looking at the class and seeing how the teaching is. . so try and see what I can learn for 3rd level but I actually think some of the 3rd level teaching could actually be beneficial to second level ….You know where the whole coming and going might not be beneficial for teachers but the concept of students wanting to learn where I think that helps motivate pupils but I am not too sure… as I said I am only starting into this venture …So that would be my model universal classrooms

L: have to say just em how like everyone on computers, not only you, not saying you should get rid of writing as it's a skill that should never die out but its became more and more less necessary.

A: so what I hear you both talk about is universal learning not singling individuals out.

L: yeah. . things is if you have computers in classrooms, people with a learning difficulty can have the likes of the 'read and write' software on their computers, whereas the other s won't but everybody is there typing up. it doesn't matter that Johnny has a programme running in the background and giving him a little help but everyone seems to be the same…Where if everyone with a dis-abilty gets given a laptop it's like those two down there have the laptops and they are identified as different.

Response from without

Here both L and M are speaking about a universal approach to learning that has respect for each learner as an individual without the need to categorize individuals or single them out as different

T: the whole thing I was thinking about, is that the you are always going to have a certain percentage of the population who have significant difficulties and are going to need a lot of support but I think the way the system works at the

moment. there are a lot of children and adolescents that need a psychological report but they don't really need it but they do need it to access resource's the whole system is ...This morning, I met a girl and she didn't need a full assessment but she had to go through it just to get a small amount of support, so if you have a proper universal teaching utopian classroom then this wouldn't happen anymore and the likes of that girl I saw this morning, wouldn't have a label of dyslexia because her difficulties were not so significant that she needs it. . So like, I suppose the idea that we all have difficulties, we all have strengths, we all have weaknesses is in some ways... but ok some people really have very significant difficulties in some areas but the universal idea should be everyone should be accommodated and then it would be a much smaller percentage who may need additional supports.

Response from without:

Here, T reminds me of dominant discourses and how labels are relationally constructed in the space between people. As Rapley (2004,p.8) states 'dis-ability is constructed in both 'official' discourse and everyday commonsense, as an irretrievable disorder of competence, afflicting individual subjects requiring professional diagnosis treatment and management. ' Here T, seems to be challenging these assumptions and distinctions and suggests that different structuring or constructs, might lead to the creation of new ways of construing and experiencing dis-ability labels.

> **L:** mm just that I suppose its allocation of funding and the whole system needing to change allocation of resources.

Response from without:

While L appears to concur with this viewpoint I can almost hear him thinking here how do we create a mindset shift??

> **D:** a wish list; it would be long. It's a very complex issue, even the day we met ....if there are students who won't wear hearing aids.. There are issues of adolescents who don't want to stand out and don't want to be stigmatized. You were saying everyone with a dis-abilty but they don't need but em.. I think a way to continue would to be to demystify the whole area. To stop calling it 'special', Stop using the language of 'special' education and start using the language of 'inclusive' education and then having done that, make teachers aware that in the teaching profession you are going to have a much greater diversity of ability... of need.. of em intellectual ability... of social ability and of physical diversity in your classrooms, And where you have to be creative in the 21st centaury in teaching approaches,, where you teach to the greatest variety where possible, and if you want to do that, it's only possible to do it ...

And listening to T, I know she knows in her heart and soul it's not going to cater for everyone. There are still going to be a few people that will need a 1 to 1, but if we are to have any chance of proceeding. . We will have to equip, not only the teacher, but the classroom for everybody... and that I think is also going to centre

around the quality of the interactions that go on there.. and the range of methods that teachers are able to employ and deliver… and for that, I think we need much smaller numbers.

Response from without:

Here, D is drawing our attention to language and how language is constitutive in the creation of context and experience s. He is advocating a shift from the word 'special' to 'inclusive'. It would appear, as if, he is proposing a collaborative, philosophical stance and a move away from categorization and expertise. What stuck me, profoundly, was the desire for change, the desire to be responsive from all of the participants. It was both heartening and saddening simultaneously. To be a witness to this conversation which was both passionate and heartfelt was a privilege but also left me concerned for all those who work within a system that often is difficult for them and not always congruent with their personally held beliefs and values.

> **T:** I think its back to teacher training in colleges. I don't know so much about primary level but definitely in secondary and even questioning why second level teachers go into teaching in the first place? …. I never forget I went out to provide training on Splds to a group of teachers and one presenter just said let me ask you a question can you put up your hands anyone who likes working with adolescents? and only a few put up their hands and a lot of them said the reason they went into teaching was for the love of their subjects …And that was just in this particular group but mostly they didn't enjoy working with teenagers.

> **D:** I would say this, I think teachers, the vast majority, once they are in it, feel a sense of responsibility but feel caught in trying and not being able to do it, which sometimes is about the 30:1 ratios and it's like being put up with high numbers …team teaching helps but …

Response from without:

Here, both T and D are highlighting how contexts contribute to organizing us and how important it is to attend to the relationship between context, beliefs, values, the shape of things. They are also attempting to negotiate the territory of inter-professional beliefs.

> **A:** yes, agreed people are caught in dilemmas and then of a label and the label gives understanding of needs… we won't look at label terminology. The space between dis-ability and not using the terminology and sometimes that means some peoples needs don't get met, so how can we hold both? There will still be people who need extra support.

> **D:** yes but if we lose the idea that there is a separate set of expertise required, that's what is happening in teacher preparation.. I don't know how you feel about the competency of your ordinary subjects teachers?

> **M:** I did Irish but the teacher put me out of the class. She couldn't teach me. A lot of them do need to be taught. She made such a big fuss and that teacher took

a different approach. She made such a fuss over my written work and I had a dictionary, so she was receiving stuff that wasn't too bad but she had a mental block. The English teacher was fine, the math's teacher had no difference, she had no training but the Irish teacher stood out for me ...She, in second year, kicked me out and I went to foundation class but I fought with the school and they let me back in. I was bored in foundation class. I was the most diligent student ever; she just didn't want me in her class.

Response from without:

By way of information for a reader: The Irish language is for some, quite a difficult language in its written format, as it is not written as it sounds so for many people with auditory processing differences it can be a very difficult language to write.

> **T:** sometimes teachers think they are doing their best. She probably didn't realize.

Response from without:

Here, T is inviting M to consider the teachers approach may have come out of a belief that suggested that this option was the right one as opposed to a deliberate attempt to be hurtful and unresponsive. This move towards the other reminds me of reframing a response often used in therapy conversations, which both acknowledges the current but offers a new frame from within which to view an experience.

> **L:** sometime teacher doesn't realize how much an effect what they say has on student and sometimes it hits home when they hear back from students. So I definitely think the students voice should be heard. . And all my other teachers need to hear it.

Response from without

Here again, L draws our attention back to the "need to be heard " to give voice and to his personal desire to be heard.

> **A:** my question is ... is it useful to bring teachers and pupils together? is it useful to bring psychologist and teachers together in conversation ?does bringing people together in conversations help them think differently ? It's the Question I have got to now and listening to you M it's also heartening to hear about the positive experiences and how can we build on them

Response from without:

Here, I am aware the conversation has been close to 90 minutes and it is time to bring some kind of closure, as people have generously given time.

A: so just winding up …is it a useful way to influence and shape the future development of services? to bring people together in conversation or are there other ways that could be equally helpful?

Response from without:

On reflection, I was wondering was there another way to begin to wind down as opposed to the need to punctuate the conversation with a yes /no response given how rich the conversation had been. Nonetheless, I imagine I am responding here to normative ideas about summing up and closing down, when my inherent desire is to hold open and continue the conversation.

M: yes, I think in an informal situation like this, not across a desk, is very helpful, And with a wide range of students and a wide range if staff not just people with Splds…Say an English teacher and students a random sample and use an external facilitator. . so it's not all the schools views and they could provide transcripts back so schools can't color code it.

L: the one thing I would say is a lot of people would not want to talk to their teachers. The only time they will talk in class is when the teacher asks a question but they if you know like… stay back at the end of the class, to talk to the teacher. . say… after school, nobody wants to do that. There is never the opportunity for a one on one, or group discussion, without the child being individually singled out and its one of the things and timetabling etc. there is no time when you can disappear and not be missed.

T: but not just students with difficulties but forum conversations in schools with all students.

A: when I started looking at this idea, of bringing people together in all sorts of places, schools, society etc these kinds of conversations are beginning to happen and now there are things happening in communities, where communities are bringing everyone together In conversation, to look at how the project is going. so it doesn't always have to be negative, it could be a whole school thing where everyone sits around and discusses, well how are we doing as a school? What's going well? What do we need to change? contributing to peoples understanding of each other.

T: it would have to be facilitated, as It would require respect for each other.

D: lots of resonances going on as you are speaking, in terms of the methodology that you are getting people to speak to each other. If its in relation to the development of policy at any level, it can only have a wonderful effect and I wouldn't only go so far as to say it would be, I would go to say it is essential, otherwise you are not going to take into account the views of everyone involved. Sometimes you know things can go right through to policy level, without ever hearing the voice of services users, as you say.

A: absolutely that's what got me interested in this project

Response from without:

Here T, M and L are all responding to the idea of collaborative forums of discussion, as a very positive approach to reviewing how things are going. They are making some suggestions about caveats regarding structure and rules such as the need for mutual respect and the structure of inclusion of multiple perspectives.

> **D:** but even in the role of the school and the school can filter policy through and I am not just talking about special needs policy … that's the first thing as there are things on the index of inclusion which can take a simple approach and say let's have a chat about things in the school and see if it's working. On the index of inclusion, here is an indicator that it's really good and so on and so on.. The statements around can be influenced by the ethos of the school and no one really knows that. How it operates and what it says it does can be different.

> From my perspective, I think ethos really comes across am if you walk into a school it comes across in the interactions between students and teachers between teachers and teachers – I think if the ethos is good and those interactions are good its far more likely that the kind of discussion you are speaking about will be possible -So on one hand I think it might be a means to an end in terms of establishing a better ethos in the school on the other I think if there is a good ethos in the school its more likely to create a better context for this type of conversation and I think those voices of diversity then are more likely to be heard and I think in things like the index for inclusion they are talking about hearing all those voices and not just one or two

> **D:** Or those that speak the loudest. I think the description of being turffed out of the Irish class reminds me that sometimes teachers think schools are there for their purposes. That's why I think one voice can become much more dominant than the others and you know.. so I think there is a huge place for it but I am also a little bit wary of the methodology and then arriving at a policy and saying yeah this is our stated policy and then all five years of the population go through the school and then another cohort of students and parents come in and they are parents who have had nothing to do with the devising of that policy and so on and so forth. It would be important to consider it as a dynamic process, not static

Response from without:

Here, D is responding in a way that suggests that inclusion of all views is essential but with an awareness of context and ethos. This is important and it reminds me of the need to attend to the question of what is it that I am being invited into? So in some sense, I think all the participants are very positive about collaborative multi-stakeholder dialogues, in particular for reviewing Educational provision. They are all suggesting that structure and context need to be attended to in the creating of a context, conducive to a conversation where all voices will be equal.

I am stuck by his use of the words 'static' and 'dynamic'. In some senses, one of the reasons I chose to do one large-scale, multi-stakeholder dialogue, is that as Wittgenstein (1953) suggests we develop patterned response in repetition, as

opposed to when perhaps we experience novelty, we are more likely to find new ways of positioning ourselves.

Response from within:

> **A:** ongoing evolving and sometimes you have to wait until the context is right for the conversations if there was too much conflict say there can be organisations where there is an entrenched conflict and sometimes separate conversations help to diffuse some of the tension before bringing everyone into one conversation together ...Sometimes though brining everyone together just works to diffuse it but of people are not ready to be respectful of each others views and listen to each other it can be more difficult ...Some groups people can be too entrenched in positions

Response from without:

Here, I am drawing from my own training as a mediator and the need at times for mediated conversations, in preparation for a disposition of an opening towards the other.

> A: Any final comments
>
> **D:** good luck
>
> **A:**ok well thank you all, for all your time you have given. . And just to say I am looking at both the content and the process and some of your reflections. . I will let you know when I am at final stages ....thank you all for coming

Responses to the Text – Conversational Partners

In this enquiry, I invited a response to the written text as a way of keeping vibrancy and fluidity but also as a way of attending to silence and voice in my own writing.

I did not ask for a formulated or formal edited response from any of the reflecting/conversational partners. I invited 'the reflecting partners' to provide either some written or verbal reflections on some specific aspect of either the process or the content of the enquiry, which might include any personal resonances, anything that struck the reflecting partners anything they might have developed more or considered differently or even their overall sense of the written enquiry. In the early part of the enquiry, prior to the dialogues, I met with four conversational partners. These conversations and a description of how they influenced the structuring of the dialogue are described in Chapter 7. In the latter part of the enquiry, I invited some people to provide reflections on the text of either the dissertation as a whole, or a specific chapter. These reflections influenced the path of this enquiry in a variety of ways. At times the reflections provided reassurance that the enquiry had some relevance to people working in the field of dis-abilty. At other times, through the inclusion of the voices of reflectors who live with dis-abilty labels, the reflections provided attempted to ensure, in so far as is ever possible, that the enquiry did not colonise or silence some aspects of lived experiences. The voice of some reflectors was invited to ensure the narration of the enquiry and the

enquiry project had some intelligibility and acceptability amongst academic communities.

I include some of these reflections below:

The following is a contribution of reflections on Chapter 2, at draft stage, from James Forbes, Head of Care St. Josephs service for Visually Impaired. This conversational Partner has given consent to be identified.

Thank you so much for allowing me read part of your PHD thesis – I very much like where you are going with it.

Some thoughts:

In so many ways your themes resonate with my own ongoing attempts to situate the work I do in a, hopefully, evolving and enriching understanding of the disability paradigm. I loved your introductory use of Saint-Exupery: ultimately everything becomes about vantage point. I've always loved 'The Little Prince' not least because of his assertion that ' grown ups' (if there are such people) always need things explained to them – a reminder that, often, in our determination to be adult and thoughtful and perhaps especially well thought of we are stymied from seeing the mystery and marvellous-ness of common place things.

As Saint Exupery suggests we like our "misfortunes to be taken seriously" and - fair is fair – we like other peoples' misfortunes to be taken seriously too. Of course, conceptualizing and understanding disability is no easy task –the very language used in the context of disability is contested, not least in the way people are labelled pejoratively ways. In countless ways the difference presented by disability is rephrased as deficit. Nor, indeed, is it even possible to say with any precision who "the disabled" are, not least because as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) [yet to the ratified by Ireland] recognises "disability is an evolving concept" (p.1). Indeed, for example some theorists argue that obesity cannot be side-stepped as a disability issue. Others assert that episodic illness, even those manifesting without any obvious presenting features, should come within the disability ambit. How much, of course, these seemingly modern questions are just about the old deserving / non-deserving dichotomy is questionable.

Certainly it seems to me that the biomedical model of disability – the ultimate outside-in perspective on disability – is still in good health, albeit that its proponents are more careful about the language they use. The image of the problem body (Titchkosky, 2005) persists, and with it a popular and marked tendency to see those with a disability as 'other'.

Implicit in this is a sense of the tragedy of being disabled, a reading replete with references to vulnerability, protection, dependence, innocence and, even, perpetual childhood. Moreover, there can be a kind of invisibility effect, whereby what is seen

feeds into the stereotype rather than challenging it. I think, crucially, what is often missing – even sometimes from the more enlightened discourses – is the realisation that people with disabilities experience complex feelings, including enriching experiences of joy and happiness too. Your references to our binary approach supports this view, I think, cautioning us to reinterpret 'ableness' as, at best, a temporary state and to see disability as just one more trope, inviting us to a deeper communal sense of what it is to be human. In this context, then, disability becomes a construct through which to view – and hopefully, subvert – the dominant political and economic forces at work in society, forces, which draw much of their potency from the way, they serve to divide up and farm out power and privilege. At a time when the entire Western economic system has fallen prey, catastrophically, to a misplaced faith in the expert knowing better than everyone else I would suggest that there has never been a better time for people with disabilities to assert the primary of their own experience over the outsider-in 'experthood' of a medical and quasi-medical elite. Indeed in this context it might be argued that the natural rationale of a rights based perspective on disability, specifically on enfranchisement perspective, links disabled peoples' struggle against oppression to that of other traditionally disenfranchised groups in society.

I welcome your intention to apply a Focauldian analysis and I really like where you appear to be going in respect of Illich and the enlargement of the DSM – all of which reminds me of that wonderful line 'label jars, not people.' And I agree with your criticisms of the social model – I think its usefulness is now often overstated, not least because in its implicit denial of the (at least sometimes) problem body it may actually serve to reinforce the biomedical perspective and also because in the end it doesn't provide the necessary tools for change. Lately, I've been reading a bit about the affirmation model but I can't say I know enough yet to form an opinion. I am also very taken with stuff I've been connected with around disability arts initiatives, especially in respect of the way they project strength and subvert prejudice.

Like you, I share a leaning towards a social constructionist perspective. For me it offers a potentially valuable methodology for teasing out a more nuanced and sophisticated awareness about (I take your point re the problematic question of understanding) disability. I am drawn to the idea, as I sense you are, that in this context worlds are made, not found. Moreover, I think that we have to try to understand the non-linear, culturally generated processes at work and to constantly reflect on the power relations in play if we are to hope to escape the, sometimes subtle, segregationist temptation at the heart of so much practice and rhetoric around disability. I particularly like the juxtaposing of different realities around residential living versus 'residing' – I think that quite effective and, with your permission I would like to steal it for staff development work.

Above all, people living with disabilities have to be acknowledged – but not in some tokenistic way – as experts in their own experience and ways have to be found to respect and incorporate this appreciation. Indeed I think narrative is a good way to go with this. And I really love the quote about the 'palpability of inseparability'.

The following is a reflection from Disabilty support co-ordinator Eileen Daly and also someone who "knows " dis-ability from the inside out. She has also given me consent to use her name. She is one of the co-authors on the paper peer counselors (2007) and is a dis-ability support co- ordinator in the National Learning Network, Dublin.

Reflection:

This research epitomises profound personal and professional experience and expertise. The voices and lived realities of people with disabilities are embedded throughout, However, I particularly like the fact that no one discourse is given priority. The research demonstrates that a holistic approach is paramount when working with people who have acquired the label of disability. Research undertaken in the Netherlands by Van den Ven (2005 cited in Shakespeare, 2006, p.58) proposed that three issues influence the integration and inclusion of disabled people in society. Firstly, individual factors such as one's personality, skills and the nature of one's impairment will impact on the way in which the person is included and accepted in society. Secondly, societal factors such as the accessibility of the built environment, the attitudes of others towards difference etc. will influence how comfortable and involved in the community an individual feels. Thirdly, access to appropriate support systems is vital to successful and real inclusion of disabled people in society. By support systems, Van den Ven (2005 cited in Shakespeare, 2006 p.59) meant social support, professional care and assistive technology. The authors argued that the connection between the factors stated above exaggerate the effects of disability. I suggest that Shakespeare described the issues eloquently (2006, p.60) when he noted that impairment is scalar and multidimensional and that differences in impairment contribute to the social disadvantage which individuals face. Furthermore based on both my personal and professional experience I feel that by viewing disability as an interaction, healthcare professionals, educators, families and people who live with the label of disability can work in partnership. Such partnerships are based on mutual respect. I suggest that this current research supports this viewpoint and pushes the boundaries of best practices by ensuring that the voice of those who live with disability is given credence as a meaning discourse.

Chapter 7. Responding to the Project as a whole

Researcher as Respondent – The Meandering Path

In thinking about the meandering path of this research enquiry, I am reminded of the TS. Eliot (1935) quote about families proceeding to their destiny in the direction of their origins or as Eliot (1935) also stated:

> 'We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time".

In many journeys we return to where we began, only with a different perspective or as Wittgenstein (1953) describes it we begin to see the familiar in unfamiliar ways. While I started out in this enquiry process, influenced by ideas of exclusion marginalization and privileged status, my own ideas have shifted in the process to beginning to consider positioning as being much more dynamic, fluid and multifaceted. My questions evolved and became less about what is the experience of disability and how does that experience impact on the individual? to more about when do people inhabit dis-abilty spaces and how are those spaces shaped and constructed socially and relationally?

While there were many paths I could have started from and equally as many I could have ventured forth on, my path through the enquiry process was meandering and often recursive, creating and noticing connections throughout, as I referred to, drawing from a Joycean idea, as 'sideways glances '. Any project or enquiry necessitates choices about which paths to follow and in so doing leaves other territory unexplored. In this enquiry project there were many smaller divergent paths emerging through the process that this enquiry could not extend to. Sometimes the territory not visited was mapped and apparent and for a variety of reasons, including the scope and range of this project, I chose not to explore it, at others it remained invisible to me, yet to be discovered.

The journey of this research enquiry nonetheless, was not sequential or linear but a meandering back and forth, revisiting territories with new insights and questions in a constant weaving back and forth.

There were some more particular significant junctures, on the research enquiry journey, which influenced me to consider new ideas and shift my position or consolidate the direction I was considering moving in. Shotter and Katz (1998) might refer to these as arresting moments, I prefer to think of them as arresting but moving, as the pause is barely audible and at times fluidly blending into the directionality of the forward trajectory.

Some of these are mapped[39], below in figure 11, to reflect both the circularity and iterative process of my own meandering, in and around the enquiry process. This way of mapping does not reflect very well the contextual influences or the interweaving of the 'movement' back and forth or the 'in dialogue ' essence of the enquiry process. However, It captures in the interweaving of the branches the mutual influences and interweaving of ideas and the meandering nature of the journey. The flower represents both the beginning conceptualization and final production of a written enquiry but only exists with reference to the interrelationships between the stem, the roots, the thorns, the leaves and the branches. The thorns represent the sense of stuckness and moments of difficulty on the enquiry path. The leaves represent both the outgrowths (emergent ideas) and the arresting movements, not as separate but as connected, in the meanderings of journey of the enquiry.

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[39] The concept and original drawing of this map are my own, the graphic illustration has been done by Graphic artist, Sinead Lawless
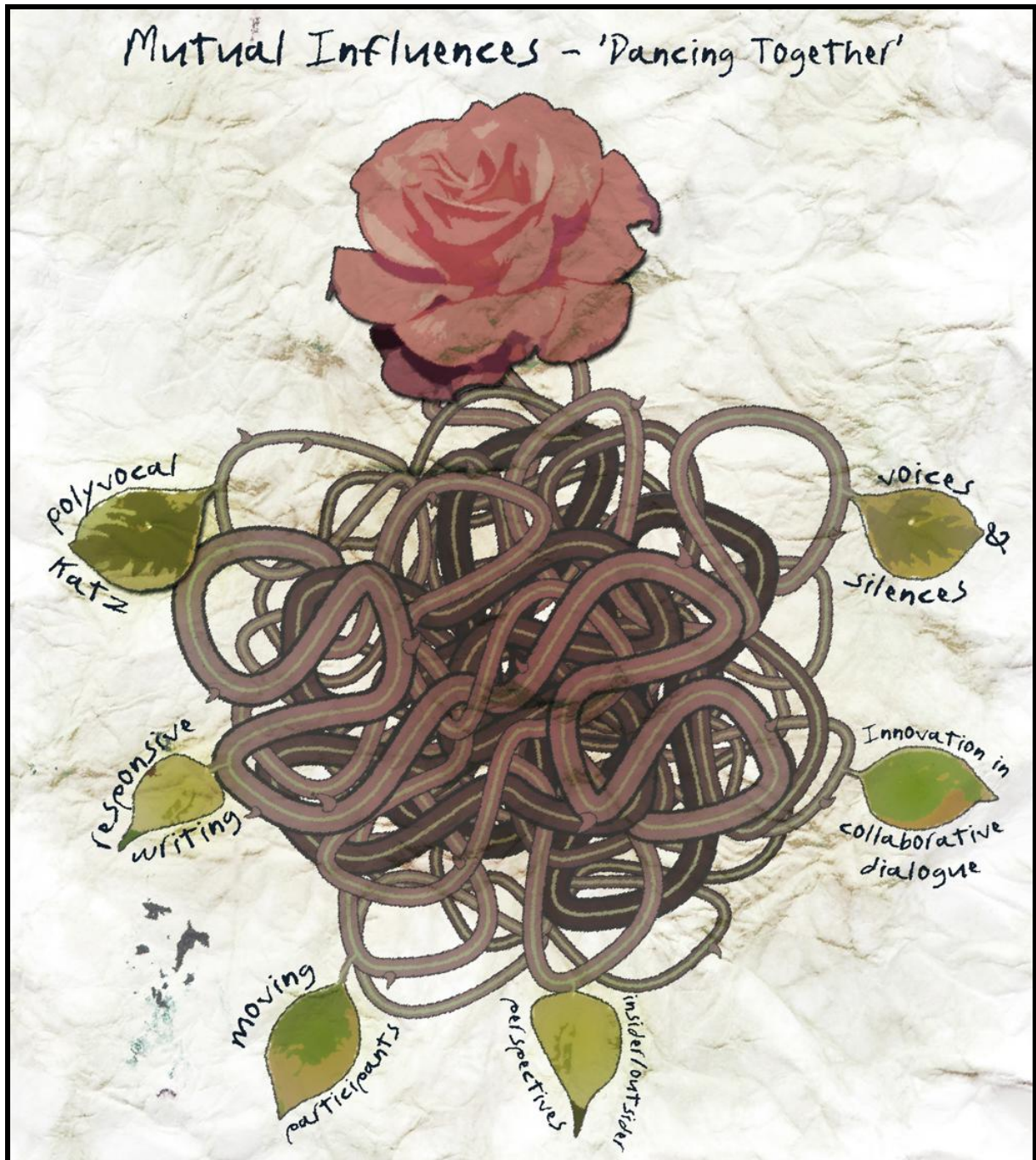
Figure 11. Arresting movements

Dialogues about Dialogues

1.The Poly-vocal Cats

Early on in this enquiry process, I had the good fortune to spend some time in Boston, drinking hot Chocolate and discussing research methodology, with Arlene Katz. At that point, I was very concerned to consider how I might include the more

silenced voices, as I perceived it, of people who live with dis-ability labels, in my enquiry. Arlene introduced me to her own work with the council of elders (2000) which was influential in moving my own enquiry onwards, to consider many possibilities for how voices which are sometimes not heard can be included in research enquiry and not be entirely shaped or filtered through the lens of research questions. We also spoke about how, sometimes in the absence of the voice of others, we ourselves carry many voices within our own internal dialogues which we can draw from. We humorously referred to this idea as the poly-vocal (cats)Katz. Through this research enquiry I held and revisited both the ideas from the council of elders and the polyvocal internal dialogues of my own voice and the voices of others. This idea of inviting my own internalized voice of the other to respond at points when I needed to reflect and to consider ways to go on was useful to me throughout the enquiry eg If Arlene were here now I wonder how she might advise me to respond?

2. Voices and Silences

All research is involved in the construction of knowledge, of some form or other and is so doing shapes discourses and as a consequence can be constitutive. Engaging in this research enquiry, presented me with many ethical questions about the nature of research, the capacity of research to silence certain stories and my own capacity as researcher to privilege certain information and in so doing silence other stories. At certain points in this research enquiry, the dilemma of how to engage and how to write about that engagement, without oppression or silencing, became for me an almost impossible conundrum.

Questions of why write at all? Does writing not just become another contribution to academic or other knowledge constructions? In addition to this, I had concerns relating to the idea, that whatever I write is subjective and writing can be silencing. These ideas plagued me throughout the enquiry and rooted me, at times, to an almost intransigent stillness. In my attempts to circumvent these dilemmas, while struggling with ideas of silence and voice, together with a strong desire to honour the contribution of the dialogue participants, I was reminded of a conversation I had with Ken Gergen (Glasgow, October 2007). In this conversation, he had suggested I speak to the subjectivity as a way of circumventing my dis-ease. By attempting to make explicit the story of my own process, the research journey and some of the many personal and professional influences, which impacted on my positioning as researcher, I am attempting to speak to this subjectivity. Nonetheless, I speak now fully cognozent of the fact, that even in this very telling, I am never neutral.

3. Inviting Innovation World Café Dresden

Attempting to seek a dialogical method, which would fit with this enquiry in terms of creating a space for equality of voice, I considered a number of large group methods

but found particular resonances in the world café approach. I was interested in the idea of creating a conversation where at least all voices would be heard – if not necessarily equally. I attended a three day world café event (Dresden 2006)to experience this approach and was particularly struck by the meeting of each persons contribution as an individual person and not from a role designation.   This was particularly important for what I was attempting to achieve as in the mix of service users and professionals I was hoping to create engagement in conversation together with 'equality ' of voice.

4. Moving Participants

One of the things, which sustained me and kept movement in this research enquiry, was being located in the memory of the moments in which I was moved by the contributions of the participants. The comments of the young man, in particular, who wondered would anyone really want to hear his views and hearing some of the young people speak about how the experience of participating in this dialogue, in this way, had been different for them encouraged me to find a way for their views to be articulated. I was also struck by the perspectives of the professionals, who had said it had been different for them too to be listening and experiencing the issues differently as opposed to giving information. For me, the collaborative dialogue approach was a particularly encouraging aspect of this project enquiry, which I believe created the possibility of building bridges of communication and of deconstructing differences in conversation.

5. Writing as a response – dynamic dialogues

It seemed as if the dialogue had its own energy and life force, a dynamism, which was fluid and created the potential to ripple outwards and onwards. I am reminded of the ideas of some people in relation to bereavement, as they consider people live on in spirit for at least five generations, as people continue to speak and think about them. The experience of the dialogue I think in the same way is carried by the participants and continues to impact in various ways in their lives and conversations and in the lives of others they engage with. This is an ongoing dialogue about the dialogue and just as in this project there were some pre-generative conversations before the dialogue even took place, I imagine that the dialogue lives on in its own ways.   I am aware that some of the participants proceeded to use variances of this method of engaging in conversations between service users and providers. Following the dialogue, it then became difficult for me to consider how to retrospectively write about a dialogue, which was still moving "as if " it had static properties to it. I was reluctant to analyze, categorise or consider emergent themes, given that my own thinking and responses shifted with each new reading or listening to the transcripts of the dialogues. Conversing with Janice de Fehr and John Shotter (CH august 2009), I found ways to think about writing as a response. I was also very influenced by the work of Kip Jones (2007) and Maxine Sheets Johnson (2009) in

performative approaches to research data in the social sciences and John Laws work on mess in social science research (2004). These conversational and academic influences, encouraged me to consider ways, in which, I might allow for data as dynamic and a more improvisational responsive, approach as researcher.

6. Researcher as participant Insider /Outsider

The issue of inside /outside, was a recurrent theme throughout this research enquiry and arose for me frequently in relation to my own position as enquirer. At times, I believed myself to be outside taking an observational position. I was outside, only in so far as I was not engaging with the conversation but always inside the conversations in terms of my responses. I, perhaps, was inside, more clearly when I was engaged in an active response to either the written or spoken word of the participants. It is my view that we are never fully outside, as independent observers but need to give attention to our own footprints as we perceive them being formed. In this research enquiry, I stepped in and out, but never really from a neutral objective stance, as it is always interesting the points we choose to emphasize. In dance the action of stepping in and out, to an extent shapes the dance, creates the rhythm and punctuates the movement. Sometimes what creates a new perspective is stepping into the dance, in ways that are novel and different, inviting the audience to look differently and to take a different perspective.

When I began the enquiry process, the distinctions 'Inside' and 'outside' seemed starkly opposed and clear to me. I am more aware now, of the multiple possible positionings of inside, outside, outside-inside, inside – outside which relate more to the fluidity of relational dynamic engagement. Even when we punctuate the space temporarily, we hold the anticipation of forward movement and the memory of from where we moved. Punctuation is perhaps an illusionary concept, as I consider we are possibly more akin to butterflies temporarily alighting as we are gathering information only to feel our way onwards. As a dancer, in particular, and a living being, I am aware that it is almost impossible to come to a complete standstill. Therefore, at times I was located in an outside frame moving forward to an inside one and at times in an inside frame moving to an outside one, always dynamically engaged. Sometimes, I was considering the ideas from the domain I was leaving and holding them, sometimes letting them go to allow for new ideas to emerge.

7. Mutual influences – Dancing together

Throughout the process of this research enquiry, I engaged in three different eight weeklong choreography projects with three distinctively different choreographic styles. The emphasis, in the first project, was on co -constructed improvisational responses, in movement, on the shape and constructions of a singular movement and on the ways in which a subtle shift conveys a different meaning. The second project attended to the fluidity of movement and to individual similarities and differences in

movement and expression. The third project considered rhythm, the space between the sounds and the interpretation of gesture and kinesthetic communication. These three projects influenced this enquiry, in ways that I noticed (and did not notice), such as in my use of the language of movement and my attention to space, time and movement. This enquiry also influenced my own creative endeavors in the choreographic domain.

What Questions arise as a result of and what ideas have come to be appreciated from engaging in this enquiry?

Emancipatory Research

The question of 'them and us' and the possibility of research becoming colonizing and oppressing remains as an ongoing concern for me, particularly when research is with or about people who have experienced marginalization. Authors such as Linda Smith (1999) and Lester Rigney (1997) have drawn attention to and written about how research has colonized indigenous populations. Mike Oliver (1990) has stressed the importance of emancipatory research in the area of dis-abilty. Nonetheless, this remains a core issue requiring ongoing attention in undertaking any research enquiry where people who have experienced marginalization are involved. The difficulty with many research methodologies is that we can never fully separate them from the underlying beliefs inherent in their creation; analysis generally brings forth themes and categories of distinction. Many cultural and traditional ideas such as storytelling have little or no place in analytical research approaches. As a consequence, the whole in an analytical approach to data can be lost in the fragmentation of the parts. Irish culture, is steeped in a 'seanachai' story telling and 'sean nos' singing traditions, which are about stories in words and song. My own view is that the research methodology needs to incorporate the worldviews of those communities who are the research participants; this may include a cultural epistemology, beliefs and local traditions. Irish culture is dialogical in its very nature. The Irish language, Gailge, often invites a call and response in conversation. Stories create the possibility for the reader to draw their own conclusions. Dialogue creates a context of responsivity.

As Wilson (2008 p.126) states accountability is built into relationships formed in storytelling within an oral tradition. As storyteller, I am responsible for how, when and to whom the story is told, you as reader are responsible for putting the story into a relational context that makes sense to you and for listening with an open heart and mind.

Within – without

Much research as suggested by Wilson (2008) about indigenous populations focuses on problems and often imposes outsider solutions rather than appreciating and expanding upon internal resources. The same situation could be said to exist in relation to research in the area of dis-ability. Like indigenous populations, people with dis-ability labels are probably also a very over researched group, with a problem focus in much of the research and a focus on the more negative aspects of life. It was for this reason, that I attempted to take an insider / outsider perspective to highlight the fluidity of these positioning's and to create spaces for other stories to emerge. The problem with outsiders doing research as Wilson (2008) states is that

there is always a comparison being made between the culture of the studied and the studier. My own unique position of inhabiting, to an extent, both worlds and the dialogical responsive approach to the enquiry, I hope reduced this dichotomy somewhat.

Labels and other questions

This enquiry raises some questions and perhaps invites reflections on 'ways to go on' from here. Questions, which personally resonate with me, and remain to an extent unresolved, relate in particular to the merits and difficulties inherent in labeling discourses. It is my view, that until such time as our resources in health and education are allocated in ways that are not based in deficit-based labels, it becomes almost impossible to move to an alternative more fluid framework for the construction of dis-abilty, as recommended by the WHO. Parents will continue to seek labels to define their children, in the awareness that those labels will give access to support services, which will benefit their children. Those same parents may also subsequently struggle to hold onto descriptions of their children, which do not fit with the constructs and label associated with the conditions ascribed. It was these dilemmas, I attempted to highlight both in the voice of the participants, as they spoke of the simultaneous existence in two worlds and in my own descriptions of the fluidity and dynamic experience that is and is not dis-ability.

Voice and privilege

 Questions remain, about how to find ways to address the right to be heard. Some of those ongoing questions relate to the need for greater participatory citizenship particularly in the domain of dis-ability. Other questions relate to; how to develop inclusive participatory methodologies. The development of inclusive methodologies, drawing from my engagement in this particular enquiry, around   issues such as silence and voice, privilege and marginalization, remains an ongoing challenge. Developing inclusive methodologies requires constant reflection particularly in relation to any attempts to include the voice of service users. The power of socialized roles cannot be underestimated, the rules of speaking and not speaking and also in learning how to speak differently all impact on service user inclusion in participatory methodologies. What is required is the creation of space for equality of voice. This cannot just be achieved in tokenistic invitations to participate but this must include a reflection on the cultural scaffolding that creates disablement.

Connecting Roots and branches – A Dialogical Trunk

The roots and branches metaphor was a useful one, for me, given my personal and professional experiences of fragmentation in service delivery. The trunk, perhaps when it is dialogical, creates a different kind of a connection between the roots and the branches that may not be experienced otherwise. As one of the participants said, "sometimes the roots are hidden to the branches". The voice of the service users

can so easily get lost in the creation and delivery of services and yet without the roots the tree cannot exist.

 The Question about finding ways to continue to bridge divisive positions, or to connect the roots and the branches, continues to seem relevant in an ongoing way.

'US and Them '

Most fundamentally perhaps the biggest question I resonate with is whether we need to create distinctions about people at all. While some of the participants did highlight the usefulness of labels, as a relief, as a way of gaining understanding, as support and as a way of accessing services, I myself continue to wonder about the need to categorize people and make assumptions and distinctions based on these categories. Every thing we do and say creates our universe and so we have responsibility   in the ways in which we speak and respond, given that we are always in the process of creating.

> In the sky, there is no distinction of east and west; people create distinctions out of their own minds and then believe them to be true."
>
> Siddhattha Gotama (Buddha) Contributed by Melissa Olson

Concluding Reflections
Author's reflections

This enquiry makes an important contribution to the field of dis-ability in Ireland. Through the use of a dialogical approach it addresses issues of inclusion and labeling. This project was the first of its kind in facilitating a cross sectional gathering using a modality which invited 'equality" of voice. In conclusion, it can be said that this was achieved as it was strongly stated in the dialogues, particularly by the service users of dis-abilty services – i.e. those who experience labeling discourses of deficiency. The emergence of multi-stakeholder dialogue, as a methodology, was the first of its kind in the area of dis-ability in Ireland.

The enquiry was further enhanced by the use of and adaptation of a Joycean idea, of 'sideways glimpses', as an observational method of self throughout the enquiry process with attention being paid to both insider/outsider knowledge's. Out of theses sideways glimpses of self, (in response) contributions were also made to 'the roots and branches' in service delivery and planning.

The dissertation argues for 'withness' responsivity in the use of a methodology of dialogue, which is intrinsic in this enquiry, from the outset and throughout. Dialogue was the object of the study, the conceptual framework for the methodology and formed the research enquiry design.

The enquiry contributes to the 'insider' / 'outsider' story considering the world from both inside and outside lived experiences and the potential for movement between domains of existence. It achieves this in the Dynamic movement of the enquiry process itself and in the attention to the fluidity of positions and constructs, in particular the idea of dis-ability as a temporarily fluid construction. It also presents an internal /external   dialogical responsive approach to presenting the enquiry story as an 'in the moment response.'

 This research enquiry adds to the possibilities for theory and practice in the area of dis-ability in the use of a methodology of multi-stakeholder dialogue.

 In the words of one of the reflectors "The voices and lived realities of people with disabilities are embedded throughout, but no one discourse is privileged ".

 While there were many striking moments in relation to the process of this enquiry and equally many contributory emergent and emerging ideas in relation to dialogue and dis-ability, the words of Saint –Expury (1935 p.16) remind us that what it is to be human is not situated so much in categories of distinction such as ability/dis-ability but in the spirit of being.

"Concerning the part played by intelligence, we were long in error. We neglected the substance of man we neglected being. What ought we to do? What ought we to

be? That is the essential question. The question that concerns is spirit and not intelligence. For spirit impregnates intelligence, with the creation that is to come forth."

There is no static conclusions or analysis to be drawn from the data of this enquiry, just many voices and perspectives and as many responses to those perspectives. Perhaps, for me the response I most hope for is a disposition of openness towards the other, in a meeting of 'beings'.

Participants' reflections

In my view, no one voice or perspective should be privileged but to go some way towards redressing the balance of marginalization it would seem important to punctuate this enquiry with some echoes of the Voice of the Participants:

On Connecting the Roots and Branches
'Importance of linking all the services together'

'If professionals not working in a multidisciplinary way leads to real problems '

'Really helpful getting feedback form peoples all working in different areas '

'Because you are speaking to so many people from different backgrounds you are looking at things from lots of different perspectives'

On the Dialogical process
'Just reminds me how important it is to listen to the voice of the person himself or herself '

'Your point goes on after you have spoken as others reflect on it'

'Get so much more getting it from all angles '

'Its like the speed dating of disability'

On Disability labels

'Goes back to the point that everyone is different'

'Younger children diagnosed live their whole life with a label'

'No label no help'

'Some people don't like labels -being put into boxes '

On Inclusion

" Lots of resonances going on as you are speaking, in terms of the methodology that you are getting people to speak to each other. If its in relation to the development of policy at any level, it can only have a wonderful effect and I wouldn't only go so far as to say it would be, I would go to say it is essential, otherwise you are not going to take into account the views of everyone involved. Sometimes you know things can go right through to policy level, without ever hearing the voice of services users, as you say."

"We need to be heard"

Visual data

One of the limitations of this enquiry is highlighted as being its two-dimensional nature. In order to be multidimensional, it would need to have included more active material and attended to the non-verbal connections between people. It was reflective, dynamic and linguistically based but with limited visual representation and due to the many constraining factors involved in such enquiries, unable to extend to a kinesthetic or corporeal response between the participants, that was present in the dialogues

In this project, finding a suitable mechanism for representing visual data has been a considerable challenge, To omit the richness and depth of the alternative and often graphically voiced experiences and views of the participants, would not do justice to their portrayal of what dis-ability has meant for each of them. As Barone & Eisner (2011p.1) suggest "when those tools limit what is expressible or representational, a certain price is paid for the neglect of what has been omitted".

Language is one way of conveying emotion, intent and experience and a way of storying our lives. However, alternative forms of expression such as the visual arts, dance and music, have a lot to offer us as presentational forms in social science research projects. I chose to call them presentational, as opposed to representational, in order to continue to engage dynamically and responsively in the present. The contrast would be representational and to imagine that any past voiced view remains fixed and static. I have chosen therefore to present   directly to the reader, images from the participants and in so doing invite a response.

As Kip Jones states

> Rethinking our relationship within communities and across disciplines such as the arts and humanities offers up opportunities for us to move beyond imitation of 'scientist' reports in dissemination of our work and look towards means of representation that embrace the humanness of social science pursuits. This creates a clearing in which meaningful dialogue with a wider audience is possible, feedback that is constructive and dialogical in its nature becomes feasible, and dissemination of social science data transforms into something not only convivial, but also even playful. Presentations can then evolve into ways of creating meaningful local encounters and performances, in the best sense of these words. (Jones, 2005,)

> In the following statement, Denzin (2000) also draws our attention to the idea of allowing the work speak for itself in a clear unadulterated manner" It seems important if, as social scientists, we are interested in 'future-oriented research' which produces works that speak clearly and powerfully as

well as works that are committed to changing the world not just describing it" (p. 915).

By including in the main body of the text a selection of the images[40] in their original format, I am inviting a dialogical engagement with the images, which goes beyond a filtered response through the lens of the author. The images were selected mostly on the basis of clarity of image or where there was a duplication of ideas one image was selected. There were some images, which contained a large amount of text, and so for the most part an image that captured some of the text was selected. While world café invites participants to draw on the tables in a similar way the images have not be collated and recorded in this way before.

As in the first image here (which is figure 2, repeated from chapter 2) we are called, by one of the participants, to attend to a need to be heard.
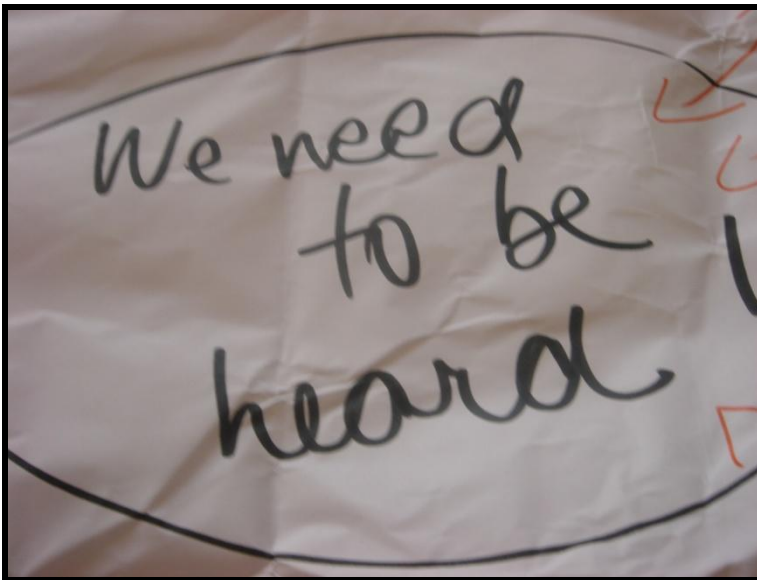
I invite you therefore to listen, observe and respond directly to the visual voices of the participants.

_____

[40] As there were over 100 images it was not possible to include them all. The images selected were selected on the basis of the clarity of image and as a cross-section of ideas as opposed to subjective selection based on content or themes.

Image 1. Stop Stereotyping
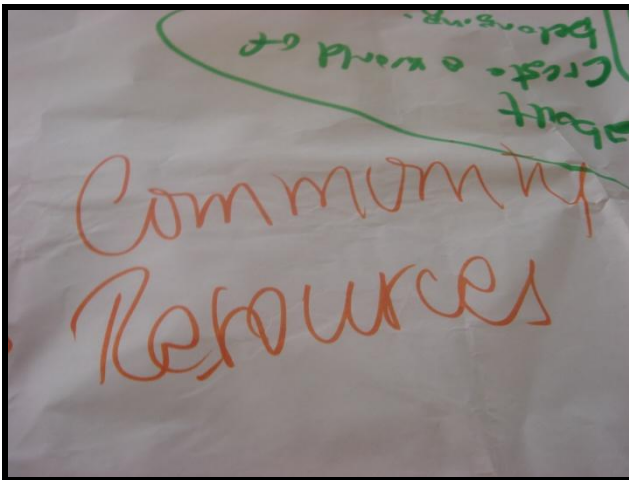
Image 2. Community Resources
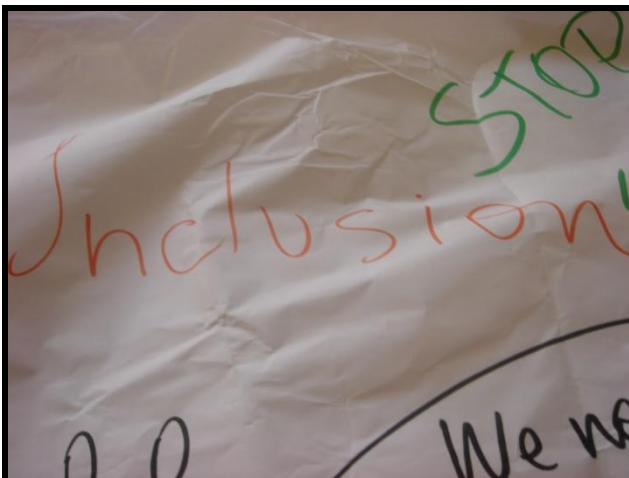
Image 3. Inclusion
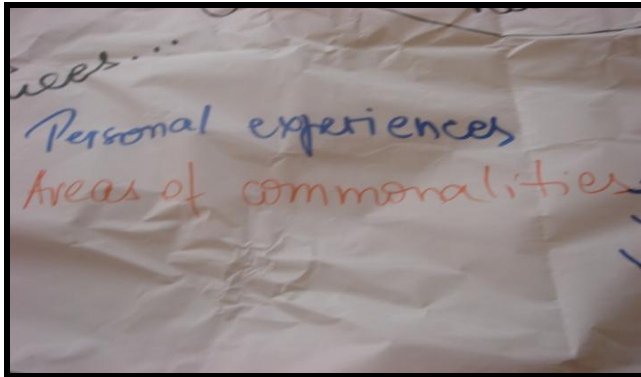
Image 4. Personal Experiences
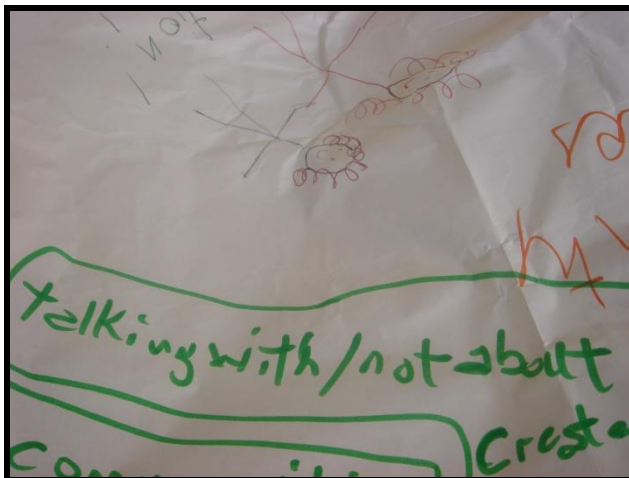
Image 5. Talking with, not about
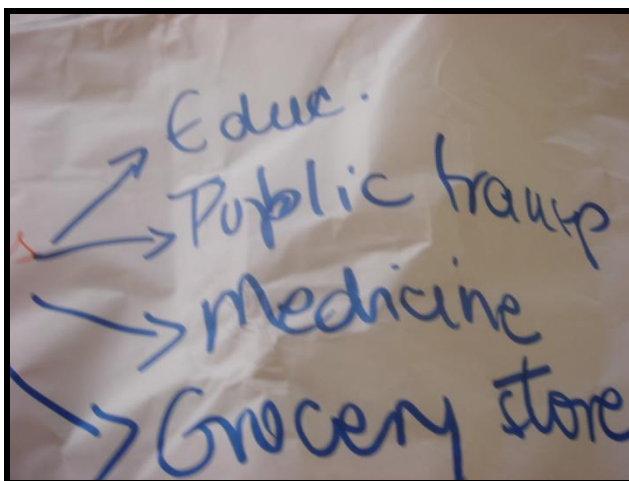
Image 6. Accessibility
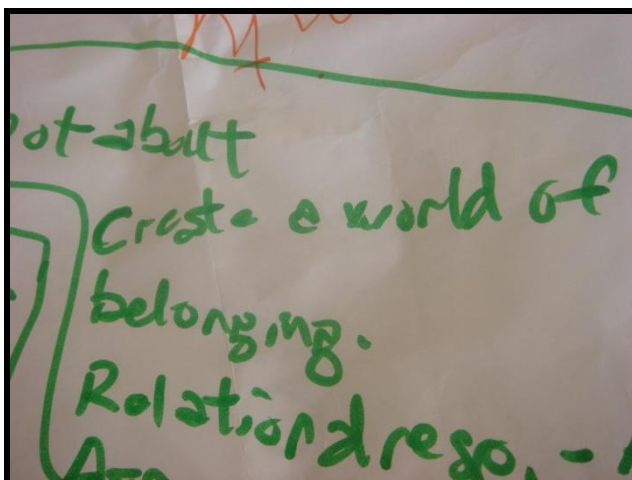
Image 7. Belonging Relationships
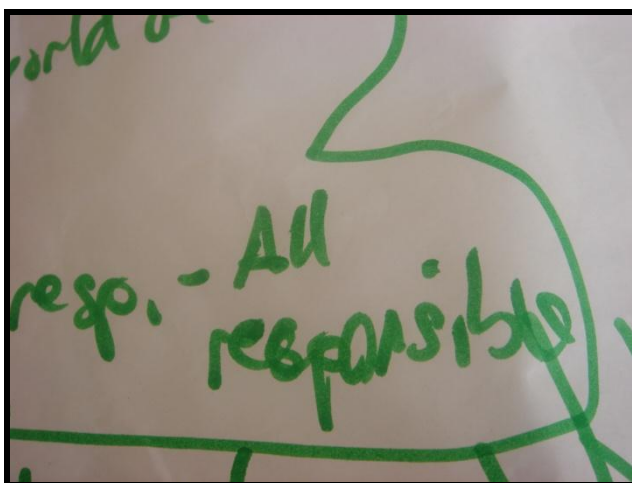
Image 8. Collective Responsibilities
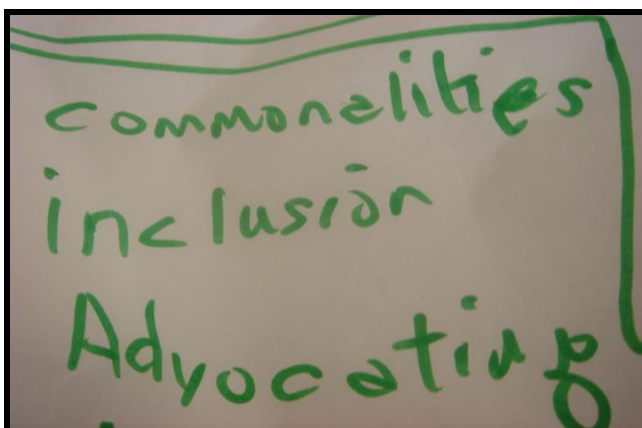
Image 9. Advocacy

Image 10. Integration
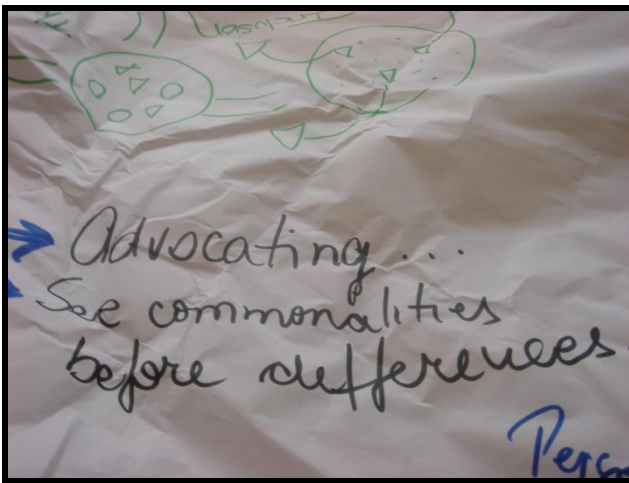
Image 11. Sameness
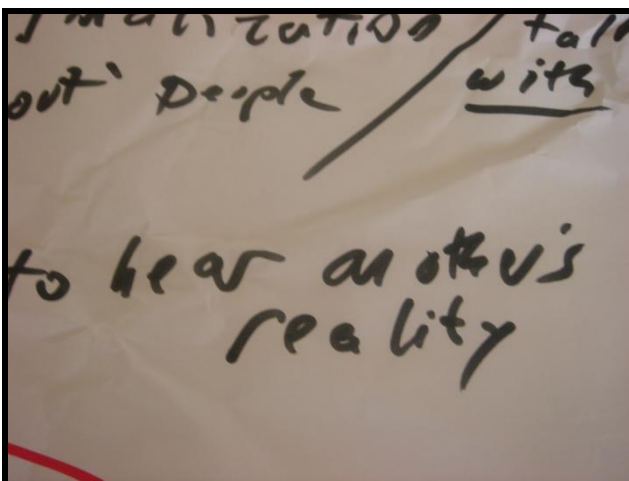
Image 12. Realities of others

Image 13. Putting into Practice

Image 14. Marginalization

Image 15. Social Action
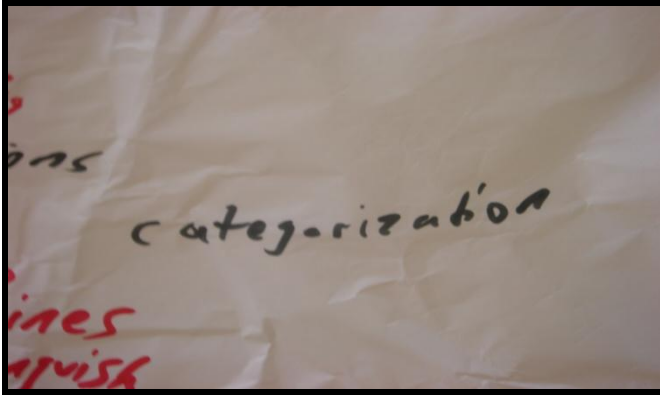
Image 16. Categorization
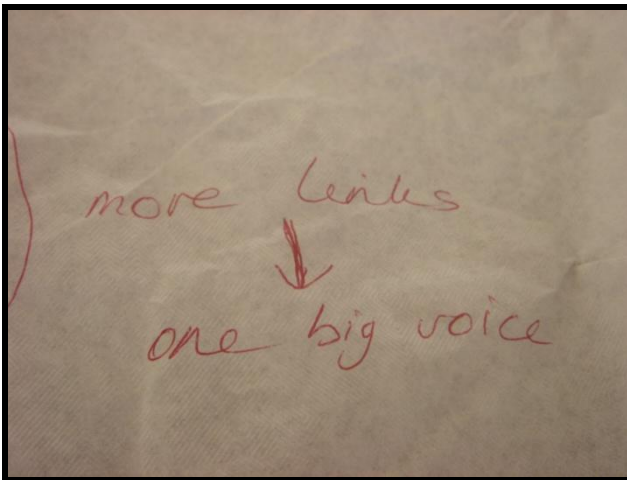
Image 17. More Links, One Big Voice
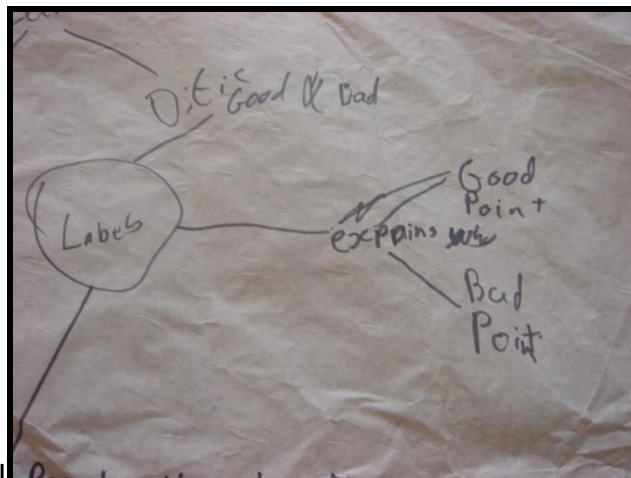
Image 18. Labels good and bad
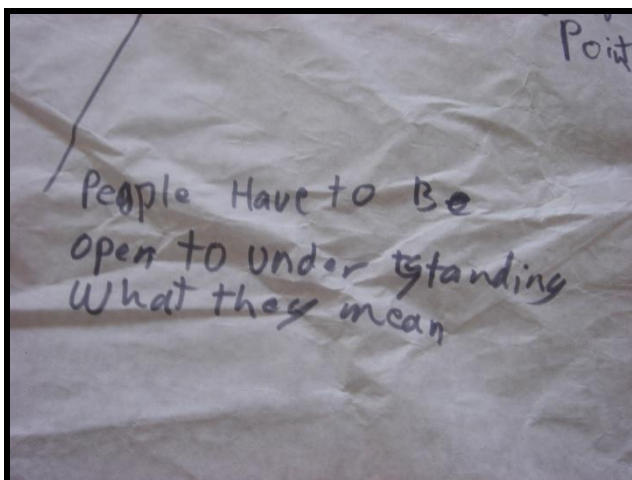
Image 19. People have to be open to understanding what they mean
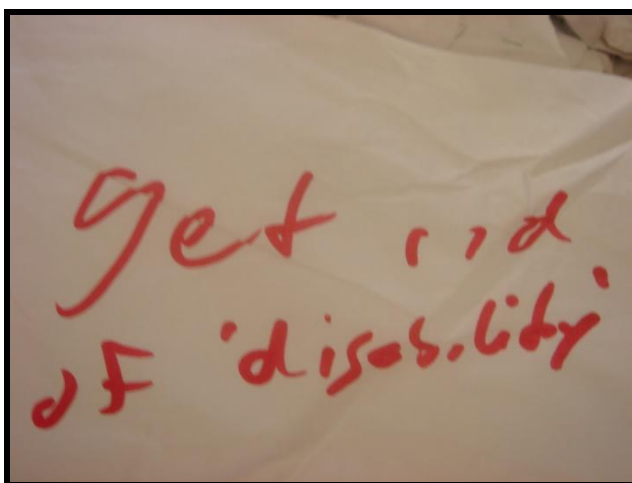
Image 20. Get Rid of Disability
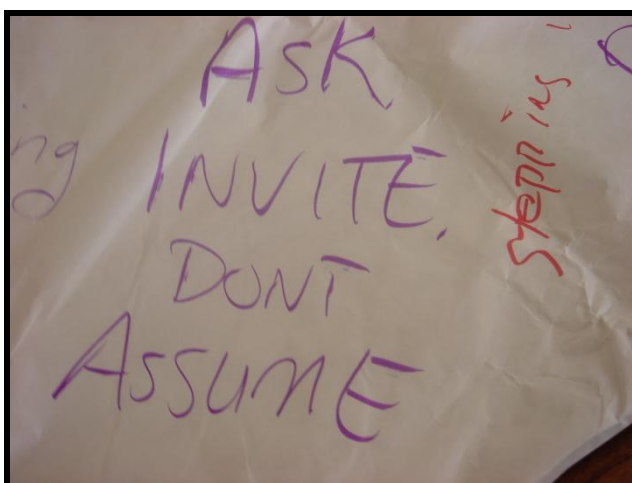
Image 21. Ask, invite, don't assume
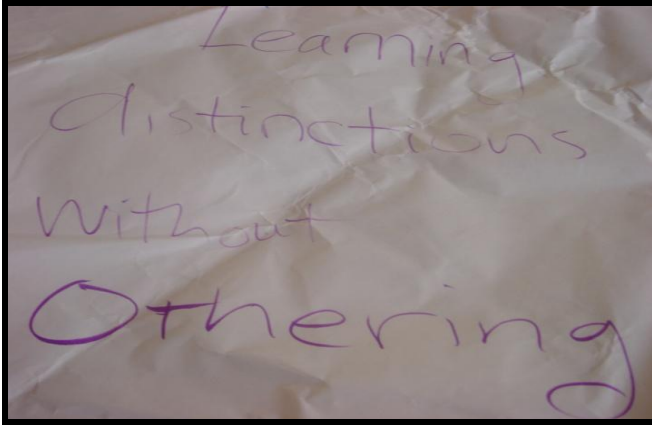
Image 22. Distinctions without othering
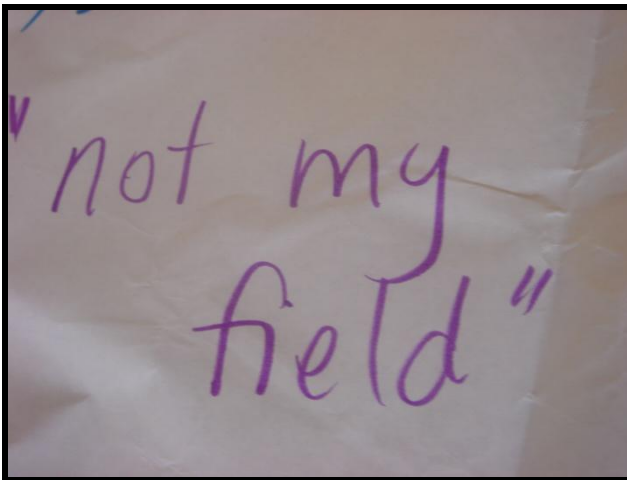
Image 23. Not my field.
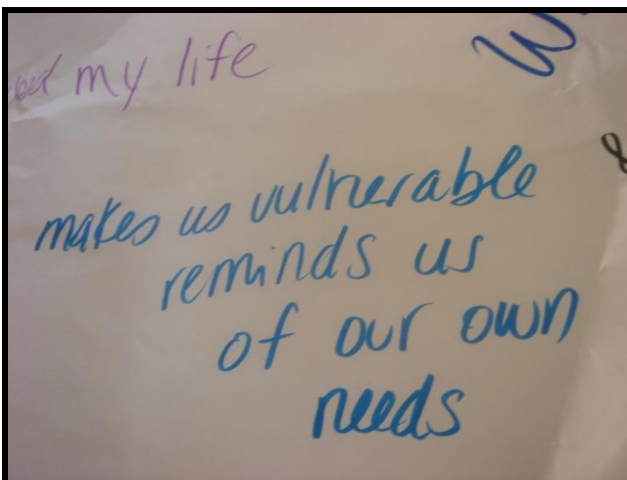
Image 24. Makes us vulnerable, reminds us of our own needs
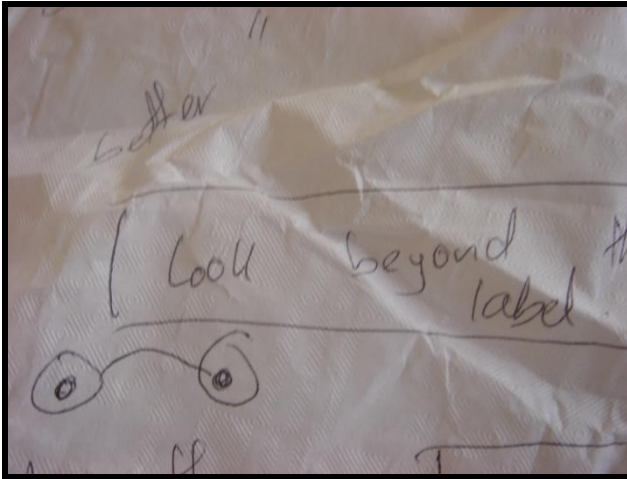
Image 25. Look beyond the label
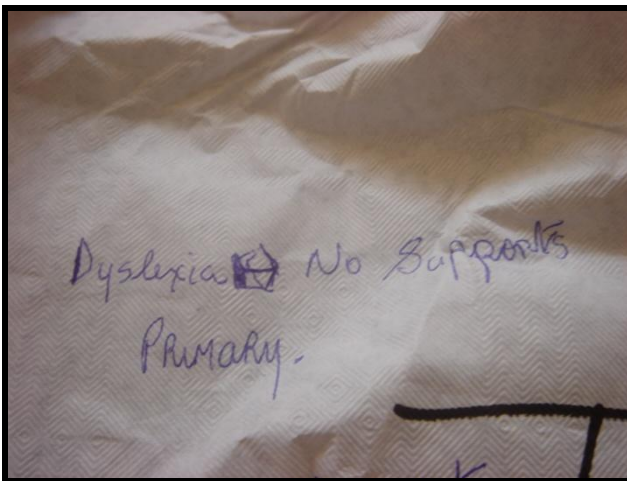
Image 26. Dyslexia, no supports
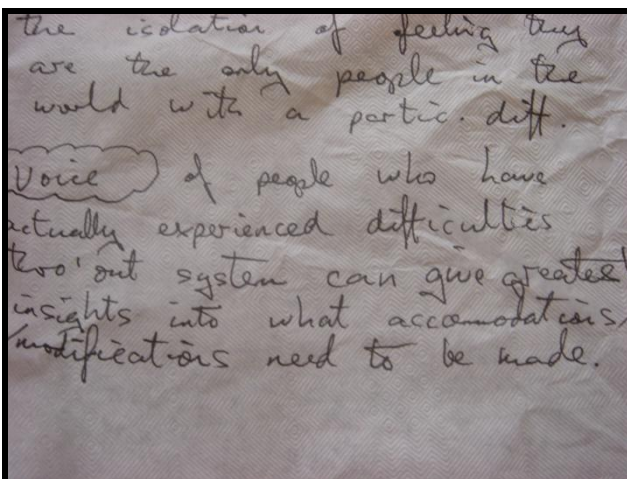
Image 27. People who have actually experienced difficulties can give greater insights

Image 28. Student voice

Image 29. Every situation is different

Image 30. Dilemma of whether to use a label or not
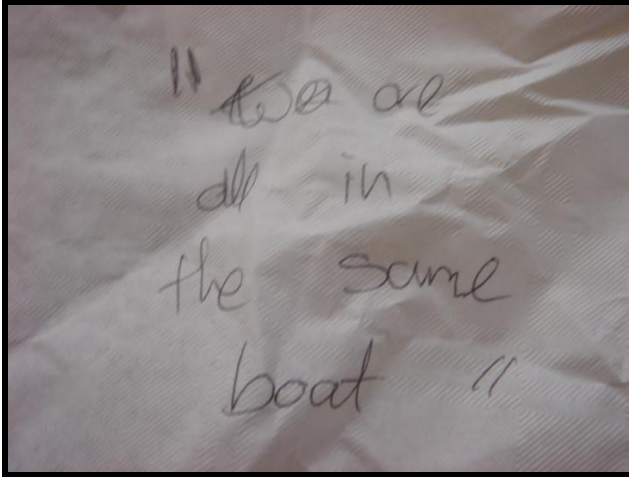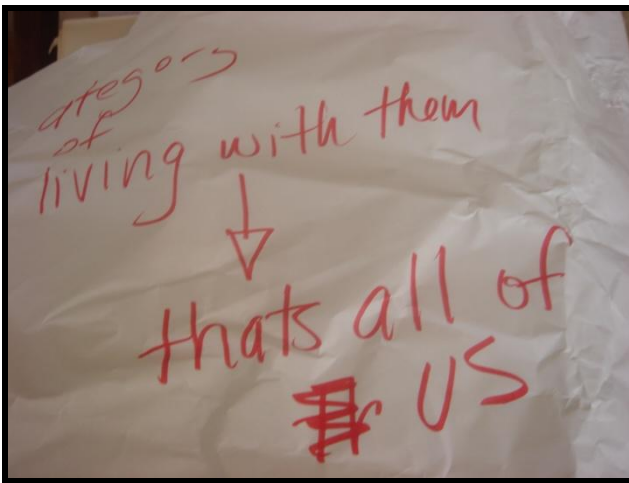
Image 31. We are all in the same boat

Image 32. Living with them - that's all of us

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consent Form to participate in Research Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Aileen Tierney from Taos /Tilburg University PhD programme.

The purpose of this study is to consider how services are planned, delivered and reviewed, in the area of disability support. It will also consider whether dialogical approaches i.e. structured conversations, that include a cross-section of stakeholders (interested people), in this process, facilitate greater understandings between disparate ideas and parties and generate more information and a wider perspective for those who are planning services.

The manner, in which the study will be considered, will be through one or more, facilitated conversations amongst a cross- section of stakeholders. This study will contribute to the student's completion of the dissertation requirements for the PhD degree of the University of Tilburg.

Consent to Participate

The research will take the form of one or more conversations, with particular questions being discussed and will last approximately 2 1/2 hours and will be audio /video recorded. The conversations will be co facilitated by a colleague and experienced facilitator/consultant Eamonn O Dwyer.

Some of the main themes emerging from the conversations will be analysed and transcribed. Participants will not be identified in any of their comments or contributions. All identifying information and details, such as place of work, names, personal details etc will be omitted. Transcripts will be made available to participants on request.

The transcripts may also be made available to the University of Tilburg, if so requested but will not receive wider circulation and will be destroyed on successful award of the PhD. Excerpts from the conversations will be used to illustrate particular ideas in the core text.

Potential benefits from this research include a contribution to knowledge about ways in which disability is considered and the creation of possible inclusive model for planning and reviewing services.

Research Procedure

Should you decide to participate, you will be requested to sign the consent form and asked to participate in a recorded conversation(s). All data will be stored securely by the researcher and final copies of the research, on completion, made available to participants. While individual responses will be anonymous,

some generalised comments and quotes will be used. The researcher retains the right to present and publish non-identifiable material.

Participation

Participation is entirely voluntary. Should you choose to participate you can withdraw your consent at any time prior to the conversation. You may have questions/ comments during your participation in this study, or after completion please do not hesitate to contact me at aileenti@eircom.net or at

Consent

I _____

consent to participate in a research study being undertaken by Aileen Tierney.

Details of this study have been provided to me, with which I am in agreement.

Signed

Appendix 2: Stakeholder Groups Invited

Over 100 people were invited to attend or made contact in relation to the dialogue.

Multi -Disciplinary Professionals – Occupational Therapists, Speech and language Therapists, Psychologists and Doctors

Voluntary Organisations: working in area of Specific learning difficulties,

Disability Organizations

Services Users: age 18+ who live with specific learning difficulty or disability labels

Educational: trainers, teachers, Principals, Lecturers.

Management Planners

Aspire: Aspergers Association

NDA: National Disability Authority

IATSE: Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education

Rathmines Teacher Training center

Drumcondra Education Center

Prof Excel:Online teacher Training Specific Learning Difficulties

Ahead: Association of Higher education and Disability

DFI: Disability Federation of Ireland

NCSE: National Council Special Education

NEPS: National Educational Psychological services

HADD: Hyperactive and attention deficit Disorder Association

NLN: National Learning network

Disability Support Staff: Higher Education

ACLD: Dyslexia Association of Ireland

FETAC: Education and Training awards Council

PWDI: People with disabilities in Ireland

ILSA: Irish Learning support Association

NALA: National adult literacy Association

Dyspraxia Association of Ireland

Equality Authority Board

Appendix 3: Information for Participants

A Conversation about Planning and Reviewing Disability Services

Friday 25th January 2008

10am -12.30am

A Block

Institute of Technology

Blanchardstown

'Conversations can and do create change-

Each contribution rippling outwards to create small waves'

I am writing to ask you to participate in a conversation about how services in the area of specific learning difficulties are planned, delivered and reviewed.

The main aim is to consider the development of an Inclusive model for planning and reviewing services, in the area of specific learning difficulties (SPld's)

I have invited a cross-section of stakeholders (interested people) to attend a structured conversation, in order, in so far as is possible, to represent the multiplicity of voices and views.

These include some of the following participants:

- Voluntary organisations working in this area

- Services providers

- Educators

- Managers

- Disability support providers

- Service users

- Disability organisations.

The conversation will take place on Friday 25th of January from 10-12.30am in the A block in the Institute of Technology, in Blanchardstown.

It will be co- facilitated by a colleague and very experienced consultant/ facilitator Eamonn O Dwyer.

As some of you will know, I have been involved in the area of specific learning difficulties for a number of years and played a key advisory role in the PACTS Wales/Ireland Project (Partners collaborating in training for individuals with specific learning difficulties) and in the initial set up of the assessment centre in Institute of technology Blanchardstown, for the National learning network, as well as providing consultancy in the area of specific learning difficulties to the national learning network.

At that time, an advisory group of stakeholders was convened, to provide a consultation process in relation to the development of the assessment service. As a result of my involvement with the National Learning Network and in particular my joint work with Dawn Duffin, I was extremely impressed with the NLN focus on inclusive policies and therefore decided to situate this conversation amongst stakeholders in specific learning difficulties, under the auspices of the NLN.

It is hoped the conversation will both be of benefit in terms of research and of benefit to those who are participating, as a forum to exchange views and ideas. In addition, to the main aims of the conversation it is hoped we might also consider some of the following issues:

Generating and exploring questions that are important to the participants in the provision of services.

To provide a network for all those working and with an interest/experience in the area of learning difficulties to exchange views.

To exchange views and collaborate on the development and review of best practice models for service delivery.

To listen to each other for new emerging insights and new questions.

To create a context for expression of difference and create contexts of understanding amongst the diversity of perspectives

To consider ideas about disability and how they impact on those whom the labels are held about.

To consider issues of discrimination and the need for inclusion of service users views.

To exchange information on current research, new inclusive initiatives and service development in the area of specific learning difficulties.

To provide written reflections and collective decisions/discoveries emerging from the conversational forum in the form of research.

Requirements

This conversation forms part of PHd research which I am currently undertaking in association with the University of Tilburg Netherlands / TAOS Institute. My research question relates to the development of an inclusive model for planning and reviewing service delivery in the area of disability and education.

As this review will form part of my PhD research, conversations will be recorded transcribed and analysed in a manner that protects the anonymity of all the participants. Consent of all those participating will be sought.

I look forward to your response to this invitation.

Yours sincerely

Aileen Tierney

M.Soc Sc. CQSW, ECP

Registered Family Therapist & Supervisor ICP FTAI

IF you require transport or further directions please do not hesitate to contact me at ………….

Aileen Tierney

Appendix 4: Voluntary Organisations

Aspire: Aspergers Association

Dyspraxia Association of Ireland

HAdd-:Hyperactive and attention deficit Disorder association

ACLD : Dyslexia association

PACTS: Partners collaborating in training in specific learning difficulty

 DFI: Disabilty federation of Ireland

NALA; National adult literacy Assocaition

Appendix 5: Dialogue Participants

Multidisciplinary Professionals	Disability Support	Voluntary Organisations	Education	Disability Organisations	Services Users	Education Organisations	Management Planners
Occupational Therapist	Disability Support officer(s)	Aspire Aspergers	Teacher lecturer	DFI - Disability Federation of Ireland	Male 25	National Council Special Education	Centre manager
Psychologist		HADD - Hyperactive and Attention deficit disorder	NALA - National Association Adult literacy	NDA - National Disability Authority	Male 24 Male 24	IATSE - Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education	Regional Manager NLN
Instructor		ACLD - Dyslexia Association of Ireland	FETAC - Education and Training Awards Council	PWDI - People with Disabilities in Ireland	Male 23	ILSA - Irish Learning support Association	Higher Ed access officer
Psychiatrist		Dyspraxia Association of Ireland	Learning support	Equal Authority Board	Male 22 Male 22 Female 22	Teacher Training College	
			Support higher Educ.		Parents		

Appendix 6: Facilitators details

Dialogue 1: Multi-stakeholder dialogue was co- facilitated by both Eamonn O Dwyer and myself.

Eamonn O Dwyer

Eamonn is a Business consultant and facilitator, with Sheppard Moscow consultancy, Dublin, where he has worked for the past twelve years. He is an honours Psychology graduate of Trinity College Dublin and holds a Masters in Organisational Psychology, from the London University.

Sheppard Moscow

Sheppard Moscow is a management consultancy firm with branches Internationally. It provides a wide range of services to companies and organizations. Its primary vision and values is to assist companies to sustain success, connected to the contextual realities within which   many businesses operate today.

Aileen Tierney

My own background is as a social worker and registered Family therapy Supervisor and holder of the European Certificate in Psychotherapy. I have a Masters in social work University College Dublin, Part 1 accredited mediation training, Diploma in Specific learning difficulties, University of Wales and Certificate in systemic supervision. I am currently CEO and Head of Training at Clanwilliam Institute, Dublin Ireland

Clanwilliam Institute

Clanwilliam Institute has been one of the leading centres of systemic therapy and practice in Ireland since its establishment in 1982. It has initiated a variety of services including marital and family therapy, mediation, organisational consultation and professional training for systemic practitioners. It is both training and clinical Institute and runs an M.Sc in systemic Psychotherapy.

Appendix 7: Naming of Irish Sculptures

There are various sculptures around Dublin City which have been named locally by the people of Dublin as follows:

1. A sculpture of a woman in a fountain has a variety of names – "The Floozie in the Jacuzzi" (Floozie is a local description of a prostitute). "The whore in the sewer" & "Viagra Falls".

2. A tall pencil like structure in the city, which was officially named The Spire is locally described by the people as follows:- "The nail in the pale" (pale being capital city) "the stiletto in the ghetto", "the spike", "the pole in the hole".

3. A sculpture of Oscar Wilde reclining on a large rock in Merrion Square has been named as: "the fag on the crag". Oscar Wilde having been known to explore his sexuality and the word faggot being used in maybe a derogatory but also humorous way to describe men who are in same sex relationships.

4. Sculpture at Martello tower by the Sea – "the sore on the shore". This particular one was not popular with the locals when it was erected.

5. Sculpture of Molly Malone (made famous by an Irish song in Dublin's fair city) has been called "the tart with the cart" and " the dish with the fish "

6. Sculpture of two women sitting on a bench taking a break from their shopping: "the hags with the bags".

7. The millennium clock, which was buried:" the time in the slime".

8. James Joyce, "the prick with the stick".

9. Thomas Moore: outside the public toilets; "the meeting of the waters".

While all the names would appear to those who are not members of the Dublin community to be derogatory, there is also a certain pride and familiarity/ownership in the naming. This is a part of an Irish humorous cynicism that has a double edge in both a sense of familiarity and distancing simultaneously. This disposition in many ways reflects the nature of this project, which is the capacity to hold the tension between two variant discourses, which is achieved here in the Dublinese humour. This may also reflect our resistance as a culture to a history of colonizati so doing.

References

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Advice from a Tree

Dear Friend,

Stand Tall and Proud

Sink your roots deeply into the Earth

Reflect the light of a greater source

Think long term

Go out on a limb

Remember your place among all living beings

Embrace with joy the changing seasons

For each yields its own abundance

The Energy and Birth of Spring

The Growth and Contentment of Summer

The Wisdom to let go of leaves in the Fall

The Rest and Quiet Renewal of Winter

Feel the wind and the sun

And delight in their presence

Look up at the moon that shines down upon you

And the mystery of the stars at night.

Seek nourishment from the good things in life

Simple pleasures

Earth, fresh air, light

Be content with your natural beauty

Drink plenty of water

Let your limbs sway and dance in the breezes

Be flexible

Remember your roots

Enjoy the view!