It is Still a Hearing World: A Phenomenological Case Study of Deaf College Students' Experiences of Academia

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This dissertation titled

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Experiences of Academia

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ABSTRACT

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In the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of deaf students attending hearing institutions of higher education. However, research has demonstrated that only one-fourth of these students will graduate (Lang, 2002; Stinson & Walter, 1997; Walter, Foster, & Elliot, 1987). Previous research reviewed, tended to focus on academic outcomes and the identification of social barriers; however, very little work has examined how the norms of the hearing world have influenced deaf students’ perceptions of mainstreamed institutions. In addition, research has not sought solutions to these identified barriers from the marginalized community that experience them, the deaf community. The literature review discussed four models of disability: the moral, the medical, the social, and the biopsychosocial models of disability. In addition, it analyzed the progression of deaf education in the United States of America and how the differing philosophies have influenced current practices within academia. Through an Appreciative Inquiry approach, this phenomenological case study incorporated in-depth interviewing to examine the lived experiences of two undergraduate and two graduate deaf students successfully working toward their degree completion. This study sought to better understand the participants’ experiences and begin a necessary dialogue in identifying successful strategies that have aided in their success. While the participants identified
various approaches that facilitated their progress, in this study, the relationship between
the student and his/her sign language interpreter and the trust that developed from this
relationship were crucial to their success. The power of voice, self-advocacy, motivation,
and the academic climate were also important. In addition, a working model of academic
interpreting was proposed which incorporated the elements that are critical from the
perspective of the participants in achieving success in the educational setting.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Even as our laws have required that non-English speaking children develop reading and writing skills in English, even as our courts have recognized the importance of different languages and even dialects or jargons, even as our constitution has accepted that one’s language is so important as to be tantamount to cultural or national origin, there is no recognition of the truly unique language and communication needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing children. (Siegel, 2006, p. 269)

Imagine…You are sitting in study hall engrossed in the latest edition of your favorite car magazine. Out of the corner of your eye you see a hand wave rapidly back and forth. It is your interpreter trying to get your attention. You look around noticing that the other students have left the room and are heading to the cafeteria. You will be last… again. Your interpreter tells you it is time for lunch. You knew that, but conversation is hard to come by. Your interpreter, a mother of three, is the only one in your school system who knows how to sign. As she hurries off to the teacher’s lounge, her hands move in rapid motion telling you that she will see you after lunch. Remembering that it is Friday and the cafeteria is serving pizza, you hurry down the hall. You walk alone down the long corridor arriving at the end of a long lunch line. As you wait in the line, you look around at the other students. They are laughing about the latest school gossip, but you struggle to read their lips. Their faces contort in sarcastic laughter, but you only hear muffled noises. You motion to a girl from your second period study hall and ask her what is so funny. She over exaggerates her mouth as she practically yells, “I’ll tell you later.”
Her lips are almost impossible to read, but it doesn’t matter. You know that later will never come and so you wait… in silence. Jimmy, a boy from your fifth period algebra class waves politely to you as he squeezes in between two cheerleaders seated at the “popular table”. You wave back… wishing he would talk to you…even for a moment, but a hand wave is all you get. It feels like charity.

**Background to the Study**

While the scenario written above is hypothetical in nature, it is a situation that is all too real for many deaf children who are educated in environments with their hearing peers. Since the passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1976 that began the mainstreaming of children with disabilities and with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA of 1993 that mandated placement in the least restrictive environment, the number of deaf children educated in inclusive environments is on the rise. According to the Gallaudet Research Institute’s Regional and National Summary Report of Data from the 2007-2008 Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Youth (2008), 66% of all deaf children are educated in either a regular classroom setting with hearing students, a self-contained classroom in a regular education setting, or in a resource room. Many deaf children struggle on a daily basis to fit into a world in which communication is controlled by hearing parents, administrators, teachers, and peers (Lane, 1999). Currently, fifty-two percent of deaf children are educated using speech and lipreading only (GRI, 2008). Thus, value is placed upon the ability to read lips and voice, both of which are difficult skills for deaf children to master. In order to accomplish this goal, from an early age, deaf children, are shuffled from professional to professional. They are forced to go through a
battery of tests, tutoring, and therapy. As a result of this environment, the educational experience of deaf children may become fraught with academic and social barriers.

As stated previously, the scenario set at the beginning of this study is hypothetical in nature, but it is not unfamiliar to me. I received my degree in interpreting in the early 1990s. From the start, I was drawn to educational interpreting, and while I would also interpret in a variety of settings throughout the community, I spent eleven years working with deaf children in the K-12 setting. I have witnessed both positive and negative aspects of educating deaf children with their hearing peers. I have seen deaf children excel educationally in inclusive environments, and I have seen them fail. Some children are able to speak and lipread more easily than others and are able to communicate, at least moderately, with their hearing peers, while others seemed to withdraw into themselves or seek friendship with me, their interpreter, to satisfy their hunger for communication.

I remember a common practice I had with the students; it may even have been the catalyst for going back to college in my late twenties to pursue my bachelor’s degree in communication studies. Lunchtime was my free period from the children. I would eat in the teacher’s lounge and socialize with my hearing peers. However, I remember on several occasions, out of curiosity, I went into to an upper level classroom and peered down upon the playground to watch how the deaf children interacted socially with the hearing children. Sometimes I would see them playing basketball or chasing another child, but more often than I care to recall I would see them alone. Sometimes they would simply walk around the playground killing time until the bell rang and sometimes they
would sit in solitude on the swings swaying back and forth. It broke my heart to watch them so isolated and alone. Those were the times that I questioned whether a hearing school was the right environment for a deaf child. I believed in the excellence of the school’s curriculum and the opportunities that it could provide deaf children, but at what cost to their socialization and self-esteem? From my experience as a sign language interpreter, I observed during the early years in education that hearing children were often excited about having a deaf child in their classroom. They were quick to learn a few signs in an attempt to communicate with their deaf classmate(s). However, as they grew into puberty and started to form social groups, they tended to lose interest in taking the time to communicate with their deaf peers. As their interpreter, I became their lifeline to a world in which they struggled to communicate.

Kluwin, Stinson, and Colarossi (2002) looked at the socialization process and outcomes between deaf and hearing peers in inclusive educational environments. They examined several different studies conducted within the field of deafness in relation to social acceptance, participation, and communication and categorized them into four themes: social skills, social interaction/participation, sociometric status/acceptance, and affective functioning. All of the studies in their inquiry were quantitative studies, published after 1980, and used a comparison group that contained deaf and/or hard-of-hearing individuals. Upon reviewing 33 studies, they concluded deaf children educated in inclusive settings may not fully enjoy their educational experience due to the obstruction of communication with their hearing peers; however interventions, such as integrated activities, may improve this outcome. Thus, communication is seen as a fundamental
component in segregating deaf children from their hearing peers and educators. Siegel (2006) stated:

To communicate completely and freely is to be included in the decision-making process of our democracy, to be a member of the commonweal. There is not a hearing child in this nation who must think, even for a second, that each day and year she goes to school, she must secure anew her right and need to communicate. Deaf and hard-of-hearing children are entitled to the same happy ignorance. (p. 257)

Communication is the foundation for all understanding. It is as essential to us as the very air we breathe and yet it is all too often taken for granted. However, the legal system in the United States does protect access to education by people with disabilities regarding communication. On July 26, 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed into law The Americans with Disabilities Act which provides protection against discrimination for people with disabilities. On September 25, 2008, President George W. Bush signed the ADA Amendments ACT of 2008, which took effect January 1, 2009. The amended version of the Americans with Disabilities Act modified the definition of disability more broadly and affirmed that extenuating devices, such as hearing aids, are not relevant in determining whether a disability qualifies under the law (ADA). Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act are relevant to deaf students within academia. Title II states:

No qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs,
or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any public entity. (§ 35.130)

In other words, public and private colleges and universities, regardless of federal funding, must be accessible to students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing (P.L. 101-336, 42 U.S.C. § 12181). In addition, Title II demands that colleges and universities provide necessary auxiliary aids and services in order to promote equal access. Auxiliary aids are defined as:

Qualified interpreters on-site or through video remote interpreting (VRI) services; notetakers; real-time computer-aided transcription services; written materials; exchange of written notes; telephone handset amplifiers; assistive listening devices; assistive listening systems; telephones compatible with hearing aids; closed caption decoders; open and closed captioning, including real-time captioning; voice, text, and video-based telecommunications products and systems, including text telephones (TTYs), videophones, and captioned telephones, or equally effective telecommunications devices; videotext displays; accessible electronic and information technology; or other effective methods of making aurally delivered information available to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. (§ 35.104)

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination of people with disabilities by public localities and mandates that said places must be designed, constructed, and altered in agreement with the Americans with Disabilities Act (§ 36.101). While auxiliary aids and services are explicated discussed in Title III of the
Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, Title III discusses effective communication.

“A public accommodation shall furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities” (§ 36.303). Regarding the use of auxiliary aids and services, the law states:

To ensure effective communication will vary in accordance with the method of communication used by the individual; the nature, length, and complexity of the communication involved; and the context in which the communication is taking place. A public accommodation should consult with individuals with disabilities whenever possible to determine what type of auxiliary aid is needed to ensure effective communication, but the ultimate decision as to what measures to take rests with the public accommodation, provided that the method chosen results in effective communication. (§ 36.303)

In addition, under Title III, colleges and universities cannot require the deaf student to bring an interpreter with him/her to interpret, cannot rely on an accompanying adult or child to interpret or facilitate communication (except in specified emergency situations), they must provide effective telecommunication services, and necessary equipment and connection when using video remote interpreting services (§ 36.303).

Communication, and its impact on deaf individuals, is significant in understanding the experiences of deaf students. Weisel and Kamara (2005) examined attachment and individuation in regards to deafness and hearing ability. Their study employed a quantitative approach using a modified version of the Gallaudet Hearing Scale, the Individuation-Attachment Questionnaire, the Index of Self-Esteem, and the
Self-Anchorong Striving Scale. Participants, 38 deaf and hard-of-hearing and 42 hearing individuals, ranged from 18 to 35 years of age. All of the deaf and hard-of-hearing participants were educated with hearing peers. One study finding demonstrated that the degree of hearing loss, whether mild to profound, did not significantly influence an individual’s ability to form attachments and become independent. However, society’s label of “hearing loss” negatively affected an individual’s social development. In essence, “once the child was perceived as ‘different,’ the social interactions other people had with him/her were altered and affected the developmental process” (p. 58). In addition, Weisel and Kamara’s findings supported earlier research which demonstrated that as a result of communicative isolation, individuals with hearing loss had lower self-esteem than their hearing counterparts (Madden & Slavin, 1983; Montanini-Manfredi, 1993; Weisel & Kamara, 2005).

Studies have demonstrated that 90 – 96% of all deaf children are born to hearing parents (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004; Schein, 1989). As a result of the high incidence of hearing parents and the high prevalence of education in the regular school settings, the majority of deaf children grow up in hearing environments. Thus, deaf children are raised in a world in which their success both academically and socially is evaluated based on a socially structured scale of hearing normalcy.

Within any culture, communication is fundamental to academic success (Blachman, 1984; Catts, 1993; Fey, Catts, & Larrivee, 1995, Lewis & Freebairn, 1992). However, for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, acquisition and mastery of the English language is fraught with peril. The process of learning an auditory-based
language without the ability to hear has been discussed extensively among scholars. The
majority of research has focused on the systemic process by which language is attained.
Research regarding reading has widely reported that the average deaf adult has a 4th-
grade comprehension level. When compared to their hearing peers, deaf children have
consistently demonstrated lower vocabulary and reading comprehension levels
(Karchmer & Mitchell, 2003; King & Quigley, 1985; Marschark, 1997; Singleton et al.,
overhear conversation and have limited early literacy experiences in English, deaf
children struggle to develop their English vocabularies at age-appropriate levels” (p. 87).

Additionally, though arguably on a smaller scale, researchers have discussed the
complexity deaf and hard of hearing students experience regarding the writing process.
Anita, Reed, and Kreimeyer (2005) stated, “Because of difficulty accessing and learning
English syntactical and morphological structures, either auditorily or visually, they [deaf
individuals] make numerous errors at the sentence level” (p. 245). In their study, they
examined written language skills of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in public schools.
Results of the Test of Written Language, (3rd ed.), indicated that the mean writing score of
deaf and hard-of-hearing students fell below average. With the complexity involved in
learning the English language and the increasing number of deaf and hard-of-hearing
students being educated in regular classrooms, educators are concerned that access to
communication and relational interactions may impact the quality of learning for students
(Anita et al., 2005; Ramsey, 1997; Shaw & Jamieson, 1997; Stinson & Anita, 1999)
The notion of normalcy, as it pertains to mastery of the English language mentioned above, carries through not only in the K-12 experience for deaf individuals, but into aspects of higher education. With the increase in the number of K-12 deaf children being educated in inclusive environments, the number of deaf adolescents and adults attending hearing institutions of higher education has also been impacted (Lang, 2002). More and more deaf students are choosing to attend predominantly hearing institutions of higher education instead of attending traditional deaf colleges such as Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. and The National Technical Institute of the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. However, only one-fourth of the deaf students attending hearing institutions will graduate (Lang, 2002; Stinson & Walter, 1997; Walter, Foster, & Elliot, 1987) There are many factors that potentially contribute to the low graduation rate.

Lang (2002) conducted a meta-analysis regarding deaf students in higher education and the barriers they experience within the educational realm. He found factors such as academic preparation (Lang & Stinson, 1982; Stinson & Walter, 1992), social and academic integration (Kersting, 1997; Stinson & Walter, 1992), social adjustment and belonging (Stinson & Walter, 1997), support services (i.e., tutoring, note-taking, interpreting services) (Elliot, Stinson, McKee, Everhart, & Francis, 2001; Orlando, Gramly, & Hoke, 1997; Quinsland & Long, 1989), classroom participation (Lang, Stinson, Kavanagh, Liu, & Basile, 1998), and effective teaching (Lang, McKee, & Conner, 1993) to be key factors influencing the success of deaf students in higher education. However, while research has focused on identifying the obstacles to academic
achievement for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, there has been limited identification of solutions.

The educational experiences of deaf individuals today has been influenced by educational and social practices of yesterday. The vast majority of educators within academia, especially in hearing colleges and universities, are hearing individuals. The greater number of these educators and administrators are unaware of the difficulties deaf students experience as a result of the notion of normalcy. With the increase of deaf individuals attending hearing institutions and the lack of success colleges have in retaining and graduating deaf students, there is a greater need for academicians to become conscious of the barriers deaf students experience as well as possible solutions. A collaboration of thought and understanding of the phenomenological experiences of deaf students may allow for such an occurrence.

**Problem Statement**

While previous work has focused on academic outcomes and identification of social barriers for deaf students in higher education (Lang, 2002), very little work has examined how the norms of the hearing world have influenced their academic and social interactions. In addition, there has been limited inquiry regarding potential solutions to these social and academic barriers. Thus, the need for an examination of the how deaf students perceive the social and academic structures within hearing institutions of higher education in relationship to societal normalcy becomes not only relevant, but also crucial in enhancing the success and retention of future students.
Research Questions

The research questions for this phenomenological study are designed to better understand the experiences of deaf college students in hearing institutions of higher education.

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of deaf college students in predominately hearing institutions of higher education?
2. What modifications, adjustments, and/or implementations aid in the success of deaf students currently attending hearing institutions of higher education?

The answers to these questions will potentially inform educators of ways to improve the educational practices and policies that impact the retention and success of deaf students in predominately hearing institutions of higher education.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to describe the perception of social and educational experiences, barriers to success, and identification of solutions to obstacles as experienced by two undergraduate deaf college students and two graduate deaf college students attending Midwestern institutions in order to identify potential solutions. Barriers may include audistic social constructions of deafness and normalcy that limit access to education both academically and socially. The majority of literature regarding deaf students in higher education has focused on deaf student’s academic outcomes and not on their social and academic experiences that are shaped by hegemonic structures in the environment. This research seeks to better understand the lived
experiences of deaf students in hearing institutions of higher education and explore possible solutions to any barriers.

A phenomenological case study provides a fitting methodological framework for this research as the cases focus on the experiences of a small number of individuals in order to see successful strategies they have implemented in their navigation of higher education. In addition, a case study allows for the multiple realities that may emerge from the various experiences of participants (Yin, 1994).

**Significance of the Study**

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) provides a constructive means to frame the research questions in this study. AI is a form of investigation that looks for positive strategies that foster successful outcomes in a given environment instead of focusing on a model of deficiency. Cooperrider (2001) stated:

> Appreciative Inquiry deliberately seeks to discover people’s exceptionality – their unique gifts, strengths, and qualities. It actively searches and recognizes people for their specialties – their essential contributions and achievements. And it is based on principles of equality of voice – everyone is asked to speak about their vision of the true, the good and the possible. Appreciative Inquiry builds momentum and success because it believes in people. It really is an invitation to a positive revolution. Its goal is to discover in all human beings the exceptional and the essential. (p. 12)
This study, through an AI stance, seeks to open a dialogue with deaf students to allow their voices to be heard regarding what is working to aid in the success of current college students to support the potential success of future students.

To date, the majority of the research regarding societal barriers experienced by deaf individuals has focused on problems experienced by deaf students and their academic outcomes. Very little has focused on social experience and solutions. Lang (2002) stated, “While many barriers to success in higher education programs have been identified in research studies over the past two decades, solutions have been few and far between” (p. 268). Part of the significance of this study lies within the basic Freireian premise that we must seek potential solutions to societal barriers and oppression by allowing the lived experiences of the oppressed group to have voice. Freire (1970) affirmed, “Humans, however, because they are aware of themselves and thus of the world – because they are conscious beings – exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and their own freedom” (p. 99). Thus, the importance of this study is focused not only on creating a better understanding of the lived experiences of deaf college students and the hegemonic barriers within academia that prohibit them from experiencing full participation and enjoyment, but also on potential solutions and/or recommendations for academicians regarding ways in which such barriers might be deconstructed.

On a broader scale, this study also seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding societal normalcy and the expectations such notions convey to people who are or are labeled as disabled. Greater understanding of how normalcy impacts the lives of
deaf individuals has the potential to raise consciousness of the problem it poses which has both practical and theoretical implications for society at large.

In addition, the various roles I serve in the deaf community add significance to this study. As a professional interpreter, I have worked in a variety of settings for almost twenty years. I worked eleven years in a K-12 setting and I have interpreted in higher education for over fifteen years. Though I am proficient in ASL, I believe that learning is a lifelong endeavor.

As an educator, I have taught American Sign Language and deaf studies courses for almost twenty years. I am still as passionate about deaf culture and American Sign Language as I was when I first began my education in 1989. However, I am also empathetic to the constraints imposed upon educators. I understand the professional and ethical responsibilities from both perspectives, in the role of the student as well as the role of the teacher.

As a researcher, I am both an insider and outsider to the deaf community. A phenomenological case study supports the discourse generated through a collaboration of ideas between me and the deaf participants in this study. As a member of the deaf community (an insider), but not a member of deaf culture (an outsider), I am aware of how my position may influence my research. In addition, as a hearing individual, I am cognizant of the impact the hearing world and the notion of normalcy has on the deaf community.
Delimitation of the Study

The range of this study is narrowed by its delimitations. This inquiry was confined to interviewing four deaf college students attending colleges/universities in the Midwest. As with all marginalized groups, there is significant diversity among deaf individuals. Services provided to deaf students range from no additional service being provided, to sign language interpreters, note takers, real-time captioners, etc. Within a phenomenological study, participants share similar experiences. Therefore, all four participants in this study communicate using sign language. In addition, all of the participants utilize the services of a sign language interpreter in the classroom setting.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations associated with employing a qualitative methodological approach. The problem of power is an evident complexity with interviewing. Qualitative research seeks to reveal the lived experiences of its participants without subjecting them to added marginalization. Reciprocity, or giving back to participants in a study, is one way in which researchers may attempt to level the power imbalance (Creswell, 2007).

This study does not seek to generalize, but for particularity a case study is beneficial to allow an in-depth and rich, thick description of the phenomenon and the investigation. Qualitative research neither seek to generalize its findings to a population at large nor does it necessarily aim at proving something. Rather, it seeks to learn something. The outcome of this research endeavor is to examine the lived experiences of a small number of deaf college students in order to describe commonalities of understanding. According to Flyvbjerg (2004):
In Germanic languages, the term ‘science’ (Wissenschaft) means literally ‘to gain knowledge’. And formal generalization is only one of the many ways by which people gain and accumulate knowledge. That knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society. A purely descriptive, phenomenological case study without any attempt to generalize can certainly be of value in this process and has often helped cut a path toward scientific innovation. (p. 424)

There are also many complexities that arise when conducting cross-cultural research. Cultural sensitivity is an essential element to this phenomenon. The insider/outsider dilemma further compounds this problem. Cross-cultural misunderstandings can occur when the interviewer and interviewees experience different cultural standpoints. Liamputpong (2008) stated, “… it is only by immersion in the particular culture that researchers may have an in-depth and accurate understanding of cultural groups” (p. 4). Awareness and reflection of cross-cultural differences may help to alleviate potential limitations. As an interpreter and instructor of American Sign Language, I am an active member of the deaf community. My experience within the culture has provided an in-depth understanding of deafness. In addition, all participants had the opportunity to review his/her translated interview transcripts.
Operational Definitions

d/Deaf

The distinction between someone who is “deaf” and someone who is “Deaf” must be clarified. The term “deaf” refers to the audiological inability to hear. Deafness can range from a very mild loss to someone being profoundly deaf. Individuals who are deaf are identified by a wide range of terms. They may consider themselves to be deaf, hard-of-hearing, hearing-impaired, or simply hearing. In contrast, someone is “Deaf” with a “D” is a member of a Deaf-World made up of a somewhat smaller group of individuals that view deafness not as a disability, but as a difference (Lane, 2005, p. 291). These individuals embrace the concept of being Deaf much like a person of color would embrace the color of his/her skin… with pride. One might think that the difference between someone who considers him/herself to be “deaf” and someone who views him/herself as “Deaf” would be dichotomous. However, these terms should be viewed on a continuum that individuals may move across as they grow and develop. As such, I will use the term “deaf” to refer to both audiological deafness and cultural Deafness.

Mainstreaming/Inclusion

Two other terms that should be discussed are mainstreaming and inclusion. Mainstreaming, which is an older philosophy of education is defined by the Wisconsin Education Association Council (2011) as:

The selective placement of special education students in one or more "regular" education classes. Proponents of mainstreaming generally assume that a student must "earn" his or her opportunity to be placed in regular classes by
demonstrating an ability to "keep up" with the work assigned by the regular classroom teacher. This concept is closely linked to traditional forms of special education service delivery.

(http://www.weac.org/Issues_Advocacy/Resource_Pages_On_Issues_one/Special_Education/special_education_inclusion.aspx)

In addition, the term inclusion is defined as a:

Commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students). Proponents of inclusion generally favor newer forms of education service delivery.

(http://www.weac.org/Issues_Advocacy/Resource_Pages_On_Issues_one/Special_Education/special_education_inclusion.aspx)

However, with regards to the deaf community, the terms “mainstreaming” and “inclusion” are interchangeable. The terms simply mean that a deaf person was educated with hearing peers and not in a residential school with deaf peers. In fact, there is not a sign difference between the two. The only sign difference is if a child was mainstreamed or included with other deaf peers both hands are in an open five-hand shape and they come together with the dominant hand on top indicating a blending of hearing and deaf children together. However, if a deaf child is the only deaf child in his or her mainstreamed or included classroom, then the sign changes. In this case, the dominant
hand is in an indexed hand shape and the non-dominant hand is in an open five-hand shape. The movement is the same; however, the non-dominant hand moves over the indexed dominant hand showing that the child was alone.

**Audism**

Audism is discrimination based upon one’s ability to hear. The original definition, coined in the 1970s by Tom Humphries, stated, audism is “the notion that one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears” (Bauman, 2004, p. 240).

**Normalcy/Normative/Normal/Normality**

The terms normalcy, normative, normal, normality are used interchangeably throughout this study. They refer to the notion that society strives to fit individuals within a socially constructed ideal of what is accepted as the norm. According to Branson and Miller (2002),

The father of sociology, Auguste Comte (1798-1857), spearheaded the ideology of normality. The most important effect of this ideology on the construction of “the disabled” was the fact that he concentrated on normality as being equivalent to “the order of things,” as a “normative order,” and defined the pathology as “deficiency” or “excess.” In Comte’s positivism, the normative order was not simply a quality of social or natural phenomena to be discovered by a highly valued condition. (p. 37)

From a Freirian perspective, the term “normative” refers to the notion that individuals with power set the norm (Freire, 1970).
Manually Coded English

Manually Coded English refers to “any of several signing systems invented by educators to represent words in English Sentences using signs borrowed from ASL combined with signs contrived to serve as translation equivalents for English function words (articles, prepositions, etc.) and prefixes and suffixes” (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan, 1996, p. 271). Several versions of Manually Coded English systems (MCE) have been developed throughout the years. Examples of MCE include, but are not limited to: Signing Exact English I (SEE I), Signing Exact English II (SEE II), Signed English, Linguistics of Visual English (LOVE), etc.

Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE)

Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE) is also a coded form of signed English. However, while CASE utilizes a more English like structure, it focuses on conceptual meaning.

Oralism

A philosophy of deaf education that purports that children should be taught using speech and lipreading. In this philosophy, sign language is thought to prohibit a child from functioning within the dominant hearing world. As such, it is strictly forbidden (Baynton, 1996).

Manualism

A philosophy of deaf education that maintains deaf children should be taught using sign language as the primary means of communication (Baynton, 1996).
Total Communication

Total communication is a philosophy of deaf education that in its truest form means that you will provide a deaf child with any means necessary in order to support their education. This could mean sign language, lipreading, speech, etc. However, the term most often refers to teachers signing and talking simultaneously (Branson & Miller, 2002, Lane, 1999).

Methodical Sign Language

Charles Michel de l’Eppe developed methodical signing in France during the mid-eighteenth century as a way to teach deaf children the grammatical structure of the French language (Branson & Miller, 2002; Lane, 1999). This influenced the first signs used by educators in United States (Branson & Miller, 2002).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act or Public Law 94-142 was passed in 1975. The law was later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Act or IDEA. IDEA, which was last reauthorized and amended in 2004, mandates that children should be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This specification was made so that institutions would be the least acceptable educational placement for children with disabilities. Under the law, the LRE for deaf children would not be a residential school, as it is considered an institution (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan, 1996).
Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides the background to the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the purpose statement, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, the delimitations of the study and the operational definitions.

Chapter 2 examines the three predominant models of disability: the moral, medical, social, and the biopsychosocial models. Additionally, the chapter discusses current and historical practices within the field of deaf education. The chapter ends with a discussion of critical theory and social constructionism, which provides the theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological structure of the study. It discusses case study, hermeneutic phenomenology, the rationale for the selection of the participants, data collection procedure, data analysis procedure, self as the researcher, ethical issues, as well as informed consent.

Chapter 4 provides a profile of the four deaf participants in this study. The major themes that emerged from the research are discussed and concepts from literature review, current literature, as well as theoretical concepts are applied where appropriate.

Chapter 5 analyzes the themes that surfaced during from the data analysis and applies the participant’s experiences under respective research questions.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the study. In addition, it discusses the major findings, as well as implementations of the study and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Normalcy, Disability, and Deafness

*Education is a social process. Education is growth. Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself.* - John Dewey

Learning is a journey in which one makes sense of the world. Growth occurs through experiences and critical self-reflection. As a result, the process of understanding is without end. As educators, we must not only stay current with the latest research and methods utilized within the educational and contemporary realms, but also continually reflect upon our culturally influenced attitudes and beliefs. We must come to understand the social construction of our thinking and its historical context in order to better serve our community at large.

This chapter examines the prevailing models of disability used to represent and define people with disabilities in light of societal normalcy. As educators, we subscribe to one school of thought or another; however, we may often be unconscious that a specific paradigm is influencing our perceptions. Thus, it becomes important to raise consciousness to this occurrence and how the models of disability influence the perception of deafness within the educational realm. In addition, this chapter examines the current and historical practices that have shaped deaf education in the United States. An exploration of the evolution of the educational practices within deaf education is paramount to understanding current educational practices and how they have shaped such things as current philosophies, educational interpreting, and higher education. Finally,
this chapter examines the theoretical lenses through which this study’s findings are viewed.

**Four Models in the Creation of Disability**

Understanding the perceptions and beliefs regarding what constitutes disability becomes vital for educators working with people with disabilities. A historical examination of four prevailing models of perceiving people with disabilities illuminates current communicative practices between people with disabilities and temporarily able-bodied individuals (TABS). The moral, medical, social and biopsychosocial models of disabilities are fundamental in understanding the social construction of disability. Other models have been discussed within the literature, such as the minority group and the Nordic relational (Shakespeare, 2006). However, from my perspective, the four models discussed below and in particular, the medical and the social models have been the most influential in shaping the perceptions of society regarding what it means to be deaf.

**The Moral Model of Disability**

The first and oldest lens in the construction of disability, whose origins can be traced through Western Christianity, is the moral model of disability. The moral model is the belief that an individual’s disability occurs as a direct result of sin. Vehmas (2004) affirmed, “According to this position, disability is a disadvantageous state, usually a visible impairment, visited on an individual as retribution” (p. 35). The influence of Christianity within this model can be seen through an examination of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.
The Old Testament viewed disability as an affliction resulting from either the sin of the parent, or the sin of the individual. Early Christians believed in “marking” or the belief that during pregnancy the mother’s sin stained the fetus. The mark manifests itself in the disability of the child (Covey, 2005). As in the classic text *The Scarlet Letter*, where an adulterous woman is forced to wear a scarlet “A” sewn to her clothing to show evidence of her sin, the physical presence of a child’s disability is seen as the mark of the mother’s sin.

Additionally, during the middle ages, people with disabilities were thought to be possessed by demons. “Christians saw madness as a struggle between Satan and God for possession of the soul” (Covey, 2005, p. 109). Church officials were given the authority to label and diagnose illness (Covey). Consequently, moral leaders had considerable power over the societal construction of people with disabilities.

As a result of such beliefs, people with disabilities were barred from churches and segregated from society at large. For example, individuals who were deaf were thought to be barbarians as they could not “hear” the Word of God. Without the ability to hear, their soul was condemned. Not only were they banned from the participation in religious services and teaching while alive, they were also excluded from burial on sacred ground, thus preventing them in death from entering into the Kingdom of Heaven (Covey, 2005).

During the witch trials of the 16th and 17th centuries, people with disabilities were thought have demonic association (Covey, 2005). Physical deformity was thought to occur as a result of witchcraft and mental retardation was thought to be a possession of Satan. The notion of “fits”, now medically classify as seizures, became associated with
witchcraft, thus an individual with epilepsy would have been labeled as, or associating with, a witch. As a result, the church condoned the execution of individuals with disabilities, including infants born with deformities (Covey).

The moral model of disability is the oldest and most common worldwide model used in the perception and representation of people with disabilities (Olkin, 2002). Within this model, the disability manifests itself as shame for the individual with the disability and/or brings shame to his or her family (Olkin, 2002). In addition, the person with the disability becomes stuck in a paradox of identity. “What makes this construction so pernicious is that in it teleology becomes tautology. The disabled are disabled because they are sinful; the disabled are sinful because they are disabled” (Wilson & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2001, p. 15).

On the other hand, the New Testament, with the teachings of Jesus, brought about the notion that people with disabilities should be treated sympathetically. Covey (2005) affirmed, “The second Christian tradition was based on compassion and understanding. According to the second tradition, people with disabilities were innocent victims of misfortune. Christianity’s role was to be the protector and benefactor for the downtrodden and disadvantaged” (p. 111). Thus, a shift occurred between disabilities being viewed as a result of sin to individuals with disabilities being viewed as objects of pity.

From the second influence of Christianity stems society’s notion of “helping”. Christianity became instrumental in setting up hospitals and asylums to treat “afflicted” individuals (Covey, 2005). Education was also an important component in the notion of
helping. “The early teachers of the deaf learned sign language much as other missionaries of the time learned American Indian or African languages, and they organized schools where deaf people could be brought together and given a Christian education” (Baynton, 1996, pp. 15-16). Within deaf education, the first free public education for deaf children utilizing a manual system of communication was established by Charles Michel Abbe de l’Epee in France in 1755 (Gannon, 1981). The premise for early deaf education was to teach deaf children using a visual means of communication so they might receive religious instruction and salvation (Grayson, 2003; Valentine, 1993; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). For instance, regarding deaf pupils, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet (1848), the co-founder of the first permanent school for the deaf in the United States wrote:

Every day he is improving in this language; and this medium of moral influence is rapidly enlarging. His mind becomes more and more enlightened; his conscience more and more easily addressed; his heart more and more prepared to be accessible to the simple truths and precepts of the Word of God. (p. 86)

**The Medical Model of Disability**

The second prevailing model used in the perception of people with disabilities is the medical model which views disability as something to be fixed. Vehmas (2004) affirmed, the “medical model of disability places the responsibility of the individual’s deficits to her bad luck (e.g., accidents), to her inadequate health practices (e.g., smoking, bad diet), or to her genes” (p. 35). The medical model emerged around the mid 19th century (Olkin, 2002). During that period the hospitals and asylums, previously operated by nuns and church officials, began utilizing the services of trained doctors and nurses
Disability was no longer seen as an affliction of sin, but as an abnormality of the body. Through such a construction, the bodies of individuals were compared to a societal norm of what constituted acceptability (Olkin, 2002).

Davis (2006) discussed the significant link between the rhetorical construction of what represents physical normalcy and the emergence of statistical data. The notion of normalcy appeared in the English vernacular in the mid 1800s. “The word ‘normal’ as ‘constituting, conforming to, not deviating or different from, the common type of standard, regular, usual’ only enters the English language around 1840” (p. 3). The appearance of this connotation is directly linked to statistical analysis. In the nineteenth century, the medical community began employing statistical measures to create norms for bodily health. In this fashion, ideals of weight, height, eyesight, hearing, and ability were statistically plotted on a bell curve. “The concept of a norm, unlike that of an ideal, implies that the majority of the population must or should somehow be part of the norm” (p. 6). People with disabilities fell below the norm and were thus viewed as negative deviations. Lane (2002) acknowledged, “The technologies of normalization that developed around this particular reification in biology of social difference… included not just research, measurement, institutionalization, and rehabilitation but also eugenic measures to purge society of this unwanted burden” (p. 363).

The notion that people with disabilities were ranked as bodily inferior to the norm opened the door for the medical community. Statistical normalization created a “problem” and medical science stepped in to find the “cure”. With the concept of a cure came the practice of eugenics. Davis (2006) affirmed, “A symbiotic relationship exists
between statistical science and eugenic concerns. Both bring into society the concept of a norm, particularly a normal body, and thus in effect create the concept of the disabled body” (p. 6). Eugenics sought to eliminate physical and mental defects through such measures as the regulation of marriage, forced sterilization, and extermination. For example, Alexander Graham Bell, a leading American eugenicist, in his speech *Memoir upon the formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race* (1884), promotes the theory that deaf marriages lead to deaf children… and ultimately a deaf race. Interestingly enough, ninety to ninety-six percent of all deaf children have hearing parents (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004; Schein, 1989).

Koch (2005) discussed issues raised by the biomedical perspective of disability in his discourse regarding the ideology of normalcy. Medical normalcy asserts that any deviation from the physical and cognitive norm results in a lacking state. Thus, the rational course of action regarding any deviation is intervention. Disability is viewed as a negative deviation from the norm. As such, it becomes rational to eliminate the disability. “The ideology of normalcy creates a situation in which termination is not only socially accepted but also generally encouraged through the lack of social and financial support for persons of difference” (p. 125). Koch affirmed, “Their [people with disabilities] claims that their lives were full and equal were assumed to be not rational but rationalizations because their insistence violated assumptions of bioethical and clinical life quality based on a standard of mundane normalcy” (2005, p. 127).

The medical model, which is the leading model in the United States, pulls the focus of disability away from societal construction and places the emphasis on physical
deviation (Olkin, 2002). Longmore and Umansky (2001) stated, “This approach personalizes disability, casting it as a deficit located within individuals that requires rehabilitation to correct the physiological defect or to amend the social deficiency” (p. 7). As a result, the responsibility for having a disability remains within the individual and not society. The medical model and the moral model create a hierarchy of normalcy in which people with disabilities are seen as inferior to the norm. This allows individuals who are able-bodied to assume a paternalistic role. This hegemonic position has created “services for but not by people with disabilities” (Olkin, 2002, p. 133). In other words, able-bodied individuals have assumed an authoritative role in the creation of “disability” and the services such a creation entails without obtaining input from the very individuals affected by said decisions.

The moral and medical models of disability have been labeled individualistic approaches to disability with a focus on an individual’s condition. Individualistic models are the predominant philosophical approaches in the examination of people with disabilities. Vehmas (2004) alleged, “A distinguishing feature of the philosophical arguments concerning disability is that they are almost exclusively based on individualistic premises; disability is represented primarily as an unfortunate individual condition” (p. 35).

**The Social Model of Disability**

In contrast to the first two models, the social model affirms that disability is a socially constructed phenomenon that resides in the rhetorical creation of normalcy and not within the individual. The social model, which emerged in the mid 1970s, was based
strongly on the work of Michael Oliver and the disability rights movement both in the United Kingdom and United States (Terzi, 2004). Fundamental to the social model of disability is the premise that individuals with disabilities are stigmatized as a direct result of the societal construction of disability that has been created and sustained through hegemonic ideology and practice.

The social model of disability challenges individualistic models that place blame on the person with the disability, and focuses attention on societal oppression. Thus, people with disabilities are seen as a marginalized group. In this instance, causality becomes significant. Terzi (2004) stated, “If the individual model sees disability as a restriction of an activity caused by impairment, the social model aims at breaking this link by maintaining that disability is caused by institutional and social discrimination” (p. 144).

Vehmas (2004) examined three theoretical perspectives used in defining disability as a social construction: the social creationist view of disability, the social constructionist perspective to disability, and the postmodernist perspective. The social creationist view of disability stemmed from disability studies in the United Kingdom. This perspective makes a clear distinction between the terms impairment and disability. Impairment is seen as a physical limitation of the body while disability is a socially created state. For example, someone who uses a wheelchair for mobility may have a physical impairment but society creates social structures and stereotypes regarding the limitation, which makes the use of a wheelchair a disability. The core idea of this perspective is that “disabled
people are an oppressed group. Their inferior status is not a natural effect of their impairment, but it is produced by unjust social arrangements” (p. 36).

In similar fashion, the social construction of disability, resulting predominantly from work in North America, views disability as a social production. This view emphasized the “significance of ideas, attitudes, and language that, it is argued, produce and shape reality” (Vehmas, 2004, p. 36). Through language a culture establishes what is and is not a disability. For example, today, alcoholism is viewed as a disability but twenty years ago someone who drank excessively would have been labeled a drunk. Thus, the historical context becomes an important aspect of this perspective. In addition, social construction theory of disability recognizes and accepts difference; and at the same time, examines how society creates the difference through socially mediated interpretations.

The third theoretical stance used in defining disability as a social construction is the postmodernist perspective. “The postmodernist perspective is based on a critique of the hegemony of scientific knowledge, which is seen to work as the foundation justifying both epistemologically and morally the categories of special and ordinary needs” (Vehmas, 2004, p. 37). In other words, science, or the medical approach to disability, has utilized language to create notions of what constitutes “ability” and “disability”. Postmodernist theory calls for a deconstruction of hegemonic terminology by allowing the voice of those who are subaltern, such as individuals with disabilities, to be heard. With this stance, language becomes the key factor in deconstructing oppression. Social models of disability promote incorporation of disability into self-identity. Thus, an individual’s disability does not become his/her defining characteristic, but rather a
characteristic used in the creation of self. This allows the disability to be viewed as a difference and not a disability.

**The Biopsychosocial Model of Disability**

When the medical and social models of disability are examined it is easy to look at them from an either or perspective. However, according to the World Health Organization, “A better model of disability, in short, is one that synthesizes what is true in the medical and social models, without making the mistake of reducing the whole, complex notion of disability to one of its aspects” (ICF, 2002, p. 9). While the social model draws attention to society’s construction of disability and its political and social implications, it does not take into account the medical model’s view of the individual and the complex relationship between an individual with a disability and his or her physical body.

In 2001, the World Health Organization published an updated International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, which “provides a standard language and framework for the description of health and health-related states” (p. 2). They recognized that one model in and of itself was insufficient in examining disability. Thus, they proposed the biopsychosocial model which views disability and functioning as “outcomes of interactions between health conditions (diseases and injuries) and contextual factors” (ICF, 2002, p. 10).

Shah and Batzer (2010) applied the biopsychosocial model of disability to infertility and women in the developing world. In reference to the biopsychosocial model, they discussed three levels in which the health conditions are analyzed: impairments,
activity limitation, and participation limitation (Shah & Batzer, 2010). Impairment is the physiological or psychological impairment of the body. Activity limitation refers to the degree in which an individual’s impairment limits their functioning. In addition, participation limitation relates to how the satisfaction of an individual’s societal role is impacted by the activity limitation (Shah & Batzer). In other words, all three levels are interconnected. The biopsychosocial model posits that the impairment of an individual’s body cannot be separated from its physical and social limitations. In addition, society’s response to impairment determines disability (ICF, 2002). Thus, there is a difference between impairment and disability. Impairment refers to the physical limitation of the body, while disability is a socially constructed notion of how individual impairments are perceived (Davis, 2006).

**Normalcy and Deafness: It’s a Hearing World**

To understand the historical and social influences that have shaped the concept of normalcy as it pertains to deafness, one must first understand the historical context regarding what constitutes “deafness”. Educationally speaking, this connotation has been honed by the hegemonic ideology of the hearing world.

This review focuses on five periods of time within American History. Hott (2007), in his article *Creating the History of Through Deaf Eyes Documentary*, a discussion regarding the movie about the history of deafness and deaf culture, created five thematic segments: “A Mighty Change (1814-1875)…The War of the Methods (1872-1905)…A Culture in the Closet (1905-1965)…Deaf Pride (1965-1990)… and Expect the Unexpected (1990-present)” (pp. 137-138). These themes provide an excellent
platform to lay out the historical and social influences that have shaped the dominant philosophies in deaf education: manualism and oralism. As such, these philosophies have impacted the social construction of deafness and its adherence to normalcy.

A Mighty Change

The antebellum era in the United States was a time in which manualism thrived (Baynton, 1996; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). It is interesting to note, this period of time began prior to the first permanent school for the deaf being established. As the story goes, in 1814 Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet was tutoring his neighbor’s daughter Alice Cosgwell, who was deaf. Alice’s father, Mason Cosgwell, was a prominent physician in Connecticut. Dr. Mason Cosgwell gathered the necessary funding in order to send Gallaudet to Europe to examine their methods of teaching in the hope of establishing a deaf school in America (Crouch & Greenwald, 2007; Grayson, 2003; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Gallaudet set sail for England in 1815; however, upon his arrival he learned that the English schools would not allow him access to their teaching methods or entry into their schools (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). “British schools for Deaf children were operated by a single Edinburgh family, the Braidwoods, who held the teachers in their employ under bond to protect the secret of their teaching methods” (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996, p. 54).

Gallaudet happened to come across an exhibition in London regarding a French school for deaf children. After attending the event, Abbe Sicard, the head of the French school, invited Gallaudet to France to learn their method of instructing deaf children. (Crouch & Greenwald, 2007). He convinced Laurent Clerc, a deaf teacher at the school,
to return to America with him where they established the first school for the deaf in Hartford, Connecticut in 1817: The Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons (Crouch & Greenwald, 2007; Grayson, 2003; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). On the boat ride from France to America, Gallaudet taught Laurent Clerc English, while Clerc taught Gallaudet French Sign Language or Langue des Signes Francaise (LSF) (Crouch & Greenwald, 2007). As a result, the first permanent school for the deaf used an adapted manual form of LSF in its instruction.

In the years that followed, schools for the deaf opened all over the country. They followed the approach to deaf education established by the first school for the deaf. Edwards (2001) affirmed:

The co-founders of the school…decided on a manualist course. The new school would use the natural language of signs, methodical signs, the manual alphabet, and written English to instruct their eager pupils. Articulation and speechreading were not part of the curriculum. (p. 60)

The emphasis of early educators for deaf children was on manual communication. This instruction occurred through two types of signing: methodical and natural. Methodical signs were signs created to teach the structure of the English Language (originally taught to learn the structure of French) and not for communicative purposes (Fischer, 1993). This method was created by Abbe De l’Epee and brought over from France by Laurent Clerc (Fischer, 1993). However, this technique of instruction was cumbersome and time consuming (Lane, 1999). Regarding methodical signing, Lane (1999) stated, “Even the simplest sentence took on enormous complexity. One example: a line from Racine, ‘To
the smallest of the birds, He gives their crumbs,’ required forty-eight signs from Epee’s pupils ‘gives’ alone required five signs: those for verb, present tense, third person, singular, and ‘give’” (p. 62).

On the other hand, natural signs originated from within the deaf community. Natural sign developed from an amalgamation of French Sign Language, home signs, and gestures. Edwards (2001) stated:

The natural language of signs, or ASL, emerged from the linguistic crucible of the first residential schools for the deaf that gathered, for the first time, large numbers of deaf Americans together in one place. The result was a language created by and for the deaf. (p. 65)

In drawing together a large number of deaf students from all over the country, the natural signing used by the first schools for the deaf would be impacted by a sign system which was being utilized on Martha’s Vineyard as well as a form of colonial sign language and home signs or signs created within an individual’s home to aid in communication (Lang, 2007). In the 1700s and early part of the 1800s Martha’s Vineyard had a large deaf population. In some areas of the island the rate of deafness was as high as one in four, resulting from a genetic anomaly (Groce, 1988). Consequently, everyone on the island during this era used a form of sign language in their communication. It was common practice for two hearing individuals to use signing as a conversational tool. When the first permanent school opened in Hartford, Connecticut, deaf children from Martha’s Vineyard began attending. They took with them their dialect of sign (Groce, 1988) which merged with the natural signing brought over from France to create an early form of
American Sign Language (ASL). There are still striking similarities between French Sign Language (LSF) and ASL. Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan (1996) stated, “A comparison of dictionaries of modern LSF and ASL has found fifty-eight percent cognates in a sample of eighty-seven signs; that is, a majority of the signs with similar meaning in the two different languages resemble one another” (p. 57). Early manualists viewed the combination of natural signing as the foundation of deaf education while methodical signing was used only for educational purposes.

Not only did the antebellum educators of deaf children realize the significance of a manual form of communication, but they understood the importance of deaf teachers and residential schooling (Edwards, 2001). Lang (2003) noted, “By 1850 there were more than 15 residential schools serving deaf pupils, with nearly 4 out of every 10 teachers in these schools deaf themselves” (p. 14). Teachers of deaf students during this era were required to have proficiency in the both natural and methodical signing. They were encouraged to look to deaf educators as innate leaders in this process. Deaf teachers were valued as role models of both language and life (Edwards, 2001). Additionally, residential schooling was seen as an environment in which deaf individuals were brought together for instruction. Through the practice of residential schooling the language of the deaf community was diffused (Lang, 2003).

During the 1830s, schools began dropping methodical signing from their curriculum (Lane, 1999). This change was supported by the notion that natural signing, or ASL, could accomplish the same task without the hassle of the methodical process. “The methodical signs were a wholly unnecessary step. It was perfectly possible to translate
from one real language to another without using them” (Edwards, 2001, p. 66). In essence, ASL could be utilized to instruct deaf children in all aspects of learning, including English. Early educators realized the significance of ASL as a language even though it was not linguistically recognized as such. Edwards (2001) stated:

Antebellum educators recognized that expressions of the eye and face were crucial aspects of ASL. This understanding, expressed so readily in 1822, would be dismissed by educators by the end of the century and lost altogether until William Stokoe’s study of ASL sparked new investigations of the language in the 1970s. (p. 62)

Thus, it can be argued that early manualist educators took a bi-lingual approach to education. In fact, according to Lang (2003):

Frederick Barnard, perhaps the most prominent deaf American of his time, was a clear thinker who published in detail his perspectives on the education of deaf children only two decades after the first school for deaf students was established in Hartford, Connecticut, writing of the need for bilingualism and studying sign language scientifically. (p. 14)

They understood the complexities and syntactical nature of ASL and used it as the basis for teaching English. However, the period of time in which ASL and deafness were accepted characteristics of deaf education was short lived. With Europe leading the way, oralism would soon become the dominant philosophy in educating deaf children.
The documentary *Through Deaf Eyes* dates the second theme, The War of the Methods beginning in 1872 with the onset of oralism in the United States. Oralism, or the German method as it was once called, is the philosophy that deaf children should be taught using speech and lipreading (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Within this perspective, the use of manual communication in any form is rejected. The rise of oralism actually began a century earlier in Germany. Samuel Heinicke, hailed as the founder of oralism established the first oral school for the deaf in Leipzig, Germany in 1778 (Lane, 1994). Alexander Graham Bell is the most recognized proponent of oralism in American history (Burch, 2002; Lane, 1994). However, oralism as a philosophy of education was actually introduced onto the American scene in 1844 with the philosophy of Horace Mann (Edwards, 2001; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989).

Mann, after visiting Prussia and touring both hearing and deaf schools, concluded the American system of education was lagging behind. The deaf schools in Prussia were utilizing Heinicke’s method of instructing their pupils: pure oralism (Edwards, 2001). Mann believed American children should unite under one culture in order to assimilate as one nation. “By acquiring this common culture together in the common school, all republican citizens, rich and poor, deaf and hearing, would be properly equipped to work together to eliminate poverty, crime, ignorance, and disease from their society” (Edwards, 2001, p. 69). This posed significant problems for Mann in that schools for the deaf were segregated from hearing schools. In addition, the increased use of ASL as a communicative and teaching technique had firmly established a co-culture in the United
States (Edwards, 2001). According to Mann and other oralists (and many manualists),
deaf culture separated deaf people from the hearing world (Edwards, 2001). During the
mid-1800s society was constructing notions of normalcy. Increased scientific knowledge
and thought processes allowed for the concept of disability to be plotted on a bell curve
(Davis, 2006). Baynton (1996) stated, “… Normality stigmatized the abnormal and
established a standard toward which deaf people were supposed to strive” (p. 147).
People who were deaf or hard-of-hearing could now be labeled as negative deviations
from the norm. Deaf culture and ASL prohibited assimilation and perpetuated a negative
deviancy. Oralists perpetuated this notion of normalcy in order to further their cause
(Baynton, 1996; Edwards; 2001; Lane, 1999).

Mann and other educators of the time were disturbed that deaf people were
thinking in sign and not English. If deaf people thought in sign, they reasoned they would
be different from the majority culture (Edwards, 2001). As the greater part of deaf
children have hearing parents, this notion was frightening. They started to feel threatened
by the increased popularity of deaf culture (Edwards, 2001). As a result, the argument
that speech was equated with intelligence would be introduced into the educational
debate (Baynton, 1996; Burch, 2002; Edwards; 2001; Lane; 1999). Mann asserted:

Speech has an extraordinary humanizing power, the remark having often been
made, and with truth, that all the deaf and dumb which have learned to speak have
a far more human expression of the eye and countenance than those who have
only been taught to write. (Edwards, 2001, p. 71)
Research has been established that speech is related to the degree of deafness and the age of onset (Burch, 2002). However, the notion that a deaf person who learned to speak was more intelligent than those that learned to sign would have considerable educational sway in the years to come.

The gauntlet started by Mann would be continued by Alexander Graham Bell, a strong supporter of the oralist method. Influenced by the work of his father, Bell began a staunch campaign against manualism (Burch, 2002; Lane, 1994). However, the most striking blow to the manualist philosophy of education occurred as a result of the Milan Congress in 1880 (Radutzky, 1993; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989; Woll & Ladd, 2003). The second congress in Milan, Italy was really just a small rally of educators from around the world who were opposed to sign language as a form of instruction. Deaf teachers and supporters of manualism outnumbered the number of oralists at the Milan Congress; however, they were refused admittance into the meeting. (Lane, 1984; Woll & Ladd; 2003). The Congress overwhelmingly passed eight resolutions. Quintessentially, the first two resolutions (see Table 1) have had the most impact on deaf education. The first resolution sought to eradicate the use of natural signs as a form of instruction and ensure the dominance of the English language. The second resolution sought to eliminate the use of a combined method of instruction (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan, 1996).
Table 1
Resolutions on Oralism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resolution 1</th>
<th>Resolution 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considering the incontestable superiority of speech over signs in restoring the deaf-mute to society, and in giving him a more perfect knowledge of language, &quot;Declares – That the Oral method ought to be preferred that of signs for the education and instruction of the deaf and dumb.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted 160 to 4 in favor on 7/9/1880.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering that the simultaneous use of speech and signs has the disadvantage of injuring speech, lip-reading and precision of ideas, &quot;Declares – That the Pure Oral method ought to be preferred.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted 150 to 16 in favor on 9/9/1880</td>
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</table>


The manualists of the post antebellum period differed from their predecessors.

“Oralism was the product of much changed reform atmosphere after the Civil War…the emphasis shifted from the reform of the individual to…the creation of national unity and social order through homogeneity of language and culture” (Baynton, 2006, p. 35).

Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc cherished the natural language and culture of the deaf, but the Civil War and the increase in immigration to the United States created a push toward progressive education. As a result, the new manualists preferred a combined method of instruction (Baynton, 2006). They called for instruction in both speech and sign. They felt such a method would better fit the notion of assimilation that was sweeping the education and political realm of the era (Baynton, 2006).

After the Milan Congress of 1880, oralism would reach across educational realms in Europe and the United States. Lane (1999) stated, “In the aftermath of Milan, the policy of annihilating signed languages by substituting spoken languages washed over Europe like a flood tide. Many people and schools were swept up in the advance of
Edward Miner Gallaudet, the son of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, and Alexander Graham Bell became unwavering rivals in their philosophies of educating deaf children. Both men had deaf mothers and both men married deaf wives, but their perspectives on deaf education were staunchly different (Lang, 2003).

Edward Miner Gallaudet’s philosophy of education varied from his father’s. While he was a manualist, he favored a combined methodological approach, which utilized signing and speech. He appreciated the beauty of sign and ease of communication, but felt it should have restricted use in the classroom. Gallaudet feared the “clannishness” of deaf people that separated them from the hearing world (Baynton, 2006; Edwards, 2001). Baynton (2006) stated, “In 1873, Edward M. Gallaudet had condemned the conventions, associations and newspapers of deaf people, as well as, their intermarriage, for discouraging the intercourse of the deaf ‘with their race and the world’” (p. 41). However, Edward Miner Gallaudet, like his father, came from a moral stance. He felt sign language allowed a deaf individual communion with God. “For Gallaudet, then, to educate was to impart moral and religious knowledge” (Baynton, 2006, p. 36). He viewed signing as a necessary evil as few deaf individuals could become proficient in oral communication. In essence, without sign, many deaf individuals would be without education, but more importantly to Gallaudet, they would be without salvation (Baynton, 2006).

On the other hand, Alexander Graham Bell came from a eugenics approach and believed in the annihilation of deafness. His plan for accomplishing this task was
twofold: attack the practice of residential schooling, and attack the use of sign (Van Cleve, 2007). According to Bell, both situations fostered environments that encouraged deaf individuals to intermingle and potentially marry (Greenwald, 2007). Oralists claimed that not only did sign make individuals who were deaf appear “clannish”, but it made them foreigners on their own soil (Burch, 2002; Edwards, 2001). Relating to deaf individuals as foreigners allowed oralists to associate deafness with a wider problem occurring within America at the end of the nineteenth century, immigration (Baynton, 2006). U.S. Americans, fearful of the influx of immigrants, called for unity of thought and language. Baynton (2006) affirmed:

Nativism, never far from the surface of American life, resurged with calls of immigration restriction, limits on the employment of foreigners, and the proscription of languages other than English in the schools. To say that sign language made deaf people appear foreign was to make a telling point for these educators. That foreignness should be avoided at all costs was generally expressed as a self-evident truth. (p. 41)

In essence, sign language and deafness was equated with foreignness and difference in a time in which assimilation was demanded. Education within the United States was shifting and the era was ripe for oralism. Schools began implementing the practice in rapid numbers and deaf teachers within deaf education were forced to resign (Baynton, 1996). Oralism became the leading philosophy for educating deaf children in the United States.
Oral schools began hiring hearing women to fill the vacancies left by deaf teachers. Not only did the Civil War take its toll on the male population, but females could be hired at a reduced pay. Baynton (1996) stated, “At the turn of the century, forty-two of the fifty-five exclusively oral public schools in the United States were headed by female principals…The teaching staffs of all oral schools combined included 184 female teachers and twenty male” (p. 58). Whereas manual communication practices could have larger classrooms, oral education required a great deal of one-on-one instruction. As a result, during the shift from manualism to oralism the number of students per classroom decreased while the number of teachers per classroom increased (Baynton, 1996). The practice of hiring hearing women offset the cost generated by the need for smaller class sizes (Baynton, 1996; Greenwald, 2007). In addition, cultural norms made women strong candidates as oral teachers for deaf children in that they were thought to embody a nurturing spirit. “What were seen as women’s natural attributes – their patience, gentleness, capacity for self-sacrifice – made them ideal for the role” (Baynton, 1996, p. 57).

One of the most historically renowned oral schools was the Clark Institution for Deaf-Mutes (now called the Clarke School for the Deaf – Center for Oral Education) in Northampton, Massachusetts. The school presented its teaching method and environment as providing a “family-like” atmosphere for deaf students. The teachers, all of whom were female, were said to embody the role of the surrogate mother (Baynton, 1996). The school promoted oralism, but at the same time they promoted the notion of preparing young girls for society. “They sought to indoctrinate specific hearing behaviors into the
Day schools were another advancement of the oralist movement. Traditionally, deaf children within manual programs were educated at residential or boarding schools. The children would live at the school, sometimes only returning home at Christmas and during the summer break. Oralists felt residential schooling segregated deaf children not only from their families, but from the hearing world (Burch, 2002; Greenwald, 2007; Van Cleve, 2007). They called for the practice of day schooling in which a deaf child attended school during the day and returned to his/her parents in the evening. This notion was “promoted as ways of preserving the family, of keeping children at home with their mothers, where they were said by nature to belong” (Baynton, 1996, p. 67). However, an underlying cause for supporting day schools in oral programs was related to the oppression of signing. Baynton (1996) stated:

The concerns most commonly expressed were that boarding schools fostered a sense of solidarity and commonality among deaf people and encouraged the use of sign language, which could be prohibited in the classroom but which proved devilishly hard to stamp out beyond the classroom doors. (p. 66)

Educational leaders of oralism understood the need to suppress deaf culture in order to advance their ideology. Only through hegemonic control could oralism prevail.

**A Culture in the Closet**

According to Lane (1999), “In America, there were 26 institutions for the education of deaf children in 1867, and ASL was the language of instruction in all; by
1907, there were 139 schools for deaf children, and ASL was allowed in none” (p. 113). Oralism was at its zenith. While there were some schools in the early part of the twentieth century who would use sign as a form of instruction, manualism as a philosophy of education took a back seat to oralism. Schools began segregating their students based upon their ability to learn speech, a practice that led to the labeling of “oral failures” for students that could not learn to speak or read lips. Burch (2002) stated, “Students who could not achieve advanced speech and lipreading… often found themselves labeled as ‘oral failures’ and ridiculed as ‘born idiots’ or ‘dummies’” (p. 222). In the literature overall, there has been limited discussion regarding the educational practices within deaf education during the first half of the twentieth century. This is due partly to the dominance of oralism.

Fearing the eradication of ASL, the deaf community began capturing stories and the history of ASL on film. A collection of these videos, spearheaded by George Veditz, who at the time was the president of the National Association of the Deaf, are archived in Gallaudet University’s library. Additionally, deaf organizations such as the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) worked to reinstate the practice of manualism in the classroom. Burch (2002) stated:

By 1939, students were again using sign language in their classes. The results demonstrated the benefits of the combined method. Some students showed greater academic progress in one semester than previous students had in years of training under the oral method. (p. 224)
Improvements in science also helped to circumvent oralism. The audiometer, a machine designed to plot an individual’s degree of deafness, was created in the 1920s. Scientists began studying the correlation between hearing loss and speech. The findings “reinforced what Deaf people had claimed all along: speech ability depended directly on the age at which deafness occurred, the degree of residual hearing, and the length of training in speech” (Burch, 2002, p. 226).

Deaf Pride

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s spurred the disability rights movement into action. While manual approaches to deaf education started to be reintroduced in the 1930s, it was not until 1960s and 1970s that a significant change occurred. In the 1960s, Dr. William Stokoe and other colleagues at Gallaudet began linguistically researching grammatical properties of ASL. Their work demonstrated that ASL was in fact a language utilizing the hands, face, and body to convey meaning (Lane, 1999; Lang, 2003; Padden & Humphries, 2005). In fact, it was not until the 1960s that American Sign Language was officially labeled. “Stokoe and his colleagues, in the tradition of comparative linguistics, decided to alter ‘the sign language’ to ‘the American Sign Language,’ as a way to distinguish the American Sign Language from other sign languages of the world” (Padden & Humphries, 2005, p. 126).

In 1965, a report investigating the practices of educating deaf children was presented to Congress. This report, commonly known as the Babbidge Report (1965) determined that oralism, as a philosophy of education, was failing deaf children. Educators began discussing alternate ways to educate deaf children. Total
Communication was developed by Denton in 1976, as a philosophy in education. Lane (1999) stated that “in theory, ‘total communication’ means that the teacher uses every means of communication available to communicate with deaf pupils: manual language, finger-spelling with the manual alphabet, writing, speech, pantomime, drawing – whatever” (pp. 33-34). However, the most accepted definition of “total communication” is that a teacher speaks and signs simultaneously (Lane, 1999; Lane, Hoffmeister, Bahan, 1996). Research has demonstrated the quandary created by simultaneous communication or SimCom (Tevenal & Villanueva, 2009). First of all this interpretation of total communication automatically indicates that a form of English will be used in the instruction, which prohibits the use of ASL. Since ASL has been established as a unique language, speaking English and signing ASL at the same time is impossible. Additionally, when an individual speaks and signs at the same time, or simultaneous communication, either their speech or their signs suffer. They cannot do both proficiently (Tevenal & Villanueva, 2009).

Additionally, during 1970 – 1972 several forms of manually coded English were developed for educational purposes. In many ways, these systems were like the methodical signing used in early educational practices with deaf children. Forms of manually coded English have literal and not conceptual meaning. In essence, they are codes and not languages. These signs, like methodical signs, were not meant to be used for communicative purposes. According to the Gallaudet Research Institute’s 2007-2008 Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Youth, of all educational institutions for deaf children, including residential and public education, 52% of all
teachers report using speech and lipreading only, 34.9% use sign and speech together, 11.4% use sign only, and 1.7% report using something other than sign or speech. This demonstrates that when teachers do use sign in the classroom as a communication tool, the majority are using a form of signed English. “Research has shown that the average teacher using a MCE system is able to make her signs correspond to her spoken English somewhere between fifty and eighty percent of the time” (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996, p. 229). This means that twenty to fifty percent of communication is lost when teachers teach using a form of MCE.

In 1975, the education of deaf children would be radically impacted with the passage of Public-Law 94-142 by Congress. The Education of all Handicapped Children Act (EHA), which would later be known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA), deemed that children with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This law sought to prohibit children with disabilities from automatically being placed in asylums or institutions as a means of instruction. In regard to educational placement, a child’s home school is considered the least restrictive environment for education and institutions were judged as the most restrictive environment, which included residential schools for deaf children and placement decisions were mandated to be made on a case-by-case basis. As mainstreaming became the leading philosophy in educating deaf children, the number of deaf teachers dropped to eleven percent (Lane, 1999).

Later, in 1978, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was passed. This mandated that all federally funded businesses, colleges and organizations be open and accessible to
individuals with disabilities. Section 504 defined disability as: “Having a mental or physical impairment, a record of impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment; and is substantially limited in his or her major life activities that include abilities such as (but not limited to) self care, breathing, walking, seeing, performing school work, speaking, and learning” (section 504). In response to the requirements of these two historical laws, educational environments began employing sign language interpreters. At that time, there were no established national or state requirements to assure the quality of services being provided. For many states, including the state of Ohio, this has not changed. The need for formal training soon became apparent and local colleges and universities began offering programs geared toward teaching interpreting/transliteration. Currently, close to one out of every four deaf students will utilize the services of an educational sign language interpreter (GRI, 2008).

In the later part of the 1980s, the Toward Equality: Education of the Deaf report to Congress (1988) advocated a bilingual approach, with the use of ASL as the primary medium of instruction within deaf education, and English as a secondary tool. In addition, this report proposed that Congress revisit the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (Public Law 89-10) that “institutionalized the premise that children were best educated, transitionally at least, in their most fluent language” (Lane, 1999, p. 120). At the time, ASL was not recognized as a language and was not included in the decree. However, Congress denied the act.

Additionally in 1989, Gallaudet University’s linguistic department and the Gallaudet Research Institute proposed the educational community revisit the roots of deaf
education in America. In *Unlocking the Curriculum*, they proposed that ASL, as a natural language, be utilized as the first instructional tool for teaching deaf children. The publication contested the use of signed English as a form of instruction and posited that the philosophy of education should return to a deaf-centered approach to teaching through the use of ASL. However, the curriculum was never implemented (Johnson, Liddell & Erting, 1989).

Another pivotal movement that socially influenced deaf education and the civil rights movement within the deaf community was the 1988 Deaf President Now (DPN) protest at Gallaudet University. Edward Miner Gallaudet served as the first president of Gallaudet from 1864 – 1910. From that period on, five other hearing individuals would serve as president over the world’s only liberal arts college for deaf people. In 1987, when Jerry Lee, Gallaudet’s sixth president, announced he was resigning his presidency, the deaf community held out hope that a deaf president would finally be appointed to the position and felt the time was right for deaf leadership (Christiansen & Barnartt, 1995).

The deaf community at Gallaudet posted signs that read:

> It’s time. In 1842, a Roman Catholic became president of the University of Notre Dame. In 1875 a woman became president of Wellesley College. In 1886, a Jew became the president of Yeshiva University. In 1926, a Black person became president of Howard University. And in 1988, the Gallaudet University presidency belongs to a DEAF person. (Christiansen & Barnartt, 1995, p. 22)

The Board of Trustees at Gallaudet narrowed the search to three candidates: I. King Jordan, Harvey Corson, and Elisabeth Zinser. Jordan and Corson were both deaf, while
Zinser was hearing. Gallaudet’s Board of Trustees was comprised of 21 members (Schein, 1989) and only four were deaf. All of the deaf members of the board as well as one hearing individual voted for I. King Jordan (Christiansen & Barnatt, 1995).

However, on March 6, 1988 the board of trustees appointed Elisabeth Zinser, the only hearing finalist, as the seventh president of Gallaudet (Christiansen & Barnatt, 1995). The faculty members and students of Gallaudet were outraged. They seized control of the university and staged a week-long protest. Their four demands were: Elisabeth Zinser resign as president of the university and a deaf president be selected, Jane Spillman, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, resign, the Board of Trustees must be comprised of a 51% deaf majority, and there would be no reprisals against the students and faculty (Christiansen & Barnatt, 1995).

During the protests, Gallaudet was supported by the deaf community at large as individuals from all over the United States flocked to Washington D.C. to champion the cause. The deaf world was united in their commitment to see a deaf person lead the university community into the future. In the end, all four demands were met and Spillman and Zinser resigned. Dr. I. King Jordan became the first deaf president of Gallaudet University (Christiansen & Barnatt, 1995). DPN was a significant turning point within deaf history. Dr. I King Jordan began the slogan that would carry the pride of the deaf world into the twenty-first century: “A deaf person can do anything a hearing person can do, except hear” (Jordan, 1988).

DPN highlighted the deaf community’s separatist movement. Shapiro (1993) stated, “For deaf students, a separate world meant education in their own schools, to be
run more and more by deaf presidents. To them, one of the first great victories of the disability rights movement – the mainstream education law – was a threat” (p. 100). Educating deaf children with their hearing peers not only separated deaf people from each other, but also placed the power of education in control of hearing individuals. Deaf President Now was more than a protest at Gallaudet University for a deaf president, it was a call to the world that deaf people can and will take control of their own lives. The protests spurred a greater sense of deaf pride within the community and the world at large. Thus, a reappropriation of what constituted deafness was occurring. Deaf people rejected the role of the victim and demonstrated gratification in being a part of a separate culture (Shapiro, 1993).

Expect the Unexpected

Currently, almost seventy-five percent of all deaf children are educated in inclusive environments (GRI, 2008). According to statistics released by the Gallaudet Research Institute (GRI, 2008), a little more than half of all deaf children are currently educated through oral methods. Thus, oralism remains a dominant philosophy in education. Manualism is a contender; however, thirty-five percent of deaf educators use a form of spoken and signed English simultaneously for instruction (GRI, 2008). Baynton (1996) stated, “Manually coded English systems are artificially contrived and simplified representations of spoken English on the hands” (pp. 156-157).

Brueggemann (2001) discussed the difference between language and communication. As seen both currently and historically, the educational system for deaf children – a system established and controlled primarily by hearing individuals- has
focused its attention on the acquisition of English literacy. In its quest for deaf individuals to achieve mastery of the English language in a unilateral fashion, educators have essentially ignored the value of ASL as a form of communication and instruction (Brueggemann, 2001). People who are deaf are required to learn an auditory language (in which they cannot hear) while hearing individuals rarely ever learn to communicate using ASL. Regarding the education of deaf individuals, Brueggemann stated, “…it is a system that, for deaf students, tends to separate language from communication, emphasizing the latter over the former and in doing so leaving, by its own “audist” terms, deaf students linguistically lacking, audiologically disabled, civically crippled, culturally deprived” (p. 130).

Additionally, the increased practice of implanting deaf children with a cochlear implant is impacting deaf education. Cochlear implantation is a surgical procedure designed to electronically stimulate sound for deaf individuals. Implants have been the discussion of a great deal of debate and as such, are too vast to discuss in this paper. However, educationally speaking, cochlear implants have impacted current educational trends and warrant mention. Cochlear implants were approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1985 for post-lingually deafened adults. Five years later, the FDA approved the Nucleus-22 for children two years and older. Currently, the surgical procedure is being conducted on infants. The current trend is leaning toward bilateral implantation in which both ears are implanted. Currently, 13.7% of deaf children have a cochlear implant (GRI, 2008). In 2000, The Regional and National Summary Report of Data from the 1999-2000 Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and
Youth reported that only 5.3% of deaf children had a cochlear implant. This eight year span denotes a 158% increase in implantation.

The deaf world is divided in their view of the cochlear implant. Some deaf people see it as a tool, like any other assistive device, while others see it as another forced attempt by the hearing world to assimilate deafness to a social construction of normalcy (Choe, Falco, Grenewetzki & Mahaffie, 2010). The hearing world sees the cochlear implantation as a means for providing a deaf child with the ability to function in a hearing world. There is also debate regarding whether a deaf child with a cochlear implant should use sign language (Connor, Hieber, Arts, & Zwolan, 2000; Preisler, Tvingstedt, & Ahlstrom, 2005) or whether they should only be exposed to spoken language (Easterbrooks & Mordica, 2000; Percy-Smith et al., 2008). The relative newness of cochlear implantation has limited longevity of research concerning education and deaf children with implants. Future research will need to explore the long-term benefits and barriers associated with cochlear implants and education.

The deaf community experiences a paradox in education. On one hand, the disability laws passed by Congress, such as IDEA, provide access to opportunities and protect the civil rights of deaf individuals. On the other hand, the very same laws established to diminish barriers between people based on ability may just create the biggest barrier of all, a barrier of communication. The current trend in deaf education is for deaf children to be educated with their hearing peers. Aldersley (2002) stated, “It is uncontroversial that the majority of deaf children now receive their schooling in one form of mainstreamed setting or another” (p. 198). For many deaf children, this means
they are the only deaf child in their classroom and for some even their school. They grow up in the school setting socially isolated from anyone akin to them. Often their closest connection to the deaf community is their interpreter and as discussed earlier, that is often lacking.

Residential schools still exist, but their enrollment numbers are dropping. Some states have even closed their residential schools. “In the last decade, more than one state residential school has closed; some of those that survive feel constant threat of closure. Schools that as recently as 30 years ago carried populations of 300 to 400 now do well to maintain an enrollment of 100” (Aldersley, 2002, p. 198). The push towards full inclusion utilizing an oral approach still seems to be the dominant philosophy in the education of deaf children (GRI, 2008). Baynton (1996) alleged,

The concept of ‘total inclusion’ bears striking and uncomfortable resemblance to the ‘pure oralism’ of the nineteenth century. In both cases, activists push a total solution based on abstract ideals. Indeed, the warm-sounding metaphor of ‘inclusion’ in the ‘mainstream’ is nothing more than the concept of ‘normality’. (pp. 154-155)

**Deafness, Education, and Barriers to Learning**

**Communication**

One of the most significant barriers for deaf individuals is communication.

Historically, literature positioned people with disabilities as “passive and reactive rather than as active participants in their own communicative and relational encounters” (Braithwaite, 1996; Braithwaite & Harter, 2000). Braithwaite and Harter (2000)
discussed relationships and people with disabilities from a dialectical perspective. They affirmed that in regards to communication, people with disabilities must balance autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and stability-change. Autonomy-connection refers to the dialectical relation between a desire for independence and the need for assistance. This is perhaps the most important dialectical tension in the relationship formation between persons who are disabled and temporarily able-bodied individuals (Braithwaite and Harter, 2000, p. 21). Next, openness-closedness relates to self-disclosure. There is a paradox regarding disclosure in relationships between people with disabilities and temporarily able-bodied individuals. People with disabilities must balance revealing information, which is a necessary aspect in the relational development with the vulnerability openness creates (Braithwaite & Harter, 2000). The third dialectical tension is stability-change. Relationships is general must balance the need for predictability with the desire for spontaneity. However, “the onset of chronic illness or disability can bring sudden and profound changes to personal relationships and demand change to every aspect of the relational partners’ established roles and routines” (Braithwaite & Harter, 2000, p. 29).

McIntosh (2000) discussed the complexity in communication between deaf and hearing individuals. Regarding relationships between deaf students and their hearing peers, McIntosh asserted, “The interaction of two cultures, two languages, and different educational and social experiences plays a heavy role in these relationships” (p. 361). In addition, McIntosh discussed how deaf individuals utilize many of the same communication channels as hearing individuals, such as the internet and newspapers.
Deaf individuals also access television through captioning and the telephone through video relays services. Though, as previously stated, the average deaf adult has a fourth grade reading level, therefore, there are difficulties involved receiving communications through written channels. Recent research has focused on the impact of two-way texting in communication with deaf students and their hearing peers. Akamatsu, Mayer, and Farrelly (2005) found that “two-way text messaging technology is indeed useful for deaf adolescents and helps alleviate some of the concerns that have kept them from developing independence as quickly or readily as their hearing peers” (p. 127).

The services to circumvent the communicative barrier provided to deaf college students vary depending on the student’s preference as well as the feasibility to the college. Laws such as IDEA and 504 affect college students with disabilities differently than they do children within the K-12 setting. At the college level, these laws do not automatically ensure that accommodations will be provided. However, there are two titles within the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 that affect higher education: Title II and Title III. “Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act covers programs, activities, and services of public entities” (ADA). Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act “prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public accommodations and requires places of public accommodation and commercial facilities to be designed, constructed, and altered in compliance with the accessibility standards established by this part” (ADA). The Americans with Disabilities Act requires colleges and universities to make “reasonable accommodations” for students with disabilities. Regarding reasonable accommodations for deaf students, the Americans with Disabilities Act states:
Deference must be given to the deaf or hard of hearing individual’s choice of what auxiliary aid he or she needs. In determining what types of auxiliary and service is necessary, a public entity shall give primary consideration to the requests of the individual with disabilities. (ADA, 28 C.F.R Section 3.160)

Additionally, the Americans with Disabilities Act defines a qualified interpreter. “The title III regulation defines “Qualified interpreter means an interpreter who, via a video remote interpreting (VRI) service or an on-site appearance, is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary. Qualified interpreters include, for example, sign language interpreters, oral transliterators, and cued-language transliterators.” (ADA, 28 C.F.R. § 36.104). Next, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that if a college or university receives federal funding, they must be accessible to people with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations and accessibility may include note-taking, tutoring, real-time captioning, and sign language interpreting services.

In many ways, the field of educational interpreting is still in its infancy. Sign language interpreting emerged out of a necessity for deaf individuals to communicate in the hearing world. Early interpreters were hearing family members and friends of people who were deaf (Gannon, 1981; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007). These self-trained pioneers rendered their services free of charge and the practice was not recognized as a profession (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007). In addition, due to the lack of formal training, many early interpreters learned the trade through religious institutions so that deaf individuals could “hear” the Word of God. Many of these interpreters would later become some of the
field’s first recognized professional interpreters (Gannon, 1981). Gannon asserted, “The clergy have often complained that they train interpreters then government agencies and private industry steal them” (1981, p. 193). In 1964, at a workshop in Muncie, Indiana, the Registry of Interpreters (RID) for the Deaf was formed. RID sought to change the perception of interpreting as an act of charity to that of a recognized paid profession.

The National Association of the Deaf and the Registry Interpreters for the Deaf established ethical guidelines called the Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) by which all interpreters should abide. They have established a national testing system to assess the quality sign language interpreters. In addition, they make available a list of all certified interpreters that provides assurances of quality to potential consumers. However, as stated earlier, many states do not require interpreters to carry certification. The tenets of the CPC are ethical guidelines for all interpreters whether they are certified or not. The tenets of the CPC are:

1. Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
2. Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.
3. Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
4. Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.
5. Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.
6. Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.
7. Interpreters engage in professional development.


As the field of interpreting has evolved, different paradigms have emerged. Table 2 describes an evolution of four models as discussed by Humphry and Alcron (2007). The models seek to align an interpreter’s role within a given paradigm. Thus, interpreters will behave differently according to which paradigm they subscribe.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpreting Model</th>
<th>Key Assumptions</th>
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| The Helper Model            | • Views Deaf people as handicapped, limited, unable to fully manage their personal and business affairs; believes that Deaf people are mentally, emotionally, or experimentally incapable of fully understanding the world around them.  
• Views the interpreter as a caretaker whose purpose it is to help.  
• Tends to be overly involved with Deaf and hearing clients, often moving out of the role of interpreter to advise, direct, teach or cajole. |
| The Conduit                 | • Interpreters assume no responsibility for the interaction or communication dynamics taking place between clients; assume almost a robot-like role in the communication process.  
• Viewed by Deaf and hearing clients as rigid and inflexible.  
• Views Deaf people as needing to learn to take care of themselves; does not recognize a unique Deaf culture or the fact that ASL is a language.  
• Views English as the only acceptable form of communication.  
• Confuses quantity (number of words/signs) with quality (linguistic equivalents) |
| The Communication Facilitation Model | • Views Deaf individuals as part of the larger handicapped population seeking inclusion in the mainstream.  
• Views ASL as a useful communication mode for less educated or less intelligent individuals; see English as superior to ASL.  
• More aware of the importance of appropriate placement within proximity of the speaker, facilitating visual intake for Deaf clients; aware of the importance of lighting, background, indicating who is speaking, and the absence of visual noise.  
• Emphasis placed on the interpreter’s appearance – beards and mustaches “outlawed,” along with fingernail polish, patterned clothing and distracting jewelry. |
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Bilingual-Bicultural Model</th>
<th>Recognizes Deaf people as members of an oppressed minority; accepts ASL as a language and Deaf Culture as that which encompasses the norms, values traditions of this community of people.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Views the role of an interpreter as equalizing communication and empowering the Deaf and hearing persons involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continues to be sensitive to physical communication parameters (background, lighting, placement) but is also sensitive to communication dynamics, including the inherent differences in the languages, cultures, norms for social interaction within each culture and the impact of these on understanding the message being communicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defines interpretation broadly, includes the provision of linguistic and cultural equivalents, interpreting implicit information, as well as that overtly stated, and providing the schema to foster comprehension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: From “Service Models of Interpreting”, by J. Humphries & B. Alcorn, 2007

**Education and Relationships**

In his text, *Learning Relations: Impure Education, Deschooled Schools, & Dialogue with Evil*, Sidorkin (2002) lays the foundation in which to propose an educational theory based upon relations. The beginning of the text establishes the premise that compulsory schooling creates an environment in which students lack the motivation to learn. Students are in essence unpaid labors in the production of useless objects. Since education has pulled away from traditional schooling, teachers and administrators have lost the authority in which to control students.

In order to circumvent this dilemma, Sidorkin calls for a pedagogy of relation. He affirmed, “The pedagogy of relation is based on the assumptions that most children and adolescents possess an innate social instinct, a drive to relate, and a desire to belong” (p.
Sidorkin approaches his theoretical assumption with the premise that student motivation is inextricably linked to the relationships developed within the educational sphere. This may include the interpreter. He takes the stance that “relation is the aspect of reality brought about by plurality” (p. 94). In other words, relationships are multi-layered entities co-created between participants. Therefore, teachers who create a relational environment within their classrooms maintain a higher level of authority within the educational environment as students are motivated through the relational dialogue to learn.

The Relational Role of the Educational Interpreter

Interpreters in academia may experience a contradiction with respect to relations in the classroom. They experience the inner conflict between whether or not to socialize with deaf students. On one hand, relationships form due to continued exposure, but on the other hand interpreters must maintain a professional demeanor. In essence, it is a balancing act between having enough of a relationship that will foster trust, but not too much, where the deaf student loses respect for the individual as a professional (Conrad & Stegenga, 2005). Additionally, interpreters are responsible for facilitating the dialogue that occurs between all members of the educational environment. However, the very nature of their job silences their own individual voice in order to make heard the voice of the marginalized deaf student. This intra-role conflict in the interpreter may pose a problem to the development of relations.

Democratic Dialogue in Education: Troubling Speech, Disturbing Silence is a collection of works edited by Megan Boler (2005) examining the issue of dialogue within
the educational environment. The contributing authors investigated the issue of voice and silence found within the classroom through a critical lens. They examined the problematic notion that privileging one voice may silence another. This complicates the relational process, as interpreters consciously silence their own voices. However, when interpreters are a daily part of the classroom, relations do in fact develop and their voice does come through in their interpreting. To believe otherwise would be to assume that an interpreter was a computerized, desensitized robot, when in essence information transmitted through an interpreter must first go through his/her filter of lived experience; thus, their voice is heard, even if only echoed off the comments of teachers or students.

In addition, as stated earlier, Sidorkin (2002) affirmed that, “The pedagogy of relation is based on the assumptions that most children and adolescents possess an innate social instinct, a drive to relate, and a desire to belong” (p. 80). This desire also contradicts the notion of the neutral interpreter. As social beings, interpreters desire the interaction and social belonging that go hand-and-hand with being a part of the classroom and yet ironically their job as the interpreter places them at odds with this desire. This dialectical struggle creates problems for many interpreters. On one hand, they want to be an active participant in the relational dialogue of the classroom and on the other hand, they feel compelled to remain in the neutral role of the interpreter.

**Interpreting and Post-Secondary Education**

Today, sign language interpreting services have permeated all aspects of society, including academia. Napier (2002) researched the interpreting style of ten Auslan interpreters when confronted with interpreting a postgraduate lecture. All of the
interpreters were professionally accredited through the National Authority for the Accreditation of Translators and Interpreters in Australia. Six of the interpreters had or were working toward postgraduate degrees, two had or were working toward undergraduate degrees, and two did not have a degree. The interpreters were videotaped interpreting twenty minutes of the lecture. After the lecture, Napier interviewed the interpreters, which was also videotaped. The interpreting styles were analyzed based on a scale of literal to free, or conceptual, interpretations. Results indicated within academia, due to its sociolinguistic and content-specific nature, interpreters should not fall victim to an either/or fallacy of interpreting: literal or conceptual. Instead, the best approach for interpreters is to take a flexible approach when interpreting in this setting where the interpretation flows on a continuum between literal and conceptual depending on the context. In addition, this study supported earlier research that the educational level achieved by the interpreter is significant for how the message is interpreted.

In a similar study, Napier and Barker (2004) held a panel discussion of four deaf university students. Three of the four students were working toward their undergraduate degree and one of the panelists completed an undergraduate and graduate degree. While all four panelists were mainstreamed as youth, two were educated using an oral approach and two were educated using sign language. The two that were oral learned sign language as adults. The participants were shown videotaped segments of a university lecture. In one video, the interpreter signed the lecture using a literal approach and in the second lecture the interpreter signed using a conceptual approach. While the interpreters were different, they both held accreditation. The panelists then discussed their perceptions and
preferences for the two differing styles. Results indicated that panelists felt “they were receiving more information from the interpreter using the extremely dominant literal approach because she seemed to be keeping up with the pace of the lecturer and pausing less, thus conveying that she was confident to interpret the information” (p. 234). However, upon further discussion, the panelists felt that the best method of interpretation would be a combination of the literal and conceptual depending on the situation and the student. They discussed that “the appropriate mix should fit the needs of the student, and interpreters could work toward this by building a close relationship with their clients” (p. 235). They also felt interpreters should at least have a university education if they were going to interpret in a university setting. Additionally, students discussed and acknowledged that regardless of the interpreting style, they “do not receive full access to information in university lectures” (p. 237).

Additionally, in 2005, Marschark examined deaf student’s access to postsecondary education when utilizing the services of an interpreter. Their investigation included 127 students (105 deaf students and 22 hearing students) and 23 skilled sign language interpreters. Results were analyzed using proportional scores for pretests and posttests. Their findings demonstrated that interpreting does not provide full access to classroom information regardless of interpreter experience. “Even deaf students of deaf parents, raised with ASL as their first language, and receiving interpreting from highly qualified interpreters, are not on an equal footing with hearing peers in the college classroom” (p. 48). This finding makes evident the need for further research within in this field.
Attitudinal Accessibility

Campbell, Rohan, and Woodcock (2008) identified and labeled five types of universities based on their inclusiveness to deafness. These include:

1. Deaf: In which Deaf students, faculty, and all member, whether hearing or Deaf adopt or espouse Deaf cultural norms.

2. Deaf-Ready: In which support services have been formally established to accommodate Deaf students and in which Deaf faculty may be valued as role models.

3. Deaf-Aware: In which Deaf students and faculty, because of the nature of the academic field, will find others within their academic unit who are aware of deafness at least on a professional level, even though the university as a whole may or may not be very accommodating.

4. Deaf-Receptive: In which there is little or no experience of deafness among students, staff members, or faculty but in which an attitude of receptiveness is backed up by efforts to learn and provide accommodations.

5. Deaf-Oblivious: In which there is little or no awareness either professionally or socially of deafness, Deaf students, Deaf staff members, or Deaf academics. (p. 82)

They assert that the differing environments influence the strategies that interpreters must employ in order for accessibility to occur. For example, they assert that an interpreter will take more of an active role working toward maintaining a power imbalance and in educating hearing consumers about their role as an interpreter in a “deaf-oblivious”
environment, as opposed to a “deaf-aware” environment in which faculty and staff have a familiarity about deafness and interpreting (Campbell et al., 2008).

**Academic and Social Readiness of Deaf Students**

**Academic Predictors of Success**

Convertino, Marschark, Sapere, Sarchet, and Zupan (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of 10 previously conducted experiments that utilized the same paradigm in order to discern significant predictors for college readiness of deaf and hard of hearing students. All of the experiments analyzed deaf and hard of hearing students using university lectures within mainstreamed universities. All of the lectures were interpreted by qualified sign language interpreters. The researchers discussed the complexity of predicting said success compared to hearing students. Factors such as low numbers of participants in studies, the vast amount of diversity among deaf and hard of hearing students, as well as issues related to communication and language contribute to the convolution of such predictions. The results of their study indicated that academic preparedness and communication flexibility were the best predictors of academic performance. In fact, studies demonstrated that “ACT Composite scores were the best predictors of pretest (knowledge), posttest, and gain scores” (p. 336). Thus, the ability to use and understand the English language was a significant predictor for deaf and hard of hearing students doing well on the ACT and being accepted into college. Students in the various studies indicated that they were comfortable with both English and sign language. However, results of the study demonstrated,
An academic setting that provides good support services in the form of sign language interpreting appears to provide students with the flexibility to use whatever modes of communication they find more comfortable, and English scores are not predictive of classroom learning. (p. 337)

Stinson and Walter (1997) applied the model of college persistence to discuss three factors influencing the attrition of deaf college students attending both traditionally deaf and mainstreamed schools of higher education. They discussed three key areas for the academic success of deaf college students: academic integration, commitment to college and social interaction. In addition, the authors suggest five areas in which college programs can focus to improve retention rates of traditional deaf students making the transition from high school to academia.

In regard to academic integration, Stinson and Walter (1997) stated, “Academic difficulties, which were significantly influenced by communication problems, and disenchantment with the learning environment, sometimes related to difficulties in choosing a major, appear to be reasons why deaf students withdraw from postsecondary institutions” (p. 17). They reported that that even with support services such as interpreting and note-taking, deaf students did not experience the same access as their hearing peers. In fact, deaf students who transferred to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf from hearing universities reported that when they left interpreted classes at mainstreamed universities they were still confused regarding the lecture material and the classroom assignments.
The second key area that Stinson and Walter (1997) discussed aided in the academic success of deaf college students was their commitment to college and social interaction. They found that commitment was an important factor influencing a student’s motivation to learn and to persevere through difficult academic situations. “Highly committed students were more satisfied with their courses, instructors, and majors, and were more satisfied with social life, than were less committed students” (Stinson & Walter, 1997, p. 18).

The third and final key area that Stinson and Walter (1997) discussed aided in the academic success of deaf college students was social factors. Social factors and access to social functions are important to both deaf and hearing students. However, as a result of communication, this may be more difficult for deaf students. In fact, the absence of social integration within the academic environment was reported to be a major reason that deaf students withdrew from mainstream colleges and universities. The ability to socially connect varies from student to student. Stinson and Walter (1997) stated, “Individual characteristics that can influence social adjustment in the mainstream setting included the student’s communication skills, self-identity as deaf or hard of hearing, and the type of peer group the student regularly associates with” (p. 21).

Stinson and Walter (1997) warn that providing support services such as interpreting and note-taking may not be sufficient for deaf students to successfully navigate their academic experiences. Communication quandaries make it difficult for deaf students to access all necessary components of academia which include social activities. They recommend that in order for colleges and universities to be successful
environments for deaf students, programs must look beyond the classroom and view the student as a “member of the total learning environment” (p. 21). They make four recommendations to colleges and universities regarding deaf students and retention:

1. Increasing the probability for persistence begins by admitting students who match the demand of the college environment.
2. Career counseling and orientation is critical to the development of a sense of commitment.
3. Early identification of difficulties and implementing interventions, especially during the initial semester of college attendance is critical.
4. Support services must be extended to include all elements of the postsecondary experience. (pp. 21-22)

Social Strategies and Academia

Lukomski (2007) observed the variation between 205 deaf and 185 hearing students’ perceptions of their social emotional adjustments during their freshman year in academia. Students were administered the Life Difficulty Scale of the 16PF-APQ. A one-way MANOVA was conducted with results indicating that hearing status was significant. Results indicated that seven of the nine social-emotional areas examined were similar for both hearing and deaf students. However, two were significantly different: context home difficulties and coping difficulties. Deaf students rated themselves as having significantly less coping difficulties than their hearing peers. This may be a result of the obstacles the deaf participants had already overcome in order to become a university student. “The enormity of the access obstacles that many deaf students entering college face is
frequently minimized. This unique subset of the Deaf population who are eligible for college (30%) successfully employ their coping strategies to arrive at college” (pp. 491-492).

Komesaroff (2005) conducted a qualitative study of the experiences of two deaf university students in Australia and how identity is constructed within a hearing university. Data from the study was “analyzed within the framework of the construction of difference and category politics” (p. 400). Results indicated that the deaf students in this study were accepted into the university, but the university itself failed to recognize how its establishment through hegemonic ideals viewed students as members of a disability group, but not necessarily as members of a distinct cultural group or as a language minority. In addition, the establishment did not take into account the marginalization of the deaf students. Komesaroff (2005) stated, “Deaf people are not generally confronted with situations in which ‘hearing’ interests are represented against ‘deaf’ interests: rather, powerful institutions such as schools and universities are conducted as if ‘hearing’ interests are the only ones that exist” (p. 401)

Thus far, chapter two has examined the prevailing models of disability used to represent people with disabilities in light of societal normalcy. In addition, it has examined the current and historical practices that have shaped deaf education in the United States. These aspects of the literature review lay the foundation for this study and pave the way for an examination of the theoretical lenses through with this study will be viewed.
Theoretical Perspective

Theory is like an eyepiece, a lens that allows given features of a situation to emerge. In addition, different theories allow specific contextual information to materialize that may be missed or concealed by other theories. Thus, all theories have strengths and weaknesses. This section examines two theoretical perspectives: critical theory and social construction theory that will be employed in this study.

Critical Theory

Emerging from the Frankfurt School, critical theory is a lens utilizing critique to examine issues of power and marginalization within society and how these systems are hegemonically and historically perpetuated. Critical theory, which draws from the work of Karl Marx, encompasses both a school of thought and a method of critique and refers to a twofold aspect of critical theory. On one hand, the theory, which has no one universal definition, has influenced a variety of theoretical perspectives. On the other hand, the theory itself has key components that may be applied to research.

One central notion of critical theory is that “critical theorists see their work as a response to specific social conditions” (Deetz, 2005, p. 93). Beginning with the premise that society is a realm of unequal distributions of power, critical theorists seek to deconstruct systems of oppression in order to bring about emancipation. This occurs not only through critical examination of what is conscious, but also what is unconscious. Giroux (2003) affirmed, “The Frankfurt School believed that the critical spirit of theory should be represented in its unmasking function” (p. 35). In other words, critical theory
encourages society to continually question aspects within a given culture that are regarded as truth in order to reveal multiple truths.

Deetz (2005) discussed two types of research that can be identified within organizational studies and critical theory: ideology critique and communicative action. Ideology critique refers to the questioning of social norms that are thought to be commonplace and accepted and can be traced back to the work of Karl Marx. Marx examined socio-economic power structures within the organizational workforce. After time, within critical theory, the emphasis on social class broadened to encompass all areas of marginalization (Deetz, 2005). On the other hand, communicative action, or the concept that universal truths are revealed through discourse, originated with Jurgen Habermas, the youngest scholar contributing to the work of the Frankfurt School (Deetz, 2005).

Deetz (2005) defined four key areas in which ideology critique has been discussed: reification, universalization of sectional interests, dominance of technical rationality, and consent. Reification refers to “a social formation [that] is abstracted from the ongoing conflictual site of its origin and treated as a concrete, relatively fixed, entity” (p. 96). Thus, decisions within organizations, such as in education, take on the appearance of “natural” and acceptable. Critical theory affirms that the historical power structure from which these decisions are generated needs to be examined in order to identify areas in which systems of power are maintained that oppress, even unintentionally, groups or individuals.
Reification treats decisions as natural fixed occurrences within society and is evident both historically and currently within deaf education. Historically speaking, oralism emerged from a medical model of disability, which affirms that people with disabilities must be “fixed” in order to better match what society has deemed as normal. This ideology of normalcy is so prevalent that the number of children with cochlear implants has grown by 158% in the past decade and is predicted to increase in the future (GRI 2001; GRI, 2008).

The second key element that Deetz (2005) discussed was universalization of sectional interests. This refers to the concept of false consensus or false consciousness. The underlying principle of false consensus is the notion that ideals are often believed to be enacted for the “good of all”, when in reality they are often sustained for the good of those in power. The notion of false consciousness comes into play when individuals perpetuate systems of power without thought or question because the belief that they are acting in a benevolent manner is so powerful they cannot perceive negative effects of their actions. Individuals in positions of dominancy often fail to recognize their power as evidenced by Dilpet (1995) who wrote, “Those with power are frequently least aware of – or least willing to acknowledge – its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence” (p. 26).

Scott (1990) asserted there are both thick and thin versions of false consciousness. The thick version affirms that a “dominant ideology works its magic by persuading subordinate groups to believe actively in the values that explain and justify their subordination” (p. 72). In this instance, there is supposed justification for oppression. For
example, the moral model of disability affirms that individuals are deaf as a direct result of sin. Divine intervention is a difficult justification to argue against.

On the other hand, the thin version of hegemony “maintains only that the dominant ideology achieves compliance by convincing subordinate groups that the social order in which they live is natural and inevitable… the thick theory claims consent; the thin theory settles for resignation” (Scott, 1990, p. 72). Within deaf education the idea of false consciousness takes on the appearance of benevolence. Hearing individuals involved in the educational process of deaf children seek the best interest of the children they serve. They enter into the field of deaf education as a way to “help” deaf children become successful members of a hearing world. Through this mask of benevolence, many hearing individuals involved in deaf education promote the philosophy of oralism. They believe that the best way for a deaf child to assimilate to the dominant society is to speak and read lips.

Thirdly, the dominance of technical rationality operates from a “group-think” mentality. Tensions exist between the “human side of organizations” (Deetz, 2005, p. 97) and the “dominant group interests of the organization’s leadership group” (p. 97). As a result, conceptualizations that are outside of the dominant group are perceived as radical, irrational, and unacceptable.

Groupthink, or the idea that members of an institution tend to conform to the prevailing group philosophy, plays a significant role in the current educational practices of deaf education. As previously discussed, hearing individuals make up the majority of stakeholders involved in the education of deaf children. Consequently, they have had
considerable influence, not only over the philosophy of education and deafness, but over the laws regarding deaf education. For example, as mentioned, in 1988, in a Congressional report entitled Toward Equality: Education of the Deaf, recommended that deaf children be educated first in American Sign Language (ASL), and then in English. The idea was based upon the notion that ASL (a visual language) would provide deaf children the basis upon which to build English (an auditory language). The report also requested that ASL be included in the 1968 Bilingual Education Act (Public Law 89-10) which “institutionalized the premise that children were best educated, transitionally at least, in their most fluent language” (Lane, 1999, p. 120). However, the act was denied. Freire (1970) declared, “Many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality, never once taking into account…the men-in-a-situation to whom their program was ostensibly directed” (p. 94).

Ware (2002) discussed the groupthink mentality that occurs in the educational placement of children with disabilities. She proposed that school psychologists wield significant power in labeling and representing children with disabilities in the educational realm. Their influence over the discourse, which is utilized in the construction of the child’s identity, overwhelmingly sets the tone for all future decisions regarding the child. Ware stated, “This medicalized discourse is utilized even by otherwise caring educators who capitalize on its currency to preserve the dominant discourse on disability but at the same time fail to recognize their own complicity in the ‘bad mouthing’ of disabled
students” (p. 155). Thus, these educators perpetuate the conceptualizations of the dominant group.

Finally, Deetz (2005) discussed the idea of consent. Consent is often brought about through hegemonic control. In essence, “people are oppressed, but are also enticed into activities that create complicity in their own victimization” (p. 97). This passive consent is another form of false consciousness. According to Deetz, individuals in this instance become passive participants in maintaining their own oppression.

Consent, or the idea that individuals who are deaf are enticed or coerced into their own victimization, plays out as a result of hegemony. Giroux (2006), in discussing Gramsci’s definition of hegemony, affirmed that in one regard hegemony:

Refers to the dual use of force and ideology to reproduce societal relations between dominant classes and subordinate groups… Hegemony in this account represents more than the exercise of coercion: it is a process of continuous creation and includes the constant structuring of consciousness as well as a battle for the control of consciousness. (pp. 20-21)

Gertz (2008) applied the idea of consent to the practice of dysconscious audism, which is “a form of audism that tacitly accepts dominant hearing norms and privileges” (p. 219). When deaf people accept terminology that is socially constructed by the hearing world, such as hearing-impaired, or when they support oral or English influenced forms of communication they are participants of dysconscious audism in that the individual “has some inkling of his or her consciousness but does not yet realize it is impaired” (p. 223). Gertz interviewed eight deaf adults who had deaf parents. The participants grew up
with ASL as their first language and they grew up in deaf culture. She examined their reactions to simultaneous communication (SimCom) and deaf studies curriculum. Of the participants, Gertz found that some of them were in favor of SimCom as a primary means of communication even though they knew that communication would take on an English structure and that it is an “incomprehensible mix of two different modalities” (p. 225). In addition, Gertz found that some of the participants were uncomfortable with the notion of deaf studies being a part of a school’s curriculum because they feared the hearing world perceiving it as rebelliousness. Gertz concluded, “Under the constant siege of audism, some of them, even with their clear thinking on their Deaf experience and their positive Deaf upbringing, had a weakened resistance to audism” (p. 230).

The second type of research identified within organizational studies and critical theory is communicative action. Habermas’s concept of “life-world” affirmed that we “subjectively experience, comprehend, and interpret our world… through communicative action” (Brosio, 2000, p. 102). Thus, discourse holds the key to demystifying or uncovering distortions in social “reality”. Habermas, along with other critical theorists, believe only discourse emerging from true dialogue utilizing ordinary speech and not the monologue of elitists, has the power to create a collective perspective. Freire (1970), another leading critical theorist affirmed, “Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (pp. 92-92). However, critical theorists recognize the complexity, if not the impossibility, of creating an environment in which dialogue, free from the influence of unequal distributions of
power, can occur. This does not mean the attempt for dialogue should cease. In fact, “Habermas believed we must keep talking and acting in order to get better, not ‘right’” (Brosio, 2000, p. 103).

Communicative action is an extremely difficult sphere of deaf education to navigate as the opinions of the deaf community have been largely silenced (Lane, 1999). Effective dialogue poses a problem for critical theorists in that in order to be successful, dialogue must emerge, not from an elitist position, but from a balanced positioning of power. Freire (1970) stated, “Dialogue further requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (which is not the privilege of an elite, but the birthright of all)” (p. 90). Historically the argument for oralism in education has been rooted in elitism. One of its key supporters was Alexander Graham Bell. As a eugenicist, he believed in an oral approach in the education of deaf children and in segregating deaf people from each other and discouraging deaf marriages (Greenwald, 2007). His goal was to selectively “breed” out deafness (Greenwald, 2007). Alexander Graham Bell used his position of power both politically and socially to eradicate the use of sign language (Greenwald, 2007). It has been over eighty years since his death and still his efforts are influencing the education of deaf children today (GRI, 2008). In fact, his name is attached to many oralist schools/programs for the deaf.

For deaf education, the problem of effective dialogue is further compounded by the language in which dialogue occurs. Although ASL is the third leading language in the United States (Mitchell, Young, Bachleda, & Karchmer, 2006), it is still fighting for
recognition in the hearing world. From the author’s experience, many colleges and universities house American Sign Language classes in hearing and speech departments or in other departments and not in foreign language departments. In addition, most hearing people who can sign do not sign in ASL, but in a form of Pidgin Signed English, which is a mixture of ASL and English. “Pidgins, by definition are highly variable and have limited grammatical structure of their own... There is no single PSE, therefore, but rather it is an ad hoc mixture of ASL and English-based signing that varies from individual to individual” (Marschark, 2007, p. 81). Thus, people who are deaf are constantly forced towards English forms of communication when speaking with hearing individuals. Rarely are they permitted the ease of communicating freely in their native language.

**Social Constructionism**

Social constructionism affirms that all meaning is socially and historically created and maintained through relational networks (Allen, 2005). The term originated from the work of sociologists Berger and Luckman in their text *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Since that time, various disciplines have adapted versions of social constructionism in their research, which has resulted in some discrepancies among social constructionists. However, Allen (2005) outlines key assumptions among social construction research.

The first assumption is that “social constructionism encourages us to be suspicious of how we understand the world and ourselves” (Allen, 2005, p. 37). In other words, social constructionism takes a critical stance in the creation of our subjective reality. What we accept as “truth” must be weighed against our societal positioning.
Delpit (1995) stated, “One of the most difficult tasks we face as human beings is communicating meaning across our individual differences, a task confounded immeasurably when we attempt to communicate across social lines, racial lines, cultural lines, or lines of unequal power” (p. 66).

Secondly, social constructionism maintains that “all knowledge is historically and culturally specific” (Allen, 2005, p. 37). Thus the creation of meaning cannot be removed from its context or from its historical influence. Meaning is derived from the connotation of one’s lived experiences, which may include such things as race, gender, sexual-orientation, age, and ability. Vance (1998) stated, “Social construction approaches call attention to the paradox between the historically variable ways in which culture and society construct seemingly stable reality and experience” (p. 161).

The third key assumption held by social constructionists is the “premise that social processes sustain knowledge. Among these processes, language is fundamental” (Allen, 2005, p. 37). Language is utilized by cultural groups to create shared meaning. Through the perception of shared meaning, social norms are produced and upheld. Thus, social constructionism challenges the connotations of societal rhetoric that have been utilized in an essentialist fashion to create normalcy.

The final assumption held by social constructionists asserts that “knowledge and social action are interconnected” (p. 38). Our societal beliefs and practices are inextricably linked. In other words, what we do is directly correlated with what has been deemed as acceptable by society. For example, Delpit (1995) discussed the relationship between knowledge and action when discussing the lack of non-white teachers in the
educational realm. By the 1970s, a study examining the perception of white individuals demonstrated that 97% of respondents felt non-white teachers should have the same opportunities as white people to find employment.

However, despite the change in stated beliefs of the white population, recent studies depict their actions as reflecting other values. Researchers have found that the reactions of whites to people of color display subtle discriminatory behavior: less assistance, greater aggression, overt friendliness coupled with covert rejection, avoidance, and assessment inconsistent with actual work performance (Delpit, p. 115).

This illustrates how dominant ideology is linked not to lip-service, but to action. Lip-service favorably viewed equality in the workforce, but action showed the underlying socially-constructed belief in the perception of inferiority.

Social construction theory has been used in the educational field to examine what has traditionally been taught by educators to be “truth”. Ladson-Billings (1994) alleged, “Scholars have come to recognize knowledge as a social construction. But, unfortunately, the ‘school knowledge’ that most students experience is offered up as a given” (p. 81). In other words, within the realm of education, there is still an existing notion that learning occurs as a unilateral process instead of dialogically.

Utilizing the lens of social construction theory to examine why oralism is still a predominant philosophy in educating deaf children allows the researcher to focus on the social construction of deafness. Audism, a term coined in the 1970s by Tom Humphries, but which has only more recently been discussed in literature, refers to a notion of
discrimination based upon an individual’s ability or inability to hear. Whereas, the hearing community views oralism as an agency of normalcy, the deaf community views it as an audist establishment. The deaf community has actively campaigned against oralism; however, Lane (2002) affirmed, “The activism attacks the expressions of the audist beliefs, but not the beliefs themselves, which are part of the meaning of the word deaf” (p. 366). Thus, to effectively resist oralism as a philosophy of education, the deaf community must examine the societal construct of what it means to be deaf.

Social constructionism provides a basis to examine the language used in shaping audistic connotations. The negative connotation of deafness has been historically created by both the medical and moral models of disability: Deafness is something to be cured or healed (Olkin, 2002). Social construction theory affirms that the use of language is fundamental in the construction of meaning. Thus, the term “deaf” often takes on the connotation of lacking (Lane, 2002). Lane (2002) stated,

In everyday discourse, when we say someone is deaf, we call upon a socially constructed set of meanings…Even in the United States, with its uniquely long history of higher education for deaf people, sentences such as ‘John didn’t go to the university because he’s short’ strike us as illogical, but sentences such as ‘John didn’t go to the university because he’s deaf ‘ do not. (p. 364)

In a recent study, Power (2007) used Google Alert to examine the term “deaf” over a five-month period. He found that “deaf” was most often used to talk about people and not disability; however, when deaf was used metaphorically it took on a negative connotation (Power, 2007).
Finally, social construction theory demonstrates the power in naming. Freire (1970) discussed the profound implication naming has on humanity. “Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and woman transform the world, to change it” (p. 88). However, the historical social construction of deafness is rooted in misrepresentation. As Freire stated, “Because dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others” (p. 89). The social construction of deafness and deaf education has historically excluded the voice of deaf individuals, the very individuals who should be given the right to name it.

Critics of social construction theory have argued that a paradox exists in that if all truth is socially constructed then our way of knowing is also socially constructed (Allen, 2005); so, marginalized individuals are not necessarily oppressed, they may just think they are. Other critics of social constructionism argue the theory creates an illusion of passivity among those marginalized by over accentuating the process of social construction (Burr, 1995).

**Summary**

The literature reviewed for this study examined the moral, the medical, the social, and the biopsychosocial models of disability. These widespread models of disability have been used to represent and define people with disabilities throughout the world. Next, this chapter examined the current and historical practices and philosophies that have shaped deaf education in the United States. An examination of the progression of the educational practices within deaf education is essential in understanding current educational
practices. In addition, the chapter discussed deafness and academia, interpreting, barriers to academic success, as well as the academic and social readiness of deaf students. Finally, this chapter examined the theoretical lenses that will be applied throughout this study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Methodological procedure is a conscious choice shaped not only by a researcher’s question, but also by his/her philosophical conception of what constitutes reality. A qualitative case study allows the researcher to unearth meaning while giving voice to its participants. “Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). This chapter provides a philosophical examination of case study, hermeneutic phenomenology, as well an examination of Van Manen’s phenomenology as a methodological approach.

Case Study

Following a traditional case study approach (Creswell, 2007); the number of participants bound the research. All four individuals were deaf. Two of the students were undergraduate students and two of the students were graduate students. The undergraduate students attended the same university, while the graduate students attended different universities. In addition, this multi-case study was bounded in that all of the universities resided within the U.S. Midwest. Finally, this case was bounded by time. The interview process proceeded over a two month time period.

Participants in this study were selected from three different universities in the U.S. Midwest. With multiple-case study, it is important for the researcher to replicate the method of inquiry from one participant to the next (Yin, 2003). In addition, in regard to multiple-case studies, Yin (1994) stated, “Each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) produces contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (p. 46). For this study a literal
replication occurred in that each case was selected in order to find commonalities in experiences.

**Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

**Philosophical Underpinnings**

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Phenomenology seeks to describe and understand the lived experiences of others (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Armino and McEwen (1996) stated, phenomenological studies “reveal lived experience of a few, which allows insight into the possible lived experiences of others” (p. 315). While phenomenology is a qualitative method of inquiry, it is also a philosophy. This, combined with differing approaches utilized by phenomenologists, can murk the water of conception in regard to what constitutes a phenomenological approach to research. To further complicate matters, “the many perspectives of phenomenology locates its various forms in the positivist (Husserl), post-positivist (Merleau-Ponty), interpretivist (Heidegger) and constructivist (Gadamer) paradigms” (Dowling, 2007, p. 131). Thus, a discussion of the philosophical and methodological approach to this study is essential.

Phenomenology, as a philosophical approach, emerged during the early part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century (Dowling, 2007). Edmund Husserl is credited as the “principal founder of phenomenology”. Husserl introduced the concept of life-world to phenomenology (Koch, 1996), referring to the lived experiences of individuals. The philosophical foundation of Husserl’s work in phenomenology was continued by his student, Martin Heidegger, who was both a successor and critic of Husserl’s reasoning. As a result, there are significant
differences between Husserlian and Heideggerian approaches (see Table 3). For example, according to Koch (1996), “Heideggerian phenomenology… declares nothing can be encountered without reference to the person’s background understanding, and every encounter entails an interpretation based on the person’s background, in its ‘historicality’” (p. 176). In other words, what is experienced cannot be separated from its historical and cultural context. This differs from a Husserlian approach which posits phenomenon as ahistorical.
Table 3  
*Comparing and contrasting two theories of phenomenology*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Husserlian phenomenology</strong></th>
<th><strong>Heideggerian phenomenology</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcendental phenomenology</td>
<td>Hermeneutic phenomenology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological</td>
<td>Existential-ontological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions of knowledge and thought</td>
<td>Questions of experience and existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahistorical</td>
<td>Historicality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning comes solely from the subject</td>
<td>Meaning is created through the transaction between the situation and the person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is shared is the essence of the conscious mind</td>
<td>What is shared is culture, history, practice, language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interpreter is a neutral participant whose experiences do not influence meaning</td>
<td>Interpreters are active participants in understanding and meaning making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants’ meanings can be reconstituted in interpretive work by insisting that data speak for themselves</td>
<td>Within the fore-structure of understanding interpretation can only make explicit what is already understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent procedures provides assurance for validity</td>
<td>Standards for trustworthiness of the data are established by the researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracketing</td>
<td>The hermeneutic circle</td>
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According to Koch (1995) “Heidegger’s two essential notions, i.e., historicality of understanding, and the hermeneutic circle, should be understood. The two notions… are inextricably intertwined” (p. 831). To comprehend these conceptions, one must first understand Heidegger’s notions of background, pre-understanding, co-constitution and interpretation (Koch, 1995). Background constitutes what is ‘real’ for the participants.
What is ‘real’ is based subjectively by the historical and cultural context of our birth. Koch affirmed, “Heidegger’s position assumes that background meanings, skills and practices cannot be made completely explicit” (p. 831). Next, our historical context creates within us a pre-understanding. Thus, our knowing is situated both within us and within the world. “Pre-understanding is a structure of our ‘being-in-the-world’. It is not something we can eliminate, or bracket, it is already with us in the world” (Koch, 1995, p. 831). Thirdly, co-construction refers to the notion that we both construct and are constructed by the world in which we live. This phenomenon occurs through the experiences and influences of our societal and cultural contexts. One’s existence and the world in which he or she lives is intertwined and cannot be separated (Holloway, 1997).

Finally, “Heidegger declares nothing can be encountered without reference to the person’s background understanding, and every encounter entails an interpretation based on the person’s background, in its ‘historicality’” (Koch, 1995, p. 831).

Our historicality of understanding is related to the hermeneutic circle. “The hermeneutic circle is a metaphor taken from Heidegger to describe the experience of moving dialectically between the part and the whole. (Koch, 1996, p. 176). This metaphor refers to the notion that one part of an experience cannot be separated from another, as it is always connected and influenced by its context. To describe an individual’s experience is an interpretive dance in which inter-subjectivity is created through the experience of the participant and the pre-understanding of the researcher (Koch, 1995). According to Heidegger, “World is the interconnected context of involvements that give meaning to everything one encounters within one’s individual
world. In other words, [the] world is a ‘matrix of relationships’ (Richardson, 1963, p. 291).

**Methodology: Van Manen**

Phenomenology challenges the researcher to move beyond preconceived cultural notions of everyday knowing to reveal a phenomenon in its entirety. Meaning is co-created between the participant(s) and the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2006.) Van Manen (1990) stated:

> The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into textual expression of its essence – in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. (p. 36)

Van Manen (1990) provided six methodological themes useful in developing a phenomenological research design. The first four were utilized in this study. Van Manen’s six themes are:

1. Turning to the nature of lived experience
2. Investigating experience as we live it
3. Reflecting on essential themes
4. The art of writing and rewriting
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole
These themes are not to be looked at as a procedure, but as interrelated activities. Van Manen (1990) asserted, “Although spelling out the various aspects of the research process may help a reader, the critical moments of inquiry are ultimately elusive to systematic explication” (p. 34).

Turning to the Nature of Lived Experience

Orienting to the Phenomenon

Van Manen (1990) claimed, “The starting point of phenomenological research is largely a matter of identifying what it is that deeply interests you and me and of identifying this interest as a true phenomenon, i.e., as some experience that human beings live with” (p. 40). In other words, as researchers, we must attend to how we orient to a particular phenomenon. In this study, the researcher’s orientation is that of an interpreter, educator, and researcher. All three roles have shaped my perceptions as an individual interested in the field of deafness and education. My experiences in each role and the review of literature regarding the social construction of deafness led me to believe the experiences of students in higher education were a pertinent phenomenon to investigate.

While many phenomenologists recommend the practice of bracketing, a technique used by researchers to set aside their prior experiences as much as possible in order to view the phenomenon from a new perspective (LeVasseur, 2003, Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 2002; Van Manen, 1990), I followed a more Heideggerian approach to phenomenology. Regarding interpretive phenomenology, Donalek (2004) stated, “Research is not truly phenomenological unless the researcher’s beliefs are incorporated in the data analysis” (p. 516). This does however call for the researcher to be self-
reflective and aware. For the purpose of this study, the hermeneutic circle (as discussed previously) was utilized. Application of the hermeneutic circle allows the experience and voice of the participants to emerge while at the same time acknowledges the standpoint of the researcher. Through this process, inter-subjectivity occurs.

**Formulating the Phenomenological Questions**

According to Van Manen (1990), “To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being” (p. 43). Thus, when formulating a question, a researcher must bear in mind the effort required to study from a phenomenological perspective. The researcher does not simply ask the question, he/she lives the question. In other words, the questions asked from a phenomenological perspective stem from a passion to reveal experiences through a collaborative approach between the interviewer and interviewee. This process demands open-mindedness and a commitment to the inquiry. From this stance, the research questions addressed in this study, as stated in chapter 1, are as follows:

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of deaf college students in predominately hearing institutions of higher education?
2. What modifications, adjustments, and/or implementations aid in the success of deaf students currently attending hearing institutions of higher education?

**Investigating Experience as We Live It: Data Collection**

Van Manen’s second methodological theme is investigating experience as it is lived. “In drawing up personal descriptions of lived experiences, the phenomenologist knows that one’s own experiences are also the possible experiences of others” (Van
Manen, 1990, p. 54). In other words, researchers must be continually mindful of the co-creation of meaning within the phenomenological process as well as their stance within the research process. Qualitative research views the researcher as the instrument. As such, researchers must be mindful of their influence regarding how their own lived experiences shape their interpretations. For example, my experiences as an interpreter and teacher actively participating in the deaf community have shaped the type of instrument I am in the qualitative process. Owens (2004) stated, “The phenomenological investigation is the product of the person who undertakes it” (p. 45). As such the researcher must be mindful of his/her position as both an insider and outsider to the phenomenon he/she is researching and self-reflection is a key element to this process.

Van Manen’s second theme speaks to the collection of data. Van Manen (1990) asserted:

The point of phenomenological research is to ‘borrow’ other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience. (p. 62)

For the purpose of this study, data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The purpose of interviewing in hermeneutic phenomenology is two-fold:

1. It may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon.
2. The interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relationship with a partner (interview) about the meaning of the experience. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 66)

As the participants in this study were deaf, interviews were conducted in their language of choice. All four participants requested that the interviews be conducted in ASL or Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE); however, as all of the interviews were video recorded, questions were first signed and voiced so that the interview question could be transcribed later, and then question was signed in ASL. The interview schedule was divided into three sections (see Appendix A). The first part of the interview solicited information regarding the participant’s background. The second part of the interview was related to the first research question. As such, it focused on the experiences the deaf students encountered within mainstreamed academia. The final section of the interview protocol concentrated on efficient strategies the participants were using that aided in their success. The interview took approximately an hour and a half to two hours to administer.

**Participants**

Phenomenological case studies do not require large sample sizes to understand the lived experiences of the participants. However, “it is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied” (Creswell, 2007, p. 128). In order to understand how deaf college students experience institutions of higher education this investigation utilized a criterion sample. A criterion sample was selected to ensure that all respondents in the study shared a similar phenomenon. For this study, all four individuals were students attending predominantly hearing colleges or universities in the U.S.
Midwest. All of the participants were deaf and utilized the services of an interpreter in the academic environment. The sample pulled from undergraduate and graduate students.

Three of the participants in this study were female and one participant was a male. Three of the participants were selected through personal contact, while snowball sampling was employed to recruit the fourth participant. As an interpreter and active member of the deaf community, I am associated with many individuals who are deaf and attending colleges in the U.S. Midwestern area.

An exclusion criterion was implemented in this study. The study was not open to deaf students who were oral and did not use the services of an interpreter in their educational environment. While I feel there could be significant knowledge gleaned from their experiences, for the purpose of this study I chose to focus on deaf individuals with similar modes of communication.

**Rationale for Selections of Participants**

As stated previously, I used criterion and snowball sampling. Criterion sampling is “useful for quality assurance” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 71). All participants in this study were deaf, utilized the services of an interpreter in their education, and all attended universities in the U.S. Midwest. The names of all participants have been changed to protect their anonymity. Snowball sampling “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information rich” (Creswell, 2007, p. 71). Snowball sampling was used to recruit Mona into the study.

I have known the first participant, Tony, since he was a child. Our relationship has been defined by differing roles. I have been Tony’s interpreter, teacher, and friend.
Tony used the services of an interpreter throughout his K-12 and college experience.

Tony is completing his undergraduate degree.

The second participant, Rebecca, attended the same university as Tony. I have known Rebecca since she was a child as well. While I met Rebecca when she was younger, it was not until she was an adult and learned to sign that we began to interact. Rebecca is my friend, but I have also served as her interpreter. At the time of this study, Rebecca was working on her undergraduate degree.

I originally met the third participant, Linda, through a mutual friend. However, I have also served as her interpreter, teacher, co-worker and friend. I contacted Linda via email to see if she would be interested in participating in my study. At the time of the interview Linda was working on her master’s degree; however, she has now successfully completed her degree.

I knew of the fourth participant, Mona, but I did not know her well. The deaf community is small. I had talked with her at deaf events and through mutual deaf friends. After interviewing Tony, he recommended that I contact Mona to see if she would be interested in participating in my study. I knew she was a graduate student, but I have never served as her interpreter, teacher or co-worker. I knew that Mona fit the criterion for this study, so I contacted her through facebook to see if she would be interested in participating in my study. Mona is currently working on her master’s degree.
Settings

There were three settings associated with this study. The deaf community is small. In order to protect the participants in this study, I will describe the institutions the students attend without reference to their names.

The first university in this study has a main campus and several regional campuses; however, the participant from this university attended the main campus. The university provides a variety of degrees in both undergraduate and graduate work. The main campus is located close to a major metropolis and has over 64,000 students. The university reports having a diverse student population that includes students with disabilities. In addition, they have an office for disability services. They report providing the following services for deaf students: interpreting, transcribing, and FM systems. Other services, such as note taking, and tutoring are also available. American Sign Language courses are taught at this university. This university has an active ASL club.

The next university in this study is also located near a large city, though not quite as big as the first university. This university also provides a variety of degrees in both undergraduate and graduate work. The student population reported by this university is slightly over 19,700 students. In addition to on-site learning, the university offers a variety of distance learning options. The participant from this university utilized both methods. The university also has an office for disability services. In addition to other services, they report providing sign language interpreters, C-Print, FM and IR amplification systems, and reader/writer services for students who are deaf. American Sign Language courses are offered at this university.
While the last university has a main campus that has approximately 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students, the participants from this university attended a regional campus with a little over 2,000 students. The regional campus offers undergraduate degrees and a few graduate degrees. While there is a formal office of disability services on the main campus, the regional campus has a liaison person to which students are referred. In addition to note taking, and reading/writing services, the services provided by this campus specifically for deaf students are interpreting services, an FM amplification system and note-takers. All other requests for services are sent to the main campus for assistance. This campus does not report having a lot of diversity in its student demographics; however, they do have a large number of American Sign Language courses and an active ASL club.

**Procedure**

The procedure outlines the steps the researcher will follow in the data collection process. For this study, the first methodological step was to gain approval from my dissertation committee. In the fall of 2009, I submitted my research approval form to the Institutional Review Board of Ohio University. Once I had approval from my committee and from the Institutional Review Board of Ohio University, I began contacting the participants. I began communicating with individuals in December of 2009. I contacted three of the participants through personal email accounts and I contacted the fourth participant through facebook. The initial email provided information about me and an explanation of what I wanted to research.
The semi-structured interviews were set up as participants agreed to be a part of the study. Participants were interviewed from January 2010 to March 2010. The first interview took place toward the end January 2010. Tony was the first participant to be interviewed. Due to convenience, Tony and I agreed to conduct the interview at his university. Before the interview, Tony was given the informed consent form to read. He had the option of having the consent form interpreted; however, he declined. The first interview with Tony lasted approximately an hour and a half. After the interview, Tony and I began to chat. We also began talking about different aspects of the interview and of his experience with academia. The information was rich in content regarding the study. As a result, we turned the camera back on and discussed in depth some of the items we had discussed off camera. The second interview also lasted about one hour. Tony’s interview was conducted in ASL.

Linda was the second participant to be interviewed. Her first interview occurred in early February 2010. Before the interview, Linda was provided with the informed consent form. Linda declined having the informed consent form interpreted. She preferred to read it herself. Linda’s first interview took place at my house. The interview lasted almost two hours. Due to time constraints, Linda and I agreed to do a second interview. Though we set up an interview for the next week, the weather prohibited us getting together. As a result, the second interview took place in mid-February. Both interviews were conducted in ASL.

The third participant to be interviewed was Rebecca. Rebecca’s interview took place the first week of March, 2010. Rebecca and I agreed to conduct the interview at my
house. She also declined having the informed consent form interpreted. After her consent, we began the interview. Rebecca is a non-traditional student and mother. She had to bring her children with her to the interview. Several times, we had to shut off the camera. While the interview lasted over an hour, there were several interruptions. We agreed to communicate follow-up questions via email. Rebecca’s interview was conducted through a combination of ASL, Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE) and English.

The final interview took place mid-March 2010. I contacted Mona on facebook to see if she would be interested in my study. She agreed to meet at a university campus halfway between our locations. Mona, like the other three participants, declined having the informed consent form interpreted. Her interview lasted almost two hours. Mona’s interview was conducted in ASL.

All interviews were transcribed during March and April of 2010. As the interviews were conducted in ASL or CASE, I had to interpret or transliterate the content into English. My experience as an interpreter greatly aided in this process. However, to ensure conceptual accuracy and to authenticate my interpretation, I asked another interpreter to cross-check my transcription. According to Creswell (2007), “Peer review or debriefing provides an external check of the research process” (p. 208). In addition, at times I was able to discuss transcriptions with the participants to ensure accuracy of the context. This process provided validation of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider this to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 34).
Data Analysis: Reflecting on Essential Themes

Once the transcripts were checked for clarity of understanding they were coded and examined for common themes. This process took several months. Van Manen’s third theme focuses on reflection of data in order to create thematic analysis. According to Van Manen (1990),

Making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure – grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning. (p. 79)

As such, the creation of themes within phenomenological research is not a rigid process, but simply a means of discussing and organizing the phenomenon being investigated. Thematic elements in the research aid the researcher in providing structure to the writing process.

Van Manen discussed three methods for reflecting on essential themes: the wholistic or sententious approach, the selective or highlighting approach, and the detailed or line-by-line approach. The wholistic or sententious approach focuses on the transcript as a whole unit. The detailed or line-by-line approach scrutinizes individual lines or segments of lines in the data (Van Manen, 1990). However, I chose to employ a selective or highlighting approach. After an in-depth examination of the transcriptions that entailed, reading and rereading the information, I began noticing common themes. I began color-coding each theme with a different color. After coding the data, I began organizing the different themes under my two research questions. For me, the most
important aspect of organizing the narratives of my participants was to ensure their voices were not lost in how I perceived the story should unfold. To ensure this did not happen, I discussed my writing and my research with my peers and with several of the participants.

**The Art of Writing and Rewriting**

The fourth endeavor of Van Manen’s hermeneutic phenomenology is the art of writing and rewriting. The objective of the researcher is to create a text in which the lived experiences of others are better understood. This phenomenological process thus involves language. “Language is the only way by which we can bring pedagogic experience into a symbolic form that creates by its very discursive nature a conversational relation” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 111). Through the symbolic form of the lived experience the essence of the phenomenon is described.

The phenomenological act of writing is a process of composition and revision. Depth of knowledge is gleaned as the researcher revisits and revises his/her work. Van Manen avowed:

The process of writing and rewriting (including revising or editing) is more reminiscent of the artistic activity of creating an art object that has to be approached again and again, now here and then there, going back and forth between the parts and the whole in order to arrive at a finely crafted piece that often reflects the personal ‘signature’ of the author. (pp. 131-132)

Through the illuminating process of revision the legitimacy of our methodology is maintained. After the data was coded and analyzed, I began the writing process. Many
times I would write, edit, and revisit my data only to change how I worded something. The initial stage of this process occurred over several months during the summer of 2010. During the fall of 2010, my father became very ill. During this period, I was unable to work on my writing; however, the time away from my dissertation was beneficial. When I began the rewriting process again, I noticed instances in which personal opinion as a deaf advocate biased my writing. During these periods I went back to the literature, research, and even the experiences of my deaf friends to ensure what I was writing was valid.

**Research, Deafness, and Voice**

The issue of voice becomes relevant anytime a member of a dominant culture researches and attempts to speak for or with a marginalized culture. While there have been significant contributions made by hearing individuals to the field of deafness, hearing scholars must be accountable to the scrutiny and critique of the marginalized community they research. Weis and Fine (1993) stated, “If we want to understand and interrupt the perversions and pleasures of power, privilege, and marginalization,” then we must allow “these voices, once marginalized, to be heard and centered” (p. 2). In order for the hearing world to understand the power we historically held and currently wield over deaf individuals, we must allow the writing and research of deaf scholars to pave the way. In addition, hearing scholars studying ASL and deaf culture must be accountable and subjective to the deaf community. Foster (1996) discussed four core values that should influence an author’s research in the field of deafness:

1. Relevance of the models of deafness
2. Respect and sensitivity to Deaf culture

3. Recognition of “hearing” world perspective and its bias

4. Belief that application of research will benefit the Deaf community.

(p. 3)

Throughout this study, I have cautiously maintained these four core values. In addition, researchers must have a strong understanding of ASL and its construction as well as an understanding of deaf culture.

**Self as the Researcher**

Based on the above-mentioned presumptions, it is imperative to acknowledge my role as a researcher. As a woman, I have experienced power and oppression, both positively and negatively. As a “hearing” woman however, I look at these concepts from another perspective. There is a distinct difference between the ability to “hear” and what the label hearing entails. The term hearing implies much more than the ability to hear sound. It is rooted in the fundamental ideal of power and privilege. Historically, the label hearing has been validated through examination of the oppression deaf individuals have experienced from the hearing world. As a woman, I am a member of a minority group, but as a hearing, white, middle-class woman I am privileged and with that privilege comes power.

My journey into the deaf community began twenty years ago when I entered into an interpreter training program at Columbus State Community College. I knew how to sign the manual alphabet, as well as count to ten. That was the extent of my knowledge regarding sign, deafness, and deaf culture. I had never met or interacted with a “real” deaf
person. I entered in the program with the ethnocentric attitude that deaf people needed me to learn their language. I bought into society’s dictate that deaf people needed my help. It did not take long for my egotistical attitude (and pride) to diminish. In reality, I needed deaf people much more than they needed me. Without the support and patience of many deaf individuals I would never have been able to learn ASL. To this day I am grateful for their efforts in teaching an ignorant hearing girl that ethnocentrism has no place in society. They generated in me a desire for self-awareness and transformation.

After graduating with my associate’s degree in interpreting, I worked as an interpreter for eleven years in a K-12 educational environment. I witnessed firsthand the experience of deaf children included in the general education classrooms. I worked with deaf children who were participants in partial to full inclusion. While working as an education interpreter, I decided to further my education. After receiving my master’s degree in communication, I began teaching and interpreting in higher education. In addition, I continued to interpret within the deaf community at large.

As a hearing woman, I am an outsider to deaf culture and must be conscious of my position and the advantage it entails. At the end of the day, I am and will remain a hearing woman. My life has been shaped by the privilege my hearing has granted me. While I continually interact and research deaf culture, I am not culturally deaf. However, as an interpreter, educator, and activist I am an insider in the deaf community. I am cognizant of the relevant models of deafness (moral, medical, social, and biopsychosocial) and how each lens positions deafness in a different light. I am extremely respectful and sensitive to deaf culture. I recognize the hearing world’s perspectives and
its biases and truly believe my research will benefit the deaf community. The phenomenological experience embraces the collaboration between researcher/participant, insider/outsider. In this manner, the chosen methodology for this study and my position as the researcher added to the strength of the study.

**Ethical Issues**

Ethics or the moral principles that have guided my life both as an educator and as a sign language interpreter did not emerge in a vacuum, but were influenced by the experiences that have honed my life. Hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges those lived experiences as a fundamental part of the interpreting process. According to Rebore (2001), ethics is “concerned with human conduct, as distinguished with mere human behavior. Conduct implies there is a choice; people can choose one course of action or an alternative course of action. Behavior is a descriptive term referring to all human activities” (p. 6).

According to Rebore (2001), Habermas discussed the importance of communication in deconstructing the morality of norms utilizing a dialogic process. Pulling from his previous work on communicative action, the notion that only discourse surfacing from communication utilizing everyday language has the power to create a shared standpoint, Habermas developed discourse ethics (Rebore). Rebore stated, “The central principle of discourse ethics is that the validity of the norm rests on the acceptability of the consequences of the norm by all participants in the practical discourse” (p. 240). Thus, all stakeholders must be equal contributors in dialogue. Habermas focused on the process by which decisions might be morally examined,
critiqued, and/or established. Discourse ethics is a way of testing societal and organizational norms. In addition, the conversation involved in discourse ethics must occur through genuine dialogic communication and not hypothetical or monological interchange.

As stated previously, my relationship with participants varied from their interpreter, teacher, friend, co-worker and acquaintance. Thus, from an ethical perspective, the notion of power, whether perceived or legitimate, was a crucial element. At the time of the study I was no longer the teacher or interpreter for any of the participants; however, the risk of them perceiving me as an authority figure and not as an equal participant of the discourse was a reality of the study. Keeping this in mind helped ensure that the interviews centered on a dialogue occurring between the participants and me and not a question/answer session.

My various roles throughout this study influenced my perceptions and must therefore be noted. I attempted to remain cognizant of how my differing roles, such as being the interpreter or the academic, influenced my perceptions. However, I was not a neutral participant in the data collection of this study. I was an active participant, which is an embraced component in a hermeneutic phenomenological case study. My beliefs as an interpreter and as an academician blended. This, combined with the participant’s experiences, provided a well-rounded view of the phenomenon.

**Informed Consent**

During the initial meeting, participants were given an opportunity to read and ask questions regarding the informed consent form (see Appendix B). Interviewees also had
the option of having the informed consent form interpreted to ensure complete understanding of their rights. As communicated via the consent form, respondents had the right to refuse or withdraw from participation at any time. A copy of the consent form was given to each participant. In addition, I retained a copies of the original signed consent forms.

**Summary**

This chapter provided a philosophical examination of case study, hermeneutic phenomenology, as well an examination of Van Manen’s phenomenology as a methodological approach. Consideration was given to issues of participant population, the process of the study, as well as the issue of informed consent. Qualitative inquiry, in particular a hermeneutic phenomenological case study, provides a strong methodological base for examining the lived experiences of deaf students attending predominantly hearing institutions of higher education in the U.S. Midwest.
CHAPTER 4: EMERGING THEMES

Higher education must lead the march back to the fundamentals of human relationships, to the old discovery that is ever new, that man does not live by bread alone.

– John Hannah

Experience is life’s greatest teacher. It shapes the way we view the world. In essence, what we do is directly related to what we think, know, and believe. Our understanding of reality is influenced by our experiences. Hence, this chapter discusses the perceptions of four deaf students and how they manage their education within hearing institutions of higher education.

Participant Profiles

Tony

Tony is a profoundly deaf, Caucasian man in his early twenties majoring in education and biology. At the time of the interview, he was completing his junior year at a regional commuter college with a student population of approximately 2,000 students. He considers himself to be a traditional college student in that he is not married and still lives with his family. At the university, Tony communicates primarily in ASL or Pigeon Signed English. He utilizes the services of sign language interpreters in the classroom and to communicate with faculty/staff. However, there are hearing students taking ASL courses at his university who can communicate with him, at least on a basic level and at least one additional deaf student is a student of the college. Tony will be transitioning to a main campus during his next academic quarter to complete his degree. Upon graduation, he plans to attend graduate school.
Tony was born deaf and is the only deaf individual in his family. The cause of his deafness is unknown. Tony’s hearing parents have minimal sign skill and use their voice and gestures to communicate with him. He learned sign language as a young child and was educated primarily with hearing peers throughout his K-12 experience. Growing up, Tony utilized the services of an interpreter for learning and socialization. He does not have strong verbal skills and rarely utilizes them in public; regardless, he does use his voice to communicate with his immediate family. Tony has limited outside socialization with hearing individuals. He has a small group of deaf friends with whom he associates. Tony is a strong supporter of inclusion and firmly believes in its philosophy. Academically, Tony is a good student. Throughout high school he was enrolled in AP courses and was a member of the National Honor Society.

Rebecca

Rebecca is a Caucasian undergraduate deaf student at a regional commuter college with a student population of approximately 2,000 students. She is majoring in communication and is beginning her senior year at the university. She intends to graduate next spring. Rebecca considers herself to be a non-traditional student. She is married and has four children and is in her early thirties. While in her twenties, Rebecca decided to have surgery to receive a cochlear implant (CI). As a result, one on one she can successfully communicate using speech, lipreading, and her CI. However, in the classroom she utilizes the services of interpreters for access information. She does so because she misses out on too much information in a classroom setting. One on one, Rebecca does not have difficulty communicating, but in a group setting, such things as
the teacher’s movements (i.e., not making continual eye contact), conversational turn taking, and background noise, make it impossible for her to fully comprehend the message.

She communicates and socializes with a variety of individuals both inside and outside the university. Her ability to speak and lipread allows her to “pass” into the hearing world. Often, when people hear her speak, they will ask where she is from because of her deaf accent. They are shocked to learn she is deaf and not from another country.

Rebecca was not born deaf, but went deaf at two and a half as a result of spinal meningitis. Rebecca’s family is all hearing. She has one sister. Rebecca uses voice and lipreading skills to communicate with her family. Growing up, she was educated in a hearing school and was the only deaf student. She grew up oral; using speech and lipreading to communicate. To this day, she has strong verbal and lipreading skills, but she conveyed a feeling of loneliness and isolation growing up. She struggled as a K-12 student because teachers did not understand her deafness. They would often teach class with their backs turned to the students, writing on a chalkboard. This prohibited any lipreading. In addition, Rebecca reported that due to her strong verbal skills, many teachers falsely believed that she could hear. When she was 17, Rebecca was approached by a friend to learn sign language. She felt she had nothing to lose and began taking classes. At this time, a new world opened up to her. She realized there was a world, a culture, in which she belonged. When I asked her when she became deaf, she replied she
lost her hearing at two and a half, but that she became deaf (meaning culturally) when she learned how to sign.

**Linda**

Linda is a Caucasian graduate student at a university of over 64,000 students. She is in her mid forties. She has her bachelor’s degree in business and is working on her master’s degree in ASL education. At the time of the interview, Linda was writing her capstone paper. Linda does not have strong verbal skills and uses her voice minimally with family and close friends. Linda utilizes the services of an interpreter when communicating with hearing faculty and staff. Linda is unique in that while she attended a hearing university, some of her instructors were deaf or were proficient in ASL. Linda has strong leadership qualities and is looked at as a leader in the deaf community. In addition to being a student, Linda teaches ASL and has organized many social events to bridge the hearing and deaf worlds through the use of sign.

Linda was born deaf and is the youngest of four children. Her deafness is genetic, in that she has an older deaf brother and deaf great aunts. She grew up in what she referred to as a “small, one-horse town” with a few other families with deaf children. However, there were no schools with programs for deaf children near her home. Her parents researched both residential and mainstream programs. They decided that the school for the deaf was too far away to commute and they did not want their children to stay residentially because they would only get to see them on breaks for Thanksgiving, Christmas, spring break and summer. They settled on a day school program for deaf
children housed in a hearing school district. This program was still far away, but they could commute.

At first, Linda’s mother would drive the children to school, and then wait at her grandmother’s house until school was over so that she could drive them back home. Later they learned that a nearby school district provided transportation to the school, but they had to live in that particular school district to take advantage of the service. So, the family sold their 300 acre farm which had been in the family for generations so that Linda and her brother could have access to transportation to their school. In school, Linda was educated using an oral approach. However, she reported that the deaf children in her school would secretly sign to each other when the teacher was not in the room or when they were being transported to school. These signs consisted primarily of home and school signs, or signs created for communication at home or school that do not have meaning outside of said environments.

When Linda was in junior high, she and her brother transferred to their local school district so they could participate in athletic events. The school district did not provide an interpreter for them for their academics or extracurricular activities. In fact, Linda stated that at that time, she did not even know what an interpreter was. The school district did provide note-takers for them. After school, their mother would sign the notes to them.

While attending a college fair, Linda met an interpreter. This same individual would become her first interpreter and language model when she started college at a local community college. Through him, she learned how to sign. After two years, Linda
decided to transfer to a deaf college. At this institution, she learned ASL and truly became a member of the deaf world.

**Mona**

Mona is a Caucasian, deaf graduate student majoring in rehabilitation counseling at a university with a student population of slightly over 19,700. She is in her mid twenties. Mona’s rotates between taking courses online and on campus. While in discussion groups for her online courses, the university provides a Computer Assisted Realtime Translation (CART) operator. When she attends courses that are on campus the university provides sign language interpretation. Mona describes herself as a loner and associates with only a small group of deaf friends. While she considers herself to be culturally deaf, she does not regularly attend deaf functions or socials. Mona has approximately one year left until she completes her degree. She is currently struggling to find an internship that has appropriate certification and also works with deaf clients.

Mona was born with degenerative deafness, but is unaware of the cause. She was diagnosed when she was six months old. Recently, she enrolled in a genetic study at Gallaudet University in the hopes of one day knowing the cause of her deafness. Mona does not have strong vocal skills. Her preferred mode of communication is ASL. Her family is all hearing and she has one brother and one sister. Her sister is proficient in sign language, but her brother refused to learn. Upon finding out that Mona was deaf, her mother began taking sign language classes and started teaching Mona how to sign. While her parents are not proficient in sign language, they are able to communicate using basic
Mona’s parent’s considered sending her to the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, but the school was three hours away and they would only get to see her once a week. Shortly after learning this, Mona’s father took a job in another state. Her family bought a house near a hearing school that housed a hearing-impaired unit. In elementary school, the majority of Mona’s classes were with deaf students, but she was also placed in hearing classrooms for some subjects. During middle school and high school, Mona was fully included. The school provided interpreters for all of her coursework.

After graduation, Mona attended a hearing college in North Carolina. The college had other deaf students and provided interpreters for all of Mona’s classes. Mona became disgruntled with communication problems at the university. She transferred to a deaf university where she received her bachelor’s degree. She described her years at the deaf university as a period of self-growth. She learned about deafness and deaf rights. In addition, she relished the ease of communication.

**Major Themes**

**Communication and Relationships**

Helen Keller was once asked what her choice would be if she could choose between her deafness and her blindness. She replied that she would choose to be blind because blindness separates you from things, but deafness separates you from people (Keller, 1902/1961). Communication is fundamental to the integration and segregation of diversity. Communication is indispensable in understanding the experiences and
perceptions of deaf college students attending hearing institutions of higher education. Relationships between the deaf student and his/her teachers, peers, university staff workers and interpreters are central to this process and were central themes arising from the data.

Tinto (1999) asserted that:

Students are more likely to stay in schools that involve them as valued members of the institution. The frequency and quality of contact with faculty, staff, and other students have repeatedly been shown to be independent predictors of student persistence…Simply put, involvement matters, and at no point does it matter more than during the first year of college when students attachments are so tenuous and the pull of the institution so weak” (pp. 5-6).

**Communication and Student/Teacher Relationships.**

Within academia there has been considerable work done on verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy and student learning (Allen, Witt, & Wheeless, 2006; Gorham, 1988; Gorham & Miller, 2002; McCroskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond, & Barraclough, 1996). It holds true with this study, that similar to their hearing peers, deaf students preferred teachers that demonstrated immediate behaviors, which lessened their perception of distance between themselves and their instructors. For example, when asked who his favorite teacher in college was, Tony replied, “My biology teacher. He is awesome, funny, laid back, willing to listen to students’ opinion, and he expands upon those opinions.” When asked the same question Mona replied:
My Human Life Development professor because she had a great personality. She had a lot of experience as a teacher. She was always upbeat. When class was over, I would feel like I was not finished learning yet. I wanted more from her. Sadly, she did not teach other classes.

Empathy, compassion, commitment, patience, spontaneity, and an ability to listen are closely connected to the trust necessary for creating the conditions for loving relations in the classroom (school) community (O’Quinn & Garrison, 2004). The deaf students in this study appreciated teachers who possessed these characteristics and who were willing to accommodate potential communication barriers. Said behaviors became defining reasons why a student liked a particular course. This was shown in a scenario that emerged in this study in which Mona participated in an online class. The professor and the students used microphones and visual text to communicate. The university provided Mona with a Computer Assisted Real-time Translation (CART) operator. This individual would log into the discussion board. The CART operator would then type everything that was verbally stated so that Mona could participate in the lecture. She acknowledged:

One of my online professors was also one of my favorites. He really got to know his students. He could hear the other student’s voices, but he always checked to make sure if I had something to say. He recognized that I was a part of the class. He would tell people to hold on so that I had time to read the discussion. That was wonderful! I would read everything the other students had posted, make comments, and then he would continue with class. It was awesome! Now I am getting better at quickly reading the comments and responding on time. I have
improved a lot, so I feel really good about that class. I feel like when the teacher recognizes my participation, then my classmates notice me… It is important to be recognized.

Thus, teacher awareness in the relational development between the teacher and deaf student is a fundamental. According to Rudasill, Reio, Stipanovic, & Taylor (2010), “Positive behavioral support systems…highlight the teacher’s role in creating a school and classroom climate where positive student-teacher interactions far outnumber negative interactions” (p. 407). This includes the facilitation of communication. Rebecca touched on how a teacher’s awareness of deafness and communication needs can positively influence learning. When asked, “How does your favorite teacher communicate successfully with you?” She replied:

She really does not pay attention to the interpreter, but at the same time, she is very aware there is a deaf person in the room. She understands what is happening in the classroom. She is aware that the interpreter is trying to convey information, so she will stop the class to allow the interpreter to catch up if the communication gets out of hand. That is awesome because I feel like she respects me a lot!

When asked to discuss her experience with how the faculty accommodated her needs in the classroom, Rebecca said:

The faculty members have been amazing! I have had teachers who have had prior experience with deaf people and faculty that have not. Most of them were a little bit nervous, but I would contact them before the start of the quarter, and let them know about me and about the interpreters. I think that helped a lot to make them
more comfortable. I also had good experiences with the interpreters and people that run the (interpreting) program. They have been great about letting new teachers know that a deaf person and interpreters will be in their classroom. That helps the teacher to have a little bit of an understanding so they are ready for the class. If I have never had experience with that teacher before the first day of class, I will approach the teacher and introduce myself and let them know that I have interpreters with me in the classroom. I will tell them that as a student I watch for information so that I can understand the concepts they are trying to teach. I also tell them that sometimes they will see me signing with my interpreters. That does not mean that we are chatting during class. We are often trying to figure out a concept and how to best sign it in ASL. I do not want the teacher to think I am wasting their time.

Tony also emphasized the importance of how minor accommodations can make huge differences in the classroom:

I remember I had this one teacher. I asked him for his PowerPoint slides. He often showed videos. He would pass out questions for the class to answer related to the video while we watched it. I thought shit; I will try to answer the questions, watch the video, and try to catch what the interpreter is saying at the same time. I explained to him the situation. He was willing to give me the answers and said he had never thought of that before. From that point on, when we watched videos he always provided me with the answers. That way, I could watch the video and the interpreter and focus on what was being said. Of course, he would give me the
answers after we had discussed them in class. I did not want anyone to think I was cheating. I would try to answer the questions first, and then he would give the answers to me.

These examples highlight how the professors utilized their role as the instructor to foster academic environments in which the students felt positive interactions between the student and the teacher occurred (Rudasill, Reio, Stipanovic, & Taylor, 2010).

Technology is changing the face of the modern classroom. It affects such things as learning (Hwang, Chang, & Chen, 2004; Jones & O’Shea, 2004), teacher evaluation (Bass, 2000), instruction (Penick & Bonnstetter, 1993), and communication (Bloch, 2002). Technology is also impacting the communication between deaf students and their hearing instructors. Instead of meeting face-to-face, several participants in this study discussed the ease of using such modes as email to contact their professors.

Linda said:

The internet makes it easier. I hate having to go to the office without an interpreter because communication gets messed up and I do not understand what is going on. With the internet, I can check myself and make sure everything is good.

When asked, “Do you ever take advantage of the office hours of your professors? Tony replied:

No, I never do. Most of the time I never need to contact or meet with the professor during office hours because I am doing fine in class. I understand what
is going on. If I am home doing homework and I have a question, I will email my professor.

Utilizing technology for communication bypasses the need for an interpreter, but can raise issues with the English language and deaf students’ writing skills. The average deaf adult has a fourth grade reading level (Parault & Williams, 2010). Thus, writing can become a challenge for many deaf students. For example, Linda was working on her capstone paper for her master’s degree. When asked, “How do you think being deaf influences the writing of your thesis?” She replied:

I do not think I am a bad writer. I tend to write out the meat of my paper quickly. I am not sure I am at a masters or PhD level. I tend to put everything down on paper; which includes my opinions. My advisor told me I could not do that because I include too many of my biases. I like to type up my work and feel good about it after showing it to my advisor, but he is always so critical. I feel so deflated.

When asked if she had ever made use of her university’s writing center or tutoring to improve her writing, Linda expressed that she was encouraged to utilize the university’s writing labs to improve her English. However, the facility lacked the necessary support to make the experience successful. Linda lamented:

I went to the writing center. They would not provide an interpreter for me, so that is the reason I would not go often. My advisor suggested I got to the foreign language writing center, but they were clueless regarding ASL. Most of the tutors
were from Korea or from other countries. They could help students from their
countries, but not me.

Students expressed a strong desire to demonstrate their ability to write. They
expressed the need to prove to their professors that deaf people could write successfully.
They worried that if their writings were not up to level with their hearing peers, then
other deaf people would be judged by their failures. This speaks to the collectivistic
nature of deaf culture (Filer & Filer, 2000). However, they were also concerned with how
their professors would judge them based on past experiences with other deaf students.
Tony stated:

Because it is the nature of the course, I think appropriate English is important to
anyone. However, I have noticed that for other deaf people their English is
mediocre. I am talking about their grammatical structure. Often their writing
reflects their use of ASL, so things are not always in appropriate English order.
They also may delete information. I think when other hearing students, peers, and
faculty see that, they develop a negative stereotype that deaf people cannot write
appropriately… Every person is an individual. I do not think it is fair to label
them all. Just because one person cannot write in appropriate English does not
mean that all deaf people cannot. There are different skill levels with writing
among deaf.

In a discussion about an instructor, Rebecca also touched on this when she stated:

I had heard that one of my instructor’s experiences with other deaf students was
not positive. I think when I first showed up she was a little suspicious as to the
type of student I was going to be. I think I helped her to understand that one deaf
student did not represent all deaf students. We are not all the same.

When asked if a professor had prior experience with deaf students, and whether or not
that helped, Linda responded:

My professor told me I explained a lot more about deafness than the other two
deaf students before me. Those students had been part of the Deaf Education
program, but I was part of another program. I had more in-depth experiences. I
provided more in-depth answers, so the teacher asked me many questions.

Students also expressed that sometimes they were assigned a pity grade or that
their professors did not even read their papers because of their deafness. Mona stated:

At my first college during my undergraduate degree, I felt like I was given a pity
grade. At Gallaudet, the teachers seemed to be more challenging, but they
understood that most deaf students struggled with English so they did not hold it
against us. At my current university, I do not even think the teachers read my
papers.

When asked to expand on this Mona stated:

I want to ask my professors if they even know what my paper is about. During my
first year (of graduate school), I was serious about my work. I made sure to write
grammatically correct. I used appropriate terminology. I made sure my writing
structure was good. I consistently got good grades. I really want to know what the
teacher thought about my grade. So the next few classes I thought, “What would
happen if I just throw a paper together and submit it?” Therefore, I did. I got an A on it. I could not believe it! I felt like my paper was complete bullshit!

However, Mona recently tried this with her self-reported favorite teacher mentioned earlier in this paper. Her experience changed her perception.

Recently I tried to throw a paper together for my professor. I really was not motivated to write an in-depth behavior analysis paper. I plugged things in under the four required research areas, but I really just did the bare minimum and submitted my paper. He replied that I got most of the information correct and that it was satisfactory, but that there were points deducted because there were grammatical errors in the paper. He even noticed that on the front page there was a space between the last word and the period. He commented about all the different grammatical errors. I feel bad I took a chance with him. I feel like if I get feedback from my professors, then I can improve my paper the next time. If I hear nothing, then I will continue to make the same errors.

The syntactical and morphological structure of the English language makes writing a conundrum for deaf students (Anita et al., 2005). Thus, as demonstrated above, students expressed the desire to prove that deaf people could write at a collegiate level. However, they worried they would be judged by the experiences a professor might have encountered with former deaf students or that their own writing would influence the judgment of future deaf students. As stated, this spoke to the collectivistic nature of deaf culture. Important to note, students did not feel as if they were given the opportunity to improve upon their writing, as resources, such as the writing lab, were not accessible. In
addition, at times, students felt as if they were assigned a pity grade based on their deafness. This contradicts findings from a study conducted by Mastergeorge and Martinez (2010) investigating teacher assessments and bias when evaluating students with disabilities. They found, “On average, ratings did not go up or down when teachers were aware of the disability status of the student” (p. 548).

**Communication and Student/Peer Relationships.**

Interaction and communication with peers was another theme that emerged when talking to the deaf students in this study. Harter, Waters, and Whitesell (1998) opined that experiences with relationships contribute significantly to the development of a sense of self which we contend is critical in the realization of self-esteem and self-actualization. This becomes even more crucial for deaf students as previous research has demonstrated that as a result of communication barriers, individuals with hearing loss have lower self-esteem than their hearing peers (Madden & Slavin, 1983; Montanini-Manfredi, 1993; Weisel & Kamara, 2005). Therefore, relationships with peers were critical to self-perception and ultimately to success. In discussions with the participants of this study, the term “peers” seemed to take on a broader meaning at times to mean friends outside of the classroom who were willing to offer assistance, and tutoring. In addition, the majority of the students in this study experienced deaf peers or hearing peers that could sign, which aided in alleviating communication detachment; however, one participant was the only deaf student in the program and potentially the university.

Three of the four students in this study do not utilize their voice to communicate. This becomes a challenge to relationship development with hearing peers that do not
know sign language. Interpreting services also became important in the socialization between deaf students and their hearing peers. This especially held true for students that did not have strong verbal or lipreading skills. As a graduate student, Linda was part of a cohort of both hearing and deaf students. Since their degree was deafness related, all the students were proficient in ASL. I asked Linda if she utilized the services of interpreters to socialize with her hearing peers outside of her cohort that did not know ASL. She replied, “Yes, we always partnered up with hearing peers; the teachers did not let us stay with deaf peers.” However, she went on to say her communication with hearing peers “depended on the interpreter. It depended on if the interpreter matched my level of speaking.” I asked Linda to expand on this. She said, “I want an interpreter who can match my ability to sign.”

Mona also discussed how the philosophies of different interpreters could influence peer socialization. When asked, “Do you use the services of an interpreter to socialize with your peers? She stated:

The interpreter seems to think that it is their role to interpret only what the teacher is saying. I have had different experiences with different interpreters. In some classrooms, an interpreter will sign: This person said this and this person said that. I really appreciate that. It really depends on the experience of the interpreter. Some interpreters will be signing the lecture, someone will say something in the classroom, and they are able to point to that person and quickly sign what they have said and then get right back to the lecture. I like that, because I am more involved with the class. I feel like I am more involved with my classmates. Other
interpreters will only sign what the teacher is saying. I will look around and see other people talking. I will ask the interpreter what they are saying and the interpreter will reply that they were not listening. I do not know if they are talking about something personal or if they are talking about something related to the class. I do not know, but it would be nice if I were included in the discussion. It would be nice to know what they were saying. It limits my socialization with my peers because I do not know.

Sometimes deaf people use their voice and lipreading skills to communicate with their hearing peers. This ability to pass into the hearing world makes communication and relational development with hearing peers less complicated. Rebecca was not born deaf; she went deaf at almost three years of age due to spinal meningitis. She also received a cochlear implant in her early twenties and has had significant success with it. In a recent study, Martin, Bat-Chava, Lalwani, & Waltzman (2009) demonstrated that children with cochlear implants experienced little to no difficulty communicating with their hearing peers and they reported equivalent self-esteem levels. Additionally, Bowmen (2008) stated, “Communication choices are often influenced by the degree of hearing loss as well as amplification that a student uses” (p. 290). Overall, this seemed to hold true for Rebecca as well, however, there were still instances where communication was complicated. Rebecca said:

I have had people that are unsure of how to interact with me. They do not know what to do. They do not know if they need to do something special. They do not know if they can talk to me without my interpreter. They do not realize that I can
talk with them one on one without an interpreter. I often get tired of explaining repeatedly that it is ok and they can communicate with me. Sometimes I become so tired of that, but I do not show it. I want people to have a positive experience with a deaf person. Therefore, I push aside when I am tired of it and I think about the hearing person I am talking with. I do not think about myself. It is my responsibility as a deaf person to make sure that other people are comfortable communicating with me.

Rebecca’s statement that she owns the responsibility of making hearing people comfortable communicating with deaf people relates to dysconscious audism (Gertz, 2008). She does not see that the world should accommodate a culture that utilizes a visual form of communication, which also speaks to the notion of hegemony. According to Williams (1976), “hegemony requires that ideological assertions become self evident cultural assumptions. Its effectiveness depends on the subordinated peoples accepting the dominant ideology as normal reality or common sense… in active forms of experience and consciousness” (p. 145). In this case, Rebecca accepts the societal norm that deaf people should assimilate into a hearing world, instead of a hearing world working to make communication access equitable for all. Thus, the responsibility of communication remains with the marginalized culture and not with those in power.

In addition, Rebecca’s comments speak to the collectivistic nature of deaf culture (Filer & Filer, 2000). Rebecca is careful to ensure that her interactions with hearing individuals are positive so that future interactions they might encounter with a deaf person will carry a positive connotation. In essence, she is conscious that her actions are
reflective upon her culture. She places the good of the culture above her individual feelings.

The majority of participants in this study attended universities in which some of their peers are other deaf students or hearing students who sign, which also impacted their socialization. As previously stated, deaf culture is collectivistic in nature. As such, the “group” is put above the “individual.” This fact was demonstrated in the stories that unfurled from the deaf students. Ma and Yuen (2011) demonstrated, “that the need to belong significantly predicts knowledge sharing behavior” (p. 217). This was most evident with Linda who often spoke of the “buddy system” used throughout her educational career in which students worked collaboratively to strengthen each other’s weaknesses. She also discussed how accessibility issues became a group decision when her university would only provide interpreters or a CART operator, but not both. She said:

We all wanted an interpreter… we are all strong ASL users. That was our preference. With an interpreter, we could raise our hand and the interpreter can voice for us. You cannot really participate with CART because everything is typed.

In addition to having deaf peers, participants also discussed the influence of hearing peers that can sign on their socialization. Tony said:

At my college, if my peers have been part of a deaf studies or ASL class then they tend to approach me because I am deaf. They will ask me to help them or ask me how to sign different things. I am more than willing to help them.
Rebecca also talked about how ASL courses at her university have influenced communication.

Many ASL classes are offered here. As a result, many people that I know in my communication classes have already taken an ASL class. So, a lot of my peers already know about deafness. It absolutely influences socialization!

Hearing peers that could sign seemed to become part of the collectivistic whole in aiding to the success of deaf students. For example, Linda often talked about her hearing peers stepping into the role of the interpreter to clarify assignments with hearing professors. When discussing a project she was working on for a professor she stated:

I did not understand the requirements for the project. I wanted to make sure I understood correctly, so I set up a meeting with the professor. I brought a few of my graduate peers with me to interpret. They were working on the project with me, so it was easy for them to be the interpreter.

Finally, as mentioned previously, the notion of “peers” often took on a broader meaning with participants in this study. They looked toward outside sources for assistance with their academic work. For example, when talking about her difficulty with writing Linda replied:

I would type my paper and send it to my friend so she could read it. She worked in a writing center at another university. I would email her my papers and she would adjust it and send it back to me. Another hearing friend of mine who is an interpreter also read my papers. She really knows my culture. She could see what I wrote and would understand it immediately and make the necessary
adjustments… Actually, all of the deaf students wanted this individual to read their papers.

When asked, “What services do you use to help in the writing process?” Mona was quick to reply, “Whatever is available… like my friends!”

Hence, the relationships between deaf participants in this study and their peers were noteworthy. Bowen (2008) examined the friendship and social interactions of deaf and hard of hearing and hearing 3rd and 4th grade students. Results demonstrated “there was no significant difference in friendship patterns based on communication style” (p. 290). However, for the participants in this study, universities offering ASL courses provided increased opportunities for deaf students to participate with their peers as this made available the participants’ overall preferred channel of communication. In addition, peers that were fluent in sign took on dual roles either as the friend/interpreter or as the friend/editor.

**Communication and Student/Staff Relationships.**

Being a student not only requires interaction and communication between faculty and peers, but also between members of a university’s staff such as individuals who work in student services or disability services. Deaf students must interact with staff regarding accessibility accommodations.

Graham-Smith and Lafayette (2004) conducted a qualitative study using constructivist theory to explore how students in a community college setting perceived the quality of their disability support office. The study indicated that “caring” was an important characteristic for members of the disability support staff to possess. In fact,
Graham-Smith and Lafayette (2004) stated, “Without providing understanding, the cares, struggles, and needs of the individual student go untouched and success becomes untenable” (p. 98).

When asked about their experiences with staff, a common thread emerged. Students reported finding comfort and security in a particular individual. This individual would not know sign, but the students would form a bond of familiarity with this individual that lessoned their uncertainty. This seemed to be particularly important to the graduate students in this study. When talking about needing assistance with financial aid, Linda said:

Before with financial assistance, I would send off the paper work and wait to see how much money I was going to get and how much school would cost. Now it is all on the internet and I cannot figure it out. Therefore, I am always going to the office for assistance. The first time I went into the office I brought a hearing peer with me to interpret. I went in and told tell them the system was stupid. The woman laughed at me. From then on, I always went to the same woman. I knew she was not going to freak out because I was deaf. I always went to or emailed the same person. I would tell her I had a problem and see if she was available. She always fixed my problems and helped me out. Therefore, when she got a new job and was transferring she made sure that she gave me the name of a new woman. She explained the situation to the new hire before she left. When I met the new staff worker for the first time, I brought my hearing peer back with me to interpret. Now when I have problems this new woman takes care of me.
When dealing with a problem with disability services Mona stated:

> There is one woman that tended to help me with my problems when I complained.

I felt like she tried to make sure that my voice was heard. When I had a problem she would find out who was involved and follow up to see if I had heard back from that agency to see what was going on. I really appreciated that. She had a long line of students to take care of and help, but she always remembered my situation and me. She recently retired. She told me she was leaving two days before she her last day. They just hired a new person. I do not know if the replacement is permanent or temporary. The new employee just started working this week, so I do not know how she will do yet. I have not talked with her.

The undergraduate students in this study had slightly different experiences with staff at their university in that they had staff that could sign. This also demonstrated a level of caring necessary for successful relationships and communication (Graham-Smith & Lafayette, 2004). When asked, “When you communicate with the faculty and staff at your university do you utilize the services of an interpreter?” Tony replied, “Yes, but sometimes the faculty and staff here know sign language so in those situations I can communicate with them one on one.” Rebecca discussed the impact attending a small university had on the communication with faculty. When asked about her experiences with faculty she replied:

> It has been wonderful! Before the quarter begins, they notify the teachers that a deaf student is going to be in their classroom. I think the faculty at small colleges
tends to spend more time on communication. They want to know what is going on in the classroom. In addition, the classes are smaller.

When asked if she felt the faculty and staff at her university were knowledgeable about deafness, she responded:

They have exposure in the classroom, but they are not involved… they do not socialize with deaf people and I do not think they have an in-depth understanding of deaf culture. Maybe it would be beneficial if they took a class or something. They need to understand that deaf people are very diverse. They have a variety of knowledge and understanding. They are individuals.

As described above, students in this study felt staff members at their university exhibited caring attitudes. For the graduate students, this meant one particular individual who connected them to the university at large. For the undergraduate students, faculty and staff that could sign also demonstrated caring and contributed to the ease of communication.

**Communication and Student/Interpreter Relationships.**

The purpose of a college or university providing sign language interpretation is the facilitation of communication. However, due to the continual interaction between deaf students and their interpreters, relationships often develop. These relationships impact how students perceive and experience their academic environment.

While interpreting as a recognized profession is still in its infancy, several service models have developed to examine the role of an interpreter. While these models have changed over time, an interpreter still practicing under an older model will perceive their
role differently than an interpreter practicing under a newer model. In essence, each model position the interpreter in a different light.

The U.S. Midwestern area in which the cases occurred for this study, currently do not require sign language interpreters to have national or state-recognized certification. K-12 interpreters are the only individuals who must have state licensure to practice. This licensure consists of an application upon completing a two-year degree from a state-accredited interpreting training program. In essence, there is no required skill-based examination to standardize interpreters’ level of competency. As a result, participants in this study all expressed the desire to have a say in determining who was qualified to interpret for them. Linda, a graduate student, stated, “A deaf person should have the right to pick who they prefer to interpret. You cannot just put anyone in a classroom and think that is acceptable.” Tony, an undergraduate student also demonstrated this when he stated:

I have a list of interpreters that I prefer. Therefore, when I get a new interpreter, I give them a few weeks, but if I do not like them then I inform the interpreting coordinator. The interpreting coordinator works to replace the interpreter or they will not hire that person for me the next quarter. Most of the time, it works out well.

With continued exposure to the same interpreter, relationships develop. Students in this study viewed relationships as crucial to their success. Half the participants grew up utilizing the services of an interpreter. The participants’ experiences influenced how they viewed the student/interpreter relationship. Tony stated, “I often find it more interesting
to chat with my interpreters. They are often more interesting and mature than my peers.”

I suspected this was related to the ease of communication as well, so I asked him if he felt
the two were related. He replied:

Of course it does. I do not think anyone else grows up with an interpreter as their
best friend. The interpreter becomes your best friend because they can sign and
they know what you are saying and what you mean. They can help you along the
way through life.

Mona, a graduate student, also discussed the importance of relationships and interpreting
when she explained:

Maybe part of why deaf students drop out of college is because they cannot
develop dependable relationships with their interpreters. Our interpreters are our
only support. If we do not have that support then we feel lost. The teachers do not
know what we need. Without interpreting how can I communicate with the
professor or with my classmates?

Sometimes the relationships between interpreters and students become friendships
outside of the classroom. When asked about the relationships she had with her
interpreters, Rebecca responded:

I do (have relationships) with most of my interpreters… However, there is still a
level of professionalism. It is nice because when I go into class the interpreters
will be sitting in front. They stay in their role as the interpreter and are very
professional. Then, when class is over they are more relaxed. They will also ask
for feedback and ask if they need to do or change anything. It is really nice because they truly care about me.

When Rebecca refers to interpreters maintaining a level of professionalism, she is referring to the balancing act interpreters must negotiate in forming relationships with deaf students. As previously discussed in chapter two, relationships are precarious for interpreters because on one hand, they must develop a relationship between themselves and the deaf student in order for trust to develop, while on the other hand, they must maintain their professionalism. However, problems may occur when interpreters remain firmly in a professional role and are not willing to develop a relationship with deaf students, which is fundamental in trust development (Mayer et al., 1995).

A Model of Trust

There were many modifications, adjustments, and or/accommodations that deaf students felt aided in their success in navigating their academic and social endeavors within hearing institutions. For example, students in this study stressed how having a qualified interpreter positively impacted their academic success. Qualified was defined by participants as an interpreter that possessed such characteristics as mastery of ASL and English, the ability to understand and break down complex ideas without losing conceptual accuracy, the ability to adjust his/her signing style to match the deaf student and the context, and the ability to match the appropriate register of the academic environment.

Interpreting was the most noteworthy predictor of academic success for the participants of this study. Central to this element was the notion of trust. Mona stated,
“When a deaf person goes to a doctor’s appointment... they trust the interpreter with their life. I guess that kind of concept applies to the educational environment as well”. Trust, and how it develops, is crucial to the successful relational connection between the student and his/her interpreter.

This connection of trust between the student and the interpreter determined how the students related with all individuals within their academic experience including faculty, staff and peers. When students trusted their interpreter, they reported positive experiences such as actively participating in class and engaging in more social interactions. For example, when Linda was asked if she felt like she could communicate with her hearing peers, she replied:

It depended on the interpreter. If they could match my communication style, then I interacted with my peers…. I was very fortunate to have two of the interpreters. They would come before class and stay after class because many of my hearing peers wanted to talk to me and ask me questions.

Mona also spoke to this when she was asked about her favorite class in college. She replied, “It depends on the day, it depends on the interpreters I have for the class.”

Conversely, when students did not trust their interpreter, their voices were silenced. They would not actively participate in the classroom and would not socialize with their non-signing peers. Linda stated, “If the interpreter was new, and I did not know if I could trust them, then I would remain quiet. And when class was over, I would immediately leave.”

Mona also spoke to the notion of participation and mistrust when she stated:
Some days I have an interpreter that I like. I really enjoy that. When I have an interpreter I like, then I enjoy class more because I learn so much more. When I do not have an interpreter I like, then I am depressed because I know I am going to miss out on information and participation.

This speaks to the notion of distrust. In particular, the concept of distrust aligns with two definitions proposed by McKnight and Chervany (2001): “Distrusting Belief-Benevolence means one, with some degree of confidence, believes the other person does not have the ability or power to do for one what one needs done” (p. 44), and “Institution-based Distrust means one believes, with feelings of relative certainty or confidence, that favorable conditions that are conducive to situational success in a risky endeavor or aspect of one’s life are not in place” (p. 45). Thus, without trust, deaf students remain silent because they do not feel the interpreter has the ability to facilitate a communicative environment in which they can be successful. As Linda stated, “If I had a substitute interpreter, then I would remain quiet because I did not know if I could trust them. I did not know how they would speak for me.”

Trust is an important component in relationship formation (Ferrin, Bligh, & Shah, 2007; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) proposed an integrative model of organizational trust. In their study, trust is defined as:

The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party. (p. 712)
Within their model they examine characteristics of both the trustor and the trustee. According to Mayer et al., trust will be influenced by the trustor’s, or in this case, the deaf student’s, propensity or willingness to trust the interpreter, based on such things as quality and personality. Some individuals will more readily trust than others (Mayer et al., 1995).

For example, Tony stated:

I remember an experience with one interpreter in particular in which I trusted her immediately. She was a skilled signer, I knew that right away, but it was more than that. Our personalities were so similar. We had an immediate connection and I trusted her.

Additionally, they examined characteristics that are inherent of the trustee, or in this case, the interpreter. Three facets of perceived trustworthiness emerged from the data: ability, benevolence, and integrity. According to Mayer et al., (1995) “Ability is that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain” (p. 717). In other words, ability refers to the competency an individual has in a specific area. This competency ascribes trustworthiness to individuals based on their ability to perform tasks related to their specific skill level. In this study, the skill or ability of the interpreter is one factor that students’ reported influenced their willingness to trust an interpreter. Rebecca stated:

With an interpreter I am able to listen and watch. I am able to formulate a picture of what the teacher is talking about. I can understand the concepts they are trying to teach. That is important to me. I am very conscious of who my interpreters are.
I want them to be qualified and skilled enough to understand the teacher’s concepts so that I can take advantage of as much learning as possible.

Ability is domain specific (Mayer et al., 1995; Schoorman et al., 2007). Thus, an interpreter might be highly skilled in ASL and flexible in its use, but must also understand the content material of a specific course and have the appropriate English register for the academic level. For example, Mona stated:

I have noticed that in graduate school the professors do not lecture from the book. So, if I do not understand the interpreter, then I do not understand the class. I do not know what my peers are saying and I feel like I cannot participate. It is difficult when my interpreters have a hard time understanding me. I will raise my hand to be called on and I will start to explain my point. People are looking at me and I am signing. My peers are waiting for me to say something, but the interpreter does not understand what I am saying. I just stop signing and say never mind.

Thus, the environment influences ability and trust is an interrelated component in this process. Mayer et al. (1995) affirmed, “The assessment of the antecedents of trust (ability, benevolence, and integrity) are affected by the context” (p. 727).

Another important component influencing trust that was related to ability was a student’s perception of the interpreter’s understanding of English. Interpreters who understood and were able to convey complex ideas were perceived to be more trustworthy than interpreters that appeared to struggle with English vernacular. Linda stated:
I want an interpreter who can match my ability to sign. I want them to use a higher register of words when they are explaining something. I do not want them to use low register wording. I want them to bring it up to a graduate level. They need to be able to fluctuate their vocabulary register.

In addition, consistent with the research, students trusted interpreters that had prior educational experience with content material (Napier, 2002; Napier & Barker, 2004). Rebecca even expressed trusting practicum students when she learned they had the same bachelor’s degree she was seeking.

I had a lot of practicum students this quarter. At first, I was really nervous about having practicum students. It is my education and I was concerned that the practicum students would not be at a college level. Then, I noticed that most of the practicum students had already taken the class that they were interpreting. They were familiar with the concepts we were talking about. Once I realized that the interpreters understood the concepts and I realized that they could sign, then I started to trust them.

There is often a debate, at least in the interpreting circles with which I am affiliated, between quality and certification. I have often heard it said that certification does not necessarily constitute quality. It does however provide a standardized means of attempting to ensure quality. As stated previously, at the current time, the area in which this study was conducted does not require certification for interpreters. Therefore, there are many uncertified interpreters who are qualified and vice versa. When this area moves to mandatory certification, more interpreters will seek this credential. However,
interesting to note, participants in this study did not stress the need for certified
interpreters; rather, they stressed the need for qualified interpreters. In fact, when I asked
Tony, who is seeking a degree in education, if he had any fears associated with teaching
in a hearing school, he replied, “My biggest fear is that I will not have a qualified
interpreter.” I then asked him to define what the term “qualified” meant to him. He
responded:

In my opinion, a qualified interpreter is skilled in sign. He/she has the ability to
analyze new concepts, not just simple ideas. I can understand complex concepts,
so I prefer an interpreter who can follow along with the speaker, not one that
condenses everything. For example, if I said, “The huge squirrel ran up the oak
tree,” I would want the interpreter to say that specifically. However, if the
interpreter said the squirrel climbed the tree, then he/she did not say anything
about the size of the squirrel, nor did they say how the squirrel moved or what
kind of tree it was.

Later, Tony made reference that the quality of the interpreter was so important that it
outranked the quality and attitude of the teacher. When asked why he felt this way, he
replied, “Most of the time you are with the interpreter for hours and hours, but you may
only see a teacher for two hours.” When Rebecca was asked if she thought the skill of
the interpreter was important, she replied:

For sure, but it truly depends on the interpreter. If the teacher is conveying
important information then I need to be confident that the interpreter conveys that
information. For example, one quarter I was taking a math class. There was a lot
of information being presented and I needed to be sure I understood the concepts because if I did not, when I got home I was stuck because I did not know how to do the work. I could not just read it and understand it. I need an interpreter in situations like that.

The quality of the interpreter can negatively impact a student’s understanding. Mona’s experiences with interpreting at her current university appeared overwhelmingly harmful. In talking about quality and interpreting Mona stated:

In my group interview, before I entered into my graduate program I had two horrid interpreters. Before the interview, I had requested two qualified interpreters. I did not want them to mess up my chance at getting into the program because it was a very competitive program. The university provided one interpreter that was working on certification and another interpreter that was a student. They were not professional at all. The student did not understand anything. They did not know how to interpret. I wanted to know why they would even accept the assignment. When they were not signing, they were on their cell phone. I was angry that day. I asked them, “Do you mind putting your phone down?” This time was about me. It was about my future! They said they were sorry. After that, they limited how much they were on their phones, but they still checked them. I was thinking, “You cannot give me two hours of your time and wait for a break?” I had a hard time understanding the interpreters too and I think I understand people really well. The interpreter would just sit there. I would have to ask them to sign something repeatedly.
Linda also expressed the need for having a qualified interpreter. She was very concerned that the interpreter could match the vernacular of her hearing peers in graduate school. Linda stated:

If I had a new interpreter then everything was messed up. Sometimes I had a substitute interpreter in my class and everything was off kilter. On those days, I tended to be quiet and not speak because I did not want to be embarrassed. I want someone who is going to speak equivalent to my hearing peers and I did not know if the new interpreter could do that.

Linda’s situation, described above, is an example of the trust that must occur between an interpreter and a deaf student in order for the student to have a voice in the classroom and to be successful in their learning endeavor.

The second facet discussed by Mayer et al. (1995) was benevolence, which refers to “the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from an egocentric profit motive” (p. 718). Benevolence occurs when the trustee has a favorable perception of the trustor and acts accordingly. Benevolence is an integral component in trust (Mayer et al., 1995; Schoorman et al., 2007). Students preferred interpreters who were willing to show up before class and to stay after class and interpret both social and academic information. I have observed in my own classes that hearing students often discuss such things as classroom projects, assignments, and readings before and after class. However, interpreters are frequently paid by the hour. Within academia, this means they are paid for the clock hours when class meets and not for interactions that occur outside of the designated class time. Therefore, students assigned
trust to an interpreter who acted in a benevolent manner, by ensuring that communication was facilitated before and after class and not just during the period when they were being paid. Linda discussed this when she said:

When I work in group projects, I tend to meet with the interpreter before hand and explain everything that is happening. To be honest, I often text the interpreter in advance and ask them to show up early, and often they are not paid for that.

This action, surpassed the “egocentric profit motive” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 718), and provided deaf students with access to potentially vital information. Interpreters that did not act in a benevolent manner also impacted deaf students. Mona stated:

I feel like college interpreters are only doing it for the money. That upsets me.

They are not interested in improving their skills and they are not interested in me.

They come in, do what they need to do for the day, and are gone.

Thus, when students perceived the interpreter to be benevolent, they appeared more trustworthy and reported positive experiences, however, when interpreters did not behave in a benevolent manner, the experience was negative.

The third facet of perceived trustworthiness in the integrative model of organizational trust is integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). Such things as reputation, perception of honesty, and the congruency between words and actions all influence the trustor’s opinion of the trustee’s integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). Concerning the trust between a deaf student and his/her interpreter, personality was a key aspect in the process. Students expressed the desire for interpreters to have similar personality characteristics as their own. This was recognized in Tony’s statement previously cited in this chapter when he
gave immediate trust to an interpreter based partially on the similarities between their personalities. When Tony was asked how trust developed, he also spoke to the notion of integrity and personality. Tony stated:

Trust does not necessarily develop in a week. It might take a quarter or even several quarters to develop. Most often trust is a gradual process. Sometimes it is easier if the interpreter and I have similar personalities. When our personalities are opposite, then there is not a lot of trust.

This relates to the notion of integrity (Mayer et al., 1995; Schoorman et al., 2007). When students perceived similar characteristics in their interpreter, they perceived the individual to have similar core ethical values as themselves. Thus, deaf students perceived the interpreter would adhere to a set of principles they found to be acceptable (Mayer et al., 1995).

The significance of trust and the interpretation process became clear in the experiences of all four of the participants. But how does trust develop?

Rebecca responded:

I have noticed the trust that develops… I have had interpreters I did not trust because of their skill level or maybe even because of a gut feeling about them. During those times, I found I was lipreading the teacher more than I was paying attention to the interpreter. The other interpreter noticed that I was doing this. They realized that this practice was a habit of mine. If I did not trust the interpreter, I would ignore them and lipread the teacher. Then, when the interpreters would switch, I would pay attention to the interpreter I trusted.
Tony responded:

If I really trust the interpreter, then I do not watch them… If my sentences are long or the concepts are complex, then some interpreters cannot comprehend what I am signing. Sometimes, their word choices do not match up with what I am trying to say. However, if I trust the interpreter, then I go ahead and sign what I want, knowing that they will give appropriate voice to what I am signing. If I do not trust them or I do not think they will understand, then I write what I want to say before I raise my hand to participate in class. I might also tell the interpreter what I am going to say before I say it.

The need for trust development is especially evident in graduate school. Not only are students specializing in a career path, it is also a period in which social networks and professional connections are formed. Linda discussed her desire to have the interpreter voice at a register equivalent to her hearing peers. Mona discussed the difficulties she experienced in graduate school because of interpreting. Often her interpreters were unqualified, or did not even show up to class. When asked about the notion of trust, Mona responded:

I want to be able to feel comfortable. I want to be able to speak up in class. I want to be comfortable if I give a presentation. I want to trust the interpreter to know how to say what I am talking about, and I want it to be smooth. For example, once when I was giving a presentation during an English class, I noticed the interpreters were continually missing what I was saying. Sometimes interpreters asked for my presentation ahead of time. I agreed because I noticed they wanted
to prepare themselves for my presentation and that was nice. I gave it to them only to realize that as soon as I started my presentation they were just reading from the paper. I wanted them to look at me! They were missing everything I was adding to my presentation and I was expanding on ideas. The outline did not sufficiently explain my points. If you trust me then I feel like I can be successful. If you do not trust me, then I cannot trust you and I cannot be successful!

In this statement, Mona spoke to the reciprocal nature of trust necessary for success to occur. Pervan, Bove, and Johnson (2007) stated, “Upholding a norm of reciprocity in relational exchange, even in times of potential conflict, may generate equilibrium, expectation and self-esteem leading to feelings of personal well-being” (p. 61). Thus, the reciprocal nature of trust is an important component in the process.

Three of the four participants in this study had the opportunity to select who interpreted their courses. They felt this was a positive experience and crucial to their success. Linda noted several times that she was thankful she was able to select her interpreters. When asked if her university allowed her to have a say in her interpreters, she replied:

I hand-selected my interpreters. I actually contacted two of them before student services contacted them. My university honored my request for them to interpret my class. The interpreters really matched my personality and sign style. I am happy that I had that type of relationship with student services and that they knew me and respected my preferences.
Rebecca and Tony both attended a university that had an interpreting coordinator. This allowed them to voice concerns when necessary regarding interpreting. Rebecca said:

If I really have a problem with an interpreter then I made the interpreting coordinator aware of it. They would do something about it. Nevertheless, I have a wonderful group of interpreters. They are amazing! If I have a conflict with someone then I feel I can let the coordinator know. I can make them aware that something needs to change.

One of the reasons Tony actually chose his university was because he had inside knowledge regarding the quality of the interpreters and the services the university could provide. When asked why, he replied, “If I went to another university that did not have experience with deaf people, would I get a qualified interpreter? That is the million dollar question.”

Not all students in this study had favorable outcomes with interpreting and with having their voices heard. When asked if she could pick her interpreters, Mona replied:

Not really, it depends on who is available. Last summer was the last time I had interpreters. At that time, I had four different individuals. Two of them were lousy, one of them was okay, and the fourth one was good. I sort of cornered her and asked her if she would not mind interpreting for my classes in the future. I will try to see if the college permits that. If I have to take a class this summer, I will ask for her. I have to. I have seen that she is skilled.
While ability, benevolence, and integrity can act independently of each other, “if they are all perceived to be high, the trustee would be deemed quite trustworthy” (Mayer et al., p. 721). This was demonstrated in this study when Tony stated:

An interpreter must have personality [integrity], quality or skill [ability], and a willingness to stay after class to interpret communication with my peers [benevolence]… An interpreter may have one or two of those qualities and I am okay with them interpreting, but I need all three for me to completely trust them to voice what I want to express.

However, Mayer et al. (1995) cautioned it is important to examine the notion of trustworthiness on a continuum and not fall victim to the either/or fallacy; either the individual is trustworthy or they are not trustworthy.

Ferrin, Bligh, and Shah (2007) proposed a theoretical model of trust, monitoring, and cooperation in interpersonal and intergroup relationships. The authors utilized previous research to examine these three factors. They asserted that while trust, monitoring, and cooperation have different structures; they have comparable underlying constructions. Of particular interest were their findings on monitoring. Ferrin et al. (2007) defined monitoring as “behaviors conducted by one party to gain information about another party’s level of cooperation” (p. 470). Concerning trust and monitoring, they affirm that when trustors have the ability to monitor the trustee, then they are less motivated to develop trust. However, as relationships develop, and trust increases, then the necessity for monitoring decreases (Ferrin et al., 2007).
The development of trust between the student and the interpreter did not occur instantaneously, but like all relationships, trust development required ongoing association. When deaf students did not trust their interpreter, then they engaged in increased monitoring strategies. Ferrin et al. (2007) stated:

If a party is primarily worried about being exploited and the party has the ability to monitor the partner’s behavior to a substantial degree, then the party can be assured that if any exploitation occurs or is about to occur. (p. 480)

This held true for the participants in this study. For example, in the initial stages of the trust development process, students reported increased eye contact with the interpreter. For example, Tony reported:

When I am talking I watch the interpreter and I lipread what he/she is saying. I am a good lipreader. If I catch an error, then I will stop the interpreter and say, “That is not what I am saying.” I will then back up and restate what I said so that they understand. I watch what they say. I watch both the students and the interpreter; however, if I really trust the interpreter, then I do not watch them.

Linda also spoke to this when she was asked how she ensured that a new interpreter was voicing at an appropriate register. She stated, “I read their lips. I sign and watch the interpreter speak.”

Students watched to ensure that the interpreter understood what was being signed. They employed different strategies to guarantee this was occurring, such as watching for non-verbal facial signals and hand gestures from the interpreter indicating that comprehension had occurred. Linda stated:
I read their lips and I watched the interpreter speak. But not the whole time. I often just knew when I needed to look at an interpreter for clarification. We would make eye contact, do a simple head nod of understanding and then I would know whether or not we were on the same page.

As mentioned above, students attempted to lipread interpreters to ensure accuracy and register of their words. When students developed a trusting relationship with his/her interpreter, their monitoring, or eye contact decreased and they expressed feeling more comfortable participating in the classroom.

Thus, when students trusted their interpreters, their eye contact with their professors and/or peers increased. Within the dominant culture of the United States, eye contact is perceived as being competent, respectful, attentive, and honest (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Martin & Nakayama, 2011; Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2010). Conversely, when students did not trust their interpreters, their eye contact remained on the interpreter and not on their professors or peers. As a result of reduced eye contact, hearing professors and peers may perceive deaf students as less competent in their communication skills. Future research is warranted in this area.

Trust can be explained through the trustor’s propensity to trust and the trustor’s perception of the trustee’s ability, benevolence, and integrity even before relational developments occur. Integrity is significant to early trust formation (Mayer et al., 1995; Schoorman et al., 2007). Deaf students in this study more readily accepted interpreters they perceived were akin to them. However, once a relationship develops between the trustor and the trustee, the three facets of trustworthiness will most likely shift in their
importance. For example, while integrity is important, after a relationship develops, the
trustor is in a better position to evaluate the ability and the benevolence of the trustee.
Deaf students in the study reported increased trust when working with interpreters with
whom they had longitudinal experience. Tony affirmed:

I have had many of the same interpreters throughout my college experience. I am
in upper level courses now, so I prefer that I have the same interpreters for those
courses. They are knowledgeable about the content information and I know that
they are skilled.

However, when a student had not worked with an interpreter in a while, they
reported that they engaged, at least initially, in increased monitoring skills before
completely trusting the interpreter with their voice. Tony stated:

If the interpreter is new, or if they are an interpreter that I have not experienced in
a long time, then I will watch them. If they have not seen my signing style in
awhile, then they have to get used to me again.

Mayer et al. (1995) also discussed risk taking in the relational trust development.
They asserted that “there is no risk taken in the willingness to be vulnerable (i.e., to trust),
but risk is inherent in the behavioral manifestation of the willingness to be vulnerable”
(p. 724). In other words, risk taking occurs when individuals act on trust. For deaf
students, there is significant risk in decreasing monitoring skills, which is the behavioral
act of allowing themselves to become vulnerable and trusting interpreters to appropriately
voice their thoughts and emotions. This accounts for increased monitoring by the deaf
student when trust is not present in the academic interpreting process. Mayer et al. (1995)
also distinguished between the risk taking behaviors that occur within relationships, RTR (risk taking in relationship), and other forms of risk taking. RTR can only occur within the context of a particular relationship with another individual. “Trust is a willingness to be vulnerable to another party, but there is not risk involved with holding such an attitude. Trust will increase the likelihood of RTR, which is the behavioral manifestation of trust” (p. 726). As stated previously, Rebecca talked about the relationships she had with her interpreters:

I do (have relationships) with most of my interpreters because I have been with them since I started school. I know them. I am comfortable with them. I am used to their style of signing. It makes it easy to form a relationship with them.

Thus, the formation of a relationship between the trustor and the trustee is fundamental in trust development and the trustor’s willingness to take risks. In other words, as the relationship between the deaf student and the interpreter progresses, trust develops, which increases the likelihood that the deaf student will decrease their monitoring of the interpreter and increase the eye contact between themselves and their hearing professors and peers.

Context and long-term effects are also important elements in the Mayer et al. (1995) model of trust. Context refers to the circumstances in which the trustor and the trustee’s relationship occur. Context may include such things as “the stakes involved, the balance of power in the relationship, the perception of the level of risk, and the alternatives available to the trustor” (p. 727). Thus, trustees must be aware of the context and how it influences their trustworthiness. Interpreters have the power to positively
impact a learning situation. Rebecca talked about context and power when she compared her secondary and postsecondary experiences.

In high school I was very isolated. I could not communicate with my teachers like I can now. The teachers pushed me away. They did not want to take the time to re-teach me things after class. I needed individual attention. In high school I had a “C” average because I just gave up. College was sort of a shock for me because I had an interpreter. I had new access to information and I had a new way of expressing communication. I felt so free. I felt like a weight was lifted from my chest and I could breathe. I realized I had the power to decide what I want! I had never experienced that before.

The long-term association between deaf students and their interpreters has important implications for the field of interpreting and should be expanded in future studies.

As relationships are cultivated, trust will be influenced. “When a trustor takes a risk in a trustee that leads to a positive outcome, the trustor’s perceptions of the trustee are enhanced. Likewise, perceptions of the trustee will decline when trust leads to unfavorable conclusions” (p. 728). For example, when the participants in this study trusted the interpreter, the outcome was positive and they viewed the interpreter as trustworthy. This experience also influenced how they viewed their overall academic experience. In this study, three of the four participants viewed their educational experiences as positive and had positive experiences with interpreting. Conversely, Mona had negative experiences with interpreting and negative perceptions of her university.

While talking about her university and attrition, Mona stated, “Maybe deaf students drop
out of college because they cannot develop dependable relationships with their interpreters…If the interpreter does not support me, then why would I want to stay?"

**Trust and Models of Interpreting**

The literature reviewed for this study discussed the evolution of the differing paradigms experienced by the field of interpreting. The earliest model of interpreting was the helper model (Humphries & Alcorn, 2007; Wilcox & Shaffer, 2005). Within this model, interpreters saw their role as the caretaker or helper. The next model to emerge was the conduit model. In this paradigm, interpreters saw their role as an unbiased, neutral instrument through which communication occurred (Wilcox & Shaffer, 2005). While this model is outdated, many interpreters continue to conceive of the interpreting process in this fashion (Wilcox & Shaffer, 2005). Next, with the communication facilitator model, interpreters saw themselves as the mediator of communication whose bias did have impact on an interpreting situation (Humphries & Alcorn, 2007). The final model discussed by Humphries and Alcorn (2007), the bi-lingual bi-cultural model, emerged from the communication facilitator model. Within this model, interpreters saw their role as equalizing agent of communication and as an advocate for deaf people (Humphries & Alcorn, 2007). While trust has been demonstrated to be an integral component in the success of deaf participants in this study, at this time, none of the existing models used in educational interpreting specifically address the issue of trust development. Thus, these models are not sufficient to cover all of the issues raised in an academic setting. They are lacking a crucial element: trust.
A model recently discussed by Hauser and Hauser (2008) examined the role of an interpreter when working with a deaf professional. This model, unlike the others, does incorporate the notion of trust. The Deaf Professional-Designated Interpreter Model (DPDI) is designed to guide interpreters working full-time within a professional setting with a deaf professional. Hauser and Hauser (2008) defined a deaf professional as, “any deaf or hard of hearing employee, trainees, or interns who require interpreting services to access the level of communication needed for them to learn, perform their job responsibilities, or both” (p. 4). Designated interpreters are highly trained individuals who are employed by the same organization as the deaf professional. Not only is a designated interpreter skilled in sign language, but they also have an in-depth knowledge of the terminology, subject matter, and social roles and norms of the organization in which they are employed. Within this organizational environment, “the deaf professional is the person in power and the recipient of services is the hearing person” (p. 3).

Relational development and trust between the interpreter and the deaf professional is a crucial element in the DPDI model. This model focuses on interpreters and working deaf professionals. As such, this model does not adequately apply to students within academia. However, the DPDI model is relevant to this study, in that it is the only model in which trust is explicitly related to the success of the constituents. Moreover, within the educational realm, trust is also an important component.

Campbell et al. (2008) applied the DPDI model to academic and educational interpreting. They distinguished between the two types of interpreting. Educational interpreting encompasses the classroom environment and the student(s), whereas
academic interpreting encompasses situations outside of the classroom that fall within an academic realm, such as staff meetings or conferences. These situations do not typically include students. Within their discussion, the authors include graduate students to the degree that they may also be serving as instructors within courses. As with Hauser and Hauser (2008), Campbell et al. (2008) also stress the importance of trust in the interpreting process. They stated:

Anyone watching the academic-interpreter dynamic will note that there is constant communication between them, with the academic and interpreter continually signaling their understanding or need for clarification to each other.

The key to this teamwork of collaboration and mutual respect and rapport is trust.

(p. 86)

Trust is an important component of the interpreting process within all aspects of interpreting (Conrad & Stegenga, 2005); but, within academia, it becomes crucial to the success of deaf students who utilize interpreting services in their educational experience. While the DPDI model does not incorporate students within its paradigm, the notion of trust that exists between the interpreter and the deaf professional is also a necessary component in success of deaf college students. As such, it must be incorporated into any model of interpreting utilized in the academic realm. In addition, academic interpreters should be highly educated, preferably with an equivalent educational level to the one the deaf student is seeking.
Self-Advocacy

Research on advocacy and self-advocacy illuminates a potential problem in the bilingual-bicultural model of interpreting, which is one of the current working philosophies in the field of interpreting. In this model, the interpreter acts as an advocate for the deaf consumer. As such, the interpreter, though acting in a benevolent manner, assumes a position of power by giving voice to the deaf individual. In essence, in an attempt to resolve a situation in which a deaf person is being marginalized, the interpreter makes an assumption as to the best way to level the power imbalance; however, in doing so he/she may add to the oppression the deaf individual is experiencing. On the other hand, self-advocacy is empowering in that a deaf individual is assigning voice to himself/herself and the control remains with them. Thus, there is the need to search for a model that makes accommodations beyond advocacy to self-advocacy. In this regard, the ally, first discussed in 1992 by Baker-Shenk, which is just starting to become a part of the overarching dialogue in the interpreting community, appears appropriate.

Within the field of interpreting, the philosophical perspectives that shape an interpreter’s standpoint are evolving. Currently, the field of interpreting is moving toward a new model: the ally model. The ally model differs from the bilingual-bicultural model of interpreting in that the “ally model require[s] the interpreter to avoid oppression but not actively fight the oppression by others as long as the Deaf person is aware of it” (Campbell et al., 2008, p. 104). In other words, the interpreter moves from a position in which they assume power as an advocate, to a position in which they empower the deaf
person to self-advocate. This allows the deaf individual to handle an oppressive situation as he/she sees fit. Janzen & Korpinski (2005) argued that:

The interpreter as ally implies that because of the common power imbalance between Deaf and hearing people, interpreters are in a unique position to provide information about the interaction to the Deaf participants so that they can make empowered decisions on how to proceed. (p. 171)

This new model gives agency to the deaf person by empowering him/her to control his/her own representation. However, while the philosophy behind this model is one of empowerment, the name itself may be misleading as a synonym for ally is advocate. Hence, a more appropriate label for this model might be the empowerment model.

The students in this study reported that self-advocacy was a key element in determining their successful navigation of their academic work. As a deaf student, Linda stated, “You have to be assertive! You have to advocate for yourself!” There is a difference between advocacy and self-advocacy. Advocacy is the practice in which an individual or individual’s voice or take action in support of themselves or they give voice to another individual if that person is unable to do so (Jenkins & Northway, 2002; McNally, 1995). Jenkins and Northway (2002) stated that advocacy raises two important points. First, “Advocacy needs to be viewed as a process rather than simply an event” and second, “Advocacy is often viewed as ‘acquiring’ a voice” (p. 9). Advocacy is directly correlated with the notion of power and who can speak for another (Jenkins & Northway, 2002; McNally, 1995). If one has equitable access to society, then advocacy is unnecessary. Jenkins and Northway (2002) stated, that “advocacy is a strategy by which
empowerment may be promoted” (p. 9). Therefore, in applying this definition of advocacy, an interpreter, acting on behalf of a deaf consumer is an advocate. However, how can self-advocacy be promoted among deaf individuals? Advocacy differs from self-advocacy in that self-advocacy empowers the agent to speak for himself/herself.

Definitions for self-advocacy began with an emphasis on the disability rights movement which began in the United States in the 1960s (Shapiro, 1993) and with the focus on normalization and deinstitutionalization in the 1970s (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy, 2005). Since that time, numerous definitions of self-advocacy have emerged. Jenkins and Northway (2002) defined self-advocacy as a “term used to describe the process whereby individuals are enabled to gain confidence and skills to make choices and speak for themselves” (p. 10).

Garrison-Wade and Lehmann (2009) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate strategies that utilized to improve educational success for students with disabilities as they transition from secondary education to community colleges. Regarding self-advocacy, they ascertained that “students themselves need to acquire the skills associated with self-determination; specifically, self-awareness and self-advocacy are inextricably linked to students’ abilities to request accommodations to their needs” (p. 431). This may be problematic for some students, as they do not have training or experience in describing their disability and their needs to others such as faculty and staff (Quick, Lehmann, & Deniston, 2003). However, all of the participants in this study were competent in their ability to self-advocate. When asked how she developed self-assertive behaviors, Linda replied:
I learned how to be assertive from my mother. She taught me to be independent. When I was a little girl, she encouraged me to be in groups with hearing children. She enrolled me in 4H and Girl Scouts. I played sports with my hearing peers. So, I had to learn how to speak up for myself.

When Tony was asked the same question, he replied:

I would say that I learned to be assertive internally. It is part of my personality. I do not take shit from anyone and I want to succeed. In addition, I had to learn how to advocate for myself because I grew up in a hearing family with many male cousins and an older brother that liked to tease me.

The students in this study linked self-advocacy and assertive traits to their success even when they felt that it was not a characteristic of their personality. When asked about being assertive, Linda replied, “I think when deaf people do not stand up for themselves, they fail. I refuse to accept that. I resolve my problems as they occur.” Rebecca responded:

My husband forced me to be assertive. He told me there was nothing wrong with me. He told me to be proud of myself. That really gave me a lot of confidence. I became proud of who I was. I did not need to feel like I had a disability. Growing up I thought disability meant that you were less than. I thought it meant that you were under other people. I could not be equal to them. I think a lot of it really had to do with my mother. Growing up my mother heaped pity on me. She wanted me to live on her pity. Therefore, I think she really oppressed me. Later in college, I felt like a new person.
Mona also spoke of assertiveness when she was discussing negative experiences at her university. When asked, “What were the best things that you have done to improve the situation?” She replied:

I have complained. When I was younger, I was not sure of my rights and I would sit back and take things. Gallaudet really changed me. Before Gallaudet, I never thought about discrimination. I learned so many things. I realized how people treated me. Then when I went back home I was amazed at the discrimination. After going to Gallaudet, I have realized that it is not deaf friendly here. I think that in the future I will find a better place to live. I know there are better places out there. I just need to look harder to find them.

This relates to the literature discussed in chapter two of this study by Campbell et al. (2008) regarding the different types of universities and their openness to deaf individuals. In this instance, Mona is distinguishing between a university that is *Deaf*, or one “in which Deaf students, faculty, and all members, whether hearing or Deaf, adopt or espouse Deaf cultural norms” and a university that is *Deaf-Oblivious*, “in which there is little or no awareness either professionally or socially of deafness, Deaf students, Deaf staff members, or Deaf academics” (Campbell et al., 2008, p. 82). The attitudinal acceptance at Gallaudet provided an environment in which deafness was not a disability and communication was easily negotiated; however, at Mona’s mainstreamed university, she experienced a lack of understanding regarding deafness and a continual breakdown in communication. Thus, she perceives the environment “not deaf friendly.” For Mona, the
attitudinal environment of her university influenced the degree in which she had to advocate for her rights.

Not only did students talk in general about being assertive, they also gave examples of situations in which assertiveness was shown in their experiences with faculty, peers and interpreters. Faculty are often unaware of the needs of their deaf students. It could be easily perceived that an interpreter in a classroom equalizes the playing field. However, many instructors do not realize the English language can also be a barrier for their deaf students. When asked about her experiences in college, Linda replied:

There was this one class. It was a research design class. The teacher was nice, but I really had to study for that class. I was able to do my work without incident, but the test was difficult. The exam was set up through the computer and while I was taking it, I ran out of time. I went to the teacher and explained the situation. My problem was that I needed extended time for reading the test. As a deaf student, you have to be assertive. I could not just sit back and do nothing. I was not angry or mean when I sat down with the teacher. I simply explained my problem. I told him I got a “C” on the first exam because I did not get finished. There were still 15 questions left unanswered. After I explained the situation, then the teacher understood that I needed extended time.

Tony discussed how he handled situations in which hearing professors ask him to represent all of deaf culture through his individual experiences. He stated:
I had a class last quarter where the teacher asked me many questions regarding how I perceived things as a deaf man. So when I answered I always started off by saying I do not represent all deaf people, this is just my experience. I am not the deaf representative for the entire deaf community. I am just not. In that class, it was important to share my experiences. If however I was in a history or communication class for example and if the teacher continually pointed out my deafness in class or asked a lot of questions, then I would get frustrated. I may ask them to stop pointing me out. However, most of the time, I am willing to share my experiences with my classmates.

Self-advocating behaviors may also be necessary when dealing with peers. When asked, “How do you negotiate communication between yourself and your hearing peers,” Rebecca stated:

Right now, I am involved in a communication class that is focused on small groups. I was nervous when I signed up for the class. I thought it would be interesting how a deaf person would interact in a small group of hearing students. I knew it was going to be a really interesting class. There were six people in my group. The first day we had a meeting. We sat in a circle. Naturally, we began by getting to know each other. I had two interpreters. They sat on opposing sides of the circle. One of the interpreters would interpret for one-half of the circle and the other interpreter would interpret for the other half. Well, everyone started talking over each other. I slammed my hand down on the table. I got everyone’s attention. I told them, “I know we have just recently met, but if we want to have a
successful group then we need to be aware of our time together. I want to let you know that I have two interpreters in the group and they cannot keep up with you talking over each other.” Everyone started laughing. There were two ASL students in my group and they started apologizing because they knew better. From that point on, I understood everything. It was really a good group.

Mona also had an experience with a group project and being assertive. She stated:

In my group project, we could communicate via email or videophone, but my group preferred to use cell phones. They decided that they wanted to have a phone conference. How am I supposed to be involved in that? I remember one of my classmates told me that the group had set up a phone meeting and she wanted to let me know. I thought okay, where is my feedback? How do I participate in that? Something like that always happens. I kept proposing different ways that we could communicate as a group. Finally, they decided to meet via group email. As it turns out it was a great idea. Our communication would post in different colors. One student might be one color and mine would be another. We were setting up a therapy program for a fictitious client. In the end, it worked out really well. Because of the different colors, it was easy to go back and see how we had improved on what we were doing.

The students in this study have already demonstrated self-advocacy characteristics in speaking up about their desires for a specific interpreter. The students also discussed self-advocacy when asked how they would handle negative experiences with interpreters. For example, when asked how he handled negative situations with interpreters he replied:
First, I would be straight with the interpreter. For example, I would say, “change the sign,” if it is a sign that I do not like. If the interpreter were not qualified then I would inform the interpreting services that I did not want that person interpreting for me.

They also experienced other situations where they needed to be assertive with interpreters. Mona discussed the difficulties she has experienced with interpreting and CART operators.

I do email my university when I have a complaint and tell them I do not want a specific interpreter. My parents are paying for my education. I do not want that to go for nothing. Maybe if I had a full ride I could ignore some of it, but my parents are paying so I have to be assertive. I have to be serious about it. The same is true with captioning. I met three different CART operators. One was not skilled. The other two did not know much sign language, but they did their jobs really well. Some agency interpreters and CART operators always show up late for my class. They will be an hour and a half late! They will forget about class time or they will say no one told them about the class or that is was not on their schedule. I know they have the information because I have sent everything to everyone. The agency has the information, so they should know my schedule! I get disgruntled. During class I would also experience where no interpreter would show up. I would get the agency’s phone number and text them that I was in class and that neither of the interpreters had shown up. They should show up! It is their job!
Through meta-analysis and input from stakeholders, Test et al. (2005) developed a conceptual framework of self-advocacy for students with disabilities. There are four components to their framework: knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership (Test et al., 2005). First, knowledge of self is critical to self-advocacy. Test et al. (2005) stated, that the “first step toward self-advocacy is to gain knowledge of one’s own interests, preferences, strengths, needs, learning styles and attributes of one’s disability” (p. 50). All of the participants in this study were self-aware of their needs. They accepted their deafness as an identifying characteristic of their personality, they were self-assured, and knew what accommodations best fit their individual learning styles. For example, when asked what advice he would give to a future deaf student, Tony replied:

First and foremost, a deaf student needs to comfortable with himself/herself. Accept yourself for who you are. If you are comfortable with yourself and you know who you are, then no one can break you and you will be fine anywhere. It does not matter if you go to a deaf college or a hearing college; you first need to accept yourself. And of course, expect there to be barriers.

Having knowledge of one’s rights was the second element of the Test et al. (2005) conceptual framework for self-advocacy. For students, being aware of their rights was a crucial step in this process. This awareness meant knowing and understanding current laws affecting the requirements of universities to be accessible to individuals who are deaf. Students of this study were either aware or became aware of their rights under the law before or during their academic endeavors at the college level. Rebecca stated:
I think it is important that something is set up to educate deaf students of their own power in the system. I know when I started college; I did not know my rights. I did not know about the services that were available for me. I learned that as I went along. I think it would be beneficial if deaf students were provided a list of information regarding their rights. This would help them to understand and help them to be more assertive. I do not think many deaf students realize that until it is too late and the information is already lost.

Assertive traits demonstrated by the students in this study were such things as requesting specific interpreters, complaining when sub-adequate interpreting occurred, asking for notes ahead of time, clarifying classroom discussion(s) with their peers after class, communicating needs to faculty and staff, and advocating for appropriate communication channels both inside and outside of the classroom (i.e. classroom discussion or group projects).

The third component in the conceptual framework for self-advocacy was communication. Test et al. (2005) confirmed, “Once the foundation components of knowledge of self and knowledge of rights are in place, an individual will need to be able to communicate effectively” (p. 50). Communication in this instance does not mean one’s ability to speak, but one’s ability to convey thoughts, ideas, and opinions, which are necessary tools in asserting one’s rights. Students in this study utilized several communication modalities to self-advocate when necessary, including such things as utilizing the services of an interpreter, voice, paper and pencil, gesturing and email. For
example, when Linda was asked how she communicated with staff members at her university, she replied:

Sometimes I used the internet. I register online. If I need to pay my loan payment, I go into the office by myself. I will bring the letter with me. Most of the time, we communicate through gestures or through writing back and forth.

On the other hand, Rebecca, who has strong verbal skills most often depended on her voice to communicate. She stated:

I use my voice because I feel like I have a larger verbal vocabulary than my sign vocabulary. I can speak and I understand concepts that are being discussed. I think hearing people need to be exposed to deaf people who can speak and to deaf people who are completely manual.

The final element of the Test et al. (2005) conceptual framework for self-advocacy was leadership. “Leadership involves learning the roles and dynamics of a group and the skill to function in a group” (p. 50). Leadership from an individual perspective is not always a necessary component in effective self-advocacy (Johnson, 1999); however, from an organizational perspective it is essential (Martin, Huber-Marshall, & Maxson, 1993; Test et al., 2005). Students in this study assumed leadership roles when they advocated and educated their peers and instructors about deafness and deaf culture. For example, regarding an education class in which there was a diverse representation of cultures from around the world, Linda stated:

I was always proving to the other students that ASL was a language. I had to give the examples of the phonology and morphology of ASL. They understood, but it
took a lot of convincing. They also asked me about pragmatics and socializing within the deaf community.

This aligns with research that demonstrates that students with disabilities who have strong advocacy skills challenge individuals who view them as incompetent (Test et al., 2005; Wehmeyer, 2002).

**Voice**

There is power in voice. The power to decide who and what represents us or who gives voice to our thoughts and emotions is something deaf people experience every time they raise their hands to communicate in a non-signing, hearing world. They must trust that the interpreter attaching verbal meaning to the conceptual movements of their hands, face, and body are accurate in content. They must trust in a hegemonic process, a process that “is embedded in the social fabric of life” (Charlton, 2006, p. 224), that their voice will be heard. Thus, it is no wonder that the participants in this study stressed the desire for their opinions to be taken into account regarding who interprets for them in their academic endeavors. Linda stated:

> My university honors my requests for an interpreter. That is important. I want an interpreter that really matches who I am and the educational program in which I am enrolled. I want my peers to look at me as an equal.

Responding to a similar question, Mona replied:

> At my university, I miss out on a lot! It is not often that you meet a qualified interpreter. If I am not permitted to have a say in my interpreter then why should I
be at school? I want to be in school because I want to improve myself so that I can work in this society.

Hegemony is a systemic process by which a dominant culture maintains power. Allen (2002), defines hegemony as “a social condition in which relationships of domination and subordination are not overtly imposed from above, but are part of consensual cultural and institutional practices of both the dominant and the subordinate” (p. 106). Thus, practices, which are thought to be accepted norms within a given society consciously and unconsciously, sustain the power of those in power. Deaf students must rely upon a systemic process for interpreting services to occur. In the current economy, budgetary constraints may affect the quality of interpreting the university provides. Regarding the contracting of interpreters at her university, Mona stated, “The University accepts bids from agencies selling their services for the lowest price. Whoever, bids the lowest gets the contract”. This hegemonic process of seeking the cheapest services possible may save the university money, but it potentially does so at the expense of the student’s academic needs. The individual requirements of each student must be prioritized and their voices heard in order for them to be successful. When a university fails to do so, they in essence silence the student.

Historically, the idea of “voice” itself was rhetorically problematic for the deaf community, even while disability rights activists were using such terms as “speaking out.”

While ‘vocal’ minority groups used the rhetoric of ‘gaining voice’ and ‘speaking out’ without a second thought, the Deaf community faced the fact that the
hegemony of the ‘voice’ and ‘speaking’ was precisely what they wanted to ‘speak out’ against. (Dirksen & Bauman, 2008, p. 3)

However, in the past few decades we have seen a re-awakening of thought and action in the empowerment of the deaf community. They have fought for their voices to be heard and in essence, they came into voice. Humphries (2008) affirmed:

> Coming to voice, as I see it, is not about coming out. It is about the subsistence of individual and group sensibilities. Finding ways to talk about ourselves may be a process of affirmation and confession, as coming out often is, but it is a different process, it involved developing a sustaining voice, one that sustains the individual and group alike. (p. 37)

For deaf people, not only was the notion of voice problematic, but also who had the power to represent them. The cultural representation of deafness, and on a broader scale, people with disabilities, has often been fraught with peril. Most often, both groups are viewed from medical representations of normalcy (Dirksen & Bauman, 2008). Having voice and the power to decide who and what represents us is intractably linked to identity and worth (Hall, 1996). Thus as stated by Beckhter (2008), “A truly deaf public voice would be able to convey what deaf signers value; it would not need to contort itself to fit the value system of others” (p. 74). In the case of deaf students within academia, this means having the power to be an active member in a collaborative process with their university in determining who interprets, and gives voice to them.
It’s All in the Attitude

The National Institute of Education report on Involvement in Learning suggested that students who are more involved in activities related to their formal education will grow more as individuals, will be satisfied with their education, tend to persist in the education to graduation, and tend to continue their learning after college (Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education, 1984). For the students in this study, both the attitude of the academic culture and their own individual attitude affected their success. “Students have a fundamental need to feel that they are an important part of a larger community that is valuable, supportive, and affirming” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 527). When students receive affirmation, then they are more apt to take part in their academic experience. For example, Tony stated, “Deaf students are more willing to participate in class when a professor is open-minded to their deafness”.

Previous research has demonstrated that as a result of social workings and racial climate within a university, students of color do not feel as strong of a sense of belonging as their White peers (Johnson et al., 2007). This sense of belonging is also important to students with disabilities (Milner & Kelly, 2009) as well as the deaf participants in this study. If the cultural environment of a university does not foster a sense of belonging for students with disabilities, then they may perceive the environment to be alienating. Mona stated:

I would not recommend going to my university if you need assistance from disability services. I do not know if other people who need their services would
say the same thing, but I do know another woman who uses a wheelchair. She
complains a lot about the services as well.

persons with disabilities contribute to the development, reinforcement and solidification
of barriers that prevent full societal inclusion” (p. 12). In addition, regardless of a
student’s race and ability, when alienation occurred at the beginning of a student’s
college career, they may be predisposed to attrition (Daugherty & Lane, 1999). Thus, the
attitude of the university, or at least the perception of the university’s attitude by people
with disabilities, is important to their feeling of belonging and to their retention.

Radermacher, Sonn, Keys, and Ducket (2010) utilized participatory research to
investigate barriers to participation of people with disabilities in organizational settings.
They affirmed that people with disabilities “identify negative attitudes and social barriers
to be: the greatest impediment to their well being, the greatest impingement on their
human rights and the main reason for their social exclusion” (p. 334). Their study found
that from a rhetorical perspective, the organization appeared to be accessible and open to
participation; however, in practice, numerous barriers to participation existed. In other
words, lip service is insufficient in making a student feel as if they are a part of an
organization. Mona identified strongly with this as her university had a reputation of
being accessible and accommodating to people with disabilities; however, her experience
was contradictory to this reputation. She stated:
Before I went to my university, I had always heard that they were hailed for their work with and services for people with disabilities. Therefore, I thought I would go there… but to be honest with you, I think the services there are awful!

Concerning the academic culture, deaf students in this study reported having a sense of belonging and purpose when faculty recognized they were a part of the class at large. This is consistent with Meeuwisse, Severiens, and Born (2010). They found there is a “positive relationship between the learning environment, peer and teacher interactions, sense of belonging and study success” (p. 542). The students in this study also felt that faculty recognition encouraged their hearing peers to notice the contributions they could add to the class. For example, Mona stated, “I feel like when the teacher recognizes my participation, then my classmates notice me…. It is important to be recognized”.

Belonging and relational development are interrelated. Sidorkin (2002) stated, a “pedagogy of relation is based on the assumptions that most children and adolescents possess an innate social instinct, a drive to relate, and a desire to belong” (p. 80). He approached his theoretical assumption with the argument that student motivation is inseparably connected to the relationships developed within the educational realm. From this premise, developing a relationship between the deaf student and his/her interpreter aids in fostering an environment in which the student feels a sense of belonging. Participants in this study felt that the relationships they had with their interpreter aided in their success. For example, concerning her relationships she developed between herself and her interpreters, Rebecca stated:
It makes it easy to form a relationship with them… They are highly motivated and they want me to understand things. They do not look at me as if I am not important and just leave when they are finished interpreting.

Alternatively, the lack of a relationship between a deaf student and an interpreter can negatively influence their sense of belonging. Mona affirmed:

Maybe deaf students drop out of college because they cannot develop dependable relationships with their interpreters. I think we need that type of service. The interpreter is one of our only supports. If we do not have that support then we feel lost.

Thus, the support of the academic environment, including the relationship between the deaf students and his/her interpreter, was regarded as notable in their success. As Tony stated, “If a school system did not support me, then I would quit. I need all the support I can to be successful. It is like a three legged chair, without support, it will fall”.

The attitudinal climate of a university to make all essentials components of the academic experience accessible to deaf students is paramount to retention. As previously stated, an interpreter in the classroom does not necessarily make the university climate and experience accessible to the deaf student. Stinson and Walter (1997) stated:

Deaf college students also need support in such areas as financial aid, academic advising and registration, health care, extracurricular activities, and intercollegiate athletics. If support is not provided in these areas, a deaf student is put at risk of becoming isolated in the college environment thus increasing the likelihood that the student will withdraw from college. (p. 22)
Many of the students reported that their universities made efforts to make social events accessible. Linda, who attended a large university, reported that her university provided interpreters at guest lectures, films and even sporting events. Her experience and the experiences of Rebecca and Tony were positive in regards to the attitude and accessibility of their university. Overall, students expressed a feeling of acceptance and belonging by their university and their academic culture. However, the lack of these services at Mona’s university, and the impact it has had on her were profound.

Most of the services my university provides are related to people who are blind or are in a wheelchair. I even went to a disability job fair. Primarily it was for people who could speak. It was not for deaf people at all. So, how do I fit in there? It is as if the deaf people do not really fit, so they push them away. That is how I feel.

The deficiency in the services the university provided for Mona was also evident when she needed to find a practicum placement that was accessible to a deaf individual, and the college did not provide any type of support. After conducting a futile search on her own, Mona was unable to find an agency that was certified, worked with deaf consumers, and was accessible to deaf employees. When I asked Mona if her advisor helped her in this situation she replied, “The school is not very helpful. I would like for them to give me ideas of who to contact or at least some advice, but I am all on my own.”

The participants in this study also deemed that their own individual attitude affected their success. Stinson and Walter (1997) stated, “Students who find satisfaction with their courses are likely to have greater motivation to learn and enjoy greater success” (p. 16). Findings from this study were consistent with Stinson and Walter’s
(1997) recommendations for improving academic retention for deaf students. The deaf students from this study felt strongly that the success of all deaf students in academia, both current and future, was directly related to their motivational level (Stinson & Walter, 1997) and their ability to adapt and cope (Lukomski, 2007). When Tony was asked what he felt was most influential to him as a student, he replied:

For me, it is self-motivation. Really, that is the most important thing. For example, you can try to teach a dog to sit. You can say, “Sit” repeatedly, but the dog will not sit if it is not motivated enough. However, if you show the dog a treat, tell the dog to sit, and then reward him after he/she sat, then the dog would be motivated to sit again on command. What I guess I am trying to say is that if someone is motivated enough, then they will succeed.

Tony’s example of the dog illustrates extrinsic motivation, or the motivation an individual engages in based on an external benefit (Kohn, 1999). On the other hand, intrinsic motivation (IM) refers to motivation that occurs based solely on an individual’s pleasure or enjoyment (Kohn, 1999), although, many behaviorists feel intrinsic motivation does not exist. “The very idea of IM is controversial in some quarters because of its implicit affirmation that what people do isn’t always initiated by forces outside the self” (Kohn, 1999, p. 290). Rebecca demonstrated another example of extrinsic motivation when she was asked what influenced her decision to go to the college she was attending at the time of the interview. She responded:

Well, I had motivation. I knew that I wanted to go back to school. I have had the opportunity to be a guest lecturer in ASL classes regarding my deafness and my
experiences. As I watched the classroom interaction, I realized I was ready to go back to college. I have had a lot of encouragement and support from my friends. In addition, motivation was often linked with self-assertive behaviors. For example, when Mona was asked about the things that have helped her to be successful, she replied:

I think motivation. I want a better life for myself. I have to do something about it. I cannot just sit back and hope that something will stand up and change it.

Deaf students perceived themselves to be more active in the academic system but not the social system. This finding is consistent with Stinson and Walter (1997), who reported that, “Students felt less integrated into the college’s social setting than its academic system” (p. 20). Overall, participants in this study reported that they did not experience a lot of social interaction at their universities; however, two of the participants attributed this to their personality and not to the social accessibility of the academic environment. For example, Tony stated:

It is not because I am deaf, but it is more of my personality. I am just not that much of a social person. It is not that I do not want to hang out with people, but I really just prefer to be by myself or with one or two close friends. I am not the kind of person to jump into a group and introduce myself… Now related to school I do go into the cafeteria or the lounge and I will sit in an available seat and read a book, magazine, or do homework. If someone I know comes by, I will move my stuff and have them sit down and converse. I do not go up to people and introduce myself. I really just do not socialize a lot with people, but it is not because I am deaf.
Mona echoed this when she stated:

The problem is that I do not really socialize… I have no interest in getting to know people for the most part. If we have common interests then I am sure I will take the time to get to know you… Sometimes I think it would be better if I knew more people, I was involved, or had a stronger connections at my university. When I went to Gallaudet, it was easy for me… so easy. I feel like I want it handed to me on a silver platter.

While Mona’s comment is similar to Tony’s, it differs in that it speaks to the longing for the ease of communication that occurs between peers at a deaf university. This relates to the findings of Stinson and Walter’s (1997) study that examined both deaf and mainstreamed schools of higher education. They stated, “Because of difficulties [at mainstreamed schools] in communication, deaf students had difficulty making friends with hearing students” (p. 20). Conversely, deaf students reported that the ease of socialization was a primary factor in selecting a deaf college or university. “A national study of deaf students and educators of the deaf revealed that both groups agreed that the size of the deaf student body was the most important factor in attracting students to postsecondary programs” (p. 20).

However, three of the four participants attended hearing universities in which a few of their hearing peers could sign, at least minimally, which seemed to aid in social interaction. When asked if having peers that could communicate through sign language aided in his peer socialization at his university, Tony replied, “Yes! Before I would pass
people in the hallway and they would say a quick hello, but now I pass people and we have conversations in sign language. So it has really improved”.

For one of the participants, her hearing peers were crucial in clarifying information outside of the classroom. “Both the hearing the deaf students in my cohort were proficient in sign, so we were a close knit group.” The relationship between this deaf participant and her hearing peers fostered an environment where she felt socially welcomed at her university.

**Summary**

This chapter provided a profile of the two undergraduate and two graduate participants in this study. In addition, the major themes, which emerged from the experiences of the participants, were discussed. Concepts from the literature review, current literature, and components from the theoretical framework were applied to the participant’s understanding of mainstreamed academia.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Now is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But is, perhaps, the end of the beginning. – Winston Churchill

This study began a dialogue with four deaf students who are effectively finding their way in hearing institutions of higher education. However, the conversation does not end at the conclusion of this study. It is only the beginning of conversations yet to come in order that all students have equal access at the academic table. The final chapter of this study provides a summary of the data, summary of the study, discussion of major findings, implementations for the study, and suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Study

Within a phenomenological case study, participants must share similar experiences. Therefore, as a delimitation of the study, it was limited to deaf university students within the U.S. Midwest who utilized the services of an interpreter in the academic setting. This study examined the lived experiences of two undergraduate and two graduate students attending universities in the U.S. Midwest. Case study is designed for small numbers so that the researcher might have an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being studied. This was framed in a phenomenological case study to allow in-depth interrogation and thick description of the participants’ experiences related to their adaptations in a predominantly hearing college environment.

Communication is an essential element in every aspect of life, including academics. For deaf individuals, communication may be laden with barriers. Research has demonstrated that as a result of communication complexities between deaf children
and their hearing peers, deaf children may not fully enjoy their educational experience when they are placed in settings with hearing peers (Kluwin, 2002).

During the past thirty years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of K-12 deaf students being included in hearing schools. This has impacted the number of deaf high school graduates attending hearing institutions of higher education (Lang, 2002). However, only one-fourth of deaf students attending hearing institutions graduate (Lang, 2002; Stinson & Walter, 1997; Walter et al., 1987). Lang (2002) cited such things as academic preparation, social and academic integration, social adjustment and belonging, support services, classroom participation, and effective teaching to be key factors influencing the success of deaf students.

While problems have been identified, there has been limited discussion identifying solutions. Thus, the goal of this research was to examine how the norms of the hearing world have influenced the academic and social experiences of deaf college students. Through discourse, this study strove to allow the perceptions, experiences, and voices of four deaf college students successfully navigating hearing institutions of higher education to contribute potential solutions to systemic and social barriers. Two research questions were generated. The first question examined the experiences and perceptions of deaf college students, and the second question examined the accommodations that deaf college students felt aided in their success and could potentially aid in the success of future deaf students.

There are several significant contributions made by this study. The first is that the study comes from an Appreciative Inquiry approach. Such an approach moves away from
a deficiency model, which looks for what is lacking, and seeks positive strategies that
deaf students are successfully employing that enable them to navigate their academic
environments. An AI approach has the power to enlighten both future deaf students as
well as academicians to strategies that may be employed in aiding student retention.

Additionally, this study contributes to the larger body of research that seeks to
understand how normalcy influences the lives of deaf individuals. Finally, my lived
experience as an interpreter and educator provided me with both an insider and outsider
perspective into the academic endeavors of deaf college students. My position within the
deaf community as an interpreter and my position as an academician in a hearing
institution allowed me to critically observe and interpret the phenomena of this study.

A limitation to this study is that it is cross-cultural. As a hearing woman I come
from a dominant culture. There is always risk associated when a member of a dominant
culture seeks to give voice to members of a marginalized culture. However, I sought to
minimize this limitation through self-awareness, conducting interviews in the
participants’ language of choice and by encouraging the participants of this study to be
active participants and to review their transcripts. Doing so also aligned with Habermas’s
discourse ethics that seeks to create mutual understanding and validity through dialogue
in which all participants experience equal recognition of voice (Meisenbach, 2006).
Therefore, through discourse, “participants make a judgment about whether the claim and
its consequences are acceptable to all affected and are, therefore, ethical” (Meisenbach,
Some scholars may view the number of participants as a limitation to this study. However, a case study is designed for small numbers. Having only four participants in this study allowed for rich, in-depth descriptions of the participants experiences to emerge. Thus, the small number is a strength, and not a weakness.

Next, I sought to balance the power between the participants and myself through such actions as communicating in ASL throughout the interview process. However, the perception of power and its influence on the participant’s response to interview questions was uncontrollable. As mentioned previously in this study, I knew three-fourths of my participants prior to their participation as their interpreter, co-worker, teacher, or friend. Thus, the participants may have answered questions, as they perceived I wanted them to answer.

Finally, as both undergraduate and graduate students were participants in this study, they may have different levels of experiences. For example, both of the graduate students attended deaf universities for the undergraduate degrees. This experience may have shaped their perceptions of the academic setting differently than the undergraduate students who only experienced hearing institutions of higher education.

Four predominant models of disability: the moral, medical, social, and biopsychosocial model were reviewed as part of an examination of the literature to understand how the models shape individual perceptions of disability. In addition, an examination of a historical overview of deaf education and its influence on current educational practices was undertaken. Finally, critical and social constructionism, which are the theoretical underpinnings of this study, were examined.
Criterion and snowball sampling was used in this study. All of the participants were university students in the U.S. Midwest and used the services of an interpreter in the academic setting. Snowball sampling was used to recruit Mona into the study. She was recommended for participation in the study by another participant.

There were three different settings used in this study. Both of the undergraduate students attended the same regional campus of a larger university that had a study population of approximately 2,000 students. One graduate student attended a university with over 64,000 students and the other graduate student attended a university with over 19,700 students. All settings were located with the U.S. Midwest.

The procedure guided the study and provided a systematized means of collecting and analyzing the data. I began contacting potential participants for this study in December of 2009. The in-depth interviews occurred between January 2010 and March 2010, and all interviews were video recorded. The interviews were conducted in the participants’ language of choice. Three of the four participants chose to communicate via ASL, while one of the participants communicated through a combination of both ASL and CASE. The interviews were then interpreted or transliterated from ASL or CASE into English and then transcribed. An outside interpreter was consulted to validate accuracy of the interpretation. Transcripts were checked with participants for clarity. Data were then coded and major themes extracted after which the theoretical framework and the literature review were used to analyze the findings.
Summary of the Data

Research Question 1

The first research question in this study, sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of deaf college students attending hearing institutions of higher education. Throughout the process of collecting data, an overarching theme emerged, that of communication, which was fundamental to the integration and success of the participants. Communication encompassed all areas of interaction between the deaf student and the academic environment, including interactions with professors, peers, university staff members, and interpreters (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1: Research Question 1 and Emerging Themes*
Results were consistent with previous research indicating that communication was a necessary component of academic success within any culture (Blachman, 1984; Catts, 1993; Fey et al., 1995, Lewis & Freebairn, 1992). The formation of relationships within the academic environment was necessary to the social adjustment and belonging (Stinson & Walter, 1997) of the participants. While all of the relationships between the deaf students and all academic constituents were important, the relationship formation between the student and his/her sign language interpreter was vital in that it connected the participants to all other facets of their academic lives.

Research Question 2

Unfortunately, as stated earlier in this study, only one-fourth of all deaf college students who enter hearing institutions will successfully navigate their way to completion. Thus, the second research question in this study explored the personal understandings and characteristics, as well as academic accommodations, which have enabled four deaf students to succeed where others have not. Success for the participants in this study was linked to the development of trust between students and interpreters, self-advocating behaviors, having a voice in the academic decision-making process, and individual and academic attitude (see Figure 2).
One key component that emerged from this study was the interconnected relationship of trust between the deaf student and his/her interpreter necessary for the success of participants in this study. The bi-lingual bi-cultural, the deaf professional, designated interpreter, and the ally model of interpreting, which have been previously discussed, all have pertinent characteristics that positively impact the interaction between an interpreter and a deaf student. However, they do not explicitly incorporate components drawn from the study participants that accounted for their success in academia. Thus, a new working model might be helpful in representing this phenomenon.
Figure 3: Educational Interpreting: A Model of Trust
Obviously, the participants, interpreter, and deaf student are the key characters in this model. However, there are several components in the model that link the characters within the process. The first of which is the context. The context refers to the environment in which the interpreter and the student are interacting. The environment will influence all other components of communication. As such, it encircles the process. For example, is the course an undergraduate or graduate course? Is the course ceramics or is it microbiology? The culture of the university is also important. As discussed in the literature review, is the university: deaf-ready, deaf-aware, deaf-receptive or deaf-oblivious (Campbell et al., 2008)? All of these factors, as well as other potential contextual factors, influence the overall process.

Second, mutual trust must exist between the interpreter and the student. Effective trust is reciprocal, thus the arrows point toward the interpreter and the student. This trust is influenced by several key factors. Included are ability, integrity, and benevolence derived from the Mayer et al. (1995) model of organizational trust. The quality of the interpreter is related to ability, as such, it is located closest to the interpreter. An interpreter’s ability is influenced by such things as years of experience, education, and certification, which relates to ADA’s definition of qualified in that a qualified interpreter can effectively and accurately render a message both receptively and expressively (ADA, 28 C.F.R. § 36.104). ADA also states that interpreters must possess necessary specialized vocabulary for a given interpreting environment. This not only speaks to ability, but also to the third component of the educational interpreting trust model, the interpreter’s level of education. The interpreter’s level of education has been discussed within previous
research (Napier, 2002; Napier & Barker, 2004) as well as by the participants of this study. Thus, within the model, level of education, which relates to ability, is placed closest to the interpreter. The third component, English, is related to ability and trust. Participants of this study trusted interpreters who were able to use appropriate voice and sign register to match their level of education. This component is placed toward the bottom, because research also shows that English can influence a deaf student’s success within academia (Convertino et al., 2009). This ability to understand complex English terminology influences the interaction between the interpreter and the deaf student.

Integrity is another element in the Mayer et al. (1995) model of organizational trust. Within the educational interpreting model of trust, integrity is represented by the personality of both the interpreter and the deaf student. As a result, the fourth element of the educational interpreting model of trust is personality. An interpreter that has integrity, like ability, also matches ADA’s definition/meaning of quality in that qualified interpreters are impartial (ADA, 28 C.F.R. § 36.104). This means they convey the message of the deaf and hearing consumers in such a manner that they remain in an objective position. In addition, an interpreter with integrity abides by the laws of our nation; as well as the tenets set forth by the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct (http://rid.org/ethics/code/index.cfmrid).

An interpreter’s personality in general also influences the deaf student’s perception of trust as was demonstrated within this study. When students perceived similar personality characteristics in their interpreter, they were more willing to trust him/her. As an interpreter myself, I would argue that this goes both ways. Interpreters
must also trust the deaf student. For this reason, within the working model above, personality is placed at the top, slightly toward the interpreter, but still in a central position indicating it is mutual. Further research should examine the impact of the deaf student’s personality on the interpreter and the impact within the model. In addition, interpreters’ personalities will influence whether or not they are perceived to be benevolent, which is the final component of the organizational trust model (Mayer et al., 1995). The participants in this study demonstrated that when interpreters are willing to go above and beyond the “egocentric profit motive” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 718), and show up to interpret before and after class, then they were more willing invest their trust in the interpreter because they believed the interpreter to be acting in a benevolent manner.

The fifth element of the educational interpreting model of trust is eye contact. Consistent with research, for the participants of this study, the lack of trust initiated increased monitoring behaviors (Ferrin et al., 2007). When the deaf students trusted their interpreter to appropriately and accurately voice their signed comments to the hearing peers, faculty, and staff members in their university, they decreased their eye contact with the interpreter and engaged in increased eye contact with hearing constituents. Thus, this element is situated within the model closest to the deaf student.

Another element of the model is time. Trust is fostered as relationships develop. The more time a deaf student and his/her interpreter work together, the more their distinct signing style will be understood and anticipated, the more likely they are to know each other’s personalities, and the more likely they are to know content specific vocabulary and sign choices. Finally, the model incorporates additional factors that influence the
trust process between the deaf student and his/her interpreter. These factors could be
general or relationship specific.

All of the components related to trust development are inter-related and cannot be
separated from the process as a whole. Trust is not developed based on one individual
component, but through an overlapping, interconnectedness of all the elements. Within
this process, relationships develop. However, this must be balanced so that the interpreter
maintains his/her role as a professional interpreter.

The final aspect of the model is motivation. As demonstrated in this study,
motivation is a crucial element in the success of deaf college students. Notice however,
that within the educational interpreting model of interpreting, that motivation is bi-
influential as is demonstrated by the arrows. The interpreter’s motivation influences the
deaf student and the motivation of the deaf student influences the interpreter. For
example, a motivated interpreter will learn content-specific vocabulary and will study
information pertinent to the course he/she is interpreting. They will also engage in such
behaviors as showing up early and staying after class to interpret when necessary for the
deaf student to convey information to their peers or professors. The deaf student’s
motivation is also critical. Motivated students self-advocate when necessary. They
request a new interpreter when necessary, they know and understand their rights, and
they inform appropriate channels when their needs are not being adequately satisfied. In
addition, per the students in this study, a motivated student has the drive to excel. When
all of these conditions align, when there is mutual trust between the deaf student and
his/her interpreter, then the likelihood of success increases.
Appreciative Inquiry and Implications of the Study

As stated at the beginning of this study, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) seeks positive strategies for implementing change instead of dwelling on a deficiency model, which focuses on what is lacking (Cooperrider, 2001). An AI stance allowed the voices of the participants to emerge in seeking positive strategies they have utilized in navigating their academic journey. However, while an AI stance situated this study in a constructive framework, it also illuminated deficiencies, as they stand out in stark contrast to that which is positive.

Within this study, three of the four participants reported positive associations with their universities. They discussed such things as faculty and staff that were knowledgeable and/or open-minded regarding deafness and/or could communicate using ASL, deaf professors, and hearing peers taking ASL courses as positive factors. This description of their universities lead the researcher to believe that these institutions were “deaf-ready”, in that accommodations for students have been formally recognized and deaf faculty are respected role models (Campbell et al., 2008). On the other hand, one of the participant’s overall opinion of her university and the services she received were negative. Mona described her university and the services she received as “awful.” However, Mona did report positive interactions with two of her professors. Thus, her university could be described on a continuum between “deaf-receptive” and “deaf-oblivious.” While the faculty there had little to no experience at her university working with deaf students, some of them were open-minded regarding deafness. However, the overall climate of her university appeared to be “deaf-oblivious,” in that the faculty and
her peers were not aware of deafness professionally or socially, which included disability services (Campbell et al., 2008).

**Theoretical Implications of the Study**

Critical theory acknowledges that the historical power structure from which educational decisions are determined needs to be examined in order to recognize areas in which systems of power are maintained that oppress. This study revealed that within hearing institutions of higher education, deaf students do not have equitable access to communication; however, several of the institutions in this study were working toward improving access by providing such accommodations as interpreting for extracurricular activities and offering American Sign Language courses. Nevertheless, as previously discussed, students are not always provided with qualified interpreters. This limits their ability to communicate effectively within all aspects of the academic realm. In addition, interpreters do not always interpret information that is out of the restricted time period for which they are hired, or they may feel they are hired to only interpret what the teacher is saying and not additional classroom interaction. Without contact and socialization with their instructors and peers both inside and outside of the classroom, deaf students may not feel as if they are active participants in the class.

When institutions of higher education do not actively involve deaf students in the decision making process, they in essence maintain a hegemonic paradigm by assuming the needs, wants, and desires of the marginalized students. Policy makers within academia should begin a discussion with current students receiving assistance from
students with disabilities in order to ensure that student voices are adequately represented in breaking down the social and academic barriers.

In addition, deaf students in this study had limited access to educational aids available to hearing students. This is also representative of a hegemonic system. In addition, it fits within the notion of dysconscious audism in that students recognized they were not given equal access to services, but they accepted this limitation as the norm. For example, Mona discussed difficulty in finding a practicum placement for her graduate degree that works with and is accessible to individuals who are deaf. To Mona, this hurdle seemed insurmountable, as she was not receiving assistance from her university. Conversely, hearing students automatically assume that this type of assistance will be provided. Coercive consent within critical theory affirms that marginalized groups are often lured into activities that perpetuate their own oppression (Deetz, 2005). In essence, Mona’s example is hegemony at play.

Another example of dysconscious audism and coercive consent is the access deaf students had to writing centers. The writing centers for hearing students did not seem to understand the difficulties faced by deaf writers nor would the universities provide interpreters for these services even though section II of ADA mandates that universities make these services accessible. Students did not question the university’s authority to deny them equal access to services even though they had backing of federal law. This demonstrates the power a hegemonic structure can wield in determining who has the power to name. In the examples provided, the universities maintained the power to name accessibility, and in doing so, marginalized the students.
Finally, critical theory significantly influenced the consciousness of the researcher. Communicative action within critical theory calls for a deconstruction of hegemonic actions through discourse in which the voices of those who are marginalized are equal participants in the process. As such, within this study, all interviews and discussions were conducted utilizing the deaf participant’s language of choice, which in most circumstances meant ASL. In addition, consistent with a phenomenological case study, during the data analysis and writing phase of this research, I continually went back to the participants to clarify information from the transcripts or discuss their experiences in further detail.

Social constructivist notions were also evident within this study. At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked if they had a “disability.” This question led to a discussion regarding whether or not they viewed deafness as a disability. Students overwhelmingly felt that the hearing world made deafness a disability through social and governmental policies. For example, Mona stated:

When I went to Gallaudet, I did not feel that deafness was a disability. However, when I am out in the hearing world I do. Society makes deafness, not so much a disability, but a handicap. They handicap us. We need interpreting services to be successful. If the government said deafness was not a disability then they would refuse to provide services. Therefore, I cannot say that I do not have a disability, because I know it is not true.

This speaks to the notion of societal normalcy in a hearing dominated world. The title of this dissertation begs the question, “Is it still a hearing world?” Findings from this
study would indicate that though we have made strides toward improving access to mainstreamed institutions of higher education for deaf students, we still have a long way to go. Deafness is still defined based on a notion of normalcy, and though the students in this study viewed their deafness as difference, they recognized that society still viewed deafness as a disability. Lane (2002) in an article discussing deafness and its socially constructed meaning stated,

Unless Deaf people challenge the culturally determined meanings of deaf and disability with at least as much vigor as the technologies of normalization seek to institutionalize those meanings, the day will continue to recede in which Deaf children and adults live the fullest lives and make the fullest contribution to our diverse society. (p. 376)

**Major Findings**

**Disability Services**

Budgetary constraints may encourage an institution to contract with one agency or individual over another for interpreting services. From my experience as an interpreter, deaf individuals often report that they would prefer an interpreter that is a good match to their personality, has a good attitude and is skilled rather than having an interpreter that is highly skilled, but has a poor attitude. This may help alleviate the problem associated with the cost of interpreting. Regardless, deaf students should be active participants in the selection of and/or the continued use of an interpreter. Universities should establish appropriate guidelines for hiring sign language interpreters. The website for the Registry Interpreters for the Deaf would be beneficial in determining these guidelines. When
possible, deaf students should be consulted regarding their preferences and their preferences should be given priority. At a minimum, disability services should maintain an open line of communication with deaf students to ensure they are satisfied with the interpreting services they are receiving. As Mona stated, “Access to quality interpreting really influences how good my education is and how much I can participate in class”. This is a key determinant in the success of deaf college students within mainstreamed universities.

**Academic Faculty**

Deaf students perceived teacher immediacy in the same manner as hearing students. The students in this study reported enjoying classes in which the professor was perceived as open and approachable. In addition, deaf students appreciated when professors were aware of their needs without drawing unnecessary attention to their deafness. Deaf students reported positive experiences when professors were cognizant to such things as whether or not a documentary was captioned, making sure there was adequate lighting on the interpreter when the lights of the classroom were turned off, and providing classroom notes ahead of time. They also appreciated when professors saw them as individuals, with individual strengths and weaknesses and did not assume that all deaf students were the same.

**Academic Staff**

Concerning interactions with academic staff, deaf students in this study reported that they tended to find one person who made them feel comfortable. This individual was neither proficient in sign language, nor did students report the individual had prior
knowledge of deafness. They were however patient, open-minded and willing to communicate via a variety of modes including interpreting, paper pencil, or email. In essence, they were caring. This finding supports Graham-Smith and Lafayette’s (2004) study that demonstrated caring is a necessary characteristic for staff members of disability services to possess when working with people with disabilities. Staff members that positively impacted the participants of this study remembered the deaf student’s name and his/her situation, this made the participants feel a part of the university at large. The one-person familiarity was important in making students feel recognized.

**Interpreters**

Interpreters must be cognizant of the impact they have on whether or not a deaf student who utilizes interpreter services will be successful in mainstreamed academia. Quality and personality were two key influences on this success. Interpreters should work toward continuing education and not accept assignments in which they are educationally unqualified to interpret, which is mandated in the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct. They must recognize there is power in providing voice to deaf students. This power must be taken with conscientiousness. Their register must match the level of education in which the deaf student is seeking. For graduate students this becomes even more crucial as the register and understanding of appropriate dialogue within this setting has academic, social, and political ramifications for the deaf student.

Personality of the interpreter is another factor that influences the success of a deaf student in academia. The willingness of an interpreter to show up early and stay late provides deaf students with access to their hearing peers and access to both academic and
social information discussed outside the confines of the classroom. When students are provided with this information, they are more apt to feel a part of the academic community at large, which increases the likelihood of their success. In addition, students reported positive experiences when interpreters indexed a classmate when he/she was speaking and provided his/her name. This allowed them to get to know their peers on a more intimate level. They also appreciated when interpreters signed side discussions between hearing students that other hearing students could overhear, so they were able to join in the discussion. Finally, interpreters should be aware of the time they have reserved for the deaf student. The students in this study reported positive experiences when interpreters were focused on their responsibilities in the classroom. Conversely, they reported negative experiences when interpreters were distracted and engaging in such behavior as constantly checking their cell phones and texting.

**Future Research**

This study demonstrated that trust is an important element in the success of deaf college students when they utilize the services of a sign language interpreter. Students remarked that skill was an important aspect, but they also noted personality factors and educational experience as key indicators. Future research should delve deeper into how this trust develops and what additional factors, such as physical appearance and social skills lead to the perception of trust. In addition, the area of trust development may be an essential area of study for deaf graduate students. Graduate school is a period of learning not only in the classroom, but the social and political norms inherent in academia.
Next, this study demonstrated that trust is an important aspect in the relationship between deaf students and their interpreters. Future research should examine the experiences and perceptions of educational interpreters in this process.

Additionally, if this study was to be replicated using a deficiency model instead of Appreciative Inquiry, would the findings be similar?

Another area stated previously where future research is warranted is how deaf students are perceived when they do not make eye contact with their professors and peers due to a lack of trust in their interpreter.

The collectivistic nature of deaf culture influenced students in this study. Support services took on a broader meaning to encompass peers that could sign as well as friends outside of the academic environment. Future research as to how this phenomenon influences the success of deaf college student within hearing institutions is necessary.

On a broader scale, future research should continue to explore the experiences of deaf college students successfully navigating their mainstreamed experiences in order to find the means to improve academic retention. Are the experiences of the four individuals from this study indicative of the experiences of a broader range of deaf students? Would the findings of the study differ if the experiences were limited to only undergraduate or graduate deaf students?

**Suggestions for Policy**

Disability services within universities must begin a dialogue with students who utilize their services. Clear guidelines should be established regarding how services, such as interpreting, will be evaluated. In addition, it would be beneficial if the university had
a handbook with their own policies and procedures, an explanation of the laws that affect accessibility, and contact information for incoming students so that they are aware of their rights. Students with disabilities must have a voice in determining their own needs, and their voice must be given priority. Universities must work to ensure they are in compliance with the laws regarding accommodations and accessibility. Doing so will aid in fostering an open relationship between the university and the student, which will promote their overall success.

**Conclusion**

Deaf students attending hearing schools in their pursuit of higher education experience academic and social barriers. This study examined the lived experiences of four deaf college students successfully traversing the course of academia in order to identify potential solutions to these obstacles. Through an Appreciative Inquiry approach, this phenomenological case study revealed that the quality of interpreting, trust between the interpreter and the deaf student, agency, motivation and self-assertive characteristics were necessary in overcoming barriers both academically and socially.

In this study, the quality of the interpreter was not defined by national certification, but by individual preference. This in part could be because national certification is not a requirement in the area in which this study resided. Trust development was an important element in this study. When students utilized the services of an interpreter to bridge the communication barrier between themselves and the hearing constituents at their university, then trust between the deaf student and the interpreter was crucial in their success. In addition, deaf students must be highly motivated and self-
assertive in order to negotiate the barriers that occur within academia as a result of hegemonic systems.

Through a dialogic approach, this study sought to give voice to deaf students in the hope that their experiences might help in the retention of future students. The study is the beginning of a conversation that must continue to occur so that deaf students within hearing institutions experience full access to academia.

Imagine… You are sitting in a public speaking course at your university. You are nervous, it is after all public speaking. But you notice that the other students in the class are fidgeting in anticipation too. Across the room, a student waves to you. Remembering that you met her the other night at the diversity symposium and that she was learning ASL, you strike up a conversation in sign. She stumbles a little over the vocabulary, but that is expected. You are so relieved that you know someone and you don’t have to suffer through speeches alone. Seated in front of the classroom are two highly qualified interpreters. You have worked with them for the past year, so you trust them completely. Every quarter the interpreting coordinator meets with you to evaluate how you are feeling about the services you are provided… so far, so good. Out of the corner of your eye, you notice the door sweep open. The professor hustles in while balancing a large stake of papers and a diet Coke. The classroom instantly becomes silent. As the teacher introduces herself, the interpreter raises his hands to sign, but you met the professor last week during your meeting about the accommodations a speech class will entail. You half listen to the teacher’s prattle as you scan the room… you make eye contact with a student you have never met before, she smiles and waves. Making a mental note to talk with her during the
break, you wave back. This is going to be a great semester. You do not even worry that you are the only deaf student in the class; you are a part of a whole. It feels good to belong.
REFERENCES


Covey, H. C. (2005). Western Christianity's two historical treatments of people with disabilities or mental illness. *The Social Science Journals, 42*(1), 107-114.


APPENDIX A: PERMISSION FOR USE OF TABLE 1

Hi Becky,

By all means. The footnote on the website does say that most of the text is copyright free as the Congress proceedings, which was written and published by A Kinnsey, is already copyright free anyway (as books become copyright free 70 years after the authors' death). However, as you have already said, do credit milan1880.com.

Good luck with your dissertation.

Regards,

Nick

On 14 Mar 2011, at 20:11, Brooks, Becky wrote:

Hi Nick,

My name is Becky Brooks. I am a PhD student at Ohio University. I would like your permission to use part of your Table showing the resolutions of the Milan Congress in my dissertation. I will give you full credit for the work both in the Table and in my references.

Thank you for your consideration,

Becky

Nick Sturley Website
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol: Semi-Structured Interview

Background Information:

1. What is your name?

2. What is your ethnicity?

3. Tell me about the situation leading to your deafness?

4. Tell me about your experience living as a deaf man/woman?

5. Who else in your family is deaf?

6. When did you learn to sign?

7. Where did you attend school before college?

8. Do you consider yourself to be actively involved in the Deaf community? Why or why not?

9. Do you experience other disabilities? Is so, please explain.

Research Question 1: What are the experiences and perceptions of deaf college students in predominately hearing institutions of higher education?

1. Are you a graduate or undergraduate student?

2. Where are you currently attending college?

3. What is your major?

4. How did you determine your major?

5. What influenced your decision to attend your college/university?

6. How long have you been with your current university/college?

7. What type of accommodations do you utilize in the classroom?
a. How has utilizing the services of an interpreter in the classroom impacted your learning?

b. How has utilizing the services of an interpreter in the classroom impacted your socialization?

8. To date, what has been your favorite class in college?
   a. What made the experience constructive?
   b. What type of support did you receive in this particular class?

9. To date, who has been your favorite teacher in college?
   a. Was the teacher hearing or deaf?
      i. How did you communicate with the teacher?
   b. What made the experience positive?

10. Tell me about your college experience as a deaf student attending a predominantly hearing institution?
    a. What experiences, both positive and negative, have you encountered? If applicable, how have you negotiated negative experiences?
    b. Are there positive or negative experiences that exist now which were not present when you started as a student at your university? Please explain.

11. What do you feel are the best practices that have assisted you in coping with your academic and social lives?

12. Have you ever attended another university? If so, where? How was your previous experience similar or different to your current university?
Research Question 2: What modifications, adjustments, and/or implementations do deaf students currently attending hearing institutions of higher education perceive could potentially aid in their success?

1. What strategies have you utilized in the classroom which have aided in your success in academia?

2. Tell me about your experience working with faculty to accommodate your special needs for their classes?

3. What strategies have you utilized in the negotiation of communication between you and your hearing peers in the classroom?

4. What strategies have you utilized in the negotiation of communication between you and your hearing peers in social situations outside of the classroom?

5. What strategies have you utilized in the negotiation of communication between you and the hearing faculty/staff at your university?

6. How have support services, such as tutoring, interpreting, real-time captioning and note taking enhances your experiences?

7. Is there anything you would want to add for this research that I have not asked?
Title of Study: Is it Still a Hearing World? A Phenomenological Case Study of Deaf College Students’ Experiences of Academia

Introduction: Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that the following explanation of the proposed procedures be read and understood. It describes the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the study. It also describes the right to withdraw from the study at any time. It is important to understand that no guarantee or assurance can be made as to the results of the study. Please note that you must be 18 years of age or older in order to participate in this study.

Purpose: This purpose of this study is to gain understanding of what it is like for deaf college students attending predominantly hearing institutions of higher education. This understanding will add to the body of knowledge in the field of higher education as well as improve our understanding of the needs of deaf college students. You will be one of four participants taking part in this study.

Duration: Your participation in this study will last for the length of time it takes to conduct two interviews. Each interview may take approximately one to two hours. The interviews will be collaboratively scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for you.

Procedures: During this study the following procedure will take place:

- You will be asked to participate in two interviews that will take place in a mutually agreed upon place.
- The two interviews will be video-taped by Ms. Brooks.
- The interviews will be interpreted/translated from their signed format and transcribed into English. A qualified sign language interpreter may be employed to aid in the interpreting/translate portion of the interviews. This individual will be required to sign a confidentiality statement. In addition, he/she is bound by the NAD-RID Professional Code of Conduct.
- Your name or any other identifying material will not appear on the tapes or transcripts. You will be given a pseudo name to ensure anonymity.
- If desired, you will be given the opportunity to review the final transcribed portion of the interview.
• The information you provide in the interviews will be combined with the information from other participants to come up with one description of what it is like for deaf college students attending predominantly hearing institutions of higher education. Some quotes will be cited directly, but when this occurs, the statements will be anonymous, with no personally identifying information given.

**Exclusion:** You will not be able to participate in this study if any of the following apply to you: If you are deaf, but do not use the services of an interpreter in the academic environment.

**Risks/Discomforts:**
The study is not expected to involve any risks or discomforts. However, some people may find talking about certain experiences discomforting. The safeguards to avoid these discomforts or risks are that Ms. Brooks has been an interpreter and educator for over fifteen years and would be able to talk with you if you became upset.

**Benefits:** You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study, but your participation may help educators better understand what it is like for deaf students to attend colleges and universities in which the majority of students are hearing. You may also find it personally helpful to talk about these experiences.

**Confidentiality:** Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. Agents of the Ohio University will be allowed to inspect sections of the research records related to the study, but neither your name nor any personally identifying information will be present. The findings from the study will be presented as a written doctoral dissertation with the possibility of publication or presentation at conferences. Your identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law, such as mandatory reporting of elder abuse, or immediate danger to yourself or others. Some of the things you say will be directly quoted in the study, but always in an anonymous manner. Neither your name nor any other personal identifiers will be associated with what you say. Upon completion of the study the videotapes will be destroyed. Transcripts, without any personally identifying information, will be kept in a secure location and not accessed by anyone other than the researcher.

**Payment to Participants:** There are no incentives or payment for participating in this study.

**Right to Refuse of Withdraw:** Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or may discontinue participation AT ANY TIME, without penalty or loss of benefits to which you or your parent are otherwise entitled. The investigator has the right to withdraw you from the study AT ANY TIME. Your withdrawal from the study may be based on reasons related solely to you (for example, being unavailable for interviews) or because the entire study has been terminated.
Offer to Answer Questions: If you have any other questions about this study, you may call or text Becky Brooks at 740-243-3161, Dr. Francis Godwyll at 740-593-4484, or Dr. Jo Ellen Sherow at 740-597-1267. As Director of Research Compliance of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Sherow would also be able to answer any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant.

Legal Rights: Nothing in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE. I VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM FOR MY INFORMATION.

_____________________________________________  _________________________
Participant Signature                                      Date

_____________________________________________  _________________________
Signature and Title of Person Obtaining Consent             Date

_____________________________________________  _________________________
Witness to the Signature
t(Used only when the content is interpreted to participant)