“SOME PEOPLE SIGN, SOME PEOPLE SPEAK”:

d/DEAF KIDS TALK ABOUT DEAF EDUCATION

by

JENNIFER SCARBORO HENSLEY

(Under the Direction of Joseph Tobin)

ABSTRACT

This is a study of d/Deaf children's perspectives on enculturation into Deaf culture and Deafhood through their experiences in Deaf schools. The study uses videotaped scenes shot in a preschool classroom in a signing school for the deaf as cues for focus group interviews with Deaf elementary school students. The scenes in the video were filmed for a larger study of Deaf Kindergartens in Three Countries: The United States, France, and Japan (Tobin et al, 2009). The larger study focuses on the perspectives of d/Deaf teachers on Deaf Early Childhood Education. My study focuses on d/Deaf children's perspectives of their past and current educational experiences and on the role they see their school experiences playing in their identity formation as a d/Deaf person.

INDEX WORDS: Deaf, Early Childhood Education, Identity, Social Justice
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DEDICATION

To my parents - teaching me their love of Deaf Education, the good and the not so good. I begin this dedication like any good member of my community would...from the beginning.

As a young hearing child, I grew up in-between my parent’s Deaf World and everyone else. Growing up, I chose to claim my position in-between as my own. My world was/is made of hands, eyes, and mouths. In my home we talked and signed and looked like everyone else in our world. Outside of our world, we were different. We had a secret, quiet way – a way that others didn’t quite “get.”

Mom and dad attended the North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton, North Carolina - but “grew up” in Raleigh, several hours away. Every year we would head out of town to Homecoming. All of us, related or not, went. These annual trips and our weekly visits to the local Deaf club, and day-to-day interactions with my parent’s friends and family allowed me to revel in the most revered of Deaf cultural traditions - storytelling. I saw tales of a history that is rooted deep in the lives of many of the Deaf children and adults in my life. My parent’s stories remain with me today as I travel through life creating my own story. Within their stories I saw a side of Deaf Education that I never could have known as a hearing person; a side that instilled a sense of community and of family.

It was school where my parents created their sense of self, grew up together, and
learned together. Bob and Kaye shared their sacred affinity for their peers and school with me, and it has given me a different lens to view identity formation, and compassion for others beyond blood ties and audiograms.

Their combined stories and my personal experiences at various schools for the deaf led me to where I am today. Seeking to learn more, and find a way to give back to the community in which I grew up; I will forever be thankful for my place in-between, to experience the world full of hands, eyes, and mouths. MOTHER FATHER, THANK YOU.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I began this journey many years ago I did not imagine this outcome - I am forever grateful for my advisor Joe Tobin for asking me to step outside of my interpreter role and share my perspective. You have been the best teacher and advisor. I am also truly thankful for my committee: Kyunghwa Lee, Janna Dresden, and Jenny Singleton. You are amazingly brilliant women scholars that I want to be like - when I grow up. Additionally, special recognition is given to Thomas “Tommy” Horejes; I am fortunate to know you as a colleague, a thoughtful mentor, and old friend.

To the *Deaf Kindergartens in Three Countries* research team - The Joe’s (Tobin and Valente), Tommy Horejes, Akiko Hayashi, Patrick Graham, Christi Batamula, and Adeline Lebeaux - Our work collectively and individually will change how the world views Deaf ECE…how fantastic it is to take part in this global dialogue. I would be remiss if I did not thank my senpai, Akiko Hayashi, specifically. Your curiosity and constant inquiry are inspirational; I am your grateful kōhai.

A special thanks is needed for my classmates and writing colleagues: Diana Blom, Becky Smith, Michael Cassidy, Melissa Land, and PJ. You are amazing teachers that gave me added reasons to love what I am doing and my time in Athens.

My never-ending gratitude goes to Matt, Sutton Jones and June “Bug” Hensley, and my Coda sisters: Abby Coyer, Summer Chappell, and Deanna Gagne - thank you for your patience, and your ongoing roaring and rallying while I engaged in this live
changing journey; despite my crazy ambitions, I would not have made it this far without your unwavering supports.

Finally, I must recognize the children in this study - I am awed by their trust and candor. It is through my work with them and their invaluable views that I am able to continually learn.
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PART ONE: RESEARCH CONTEXT AND STUDY DESIGN

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Context of the Study

Recently the air around d/Deaf people and Deaf Education has been politically charged. Rallies, both actual and virtual, are occurring across America. One focal point of resistance to the hegemonic, audist norm can be found in Washington, DC, home of the nation’s only liberal arts university for d/Deaf students, Gallaudet University. Elsewhere, there are less noticed acts that stand to challenge and question the way America educates it's d/Deaf youth; these acts have gone virtual, on Facebook, Twitter, and other networks. d/Deaf high school students can be seen (online) actively protesting, reporting detailed accounts to "friends" and "followers" of their experiences and demands in and of Deaf Education. In

Still Image 1: Student protester (Photo by: Chris Summitt)
both Utah and Arizona, students were recently seen online and outside, expressing their frustrations regarding the state Deaf Schools' hearing administrators as well as the school board decisions and recent actions.

Social media releases of informal investigative reports on websites, like www.asdbreports.com are providing exposé coverage of covert audist practices aiming to sway unsuspecting hearing parents away from various d/Deaf communities, and d/Deaf cultural practices. Parents of d/Deaf children in Indiana are fighting the closing of the early intervention and outreach program of the state school for the d/Deaf. In May of 2013, CNN shared an online report that the Florida legislature is proposing a bill to allocate half a million dollars to towards auditory-oral grants, which results in "offer[ing] only one communication option . . . defy[ing] the idea of informed choice by parents of young d/Deaf and hard of hearing children by essentially limiting these parents to a single choice in order to qualify for these grants." Currently only a fraction of d/Deaf students in Florida attend the only two schools that qualify for these monies (Congdon). Just last week, panicked reports are coming out of Texas' capital where the local government is pondering selling "excess" land that is currently used by the state's school for the d/Deaf. It comes at no surprise that d/Deaf people question how they are (or aren't) considered by the mainstream, as they are pushed out (schools/programs closing or downsized), decided for (best practice in Deaf Education), acted upon (technical or surgical remediation), and labeled (disabled).

This dissertation tells the story of a study to seek perspectives of d/Deaf children about Deaf Early Childhood Education. In the early stages of planning, preparing for my
pilot study, I made a conscious decision to keep attending to the tense climate of the Deaf community, while maintaining my research focus.

A researcher walks into a school building - and finds a protest . . . With my laptop, camera, and tripod in tow I moved closer to the building. A tall steel fence enclosed the campus providing a physical, but perforated view of a newer building surrounded by multiple older structures. As I entered the empty lobby I was met by two receptionists working steadily, stopping briefly to check me in and to send notice for someone to escort me further inside the school. In the middle of campus, an older building sits recessed among the others; following closely, a staff person directed me as I came upon hundreds of people sitting and standing - mostly children. I was beginning to learn the political steam around the country had apparently seeped to this school's campus as well.

The high school students had begun to ask questions about what they had been seeing online through various social media outlets. For the next two hours I watched in awe as the children protested quietly. The younger children and adolescents silently watched the growing concern of their senior peers, many of the students were signing to each other and some individual students addressed larger groups of students. Shortly after I arrived, the younger d/Deaf students returned to their classrooms, the older students stayed to talk further, while actively engaged in a lesson in civics and civil rights. They asked about policy and procedure; they asked about their rights in the decisions made about their education - without them. In my aim to see what d/Deaf children thought about Deaf Early Childhood Education – I was learning they have a lot to say.
At the end of the school day, personnel sent students off to their assigned busses, and parents swiftly carried their children off in cars, including most of the children scheduled to participate in my study. There I was, at 3-o clock with one child, movie clips, and a camera. I asked if he still wanted to help me, and he said he was willing. So off we went to a conference room to begin my first focus group, with one 10-year old whom had just prior participated in his first sit-in.

Important Concepts and Terms

Throughout this dissertation I use terms that have multiple meanings depending who reads/defines them. Some of these terms are discussed here to provide the use as they occur in this text, at this time.

Audism – Scholar H-Dirksen Bauman, introduces the concept audism as it has evolved and developed since the 1980s when it was originally coined by Tom Humphries (unpublished work), and then later discussed further in The Mask of Benevolence, by Harlan Lane (1992). Since then many other scholars, including Lennard Davis and Genie Gertz, have added depth to the concept while considering how society shows preference to audible language, rather than visual (Bauman, 2004; Davis, 1995), and that d/Deaf individuals – as a result of normative expectations of ways of being – have internalized this expectation to hear is to be normal, as a “dysconscious audism” (Gertz, 2003, 2008). With the help of these leading scholars, I am approaching the concept as best I can understand, as an outsider to being d/Deaf, but within the community of d/Deaf people; audism is a societal behavior (both actively and passively) toward d/Deaf people as deficit to the normal state of human. In other
words, audism is to consider d/Deaf individuals to be of less value to those that can hear, thus a target of oppression and discrimination. This normative expectation to hear and speak is to be normal is grossly imbedded as a social construction – so much so, that d/Deaf individuals themselves have unknowingly assumed some of these constructions, and at times consider themselves deficit as a result.

*d/Deaf* – Throughout this dissertation the term *d/Deaf* causes a dilemma. Scholar, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, has done a delightful job troubling the concept *d/Deaf verses Deaf* in her book *Deaf Subjects: Between Identities and Places* (2009). She takes the reader through her personal journey to decide how she might represent the concept, while risking over simplification and using boiler plate definitions that so many use that the Big D (capital letter “D”) is used to identify that there is a cultural/linguistic component to the label, and that the small d (lower case letter “d”) is used to identify the audiological/medical aspect of the term. In a poignant example, Brueggemann explains the conflict, “deaf students can’t enroll in a state residential institution—long deemed the center of American Deaf culture and the sanctuary for American Sign Language (ASL) and thus a common place for Big ‘D’ cultural/linguistic Deafness—without offering an audiogram and first being able to claim their little ‘d’ deafness” (Brueggemann, 2009). The troubling matter is when to decide for an individual who or how that person chooses to identify as a Deaf person or a deaf person. In most instances, I have chosen to use the neutral term *d/Deaf* to avoid deciding how an individual may identify at this moment, as Brueggemann notes that the “twinning” of the d/D is perhaps safer. At other times, I have consciously decided to use “Deaf” instead of “d/Deaf” where a subject is named – Deaf Education, Deaf School,
etc.; and in contrast, I have chosen to use “deaf” in instances that the physical state of absence of sound is being used without considering community, cultural, or linguistic associations.

**Problem Statement and Research Questions**

Most research on d/Deaf children (Luckner & Stewart, 2003), Deaf Education (Burch et al., 2008; Weigle & Bauer, 2000), and the acquisition of d/Deaf identity (De Clerck, 2007; McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011; Nikolaraizi & Hadjikakou, 2006; Sutton-Spence, 2010) has been based on the retrospections of d/Deaf adults and parents and teachers of d/Deaf children. Deaf children are rarely asked for their thoughts about the decisions adults make for and about them (Sheridan, 1996). d/Deaf children are portrayed in the literature as an especially vulnerable population, leading to a stance by most researchers viewing them as needing our help, and lacking agency. As Malewski (2005) writes about research on children: "Our young need to be reconceptualized as intellectuals in their own right, with knowledge that claims to compete with adult understandings . . . not simply as children and youth lacking the outlooks that adults possess" (p. 218). What can we learn from the children we do not already know or that we mistakenly think we know that may be incorrect? I aim to investigate the perspectives of d/Deaf children regarding themselves, their schooling and society around them and how they form identities.

I asked d/Deaf children to talk about themselves and those around them, and what being d/Deaf means to them. The larger research questions I address in this study are of themes on identity formation, views of d/Deaf childhood, and perspectives on
Deaf Early Childhood Education and identity categorization. The primary research questions of this study are: (1) What do d/Deaf children think about Deaf preschool? (2) What do d/Deaf children think about the categories: d/Deaf and hearing and what it means to be d/Deaf? (3) What do d/Deaf children think about having hearing or d/Deaf teachers?

**Theoretical Framework**

Campbell (2008) uses Critical Race Theory to review the notion of privilege of certain races within populations as a parallel argument to show an "able" conscious society, and as a result, privileging status that "disabled" members of the community do not hold. People who are "able" may not recognize their privileged position, but those who are “disabled” are well aware of their lack of privilege. Deaf Crit (Gertz 2003; Ladd 2003) highlights the privilege conferred by hearing status and how this privilege works to oppress individuals and groups that fall on the lower end of decibel access. Our hearing-centric society has taught generations of d/Deaf children that they are the "other" simply because they do not hear as others do. Gertz (2003) introduced Deaf Studies as a means of "Deaf people seeing themselves in a different light" (p. 424); in this dissertation I apply Deaf Crit as a critical lens on a Deaf education.

The literature on d/Deaf children's understanding of being d/Deaf shows the importance of early earlier educational experiences (McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011; Nikolaraizi & Hadjikakou, 2006). Studies of d/Deaf adolescents show the continuing impact of schooling on d/Deaf identity as d/Deaf children move up through levels of the education system (Hardy, 2010; Kossewska, 2008).
However there is a hole in the literature, an absence of studies of d/Deaf (and/or hearing) children below the age of 12 years old about how they define the world in terms of sound, or absence of sound. Some scholars, such as Sheridan (1996), have addressed d/Deaf children's notion of what it means to be d/Deaf. We can use studies like hers as a starting point to open our eyes to a child's view of what d/Deafness means and how their d/Deaf identity and sense of self develops. d/Deaf people have been described as an ethnic group, as a linguistic minority and as culture based on being the "People of the Eye" (Lane, Pillard & Hedberg, 2011). This positioning of Deaf as an ethnic group introduces the question of how individuals become members of this group. A d/Deaf child must navigate the world and begin to construct her identity.

As a young child develops, there are multiple factors that influence, shape, and constitute one's identity. This dissertation will work towards an understanding of the development of identity within a cultural context, as "different cultures form different selves" (Walsh, 2002, p. 220). In an essay, "On Becoming American", Sonya Nieto (2002) problematizes over-simplifying the notion of identity: "Simplistic either/or formulations are commonplace in our society, and problems such as these generally get answered in terms of dichotomies" (p. 105). Jerome Bruner (1987) reminds us that this notion of identity and perception of self are changing and fluid, and should not be considered static or complete. Both Nieto and Bruner can encourage a jumping off point towards a multifaceted look at a d/Deaf child's identity.

Scholars who have studied d/Deaf identity in other contexts have employed various lenses and theories that show d/Deaf individuals transitioning in and out of stages and categories of identity development and recognition of self (Leigh, 2009;
McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011; Scheetz, 2004). Some of these theories provide stages people move through as they develop a d/Deaf identity (Carty, 1994; Glickman, 1996; Schowe, 1979). Others frame d/Deaf individuals within a disability setting, noting a range of identities d/Deaf people come to claim, along a continuum from being more identified with the d/Deaf or hearing worlds (Weinberg & Sterritt, 1986). Other scholars take a cultural view, centered on the notion of a d/Deaf-centered way of being (Ladd, 2003; Lane et al., 2011; Padden & Humphries, 2010). Many of these approaches share a dichotomous perspective, which people are either d/Deaf or not. I suggest that a conceptual framework that allows for fluidity and uncertainty is better suited to study the developing identity of a d/Deaf child. In her thorough review of d/Deaf identities, Irene Leigh (2009) explains, "Boundaries between identities are really about the nature of the interactions with people, and they can be either porous or rigid depending on the context" (p. 32). Following Leigh's sentiment on the social significance of identity, I look to find a framework that provides a spectrum and a flexible approach to identity analysis within a social and cultural context.

James Gee (2000) provides a useful way to look at identity as a layered concept that includes four traits that can be viewed as attributes of the self that become primary at different moments, depending on the socio-cultural context. These four types of identity are: natural traits ("we are what we are primarily because of our natures"); institutional definitions or labels ("we are what we are primarily because of the positions we occupy in society"); discursive ("we are what we are primarily because of our individual accomplishments as they are interactionally recognized by others"); and experiences or an affinity to others ("we are what we are because of the experiences we
have had within certain sorts of ‘affinity groups”') (p. 101). To illustrate the four types of identity, Gee applies them to a hypothetical child. In this example, a child is described as very physically active and has a habit of wandering mentally. Professionals recommend the child for testing and diagnose him as having ADHD; Gee describes this fixed behavior as part of the child's natural identity. Natural identity is tied to other aspects of identity and gains "force as identities through the work of institutions, discourse, and dialogue, or affinity groups, that is, the very forces that constitute our other perspectives on identity" (p. 102). In the example of the child diagnosed with ADHD, natural identity is strongly related to institutional identity, for without the diagnosis, the child would not get specific treatment for his identified disorder. This same child may have a varied type of discursive identity, depending on the context and with whom the child interacts. In this case, people may not be aware of the child's diagnosis or status and may treat the child accordingly. Gee explains, if the child has no official label, "the teacher may simply orient toward the child in terms of her or his ‘folk' or ‘everyday’ theories of attention, activity, ADHD, or other disorders." He continues, "The child may be recognized and oriented to as 'normal' or even proactively creative" if it were not for a documented diagnosis (p. 104). Finally, the child could seek out an affinity identity shared with others that (may or may not) also have similar natural and institutional identities. Gee warns that the affinity identity is not always self sought and could be encouraged as an institutional creation of an affinity group, like a school counselor assigning similarly "natured" children to meet in a support group.

Gee’s (2000) exercise with the "active child" (mentally and physically) can be useful in the exploration of identity of the d/Deaf child. I aim to analyze the varied
versions of the d/Deaf child's identity while emphasizing that these versions of identity are both emerging senses of self and "performances in society" (Gee, 2000, p. 99). This theory of identity can be useful in exploring a child's developing a d/Deaf sense of self. Gee sees the overlapping nature of the theory: "They are four strands that may very well all be present and woven together as a given person acts within a given context . . . we can still ask . . . which strand predominates and why" (p. 101).

Applying Gee's (2000) four types of identity, I will briefly explore what this could theoretically look like for a d/Deaf child. First, we can say that the d/Deaf child becomes d/Deaf naturally due to illness early in infancy or congenitally. In the United States there is a requirement for all infants to be tested shortly after birth as a result of the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) legislation. This screening is carried out by a medial institution which then secures a diagnosis of "d/Deaf" (applying a degree of loss: mild, moderate, severe or profound) early on (Joint Committee on Infant Hearing, 2007); there is documented proof of the d/Deafness via audiogram that is then used to justify certain interventions and supports. The child grows and begins to interact with others around her. Often others in the child's environment are not d/Deaf, and may not interact or dialogue with the child naturally. As a result, the child may view herself as others view and respond to her. The d/Deaf child may discover she has an affinity for other's who are also d/Deaf. These versions of the d/Deaf child's identity are either attributed to her, or accepted by her, or both. Gee's identity types are useful for analysis of d/Deaf children's identity development, as well as providing a framework for analyzing how, and of what a d/Deaf identity is comprised.
**Significance of the Study**

This study is situated in a historical collage of trends in Deaf Education. These trends are illustrated by a retelling of how one comes to study signing, Deaf Schools and the place of enculturation of young d/Deaf children. I see this study as following in the footsteps of scholars like Tobin (2000) and Corsaro (1985) who studied young children in ways where they directly engage and immerse themselves into the worlds’ of the children.

The story of signing based Deaf Schools as sites of enculturation and language acquisition in the United States is only a small part of a long, contentious history of educating d/Deaf children. There have been and continue to be many versions of d/Deaf education. Most d/Deaf children are mainstreamed into their local public schools where they might receive one-on-one support from a speech therapist, interpreter (using oral communications and/or sign language(s)), and/or a teacher for the d/Deaf, who they interact with in person, or remotely. Other d/Deaf children might commute to a Deaf School daily, weekly, or monthly; some of these students live in a residential dorm on campus. An even smaller group of d/Deaf children is homeschooled, perhaps using a combination of signing and speech to learn; schooling can range from minimal support to specialized program design (Baker, 2006; Krywko, 2012). The focus of this study is on signing Deaf Schools – both residential and day schools. In the history of Deaf Education, the role of the Deaf School has changed greatly, as well as society’s expectations for Deaf Education in general (Marschark, 2014).

The history of Deaf Education began with early times of d/Deaf people in society as members of value. This perspective changed as d/Deaf people were viewed as
abnormal, or deviant according to societal norms (Davis, 1997). Those that supported
the concept of Deaf as an ethnicity saw value in sign language and norms of a Deaf
culture, whereas those that viewed d/Deafness as a deficit aimed to "normalize Deaf
bodies" (Valente, 2011, p. 647). Educators of d/Deaf children have been continually
pulling at two ends of the language debate, focusing on the modalities of instruction,
speaking and/or signing.

Education is moving increasingly toward an inclusion/mainstreaming approach
for d/Deaf children. The historical debate between oral and manual education continues
today in the form of a debate between Deaf Schools offering a bilingual approach, with
American Sign Language (ASL) and English, and a special education model, providing
mainstream placements in local schools with majority hearing peers and teachers. The
shift towards full inclusion supports the notion of d/Deaf children's right to a typical
education, but it could also be seen as more limiting as the d/Deaf child is unable to
access his or her education directly or to interact with other d/Deaf people (Hawkins,
Harvey, & Cohen, 1994). Existing and new developments in technology will influence
the shifting approach to educating d/Deaf children, further supporting their presence in
mainstream settings, but not addressing the issue of standardization that poses a
never-ending challenge in educating d/Deaf children in public schools (Holcomb, 2010).

Dissertation Overview

The dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part provides three chapters of
introduction and context that locate this study in a certain time and place. Chapter 2,
*Deaf Early Childhood Education and Enculturation of a "Deaf" Child*, provides the frame
of the educational context of signing Deaf Schools and discusses theories of identity of 
d/Deaf children. Chapter 3, *Design and Methodology* presents the background of the 
methodological approach of the study.

Part Two presents findings tied to the research questions asked in this study, 
focusing on the child participants’ perspectives of teaching practices and classroom 
management, concepts *d/Deaf* and *hearing*, and their thoughts on Deaf Schools and 
mainstreaming. The last chapter presents implications of the study.
CHAPTER 2

DEAF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ENCULTURATION OF A “DEAF” CHILD

Historical Setting of Deaf Education

Deaf Schools in the United States date back to 1817, with the opening of the Connecticut Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb (now the American School for the Deaf), directed by Thomas Gallaudet alongside Laurent Clerc, the first d/Deaf teacher in America (Lang, 2011). Over the next several decades more schools for the d/Deaf opened across the United States, many with d/Deaf teachers and leaders: "By 1850 there were more than 15 residential schools serving d/Deaf pupils, with nearly 4 out of every 10 teachers in these schools d/Deaf themselves" (Lang, 2011, p. 12). As a result of these schools the Deaf community in the United States began to grow.

The oral versus signing debate. Thomas' son, Edward Miner Gallaudet, continued his father's passion of sign language as a means to educate d/Deaf children. At that time, he was in opposition to Alexander Graham Bell, a strong proponent for a deaf, eugenics movement - ridding humans of the problem of deafness. The two camps oralists and manualists, arose among the new presence of Deaf Education. These opposing camps came to a-head in 1880, with the Congress of Milan. At this gathering
of educators of the deaf there arose the proclamation: "the German oral method should be the official method used in schools of many nations" (Lang, 2011, p. 13).

Early in the twentieth century there were residential Deaf Schools in almost every state in America, including the District of Columbia (Miller, 1997). Stephen Nover (1995) notes, "historically, language policies within Deaf Education have been founded on auditory-based assumptions about ASL and English" (p. 109). The notion of oral education of d/Deaf children spread in the US. In her 1934 report on "The Status of the Preschool Deaf Child" Malinda Miller urges, "the training of congenitally deaf children should be begun at as early an age as possible to secure flexible speech and take advantage of the natural efforts of every child to produce speech" (1997, p. 54). As d/Deaf educators worked to transition away from signing and towards an oralist approach, the increase in Deaf Schools reflected "similar developments targeted on the insane, the criminal, and so on, just as the nineteenth and early twentieth century debates about manualism and oralism in education of d/Deaf children clearly reflected the broader emphasis on normative integration of the d/Deaf into hearing society" (Reagan, 2002, p. 47).

By the 1920s, there was a decline of d/Deaf educators in the schools for d/Deaf children, with only 1 in 10 teachers who were d/Deaf (Marschark, 2002). There was a negative perception of d/Deaf teachers in Deaf Schools, a resistance toward d/Deaf teachers that continued for several decades, despite d/Deaf people’s longing to engage with the problem of educating d/Deaf children (Holcomb, 2010). Finally, with the establishment of the National Leadership Training Program in 1962, d/Deaf scholars and educators were able to begin to inform a Deaf Education reform – moving away
from oral only approaches to Total Communication\textsuperscript{1}, employing more d/Deaf teachers, and interpreters in mainstream settings (Holcomb, 2010). d/Deaf adults were increasingly resisting social norms and expectations and in the 1960s, American Sign Language was recognized as a true language (Marschark, 2002).

In 1989 Deaf Early Childhood Education scholars from Gallaudet University produced a document recommending "Guiding Principles" for "A Model Program for Education of Deaf Children." This report provided 12 recommendations based on empirical data collected from successful signing, bilingual programs around the world. The principles include:

1. Accessible language practices should be made with d/Deaf children, providing access to learn, as they are fully capable. The adults in the child's environment must become proficient in a language that is accessible to the child.

2. A natural sign language should be the first language of d/Deaf children to promote social and emotional development, later fostering academic and linguistic success.

3. Early exposure to d/Deaf adults native in sign language is critical for d/Deaf children's language acquisition. Also, the children's families need to actively engage in acquisition practices to support their d/Deaf children.

4. d/Deaf adults are the best language models for d/Deaf children to acquire language naturally, and wholly. d/Deaf adults are a critical component to the success of d/Deaf children's language and psychosocial development.

\textsuperscript{1} Total Communication is used in this context to describe a system of communication that utilizes variations of manually coded forms of English (Holcomb, 2010).
5. Educational content is much easier accessed if d/Deaf children are provided content in natural, or fluent use of sign language.

6. In order to successfully develop English proficiency, ASL must be utilized as a primary language to support the development of the second language. If there is not proficiency in a first language, the second language will be increasingly more difficult to acquire as a child ages.

7. Language learning is a visual experience for d/Deaf children; therefore teaching a written form of a second language (in this case English) should precede learning the spoken form of that language (perhaps through speech reading).

8. Hearing, or auditory functioning should not be the primary approach for language acquisition of d/Deaf children. To do so can delay age-appropriate language development of a d/Deaf child.

9. All d/Deaf children can access ASL as a primary language and access their education content through ASL. d/Deaf children developing some speech-related skills

10. d/Deaf children should not be viewed as hearing children that cannot hear. Instead, d/Deaf children should be seen in their own right, as children to be taught differently – without relying on normative expectations.

11. Being d/Deaf should be viewed explicitly in a positive light.

12. "The ‘Least Restrictive Environment [LRE]’ for deaf children is one in which they may acquire a natural sign language and through that language achieve access to a spoken language and the content of the school curriculum"
The principles of the 1989 Gallaudet University report was a paradigm shift in Deaf Education, positing d/Deaf children as a group with potential to succeed as bilinguals in society (Johnson et al., 1989). The back-and-forth history of Deaf Education is some ways parallels the experiences of other minority groups of children in mainstream educational settings, including children identified as disabled and immigrant children. Scholars of education have been working on "how to talk with rigor and respect about children, particularly minority children, who fail in school. There must be something wrong with their life, goes the mainstream story" (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). The story of Deaf Education can be placed in a larger context of educational challenges, failings, and successes.

Schools for the Deaf in the contemporary era are closing at an alarming rate (Humphries & Allen, 2008). In the beginning of the twenty-first century, 70% of d/Deaf children were being educated in mainstreamed settings, while the remaining 30% attended schools for the d/Deaf, both residential and day schools (Scheetz, 2004). In other words, "the percentage of d/Deaf and hard of hearing students attending special schools has declined by more than half" and about one of five are the only d/Deaf child at the local public school (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2006, p. 98). The latest numbers show that 85% of d/Deaf children between the ages of 6 to 21 years old attend mainstream
settings for schooling, partially and/or fulltime (Schick, Skalicky, Edwards, & Kushalnagar, 2013).

Increasingly d/Deaf children are being moved to mainstream schools as directed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) claim of the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities. However, representatives from the American Society for Deaf Children argue that "in an attempt to bring all children into the mainstream of society by placing them in neighborhood schools, advocates of full inclusion may be marginalizing students who are deaf even more, forcing them to exist on the fringes" (Hawkins, Harvey, & Cohen, 1994). Both in the Deaf Schools and the mainstream setting the majority of teachers and leadership is hearing and "are in a position of relative power and control over d/Deaf people" (Erting, 1985, p. 234). The d/Deaf adults and d/Deaf community (unlike the early days of Deaf Education) have been shut out of Deaf Education (Nover, 1995).

The increase of mainstreaming of d/Deaf children into local schools presents additional challenges to how we view Deaf Education. Recently, Krystyann Krywko (2012) provided a urgent warning that with the drastic swing away from Deaf Schools, "there are many children who are DHH [Deaf and Hard of Hearing] entering the mainstream system, yet teachers are not prepared to work with this population," and "the shortage of quality providers is also felt at the level of early interventions where there is such a need to work with families outside of formalized education settings" (pp. 17-18).

Audist constructions of d/Deafness dominate d/Deaf education (Reagan, 2002). Arguments against a signing modality of instruction are backed by social constructions
of normalcy, which are supported with empirical studies, whereas much of what supports visual, manual communication for d/Deaf people is narrative and anecdotal (Holcomb, 2010).

Carlene Thumann-Prezioso (2005) addressed this philosophical divide in her 2005 study that involved interviewing Deaf parents of d/Deaf children in schools for the d/Deaf. She found that parents were concerned about both their children’s academic success and their socio-emotional development. One parent shared the conflict felt growing up with Deaf parents in a signing environment while going to a oral school: "I was always getting my hands slapped for signing . . . while at the oral school, I had no peers" (Thumann-Prezioso, 2005, p. 422). This experience exemplifies the polarization between the oral approach focusing primarily on speech and signing Deaf Schools emphasizing social and emotional development of d/Deaf children that still exist today. Scholars and/or Deaf individuals see communication methods with d/Deaf people as "a human rights issue . . . one that remains volatile today" (Lang, 2011, p. 13).

**Bilingualism & the significance of signing, Deaf Schools.** Scholars and educators in Deaf Schools continue to make the case for a bilingual approach as the optimal setting for d/Deaf students. However, the definition of bilingualism has different meanings to different people. Traditionally, bilingualism is thought of as competence and fluency in two languages. For d/Deaf children the simple definition looks different because the modalities of languages are varied. Most studies show that bilingualism for d/Deaf children requires strong competency in a signed language as a foundation to learn a written language as the child's second language (Baker, 2006; Erting & Pfau,
Stephen Nover (1995) argues that a bilingual education position in Deaf Education is necessary; “ASL should be recognized as the natural language of Deaf and hard of hearing people and that English competence should be built on a strong ASL foundation. ASL becomes a "resource" to learn the national language – English.” Harry Knoors and Marc Marschark (2012) provide 3 conditions needed to become bilingual: proficiency in a first language, provided input of a second language, and motivation to learn the second language. Their findings suggest that for d/Deaf children, "the first two of these conditions, if not all three, are rarely met" (p. 292). They suggest it is for that reason that bilingualism is not substantiated, because there is not much evidence to support the approach.

Researchers focused on learning more about bilingualism, and mainstreamed d/Deaf children struggle to conduct studies because of the increased isolation of d/Deaf children in mainstreamed settings, and the reporting systems of the educational institutions (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2006). Studies of English Language Learners (not necessarily d/Deaf), have suggested the concept of "additive bilingualism" where "a student develops proficiency in a new language without losing his or her home language." An important caution of this view of bilingualism warns that with young children learning their native language and English simultaneously, need additional support of their native language as well as the second language in order to become "highly bilingual" (Wright, 2010, p. 18).

Deaf-centered Deaf Education provides a foundation for d/Deaf children to establish a foundation for language and identity development (Knoors & Marschark, 2012). Erting and Pfau (1997) present the importance of developing English literacy
through strong bilingualism. The emphasis of their work focuses on the majority of d/Deaf children born to hearing parents with little foundation of early language development: "a small minority of d/Deaf children grow up with the opportunity to develop language (ASL) naturally within their home environments . . . [those that do] enter preschool programs ready to participate in an age-appropriate curriculum" (p. 8).

Borrowed and adapted from spoken bilingual education, Colin Baker (2006) poses 12 suggestions for bilingual Deaf Education:

1. The first and primary language of d/Deaf children is a signed language.
2. Content subjects are to be taught using sign language.
3. Written English is taught using sign language.
4. Deaf children will be taught that they belong to Deaf Culture, and that culture is recognized and validated.
5. Deaf bilingual education is based partially from research on general bilingual education including: "bilingual education builds on a child's existing linguistic and intellectual resources; concepts and knowledge developed in the first language transfer easily to the second language; use of a children's heritage language gives pride and confidence in their use of their first language; a child's self-esteem and self-identity are boosted and not threatened by use of their first language; school performance and curriculum attainment is raised when the first language is celebrated rather than devalued; the lower achievement of minority language students and Deaf students need to be addressed by enrichment forms (or 'strong forms') of bilingual education" (p. 377).
6. Spoken language is not an accessible form of instruction for a d/Deaf child. Likewise children learning in a language other than their native language cannot easily learn content in a full immersion setting.

7. The majority, spoken language is taught using sign language and native users of sign language are employed in schools as models.

8. Sign language acquisition should begin as early as possible.

9. Using oral only approaches and sometimes Total Communication approaches can cause language delays for d/Deaf children, impacting academic learning.

10. Lack of resources for adequate training for educators of d/Deaf bilingual programs is a challenge, but not a barrier.

11. Hearing parents of d/Deaf children need ample support from the school towards the goal of bilingual success, impacting the children's cognitive, linguistic, and social/emotional development.

12. Hearing/Deaf teams should be co-teaching modeling knowledge of both sign language and the majority language, and the different cultural norms between Deaf and the majority culture.

Adapting the suggested norms from bilingual education practices is highly suitable and comparable to the efforts and aim of teachers of Deaf Education.

As Deaf Education stands now, it is important to consider future implications that the bilingualism approach affords. In order for educators to see progress and validate a bilingual approach for d/Deaf children it must be considered that "these children need to be provided with greater chances to become truly fluent in sign language, the first
condition for a possible transfer of skills from sign language to written/spoken language" (Knoors & Marschark, 2012).

The Future of Deaf Schools

As explained in the 1985 study of cultural conflict in Deaf Education, Carol Erting clearly states, "no method of education has been effective for the majority of d/Deaf people. No method provides d/Deaf children with native competence in English (or any spoken language). No method teaches the majority of d/Deaf children to speak intelligibly or to read above the fourth or fifth grade level as measured by standardized tests" (p. 230). Fortunately, for d/Deaf children some of these claims may be wrong, but as with all children, there is no method that works for everyone (Marshark & Spencer, 2011).

In the last two decades many new innovative approaches have appeared as a general education reform, but have not trickled over to Deaf Education because these strategies have been "overlooked or deemed too difficult to implement" with d/Deaf children (Humphries & Allen, 2008, p. 160). The two major camps of Deaf Education are also seen in the teacher preparation programs across the country, either teaching an oral approach to Deaf Education, or a signing approach (including any manual form of communication – ASL, Manually Coded English, or Total Communication); both oral and visual language and/or visually coded English programming has been viewed as detrimental (by the opposing camp) because the programs are built on the assumption that d/Deaf children have language delays and cognitive development specific to that population; both focus on speech development and English language skills; neither put
much emphasis on ASL development or Deaf Culture development (Humphries & Allen, 2008). Deaf Education curriculums that include emphasis on ASL acquisition and/or Deaf Culture could promote the connection between general education, bilingual programs, and Deaf Education all together to develop curriculum suitable for d/Deaf children.

Along the lines of bilingual approaches to education and teaching practices that are becoming more culturally relevant, Deaf Education is also perched to gain from culturally relevant pedagogic practices (Stone, 2000). This approach to challenging the norm has been best described:

If Deaf Education continues to teach students through a hearing-centered approach, the lack of connection between students and the curriculum will continue. A d/Deaf-centered curriculum will enhance students' curiosity and energy and provide them with knowledge they can utilize in facing life's challenges and reaching their human potential (p. 236).

The challenge educators face in promoting a new direction for Deaf Education appears in the strong move away from Deaf Schools as the primary educational sites for d/Deaf children.

There is a growing fear, however, about putting effort and resources into Deaf Education housed in signing programs or Deaf Schools, because the schools are in danger of closing due to increased mainstreaming (Humphries & Allen, 2008). Simply, if there are fewer and fewer d/Deaf students in Deaf Schools there is less demand for the schools in general. That concern rolls over to the effectiveness of mainstreaming for d/Deaf children, and the use of interpreters in the classroom (Schick et al, 2006) as
indirect means of education (Marshark & Spencer, 2011). Further, d/Deaf children growing up isolated from other Deaf people as oral deaf people that are capable of masking their deafness in the hearing society will forever have an impact on how we view a "deaf community", as there is no "oral deaf community" (Marshark & Spencer, 2011).

**Technologies in Deaf Education.** The inclusion of technology effecting Deaf Education is no simple matter; there are many implications, some reported, and some yet to come. The primary technology impacting Deaf Education historically has been various auditory technologies and amplification devices. With the advent of The Newborn Infant Hearing Screening and Intervention Act (1997), early identification and diagnosis of d/Deaf infants has provided families with access to education and interventions from "qualified providers" (White, 2010, p. 7).

The prevalence of auditory devices, like the Cochlear Implant (CI), has increased since its introduction and release for d/Deaf children. Mitchell and Karchmer (2006) reported of an earlier study Mitchell conducted two years prior that d/Deaf children ages 6-11 years old with CIs rose from 15% in 1999-2000 to 22% in 2002-2003. With the increase in technologies, d/Deaf children are no longer viewed to be at risk of speech delays if audiological and therapeutic interventions are made with young children and their families (Krywko, 2012). The connection between Deaf Education and technologies used for and by d/Deaf people is not lost on scholars however; research that is aimed toward Deaf Education often focuses on therapies and technologies that compensate for hearing loss rather than on pedagogy (Humphries & Allen, 2008). With
the recognition of the overemphasis on d/Deaf children needing to somehow be fixed or adaptations being made, there is an encouraging move towards another paradigm shift.

Moving away from a "special education" pedagogy that assumes d/Deaf and hard of hearing children are deficit or developmentally abnormal to an understanding that these children are emerging language learners who require learning environments that are culturally and socially accessible. (Humphries & Allen, 2008, p. 161).

Parallel to technologies used as amplification or corrective restoration of hearing, technology is also making a greater appearance in signing Deaf School classrooms - technology appears in various ways that promote visual learning for d/Deaf children, such as Closed-captioning on classroom televisions, Smart boards, iPads, computers, and sign language and bilingual multimedia, and portable communication devices (i.e. iPhones) (Stinson, 2010). Also, teachers at these schools and programs are using these technologies with d/Deaf students in inventive ways such as itinerant teachers reaching out to d/Deaf children remotely by using video conferencing equipment (Krywko, 2012). Additionally, d/Deaf students are consumers of real-time captioning or Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) using written (typed) English transcripts of verbal interactions around them.

Others in Deaf Education are tapping into the possibilities of visual technology by creating applications compatible with various electronic devices, like "The Baobab," VL2's storybook app created to support d/Deaf children's language acquisition in both ASL and English (VL2, 2012). Independent authors Adam Stone (2012) and Rachel Berman Blythe have also begun writing and publishing interactive eBooks in the same approach as VL2. These various efforts are all geared toward the same goal of
enhancing and better adapting the state of education for d/Deaf children visually, rather than auditorily.

In the following section, I will address the notion of d/Deaf identity and explore various ways this notion appears in literature about d/Deaf people. Specifically, I will first discuss how identity is shaped by the institutional concept of d/Deafness as disability in disability studies. Next, I will address how d/Deaf is being discussed as more than an identity, but a form of discourse to reframe perspectives of self and identity in critical studies, like Disability Studies and Deaf Critical Studies. Finally, because the social construction of d/Deafness is not a simple binary (McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011), I will look at narrative representations from d/Deaf adults and other d/Deaf community members expressing experiences of an affinity to the Deaf community as a cultural identity in d/Deaf studies. The second section of this chapter proceeds to take a philosophical look at d/Deaf children and Deaf identity.

**Deaf Identity: On Identity Development**

In Leigh's (2009) deep analysis of d/Deaf identities, she includes personal narratives and perspectives along with a review of the literature available on the topic. She positions herself: "I cannot compress myself into one basic identity as I navigate my varied environments, nor can I wholly accommodate the external perceptions of me" (p. 43). I rely on her sentiments of resisting simplifying, or codifying the development of an identity. Instead, I will begin looking at the development of d/Deaf identities under different lenses, and as contextual, while revisiting Gee's (2000) identity types throughout.
Identity in disability studies. Disability scholar, Lennard Davis (2010), provides a critical view of the problem and social construction of disability in society by showing the historical references tied to the term, such as, "criminal activity, mental incompetence, sexual license" etc. (p. 10-11). Linton (1998) argues, "The fact that disability is inextricably linked to pathology is problematic" (p. 6), and if we consider the concept d/Deaf, a medical or institutional view of deafness has impacted the way society views d/Deaf individuals and how d/Deaf people might see themselves. This critical lens on the construction of disability in society provides a perspective that looks to the implications of stigmatization and generalization of difference (Goffman, 1963). In his recent writings on Disability Theory, Tobin Siebers (2011) uses social construction to resist disability as a stigmatizing category creating "defective citizens" (p. 73). Trotter (1989) argues that teachers of the d/Deaf have long been "socialized into stereotypes and attitudes about deafness . . . but that teacher-training programs serve as a vehicle . . . for informing prospective teachers about Deafness, the Deaf, and Deaf community, but also for initially shaping prospective teachers’ attitudes and stereotypes about the Deaf experience"\(^2\) (pp. 226-227).

When Feminist and Queer Theory scholar, Judith Butler was asked by Vasu Reddy in a 2004 interview about identity as a performative construct, Butler replied, "This is not just a question of a private struggles with the self, but the social terms by which identities are supported and articulated" (p. 116). The inner perspectives of the self may clash with a society's perception and expectation of an individual, or in the

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\(^2\) Assuming teachers have no prior notion or perspective of d/Deaf individuals.
case of the d/Deaf individual – the clash is with a group of people. These struggles may outwardly resemble resistance to the social construct. Some scholars have moved into a different realm, out of disability studies and into, a Critical Deaf Studies, or Deaf Crit field of inquiry (Gertz, 2003 & 2008; Ladd, 2003; Valente, 2011). In the reconstruction of Deaf, scholars are turning to a new dismodern (Davis, 2010) dimension that turns perceptions around into a Deaf way of being.

**Deafhood – An epistemological and conceptual lens.** Often, the concept deaf is viewed simply from a medical or physiological perspective that a person cannot hear; however, "deafness should be viewed in regard to the entire scope of the individual, not merely as a medical condition" (Hauser et al., 2010, p. 491). The etic perspective of deaf people as stigmatized or having a deficit makes this population inferior to those that can hear (Reagan, 2002). There is however a growing group of Deaf individuals that view themselves differently; these individuals identify as Deaf, referring to themselves as a visually centered people with shared experiences of being different from the rest of society (Reagan, 2002; Sutton-Spence, 2010). Padden and Humphries (2006) distinguish this Deaf-centered approach to the world using the binary explanation, "for Deaf people, the greatest deviation is HEARING" (as cited in Davis, 2010, p. 332). The ontology and social construction of d/Deafness varies, depending on if self-identified or others perceptions of the d/Deaf person. In Reagan's 2002 article the anthropological terms emic (personal perspective of self) and etic (others view of self) are highlighted to address the internal and external constructions of one's Deaf/deaf identity. Viewing a Deaf or deaf identity in emic terms, both Ladd (2003) and Padden
and Humphries (2006) address a paradigm shift including a Deaf-centered way of identifying oneself as Deaf in a visually perceived world. These authors engage in active discourse with members of the d/Deaf communities to further identify this *discursive identity*, as a way of situating Deaf people in the world. Paddy Ladd first introduced the concept *Deafhood* in his 2003 book, *Understanding Deaf Culture*. In this in depth look at Deaf culture, Ladd explains:

In order to create a space within which Deaf people's own self-conceptions can be situated and examined, another term [other than *Deafness*] is needed, and this I have designated as *Deafhood* . . . the internal frame of Deafhood, looking outwards, can render visible those unwritten Deaf discourses . . . in search of a Deaf *epistemology*, that is, Deaf ways of being in the world, of conceiving that world and their own place within it (both in actuality and in potentiality) (p. 81).

Since then, other scholars have continued to study the concepts of Deafness and Deafhood in various contexts. In a Flemish case study, De Clerck (2007) identifies a cultural perspective of Deaf people as members of an empowered group, consisting of Deafhood. In this case, the positive perspective of themselves as Deaf becomes integral to their *discursive* and *affinity identities*. In a critical discussion of Deaf people in light of Deafhood, Hauser, O'Hearn, McKee, and Steider (2010) suggest "the way a society interacts with deaf infants, children, and adults has an impact on what these deaf individuals learn and know, and consequently on their attitudes, interests, and values" (p. 486) and how they view themselves. In this vein, Deafhood provides a
narrative that opposes audist ideology that inherently oppresses d/Deaf people (Hauser et al., 2010).

Unfortunately, there is constant conflict between the medical (disability) model of deafness and the cultural (Deaf-World, Deaf-Centered) model of Deaf. As noted by disability scholar, Simi Linton (1998), "disability is socially constructed to serve certain ends, but now it behooves us to demonstrate how knowledge about disability is socially produced to uphold existing practices" (p. 4). In his book, D/deaf and D/dumb: A Portrait of a Deaf Kid as a Young Superhero, Joseph Valente (2011) provides a narrative to show his effort to separate from the conflict of the social construction of deaf as disabled:

At Florida State, I had to fill out this form for the ADA office to get interpreters. The form wanted me to write about my disability and how my disability prevents me from performing my duties. I refuse to say I'm disabled. I'm Deaf . . . I won't become disabled now . . . I belong to a culture, not a disability category. (p. 143).

Showing the complication, Valente (2011) provides the response he received from two well-known Deaf leaders while discussing his resistance to identifying himself, disabled: "When you do that, you hurt me! You hurt Ben! You hurt many of us!" In this urgent claim, Jamie Tucker implied that interpreters are only an option because the ADA requires accommodations to be made for disabled individuals, and in this case, interpreter for d/Deaf people. Otherwise, Deaf people might not have access to the hearing-centered society. Ben Behan adds, "The interpreter is not for you, but for others" (p. 144). Valente explains this concept by describing the hearing people as
signing-impaired. Viewing the request for services in this way allows the individual to perceive that d/Deafness as normality, however, the normalcy of hearing still exist (Davis, 2010) as the d/Deaf person still must claim disabled in order to get the interpreter requested.

To delve deeper into the discourse of identity I will continue to employ narratives with theory as a vehicle to discover other various aspects of the d/Deaf identity. In the next section, narratives of d/Deaf adults and other d/Deaf community members are explored as a process-oriented approach to examining d/Deaf identities (Leigh, 2009). This approach can allow personal expression and reflection to share how one might see his or herself in context.

**Deaf community narratives.** In her in-depth work on sign language narratives, Rachel Sutton-Spence (2010) provides instances of Deaf adults recollections of identity development occurring outside of home and school, but within the Deaf community with other Deaf individuals. The development of a Deaf identity often happens as an affinity to others with shared language and experiences. However, she notes, "traditionally, most d/Deaf children started their socialization into Deaf culture upon entering Deaf School, where they finally met other signers" (p. 269).

The collective and individual voices of these d/Deaf adults could represent past experiences, impressions, assumptions, and opinions that have developed over a lifetime; these narratives help to tell the story of how a Deaf person develops a sense of self and identity. Narratives of d/Deaf adults include memories of sadness from recalling not knowing what one's own birthday was until learning about the concept later at
school as a 7-year old (Scheetz, 2004). One woman recognizes that even the schools for the d/Deaf are often hearing-centered and yet still provide opportunities for d/Deaf children to participate in more aspects of schooling (academic and social) than they might in mainstream settings (Gertz, 2003). Another study by Nikolaraizi and Makri (2004) provides adult Deaf perspectives on struggles with oral communication resulting in less positive views of self, as opposed to those that used sign language as their primary mode of communication; whereas other narratives show "strong measure[s] of pride . . . through the identity of Deaf persons" (McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011, p. 505). Considering narratives could serve to add greater value to our understanding of d/Deaf peoples' perspectives of identity narratives and interviews of d/Deaf children could also provide an introspective glimpse of developing discursive d/Deaf identities.

An additional narrative found in the literature highlights the parents of d/Deaf children as they are seen as an integral source to gain perspective of a d/Deaf child's identity formation and potential for becoming Deaf. In a documentary about a family grappling with the decision of whether or not to get Cochlear Implants for their children, Sound and Fury (2000), a Deaf father expresses his fear of implanting his daughter:

> The idea of cochlear implant surgery is so scary. It's so invasive. They drill through the skull and have to go very deeply inside. I'm afraid that Cochlear Implants are going to create a bunch of robots. It just doesn't seem right for a d/Deaf person because our natural communication is signing and being in the Deaf-World. (Weisberg & Aronson, 2000).

The father's fear of changing his daughter's physical status will somehow create a different, nonhuman version of her is clear.
In another family, parents of a Deaf child come across less frightened, but they are deeply concerned by the idea of limiting their son in his development as a Deaf individual. In a documentary trailer of *The Audacity to Exist*, the hearing parents of a young Deaf boy, Jacob, explain their thoughts about their son as a Deaf child:

[First Parent] I want to tap into Jacob's abilities and successes, and use that as opposed to what people view as a disability or inability. Because once you alter it you've changed their state of mind, no matter what you do. If you make Jacob hearing, using Cochlear implants and hearing aids and all these things. [Second Parent] It changes their constitution.

(Facundo Element, 2013).

In this film, the intent is that the parents express their desire for their son to develop his identity naturally, and foster his *natural* identity as a Deaf person without stigma for being himself, as he was born. The parents' unique views are perhaps greatly influenced as they both have Deaf parents themselves, allowing them to view *Deaf* as a possible natural state of being. *The Audacity to Exist* supports the concept brought forth by authors Bauman and Murray (2009), which purposefully portrays the human state of being Deaf as a positive positioning – “Deaf-gain,” rather than viewed as a deficit state of being, having a *hearing loss*. This unique story about Jacob leads us to the next section contemplating the d/Deaf child specifically, and how a d/Deaf child might become *Deaf*. 
Becoming Deaf: d/Deaf Children and Identity

The challenge that deafness presents to the deaf individual's notion of selfhood first occurs when it is perceived as an aspect of self not shared by the majority. Potentially the challenge recurs every time deaf individuals face deafness as a condition that makes them different, or that limits them in some way. (Erting, 1985, p. 233).

Most d/Deaf children are born to hearing families, and many parents of these children are not equipped to foster language development in the early years (Erting 1985). These children often do not learn language and culture until they begin to attend school: "Most deaf people are not automatically members of a Deaf community and do not naturally acquire knowledge of the Deaf world from their families" (Sutton-Spence, 2010). d/Deaf children are often born in limbo, into families that are 96% hearing with no prior knowledge of d/Deafness or have never met a d/Deaf person before meeting their own child (Bauman, 2008; Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). In contrast, as Irene Leigh (2009) points out, a d/Deaf child born of Deaf parents can learn to identify as a Deaf person by going through a "taken for granted phase" (p. 37).

The d/Deaf child is often living in a family, and community that do not welcome the difference his presence creates, which can form what Peter Smagorinsky (2011) describes as "secondary disabilities, the negative feelings that follow from the classification of being ‘disordered’ or ‘impaired,’ that might ultimately trouble them more than the source of difference itself" (p. 1722). Society stigmatizes differently abled (Leigh, 2009; Scheetz, 2004) children from the moment of diagnosis. Erving Goffman (1963) explains in his book, Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity, how
individuals who are inherently different from others come to view themselves the way others see them, and thereby turn a "virtual social identity" into an "actual social identity" (p.2). The normative expectation of a hearing family influences the perceived identity (or virtual, social identity) to become at times the child's "actual" social identity.

In her book on the *Psychosocial Aspects of Deafness*, Nanci Scheetz (2004) investigates at what point d/Deaf children come to know that they are Deaf and are able to describe their identity as such to others. Initially children are exposed to a "feedback loop" in which the parent and family provide model communication and socialization. As the child grows, the loop expands to include school and the local community (Scheetz, 2004, pp. 21-22). A d/Deaf child in a hearing family, Scheetz argues, does not participate in such a loop until the child is school aged. By then, Shheetz suggest, the child has already taken on an identify characterized by a feeling of difference and stigma: "It is critical to note that from these initial endeavors into communication, children begin to weave the perceptions of how others assess their persona, including their self-identity" (p. 28).

**Language and/in identity.** In 1985, Carol Erting describes the hearing parent's impact on language for their d/Deaf child: "A person's first language, through which primary socialization occurs, is inextricably part of that person's selfhood" (p. 230). She argues that the identity of the child is marked by this early socialization and the parents resistance to giving up their own identities. In the case of Deaf parents who have a hearing child, however, Erting notes that these parents are "more likely to challenge their (the parents' personal) identities than the birth of a d/Deaf child" (Erting, 1985, p.
Miller (2010) suggests that d/Deaf children with hearing families may share a "culture of common experiences" that provides them with a Deaf identity (p. 483). Language use in the Deaf community "lies at the heart of the Deaf community and one's hands are thought of as sacred because they provide the communication link with other members" (Scheetz, 2004, p. 19) providing a positive foundation of a sense of self.

Discourse with others creates the ways we think about ourselves and others in the world. James Gee (2010) explains that people use language to share perspectives of the way we see things, and how they should, and shouldn't be. In his book, *Social Constructions of Deafness: Examining Deaf Languacultures in Education*, Thomas Horejes (2012) shares his personal feelings of participating in a deaf Boy Scout troop that challenged his earlier notions of deafness: “Our languages were the same, our experiences were mutual, and what it meant to be deaf was never necessary to be brought up for discussion. Instead, we learned more about each other and our own unique characteristics, not as a deaf person, but as a human” (p. 24).

If a d/Deaf child enters school where there are others who are also d/Deaf this can serve to enlighten the child and make him or her more conscious of the differences between the hearing and d/Deaf worlds. In his chapter, "Construction of Deafness," Harlan Lane (2010) argues, "Because most Deaf children have hearing parents, they can only acquire full language and socialization in specialized schools, in particular the prized network of residential schools" (as cited in Davis, 2010, p. 85). Further, Deaf parents may seek out schools that offer Deaf-centered curriculum as a multicultural approach to the education of their d/Deaf children (Thumann-Prezioso, 2005) to provide
an opportunity to develop affinity identity. Recent studies by Deaf scholars include explicit thoughts on identity of Deaf teachers’ in early childhood settings, and the implications of a shared Deaf identity in Deaf Schools (Morgan, 2005; Graham, 2014).

Deaf Studies, Deaf History, and Deaf Culture are subjects incorporated in a Deaf-centered curriculum that can promote Deaf identity development. However, this positive sense of d/Deaf identity can potentially promote a negative perspective of hearing people, and vice versa (hearing toward culturally Deaf individuals that are resistant to hegemonic norms) (Gertz, 2003). In an online Vlog, witteborg (Erik Witteborg) poses the complicated question, "if 90 % [96 % depending on the author] of Deaf children are born to Hearing parents, where and how are our young Deaf children becoming acculturated?" He explains that d/Deaf children may have Deaf teachers modeling a "Deaf-centric" education, but the schools for the deaf are often directed by hearing administrators (Witteborg, 2012, July 12). The question Erik poses relates to a larger concept that further trouble the notion of how d/Deaf is socially constructed, and what that looks like in Deaf Education and Deaf curriculums.

**When deaf Kids become Deaf Kids**

The notion of becoming Deaf is fluid for a developing child. In a longitudinal study of a group of deaf children in Sweden with cochlear implants, Preisler, Tvingstedt, and Ahstrom (2005) offer an analysis of a 10-year-old girl’s identity formation. She shared her feelings about her implant and about her perception of herself as a deaf person:

> If I have the processor turned on, I know that I can hear. Otherwise I am deaf; I understand to be deaf is to hear nothing. Without the implant I hear
nothing, I hear zero, nothing. I am stone deaf. I immediately become deaf. (p. 265).

The deaf girl in this study notes the exact moment she fluctuates between being deaf and a person able to hear. This shift is an important concrete example illustrating the fluidity of an identity based on a physiological ability. Douglas Baynton (2010) suggests, "the relationship between the deaf and the hearing appears solely as a natural one" (as cited in Davis, 2010, p. 33). The deaf child, Baynton continues, comes to understand that the difference between hearing and deaf is that "the deaf cannot hear" (p.33).

A child realizing that they, themselves are deaf often parallels the realization that some individuals communicate using sign and others may not (Sutton-Spence, 2010). This signing versus non-signing recognition is illustrated in a conversation Sutton-Spence presents of an adult and two d/Deaf children (both 11-years old) that began with the children saying the adult is d/Deaf:

   Signing adult: No I'm not. I'm hearing.
   Deaf child: You don't Speak. I saw you signing. I saw you didn't understand when the teachers spoke. That's the same. I don't understand. We're the same.
   Signing adult: Am I Deaf?"
   Deaf child: Yes.
   Signing adult: How do you know?
   Deaf child: You sign.
   Signing adult: I sign but those people sign too. Are they Deaf?

I had a similar conversation with a 4-year old d/Deaf boy who told me that he knew whether people were hearing or Deaf based solely on the cell phones they used for talking and texting. Because his surrounding community could all sign, the child was unable to rely on signing ability to decipher if individuals he interacted with were Deaf or hearing. He noted that the hearing people most often used a "Blackberry" and Deaf people preferred to use the "Sidekick." The phone quality of the Blackberry was superior to the Sidekick at the time, whereas the spacious keyboard on the Sidekick was more suited to higher frequency texting. Characteristics of individuals with a shared identity can be evident in discursive exchanges and observations from children with others.

There are few studies of d/Deaf children's identity formation (Kossewska, 2008). This could be for a number of reasons including, but not limited to, difficulty accessing the children by researchers, great variation in the population, and limited language competency of the children. In 1996, Martha Sheridan wrote her dissertation on a study conducted with seven d/Deaf children, ages seven to ten. In this case, the researcher used interviews along with art and storytelling to access the children's worldviews. She chose to seek participants with varied degrees of d/Deafness, educational experiences, and home languages. Her findings showed that "the children's images of themselves and others were influenced by their communicative and behavioral interactions with others in their environment" (p. 164). Her primary limitation in the study was the small sample size consisting of a couple of children from varied settings (i.e. two at residential schools, one with d/Deaf parents, one child communicated orally only).
In another study, Teresa Prout (1998) provided a glimpse into the perspectives of nine d/Deaf children, ages five to fourteen, while investigating their understandings of themselves. She noted that the adolescents in her study were more aware of their identities as Deaf people, whereas the younger children were much more superficial in their understanding of d/Deafness. The sample population she chose were mainstreamed children with hearing parents, which meant that many of her informants, and particularly the younger ones, had limited language. In contrast, her older informants in most cases were able to express their worldviews. These studies suggest the potential of learning by interviewing older (elementary school aged) d/Deaf children about how they see themselves.

As noted from the contrast between the Disability Studies’ and the Deaf Critical Studies’ views of Deaf identity there lies a fluidity of identity influence and manifestations that are not easily categorized in one camp verses the other. Using Gee’s (2000) four types of identity (natural, institutional, discursive, and affinity) helps sort the layered complexity of different versions of the self that are both internalized and external. Understanding when one takes on a certain identity, becomes aware of that identity, and how that identity changes over time is a difficult task.

Recently, Deaf people’s perspectives are being gained with the inclusion of varied types of sources that can be more readily accessible using American Sign Language via Video Blogs (Vlogs), video documentaries, and direct interviewing with the researchers communicating directly with the d/Deaf participants.
CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Trends in the use of qualitative research methods with d/Deaf children parallel with approaches found in interpretive research with non-d/Deaf children. The body of research on children tells us little about children's lives (Graue & Walsh, 1998; Westcott & Littleton, 2005). Graue and Walsh (1998) suggest that using predominantly quantitative methods and laboratory-like settings has led us to overlook the situated-ness of children's lived experiences, and that "much of what we thought we knew about children stems from Piaget's markedly nonquantitative inquiry" (p. 1). The authors encourage a path of inquiry that allows the researcher to seek understanding of children with regard to the contexts they inhabit.

Researchers recommend qualitative studies of children and childhood (Corsaro, 1985; Graue & Walsh, 1998), but there remain challenges to an ethnographic approach. One of these unavoidable challenges is the adult researcher, studying children. The outsider status, adult, both physically and psychologically separates the researcher from the subject (Corsaro, 1985). In his qualitative study of children's perspectives of media, Joseph Tobin (2000) applies theories of de Certeau (1984) to explain the tactics children may employ in research situations responding to the power differential between adults and children. Martha Sheridan (1996) who is Deaf and uses American Sign Language to communicate, also discusses a few instances where the d/Deaf children
interviewed in her study actively resisted her, by covering their mouth and signing behind her back, both considered inappropriate while using visual modalities to communicate. Sheridan went a step further in her analysis by suggesting that the children may have been reacting to the uncomfortable new experience of being researched in addition to the adult-child dynamic. This outsider/insider relationship of the participant and researcher cannot be changed, but can be acknowledged and addressed during all stages of inquiry. Helen Westcott and Karen Littleton (2005) caution researchers of childhood consider the relationship of the child and researcher and the context of study.

There are various methods that could have been used in this study, including traditional observation, participant observation, interviews, and/or focus groups. I found it most useful to combine some of these approaches and incorporate newer flexible ways of researching with d/Deaf children. Clark (2011) emphasizes that a child-centered approach to research enhances the "multi-voiced (not just adult-voiced)" types of discourse (pp. 11-12).

Some researchers have sought d/Deaf children's perspectives via interviews (Hindley et al., 1993; Sheridan, 2001). Many such studies explore d/Deaf children’s feeling about their experiences with Cochlear Implants (Punch & Hyde, 2011). These studies suggest the potential of interviews as a viable and fruitful methodology with d/Deaf children.
The Research Design

The methodological design of this study is a version of Tobin et al (1989, 2009) video cued multi-vocal approach. I chose this method because of its visual nature and successful implementation in a larger international study, *Deaf Kindergartens in Three Countries: US, France, and Japan*³ project funded by the Spencer Foundation (Tobin et al, 2009). In the larger study, perspectives were gathered from many adult stakeholders concerned with Deaf Early Childhood Education. My study is an extension of the larger study, seeking perspectives of d/Deaf children in order to add their thoughts and voices to the larger dialogue about Deaf Early Childhood Education. The method I chose for my study was to show d/Deaf children videos of a Deaf preschool class and ask them to comment on what they saw. In this study, d/Deaf children are viewed as the experts in their experiences of Deaf Early Childhood Education.

Specifically, I asked d/Deaf children to watch four video scenes from an American Deaf preschool class taken from the *Deaf Kindergartens* project. The d/Deaf children I interviewed were between the ages of 6-12 years old. The size of the groups varied from one to 11 children. I conducted the interviews in three geographical regions in the United States. The age range was selected to focus on children old enough to have enough language development to engage in a discussion. I planned to group the children by age (6-9 and 10-12 years old) but this turned out to be possible in just two of the four interviews.

The children were recruited for the study via signing Schools for the Deaf. I contacted the principal or other administrator and shared details of the project’s

³ This international study will be referred to as the *Deaf Kindergartens* project.
purpose, and methodology. I then did the same with parents of the potential participating children. Aware of the delicacy of conducting research with deaf children, I was prepared to meet with the school administrators, parents, and children before beginning the focus groups in order to make myself available for any questions or concerns about the study. I sought participants from all over the United States, to include regional variation in the study results.

**Overview of video-cued methodology.** I decided to use a visually based method for several reasons. One is that Deaf culture is visual, as Harlan Lane and others have called Deaf people “the people of the eye.” A video cued method also has the virtue of redirecting attention away from both the researched and the researcher. It functions to create a site of joint attention where researcher and informants can interact. I videotaped the interviews to allow me to make transcripts. In studies that have used video to capture children during the data generation process, researchers have found that the children often tend to become less bothered by the filming after an initial period of being distracted by the presence of a camera (Tobin et al, 1989 & 2009). In his study of children and the media Tobin (2000) employed a video-cued method effectively to cue focus group discussions with elementary school aged children.

Utilizing a video-cued method worked to reduce the insecurity children might have felt when being interviewed, as the focus of the attention was displaced onto the watching and discussion of the videos, rather than directly on the questioning from me. The visual method of video-cued interviewing effectively drew d/Deaf children to engage in discussion with peers. As Clark (2011) points out, "Children are as honest as adults,
although they certainly parse the world and see experiences from distinctive angles and sometimes don't know adults' norms for socially appropriate disclosure" (p.4).

I also used a video form of assent to participate in the study. Singleton et al (2012) notes that these practices of showing the research process and describing the project in sign language prior to beginning the study makes research with d/Deaf people more ethical. Because I was interviewing young children, I was required to gain verbal rather than written assent. The video recorded assent script I developed – I recorded explained the research plan and method. I suggest that this protocol is a contribution to the field of research on Deaf Education. To support the children's recall during the interviews I also used photos captured from the videos. Combining these various visual media provided an optimal approach to researching with d/Deaf children.

Selection of video clips: Order and descriptions. I used four clips in the focus group interviews. I edited the clips from the uncut footage shot for the larger study, shortening the scenes to make them more accessible to the children. I choose scenes that showed interactions that I predicted children would find interesting. After showing each video clip, I engaged the children in short discussions between viewings. Most of the focus groups lasted a total of about 1-hour of watching and talking.

I showed the children four video clips. I began each session by asking children to watch and discuss two short scenes I call Flower Book and Speech Therapy. I then showed the children a longer clip I call Quiet-time Reading that includes teachers employing multiple approaches to helping children with reading. The final video is a livelier clip of children eating, chatting, and misbehaving, a clip I call Lunchtime. These
selections mirrored the order these events occurred in the day while filming the preschool class and it seemed a logical choice to follow that order while showing the children participating in the study.

*Flower Book.* The main teacher, Becky, reviews a book with the whole class of six children. The book is about a local flower shop that provides concepts of importing products using various forms of transportation for the preschool students. The students interact with the teacher about things in the story, and otherwise. The teacher asks questions, and responds to the students' tangents.

*Speech Therapy.* A teacher's aide, Billie, assists a female student with a hearing aid before she and another student join the speech therapist in a different room at school. The students work with the therapist on speech production and recognition of sounds using colors (Yellow) and shapes (Star).

*Quiet-time Reading.* The teacher, Becky, instructs the children to disperse with mats and books throughout a room, dimly lit by a few windows along one wall. The first scene shows a young girl and Becky taking turns reading a book, *The Napping House* (Wood, 1996), to each other in ASL. The second shows a different teacher (Aide), Billie, reading a book to a male student alternating between spoken English and ASL for each page.
The third shows Becky reading to a different male student. This student is not looking at the book, but rather being told what is in the book while he lies on the floor – half watching. The last part of this movie clip is of a student sent across the hall to join Becky and read aloud (in sign) to the teacher at a table.

*Lunchtime.* The scene opens on the two girls from speech therapy now sitting at a round table in a cafeteria with trays of food in front of them. The Two main teachers, Nicole and Becky, lead the rest of the preschool class into the room behind the girls, and they all go sit as the teachers bring trays to all the children. There is casual chatting around the table between some children. At another point, two girls in the movie sneakily eat pats of butter while ducking under the table, later the girls playfully giggle and shove each other back and forth while eating their lunches. In both of these scenes, Sara, a teacher from an older class, moves out of her seat at their table to address and correct the girls' behavior. At another moment, Sara corrected one of the girls for tricking other students and teasing them. The scene ends with the two girls practicing speech with each other using hats they made in therapy.

**The videotaped school.** The video clips came from a footage shot for the larger project of a preschool at the Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) in Fredrick, Maryland. This school was the American preschool chosen for the international study of *Deaf*
Kindergartens. MSD’s mission statement recognizes themselves as “a diverse, bilingual community, in partnership with families, [that] provides an equitable and exemplary education in a nurturing, engaging, and challenging environment to ensure our students achieve personal excellence and become responsible lifelong learners.” MSD has a strong bilingual philosophy where they believe that “a student benefits from mastering a primary language, which is proven to support academic achievement and success in mastering English. Fluency in American Sign Language (ASL) and written English is the goal for all MSD graduates.” MSD also provides speech and auditory services for those who are hard of hearing or have hearing aids/cochlear implants – often times these auditory services are both pullout services occurring outside of the classroom and embedded in the classroom curriculum via spoken English language instruction from hearing teachers.

The MSD students are diverse, with a higher percentage than is typical in Deaf schools coming from Deaf families. MSD also serves a broad spectrum of intellectual and physical abilities, including those with mild to severe additional disabilities. There are four teachers/staff in the film clips shown to the child participants: one is Deaf (Becky), one is hearing (Sara), and the teacher’s aide (Billie) who is hearing, and one speech therapist.

**Focus group interviews with d/Deaf children.** The interview process is an effort in joint meaning making between the child and the researcher; further, Westcott and Littleton (2005) suggest that children are as capable as adults to participate in interviews, but they often lack maturity, which may make it appear that they are not
competent to provide insight about issues of childhood. These researchers suggest that interviewing children can be challenging because children are accustomed to exchanges with adults in which the adults already know the answer to the question they ask, or in which they suggest that the child has done something wrong.

*Focus group* can work to make the interviewing less stressful for children than a one-on-one interview with an unknown adult. Children are likely to feel more safe if they are with peers, and the higher ratio of children to adults can address a power imbalance between the adult researchers and a child participant (D'Amato, 1986; Hennessy & Heary, 2005). Graue and Walsh (1998) cite the work of D'Amato (1986) who argues that, "Kids are more relaxed when with a friend than alone with an adult. They help each other with their answers. They also keep each other on track and truthful." (p. 114). In his study and resulting book, *Good Guys Don’t Wear Hats*, Joseph Tobin (2000) chose to conduct focus groups with children rather than one-on-one interviews because the children "form their beliefs and ideas" with others (adults and peers) through discourse (p. 7).

A challenge of using focus groups with children (and adults) is getting responses from more reticent group members. Yael Dayan (2008) suggests children may feel defensive or suspicious of the reasons behind an adult questioning them; children are often ignored and may feel less motivated to share their perspectives; children may seek to give the "right" answer to adults even if they disagree with the answer; and the final point made suggest that children are more likely to share insight and perspective if they are comfortable with the context and the people in that context. Irwin and Johnson (2005) suggest the importance of building rapport with the children in a research project.
In clinical settings it has been emphasized that the language ability of the children has a big impact on the data generated (Hindley et al., 1993). In order to avoid relying on the reading levels of her participants, Sheridan (1996) recommends visual techniques with d/Deaf children, using drawing and photos to engage participation and understanding from the children. Schick et al. (2007) suggest that children’s language abilities are closely tied to cognitive abilities and Theory of Mind. Their study of young deaf children, ages four to eight, shows that the children's ability to successfully process abstract tasks are impacted by age and language exposure. Greene and Hill (2011) discuss the implications of aiming to research children that are not yet verbal, writing that "experience is interpretive and the medium by which humans interpret their encounters with the world is linguistic or at least symbolic" (p. 5). These studies show that care must be taken in selecting the age of children to be researched and when working with young children, with Deaf children, and especially with children who are young and Deaf, research approaches must be carefully selected.

Modification of the research plan. My plan was upon greeting the children in the focus groups to briefly introduce myself and explain that I would film the session in order to transcribe and study what was said. I would provide a visual, verbal scripted video asking for the participation of the children in this project. The clips and narrations are all in American Sign Language (ASL) with the exception of a few moments the individuals on screen use spoken English; these short segments are subtitled in English. I would interpret the subtitled segments for the children as needed (depending on the reading levels of the participants).
Once I began the research, I had to modify the research plan. This study began with a pilot study. In the pilot, due to an unforeseen event at the school, only one student showed up for what was to be a focus group interview. The interview went well, leading me to adapt my method to include both interviews (one on one) and small focus groups. It also soon became evident that I would not be able to limit my participant selections, as I was continually mindful of gatekeepers in Deaf Schools who were busy and who are also cautious about research with (and on) d/Deaf children. I contacted both schools and parents of d/Deaf children in various Deaf Communities in the United States, attempting to seek participants in all regions of the country. Due to the limitations of the study population I was not able to control the race or ethnicity, social economic statuses, and sex groupings of the focus group participants, and these factors are only somewhat considered in the data analysis, as I am limited to the data available from the participating schools.

**Entry to research.** I contacted administrators at Deaf schools and explained the study. Of the schools that returned my inquiry, I submitted subsequent paperwork and details about the project. Early contacts with the participating schools and families involved an introduction letter from the researcher, and a letter of consent that described the larger project that this study was housed within. The introduction letter included more personal information about me, such as information about my research interests, intention of the study, and my family background. The letter and form were written in both English and Spanish, and I provided my contact information, so they
could contact me to communicate in American Sign Language if that was the preferred language to discuss the study.

Schools were contacted based on various factors, including previously identified contact persons in charge of research, schools that had little acknowledgement in larger and more well known studies, or if I was able to find a personal contact to lead me to the person with authority to approve the research. Each site had different requirements to apply for research, and varied procedures and processes to begin working with students. Once I gained authorization to conduct focus groups with the students of a given school, I would then negotiate to get letters sent to families of students that had been identified to have attended a Deaf School since kindergarten, and between the ages of six-twelve. Of the eight sites contacted around the United States, I received approval to conduct research from six schools. I narrowed the list down to four schools, based on the school’s response and ability to connect me with parents. Three of these schools collected signed approval from parents so that focus group interviews could be set. After a year, the first focus group was finally scheduled.

**Influence of the pilot interview.** The first focus group began as planned. Consent letters were signed by parents and collected in advance; I arrived early to assess the environment and set up equipment (a camera and projector attached to my laptop to show the videos) for the focus group that was scheduled for the end of the

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4 One might wonder why it took a year to get through the scheduling process. I too, had not expected this. As a new researcher embarking on a groundbreaking study with d/Deaf children, I assumed others would be as excited as I was (I still am) to be doing this type of work. Unfortunately (for me), my research is not a priority to school administrators who have a multitude of priorities that supersede this study.
school day. When the time came to begin the interviews no students had shown up. I learned that the school was in a state of some sort of lock-down. Once school buses arrived and hordes of students were shuffled off towards his and her planned paths home, I found that all but one of my participants were shuffled off with the rest. The lone student and I quickly chatted and decided, “if he could do it, then so could I.”

The hour-long interview with 10-year old Alex\(^5\) began with watching the two-minute assent video: *I enter an office and approach the large desk that is situated in the center of the space and frame. I sit down in front of a large monitor attached to a laptop with a video editing program open showing a screen shot of one of the video scenes from the Deaf Kindergartens video-cued material. I turn toward the camera and notice it's recording me. "Hi, there!" The video-assent continues as I proceed to show the viewer what I am working on, and invite the viewer to help me with my "homework" on "d/Deaf kindergarten." In this 2-minute video I refer to the still photo on the monitor from one of the video clips the participants will view. Additionally I show the viewers the actual digital camera that I will use to film them in this study – "to help me not forget what you (the participants) say."

\(^5\) Pseudonyms are used for all teachers and children in this dissertation.
Rather than using an English scripted prompt for the assent that I would have to interpret into American Sign Language, I chose to visually demonstrate and communicate the study’s goals and expectations using ASL. I was not entirely sure if this technique would work. However, once I showed the video to Alex, he quickly responded, "Yes, I'll do it."

I had planned to show the four movies in the order, as they occurred throughout in the preschool schedule. But because we started late and I was not sure how much time we would have, I jumped ahead to the third clip, *Quiet-time Reading*. Alex showed concern throughout the scene of the teachers reading with individual students in different ways. His concern was directed to the individualized approach of the reading practice, and he immediately shared a recommendation for group reading instead. Alex's preference for teacher's reading-aloud to a group of children, rather than one-on-
one, while interesting, was a different topic than I had hoped he would talk about. This led me to the decision to stick to the original plan of showing the four clips in order the in subsequent focus groups.

Finally, the highly engaging interactions of this "accidental" pilot interview with Alex allowed me to see the potential of my research plan. The richness of the original interview led me to include these preliminary findings with the following collection of data, making the "pilot" an additional interview analyzed within the completed study.

**Participant background.** Four focus group interviews were held in three regions/Deaf Schools spread across the United States. A total of 23 children participated.

Of the children that participated, 4 did not share their family background regarding hearing status and are unknown to me; 7 shared that he/she had a d/Deaf parent (1 or both); 10 shared that he/she had hearing parents; 2 specified that the child had one hearing and one d/Deaf parent; 5 participants have at least one d/Deaf sibling. Two
children self-identified as Hard of Hearing, while the rest self-identified as d/Deaf, and one child identified as trilingual, using ASL and English at school and (spoken) Spanish at home.

Analyzing focus group interviews. I documented the field experiences by writing reflective notes immediately after each focus group interview. The act of systematically documenting with memos included comments on general themes, attitudes, reactions, and behaviors I experienced to capture my impressions and thoughts at that moment. After the focus groups were concluded, I combined memos with the transcripts of the sessions and noted some issues and instances that were not present in the dialogue transcribed – including non-manual exchanges and contextual information (i.e. a child rests his head on the table during the interview conducted at the close of the school day).

Each focus group interview was video recorded and then later translated and transcribed. Once the transcripts were complete, I reviewed them individually and then again in a group to look for themes and patterns across the transcripts. These patterns were then reviewed to narrow the focus to key themes of importance to d/Deaf children.
and to educators of d/Deaf children. In addition to central themes, I made note of methodological issues that arose that impacted the interviews and that had implications for future studies with Deaf children.

**Translation and Triangulation**

This study was conducted entirely in American Sign Language. All interviews were recorded via a digital video camera and then translated into written English at a later time. I chose to do all of the translations personally because I was present for each interview and therefore had the contextual information needed for accurate transcription. There were challenges that came with the translation and transcription process, as the interviews contained nuances and child-like idiosyncratic language use, which caused me some doubt in the accuracy of the translations. As a result of this doubt, I used a triangulated process of checking with other Deaf ASL using members of the research team from the larger *Deaf Kindergartens* project in order to confirm or clarify specific segments of the interview videos.

Conscious of my language use and understanding of child-like language I also employed clarification tactics throughout the focus group interviews. These techniques appeared throughout the interviews as me repeating back to the child participants what I understood them to have said. Often this type of member checking would allow the children to affirm what I thought he or she had said, or on some occasion it would allow the child to clarify or change the earlier stated perspective. In order to clarify my positioning with the children, I identified myself early on as a hearing individual who grew up signing with Deaf parents. The children did not overtly change their method of
language use or lexical choices with me once discovering this detail about me, but there were instances that a child specifically noted my status as a person who can hear.

**Researcher Background, Role, and Subjectivity**

As indicated in the previous section, it is imperative to consider the hearing status, language abilities, and background or contextual knowledge of d/Deaf people situated in society while considering research methods used with d/Deaf children. Studies based on research with Deafness participants do not always address how the researcher’s Deaf status informs the research methods used and impacts the research (Schick, de Viilliers, de Villiers, & Hoffmeister, 2007; Li & Prevatt, 2010). It is important that the choice of method is matched to the population studied.

Throughout the data gathering process I mindfully reflected on my positioning in this study. I am considerate of my status as an outsider in many ways: to the experiences of these children as I am much older; I am not d/Deaf myself, but growing up with Deaf parents in a largely Deaf family I see myself as a member of the community with privileged access to the outside larger *hearing world* that is experienced differently by the d/Deaf community; and finally, I am an outsider to the experience of Deaf Early Childhood Education. But through my observations and exposure to others' and my Deaf family's own experiences in Deaf Schools I remain keenly aware that all experiences are valid and varied. From my positioning, I am constantly engaged in careful consideration to view the children's discussions from the data gathered as "texts that invite speculative interpretation . . . understood only by a process that includes an act of imagination" (Tobin, 2000, p. 139).
The primary limitations of this study are directly linked to my positioning as an adult, hearing researcher. This limitation appeared to lessen as the children learned I am a native, fluent ASL user, and once the children found that I am a friendly person who is truly interested in what they think. My view of the children from the conception of the project until now remains that they are the experts on the subject of Deaf Early Childhood Education.

As a hearing person from a d/Deaf family I am familiar with the educational experiences shared with me by those in my family and immediate community. Those views are limited and biased. My lens of Deaf Schooling needs to be widened to include variations and additional perspectives or possibilities.

For an adult researcher to understand the experience of a child (or children) as a stranger is a daunting task. Yet it is an important one because for too long we have assumed that children have nothing of interest or importance to tell us about their lives and that we adults understand much better than they what is good for them and how events impact them. (Greene & Hill, 2005).

Appropriate research practices with d/Deaf children are not often discussed in the literature (Sheridan, 1996, 2001). Age, language, and experience are all things to consider when researching this population. The methodological approaches described in this chapter reflect an approach that attempts to openly engage d/Deaf children, incorporating their world-view (Singleton et al., 2014) on topics of concern to them.
PART TWO: d/DEAF CHILDREN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT d/DEAF, HEARING, AND OTHER FINDINGS

_Deaf Kindergartens in Three Countries: France, Japan, and the United States_ is a cross-cultural study that combines the perspectives of teachers, administrators, parents, and experts who are deeply entrenched in the field of Deaf Early Childhood Education. The research team (of which I am a member) gathered the perspectives of these stakeholders across the three countries using a multistep video-cued approach (Tobin et al., 1989 & 2009). The team made videos of typical days in signing Deaf preschool classrooms in France, Japan, and the US and then used edited versions of these videos as cues to stimulate focus group discussions with the teachers and administrators at the school where the video was shot, and then with Deaf educators in other sites in each of the three countries.

My study extends the larger study by adding the perspectives of d/Deaf children. While my study is not a formal comparison of the perspectives of d/Deaf children and their teachers, throughout these findings chapters I juxtapose the statements and thoughts of the d/Deaf children interviewed with comments and opinions of teachers from the _Deaf Kindergartens project_. The teachers' views I present provides context and contrast with the children's views. It is interesting to see where the children's views both agree with those of their teachers, and disagree.
A Precocious Educational Critic. I went into this research hopeful but also a bit worried about the ability of elementary school students to comment meaningfully on aspects of deaf pedagogy. Not all of my child informants were eloquent or insightful, but in the focus groups several children raised sophisticated, thoughtful critiques of practices they saw in our videos. A prime example is Alex, a ten-year-old student at the X School for Deaf.

Throughout my interview with Alex he commented on the teaching practices and instructional language used by teachers in the video clips. He supported his points by focusing on particular moments in the movie clips (literally stopping the video to point out and comment on images on the screen) and by drawing on his personal experiences in deaf schools. At other times, Alex would mimic behaviors like the non-manual facial expressions of the teachers onscreen to illustrate points that he could not specifically name.

In the larger Deaf Kindergartens study, a common critique deaf educators made of the teachers in the US videos was that the teachers dominated interactions with children. As one teacher commented in a focus group: “I feel the children were more appropriate language models than the teachers. They were expanding on what each other said; they were turn taking. And when they were interacting with the teachers, it
was very teacher directed. The teacher had control." Alex's comments suggest that he also saw a teacher-centered approach and that he feels that teachers would be more effective if they attended differently to the students' questioning and encouraged participation from them. He also was critical of aspects of instruction, like the way the teachers handled the quiet reading time in the MSD video. We would not be surprised to hear such critiques raised by professional educators, but it is startling to hear them expressed by a child. Alex's comments on the video are consistent with the constructivist, child-centered pedagogical perspectives put forward by Vygotsky and Dewey, and endorsed by progressive educational organizations.

Alex carefully considered the ramifications of non-manual (facial) expressions impacting the motivation of d/Deaf students. His connection between emotions and language were thoughtful and powerful. Nelson (1993) suggested that d/Deaf children are often exposed to language at varied times and modalities compared to other children. As a result, they are more highly aware of emotional memories at younger ages, whereas their hearing peers may better remember verbal interactions. Alex echoes the heightened awareness of comprehension and emotion as he emphasized the importance of teachers modeling appropriate expressive language. In arguing for what he thinks are appropriate and inappropriate approaches to language modeling for young d/Deaf children, this young boy draws on his instincts, experiences, and memory. I return to a discussion of memory and recall in Chapter Seven, where I discuss the implications of deaf children's ability to remember for this and retrospective, interview-based studies of deaf education.
Early in the interview with Alex he began to wonder about various aspects of the teacher's approach in the *Deaf Kindergartens* video clips. He questioned the teacher's use of facial expressions specifically with younger children: "She's got such a serious face when she looks around at the students. If she were my teacher, looking like that, I wouldn't answer it." He adds, "She looks mad. Like she's saying, 'Answer me now!'" A teacher we interviewed for the larger study agreed: "I thought, wow, if I were a kid, I would be afraid of that teacher." Alex also disliked the teacher's instructional choice not to spell out a specific word with a student who was attempting to sign T-R-U-C-K: "She doesn't take time to make it clear . . . See she just said, "That's good." She's not excited about it." In the video clip Alex is referring to the teacher asking a student to read a book to her one-on-one.

*Still Image 3: Linnea fingerspells T-R-U-C-K.*
In this scene of the video the teacher is performing a reading inventory, by following along with the reading child using some sort of a checklist attached to a clipboard. The teacher asks the young girl to read the (English) words to her. The girl proceeds to sign each word/concept as they appear on the page and gets stuck at the word, “truck.” As there is no specific sign in American Sign Language for the English term “truck” the teacher uses fingerspelling to model to the girl one way to sign the concept. The teacher's affect shown in this brief interaction illustrated the complexity of instructional language use in Deaf Early Childhood Education; not only do teachers in signing schools for the deaf need to help new readers by providing explanation and encouragement, as their peers in hearing classroom do, but also to consider the American Sign Language grammatical and linguistic features that occur on the body as well. As Graham (2014) and Hayashi (2011) have pointed out, the Deaf ECE teachers need to embody appropriate features of ASL and Deaf culture.

This point came out in a focus group for the Deaf Kindergarten project, when a bilingual specialist raised a concern that Becky, one of the MSD teachers, had showed “no affect” in the video clip. Another teacher suggested that the lack of affect could have been due to nervousness of being filmed. When Becky was interviewed after the filming she explained that she had personal issues bothering her that day that had her a bit off.

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6 There is an initialized standard form of the sign “TRUCK” but there is no such form in American Sign Language. The concept CAR would be used, while paired with the spelling to indicate TRUCK.
her game. Regardless of the reasons for her low affect\textsuperscript{7}, d/Deaf children who watched the MSD video noticed this.

In American Sign Language, verbal and non-verbal expressions of affect are equally important. Linguists will often focus on the verbal aspects of affect in signed languages, but non-verbal affect used with young d/Deaf children (particularly in Deaf Early Childhood Educational settings) are not as well researched. An exception is a study of particular grammatical facial features of WH questions used by “deaf mothers signing with their deaf toddlers” (Reilly & Bellugi, 1996). In her 2007 book, *Ordinary Affects*, anthropologist Kathleen Stewart argues for the importance of affect in ordinary moments of everyday life by providing vignettes of the ordinary. She writes: “Affects are not so much forms of signification, or units of knowledge, as they are expressions of ideas or problems performed as a kind of involuntary and powerful learning and participation” (p. 40). Teachers’ affect or lack thereof has big impacts on students, and particularly on deaf students, as Alex’s comments attest.

Another non-manual feature employed by the teachers and students in the videos was the explicit use in conversations of eye gaze. Often instructors of young deaf children will explicitly instruct the appropriate use of eye gaze in order to understand referents and receive content about the referent (Graham, 2014; Singleton & Morgan, 2006).

\textsuperscript{7} Across multiple of hours of footage of Becky shows a varied range in her use of non-verbal affect. The segments shown to the children of this study reflect only part of the footage collected and used.
In one interview, a preschool teacher from an oral methods deaf school (unfamiliar with teaching practices in signing Deaf Early Childhood Education) wondered if a young female student in the video would have to be tapped repeatedly to get information from the teacher, "The girl kept looking up. The little girl kept looking up to get that language [from the teacher]." She notes that the young d/Deaf students already had developed this skill, appropriately directing their visual attention to the teachers in order to receive instruction and other information about the activities they are engaged.

In the larger *Deaf Kindergartens* study several hearing participants noted the overt attention-getting strategies of teachers and students and said that they found these strategies "too physical." In contrast, many d/Deaf teachers reacted to these same approaches as “typical” and were not critical of the practices as were their hearing peers. The children interviewed in focus groups did not explicitly note this practice that
occurred across the video clips, in both teacher-led and student-to-student interactions, of pointing, and/or tapping to get others to visually attend to conversations around them. I speculate that the children did not note these practices because they are so familiar to them that they do not rise to the level of conscious awareness or merit comment.

The next two sections explore other topics that were addressed in the focus groups with children. The first topic was inspired by two of the video clips shown in the interviews: “The Flower Story” and “Quiet-Time Reading”. I did not intend or anticipate that reading and strategies for teaching reading would be such a focus of the discussions. I chose these clips not to steer discussion toward reading pedagogy, but instead because they present varied child and teacher interactions. My child informants discussed reading specifically, and they also went beyond reading pedagogy pragmatics to discussing independent versus group learning.

**Reading Readiness and Group versus Independent Practice.**

During the interview with Alex, he presented his thoughts about the teacher's strategy to read with the whole class, in contrast to the independent reading time shown in another clip:

Jennifer: . . . Did you think reading to the whole class was better than the one on one reading in the first movie?

Alex: Yes, because they are all learning at the same time. That way the kids aren't at different levels.

Jennifer: You mean if all the kids are reading the same book?
Alex: If the class is all together, they are all getting everything at the same time. Say you have one student, "Casey" who reads a lot. But someone else doesn't like to read much, reads a lot less. They have different motivation. If everyone reads together it's more fair. It's not fair to everyone if some read a ton, and others not much. If it's the same for everyone, they can all be better readers.

This hypothetical situation Alex creates informs us about his views on reading as a skill and practice, as well as his ideals of equity of educational access. Alex's preference for equal educational access could be viewed as a child wanting more attention, but it also tells us about smaller class sizes and expectations of teachers to attend to all students’ needs and preferences. It is interesting to note that he perceives independent reading as a sort of deprivation for those who struggle in early literacy development or who have less self-motivation.

Along the same lines, another 9 year-old girl, Jessie, also expressed that she did not prefer independent reading at a young age (or any age), stating that she did not read on her own. She shared that in her preschool experience she would play instead whenever there was this type of free-choice activity.

Abiding by MSD’s bilingual philosophy, Becky (the teacher signing story books without the use of English) made clear that quiet time was for “relaxing” and exposure to ASL. Further, she noted that "one-on-one guided reading" was not in the required Pre-K curriculum, but that the parents of the students had requested this activity. She added that both she and the children enjoy the one-on-one reading. The preschool class portrayed in the video clips does not use an adapted curriculum, or a Deaf Education
curriculum, but rather the school has implemented the standard curriculum for monolingual students used by other schools in the county school district.

The choice to include independent reading in the preschool practice, despite it not being recommended for this age, may be a result of parents feeling particularly pressured to keep up with mainstream English based educational practices emphasizing early fluency in English literacy; despite the differences between bilingual and monolingual schooling and of differences for learning to read between children whose first language is ASL versus spoken English. Not seeing or agreeing with the value of Becky’s goal of providing children with time to “relax” with a book, the children in the focus groups saw the task as one that was unproductive and that failed to provide children with equal learning opportunity. Some teachers in the *Deaf Kindergartens* study, like this one in Indiana, shared this concern about Becky’s approach to early reading:

> Maybe one or two of them has these advanced skills, but it doesn't mean all of them do or should be expected to perform at that level. Because, you know, you're hurting all the students with that mentality. They really need problem solving and thinking skills before they move on to analyzing print.

Joe, an 8 year-old focus-group participant, also commented about MSD’s use of varied reading approaches during the free reading period and expressed his preference for ASL over spoken English use for teaching reading:

> Jennifer: Do you like the way she read that book with the boy, with some signing and some talking, or do you prefer to read in sign the whole time?

Joe: Oh, sign the whole time!
Jennifer: Why do you rather do that?

Joe: Because it's easier with the examples and you can see everything.

American Sign Language contains expansion features that naturally provide rich descriptions to capture varied concepts. Joe gives a practical view of an ASL expansion feature: explaining a category or theme by providing a string of examples of objects in a category. For example, listing three or four modes of transportation can portray the concept transportation: car, boat, bike, and plane. English is seen as more specific, and perhaps less descriptive, because there is one word rather than a string of words used for this concept.

Joe's preference is impacted by his varied experiences in different Deaf Schools using different instructional language strategies. These experiences also impacted Joe's beliefs about speaking versus signing. Joe shared that his only current experiences with speech occur in the context of speech therapy; his teachers solely use ASL while reading English texts, whereas his previous school provided a mixture of ASL and spoken English, formally (instructionally) and informally (socially) - with neither language being used alone during various periods of the school day.

Classroom Management

Although Alex disagreed with the teacher's approach in formal instructional situations, he agreed with the decision by another MSD teacher to correct the language choice of a student in an informal discussion around the lunchroom table. In this instance, a four-year-old girl, Talya, teases a classmate by calling her "gullible" and the
teacher responds by saying, "Don't say that. That's not nice." Alex found Talya’s language use to be both precocious and inappropriate.

Later in that same clip, the teacher disciplines Talya and a classmate for sneaking under the table to eat butter. In the video we see the two girls giggle while digging their fingers into small dishes of butter and licking them clean.
While many adults interviewed in the *Deaf Kindergarten* study considered this teacher's reaction as overly strict, multiple children viewed the response as appropriate, 12 year-old Paolo said, "If kids are doing things to get in trouble then of course she's (the teacher) strict." Sara, the teacher in the lunchroom with the children, was not their regular teacher. In a video-cued interview, Becky, the girls' main teacher, said that Sara’s discipline of Talya during lunch was appropriate because Talya was always teasing other students and being rebellious. Becky said that if it had been Linnea telling another student that he/she was “gullible”, that would have been okay, but because Talya’s history, Sara needed to take action. Becky said that the same went for Talya starting the pushing/shoving with Linnea and having Sara intervene once again. The butter incident appeared to be initiated by Linnea, something that Becky did not seem to notice.
Both the adult and child informants noted the behavior (more specifically the lack of *bad* behavior) of the preschoolers. Where adults criticized what they saw as the overly controlled environment and unnecessarily heavy management from the teachers in the video, the children in the focus groups focused more on the preschoolers' behavior. Alex, for example, was impressed with how the four-old children in the video moved on their own between classrooms:

Alex: They are disciplined. When I was little we weren't allowed to walk around alone like that.

Jennifer: Oh really? Could you walk across the hall to another room like that alone?

Alex: Rarely. But those kids [in the video] are coming and going, as they want. We have to cut through the bathrooms to get to the next room instead of going door to door like them. It's weird they can go alone like that [using the ASL sign often correlated with the concept "independent"].
The children and adults who commented on the videos tended to have different views on classroom management, with the children generally supportive of teachers’ disciplining students for misbehavior and the children favoring more strictness. For example, one teacher agreed with Sara’s reaction to the girls for eating butter with their fingers: "I would explain more like, ‘it's not very healthy for your body. You could get sick.’ But, I would have done the same thing."

In one interview, a teacher from an oral method Deaf School commented on the practical problem a teacher of the d/Deaf faces in a signing environment. This teacher commented on the lunch scene: "[When the two girls were] eating the butter under the table, that led me to think, ‘How do they handle behavior management?’ Because when the teacher came to talk to them and they looked away, like what do you do next?’ This teacher seemed not to notice the teacher in the video, Sara, had no trouble getting the misbehaving girls’ attention: She came around the table, and squatted down to put
herself in the children’s sight-line, while allowing her to explain to them that the behavior was not appropriate.

Still Image 8: Sara kneels to address the girls directly.

Some teachers interviewed at signing Deaf Schools felt that Sara’s intervention was a bit heavy handed, unnecessary, or misplaced. For example, one teacher suggested Sara was wrong to punish the two girls for misbehaving while ignoring what she saw as their culturally inappropriate behavior:

> You notice the two girls eating together also went to speech together. One girl was signing, trying to communicate with them, and they just left her out. The two girls were punished for eating butter, but they weren't punished for leaving the other girl out of the conversation. It was interesting, just from a language development perspective.

Why were the children interviewed at deaf schools supportive of a level of strict behavioral management which many teachers in Deaf schools considered too strict?
One explanation could be that the children have experienced similar expectations and styles of behavior management in their personal schooling, and therefore assume that this is the normal way for teachers to respond to naughty children. Another explanation could be, following Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development that children between six and twelve years old are in a conventional stage of thinking about right and wrong.
CHAPTER 5
WAYS OF “DEAF” AND WAYS OF “HEARING”

This chapter explores how children in deaf schools think and talk about what it means to be d/Deaf and about differences between the d/Deaf and hearing worlds. The children’s discussion of the MSD video reveals a set of binary categorizations, beginning but by no means ending with the binary of deaf/hearing.

The structuralist anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss suggested that every culture makes core binary distinctions about the world and that cultures therefore can be understood by identifying the binaries that are most central to them. I suggest that Deaf culture is no exception, and that children in signing Deaf schools employ a set of related binary distinctions to make sense of their world. As Eve Sedgwick (1990, 2008) writes about gender norms, the paired terms of the binaries are not equally valued: “Term B is not symmetrical with but subordinated to term A.” What is true for gender categories such as male/female and masculine/feminine may be true as well for the binary hearing/Deaf. In the larger society, Deaf is the subordinate category while within Deaf culture being Deaf and signing is the more highly valued side of the binary.

The valences of the binaries employed in the children’s focus group discussions fluctuated according to context (e.g. home vs. school; Deaf signing schools versus oral methods and mainstream schools). These categories of identification, as James Gee (2000) writes, are fluid and at times confusing. This was sometimes the case for
children in this study, a finding consistent with what Prout (1998) found in his study with d/Deaf teens.

Throughout the focus groups the children foregrounded the D/deaf/hearing binary. This was stated starkly and eloquently by a nine year-old young boy, Nick, in one focus group in the way he described his family: "We are all deaf, except our dog. It's hearing." The children consistently put forward a worldview, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, that the core of being Deaf is signing and the core of being hearing is speaking. At times, the children brought up examples of hearing individuals who deviated from that rule and identified these people as ‘hearing but can sign, too.' Hearing people who sign complicate their binary categories. For example Paolo, an eleven year-old boy explained the difference between hearing and d/Deaf individuals by comparing the hearing status of his family and a classmate's family: "His parents are Deaf. His family is all Deaf, except his brother is hearing. He [brother] knows sign well. My parents are Deaf. Well, my dad's hearing but he signs too." Some children were unsure of which of their teachers, who sign, are deaf and which hearing.

**To be d/Deaf or Hearing.**

Identifying a person as d/Deaf or hearing based on embodiment and language use is a complex process and a controversial issue. Identifying a signing teacher as deaf or hearing from watching her on a video was difficult for our adult as well as child informants. When asked if he thought the teachers in the video were hearing or d/Deaf, ten year-old Alex said that he thought most of the teachers were hearing. When asked why he thought this he responded: "I don't know. They were trying to teach the kids to
speak and stuff like that." At another point, Alex shared that even though he had several
hearing and d/Deaf teachers at his school most of the hearing teachers sign well, and
he thought it was "cool."

Across the country in another group, seven year-old Sam and her older peers
Paolo and Joey (eleven and twelve years-old) spoke candidly to me about what they
thought when asked if they could tell which of the teachers in the video were hearing
and which deaf.

Sam immediately identified the main teacher as d/Deaf, because "She signs, and she
wasn't talking." Joey agreed, reasoning: "Yeah, she didn't use her mouth a lot and didn't
speak. She was always signing." But their classmate Paolo wasn't so sure, thinking that
a lack of facial expression and moving the mouth in his mind was an identifier of hearing
signers, not d/Deaf: "Yeah, most hearing people sign. . . When they sign, it's signing
with little facial expression." At that point, he appeared to consider my status as a hearing person as he continued saying, "Hearing people, and no offense . . . " I responded, "It's fine." Paolo continued: "They don't sign like that. You could tell by the way they sign and move their mouth and stuff." Paolo and Joey, although reaching different conclusions about a person being deaf or hearing based on a lack of mouth and facial movements while signing, each show some sophisticated understanding of non-manual dimensions of signing and Deafness.

Our video-cued research method showed how hard it can be to read Deafness. In many of the focus groups with adults as well as children, participants asked us the hearing status of the teachers in the video if we did not disclose the status of the teacher in the video. Inevitably, if we did not disclose the status of the teacher on screen participants would ask: "Is that teacher hearing or d/Deaf?" We would most often respond, "What do you think?" to push informants to reveal their thinking about this binary and, more generally what it means to be identifiably hearing or d/Deaf. The ability of a deaf child to detect a person's hearing (or d/Deaf) status can be tied to the child's employing a Theory of Mind; and to infer how another person operates in the world based on how she moves and talks.

The difficulty of assigning teachers to the category of hearing or d/Deaf based on their signing ability and use of their face and body was made even more complicated by the presence in our videos of teachers who were hard of hearing. Hard of hearing Individuals disrupt the deaf/hearing binary, as Twelve-year-old Joey explained: "My mom and dad are hard of hearing. Well, kind of hard of hearing, and kind of Deaf . . .
Half, yeah dad's half Deaf." Deaf identity is troubled by the blurring of identities that occurs when an individual is hard of hearing, or hearing, but can sign.

In some of the focus groups child participants noted that I could sign even though I am hearing\(^8\). This reaction from the children led me to explain, "My parents are Deaf and I am hearing." This explanation immediately elicited nods of understanding and acknowledgement of my status as a "Coda" (Child of a Deaf Adult). My hybrid status as a hearing person who signs like someone for whom ASL is a first language may have served to make it more comfortable for the children to engage in a discussion of what it means to be Deaf, hearing, or someplace in-between. I was a familiar type of person to the majority of Deaf children in my focus groups, which have parents, siblings, or other relatives who are hearing (who may sign fluently).

A light-hearted reflection on this hearing versus d/Deaf phenomenon came from six year-old Billy in response to the Lunchtime video clip. At one point there is a four year-old student signing while holding a strawberry firmly in her mouth, and Billy excitedly shared: "If you bite food and keep it in your mouth like that while signing it might go down your throat and you might choke [acts out choking- grabbing throat and coughing]."

\(^8\) Some children asked if I am hearing upon greeting them, and others made comments to each other that I might be hearing. Several did not know until I told them I could hear.
Curious of his response, which on the surface doesn’t make much sense, I asked "If you are d/Deaf and signing, do you think you can sign and chew at the same time?" He exclaimed, "No! It may go down while you are talking (signing)" In my follow up, "So, do you sit with your hands down (quietly) while you eat?" Billy took a moment to consider, and smiled in apparent appreciation of benefits of d/Deaf individuals signing: "No, d/Deaf people can sign and chew at the same time, but hearing people can't because they talk with their mouth. And if they talk while chewing the food, [it] may choke them. Get it?" Billy’s citing of the saying, “Don’t talk with your mouth full” suggests that he lives at least part of his life eating alongside hearing people.

Examples like this one of slippages of meaning in children’s talk about what it means to sign and be d/Deaf led me to return to the data to look more deeply for moments in the transcripts when the participants began to talk about talking (spoken language) versus the use of signing in their lives and specifically in school.
Talking or Signing

The video clips “Speech Therapy” and “Quiet-time Reading” provided the context for discussions of what it means to be d/Deaf in all of the focus groups. Themes arose around the topics of sign language acquisition, the participants’ preference or distain for speech therapy, the use of speech within the Deaf School classroom, and their overall preferences in communication strategies.

Only one participant, Alex, spoke directly about the order of language acquisition within the context of a bilingual Deaf School as he finished viewing the clip “Speech Therapy.” He began to sign, but paused, and began again:

Alex: I don't know . . . I think most kids wouldn't want to do it (speech therapy) then. It would be hard. And maybe later when they are older they will stop signing and only speak. It's better to learn to sign well first, and worry about speech later. If a kid is d/Deaf and beginning to sign it's better to sign a lot with them when they are younger. Later you can speak more.

Jennifer: So it's better to focus on speech later?

Alex: Yes, but I guess I wouldn't mind at that age [refers to kids in video].

Jennifer: They are around 4 years old.

Alex: That's a little too early.
As the discussion continued, I discovered that Alex attended speech therapy regularly, but the intent was not to develop speech. Rather, he practiced speech reading, which he said was "boring," but perhaps useful in the long run.

While Alex was the only child to address when language acquisition might occur, many others had thoughts about speech therapy in general from their personal experiences. Often, these discussions would begin after watching the clip, by my question if the children had ever seen or experienced anything like what they saw. The response would vary only slightly as most had a familiarity with the subject. Ten year-old Sarah identified the experience as a place "where they (students) go and feel your (the therapist's) throat, make sounds and talk like hearing people." Paolo, like many of the other children in the focus groups, attended speech therapy regularly for the primary purpose of speech development and sound-recognition practice. He explained:
I go every Monday and Friday. BUT I don't like going to speech. I prefer to use my own language. This school (Paolo's school) doesn't believe in using Sim-Com [signing and speaking simultaneously]. Of the four students in my class there are two kids that can sign and speak, and another boy that can talk OK, but he signs well. I just prefer to sign only. I can't say even a word. I mean, I don't talk at all [leans back in his chair, smiling].

Paolo continued:

I had Ms. Walker for a long time, but I have a new speech teacher now. Now I have Mr. Knight. We started out doing letters, and then we worked on words. After that we started working on whole sentences. We practice talking like that. But I'm struggling now. I used to be able to say, "A" but I've forgotten how. Ugh, I don't want to do it anyway.

The strength of Paolo's Deaf identity can be seen in his referring to ASL as "my own language." His understated comment that "I just prefer to sign only" also testifies to the security of his Deaf identity, the "just" adding a sense of finality and inevitably to his preference for signing. His other comment, "I can't say even a word," conveys not a confession of a lack so much as pride in being so completely Deaf.

To emphasize his dislike of speech therapy, Paolo brings in his feelings about his hearing aid, suggesting that at least for him not using a hearing aid is another feature of being Deaf: "I don't really like to speak or hear. I hate my hearing aid cause it gives me a headache. A hearing aid may help some d/Deaf people hear some stuff but I don't like to hear. The sounds hurt my head." In another interview, twelve year-old Melvin made a
similar comment: "Before I used to have one-on-one speech like that but I quit because it was so loud. Once I came to this school I stopped (going). When I asked if he preferred to sign, he confirmed that he did. He admitted: "It's [speech] really hard, and I don't always understand it." Nick, a nine-year-old from the same school agreed and added, "I don't have to talk when I can just write on paper back and forth with people . . . because I don't speak." The binary concepts that arose in these discussions can be boiled down to signing as a easier, faster, more comfortable mode of communication versus speaking and listening as a more difficult, slower, less comfortable communication modality. But the complex nature of the children’s feelings on this subject is not so readily narrowed down to two constructs. The notion of speech therapy being “loud” for a deaf child suggests something more than preference, but something more is difficult to define. Becky, the Deaf teacher in the MSD video, identified this discomfort for using speech as located in embarrassment:

Like if the student struggles to say a word, you know, they feel silly. They would be embarrassed. Everybody is watching. For example, some of them, their written English isn't that great, and they feel embarrassed. Like for me at home, sometimes I use my voice with my three sons. They're hearing. But I would never use my voice with other people. I'm embarrassed.

An interesting comparison can be made with responses from an interview from the larger study of a teacher at an oral method Deaf School that uses spoken English only. She noted the overall "quiet" environment in the videos and compared it to her class:
I expect my class to be loud... my students all talk to me at the same time and they think that I can hear them at the same time. I wonder how, in a signing classroom, how they manage that because they are all signing at the same time. Because it is maybe more visual for them to kinda figure out, “Ok, stop. I can only listen to one at a time.” But mine (the oral class), it's just auditory, like, “Oh my gosh, please just give me a break.”

This stark comparison of the quiet environment in a signing classroom and the loudness of an oral classroom suggest that the practice of listening and speech for d/Deaf children can be overwhelming.

The video clip, “Quiet Time Reading,” included the segment of a hearing teacher reading aloud to a young male student English text and signing ASL versions of similar concepts, alternating between the two languages. This segment provoked strong reactions in many of the focus groups.
Still Image 12: Billie reads aloud in English.

Still Image 13: Billie explains the English concept further using American Sign Language.
Some students expressed confusion about the hearing status of the boy in the segment. Melvin stated, "I think that's what you would do if the kid is hearing or something." When I asked if he thought the boy could hear, Melvin responded, "Maybe he's hard of hearing." In another group, twelve year-old Joey asks, "What's she doing? He can't hear that." In response, his classmate, Paolo, offered a theory about why that young boy's parents might want the child to use spoken language. Paolo explains:

Those kids . . . it's fascinating. Well . . . [pauses for a bit] They were reading and signing what they were reading, and turn taking, but what they should have been doing was read the whole part first and then sign it. Not back and forth like that. These kids were little, and they can read and all, but like the hearing one (spoke) read aloud first then signed. Some dads might say they want their son to talk like that so they will do that. He'll listen and then see the signs. That's fine, but here at this school, they don't support that. Some parents may say they want something like that, and they (school) accept that by providing speech therapy. Some want it, [and] others don't want it.

The theory Paolo put forward is consistent with the philosophy of bilingual Deaf ECE program that utilize a bilingual/bimodal instructional approach (Nussbaum, Scott, & Simms, 2012). This educational, linguistic practice explicitly separates the signed language from the spoken language used by the majority population (in this case American Sign Language and English).
Alex has a somewhat different take on this scene, as he is bothered by the confusion produced by introducing speaking to a signing environment: “She's talking. Why is she talking to a deaf kid? If she stops talking and just signs it will motivate the kid to learn sign.” Nine year-old Nick made a similar point in another focus group: "I'd rather (the teacher) just sign." In an interview with that teacher the next day, she explained what she was doing and how she decided to use this approach with this particular student:

I usually ask him (the boy in the video), if he wants me to use sign fully with him, without using my voice, or only use my voice. Most of the time, he will ask me to use my voice. Yesterday was not a typical day in that sense, I used Sandwiching with his right CI. ..he would listen to me, when I use my voice only. But yesterday, I knew when he didn't say anything back to me. ..I realized that he may not have been used to using his left CI, that it may not have been set up correctly, so that's why I went ahead and used the Sandwiching method, because I wanted him to get the most out of the story.

In this instance, the children were puzzled by and critical of this teacher’s use of speech in part because they lacked context. The teacher explained that she made a conscious decision to "Sandwich" signs with English, and that she was responding to a common request in Deaf schools, in this case, a request coming from a Deaf child rather than from hearing parents, the most typical source of pressure to introduce speech. Another teacher in this classroom explained: "We still have moments. It depends on parents. If they put it in the IEP, then it's required." However, even if the
children who commented on this scene lacked context, their criticisms had merit. The hearing teacher in this scene was not using the two languages simultaneously, as you do with "Sim-com," and instead was pausing deliberately to separate the signs and spoken words, but the children viewing the video saw little difference between Sim-com and Sandwiching. Some teachers interviewed agreed with the child participants, criticizing the teacher in the video for practicing a form of “Total Communication,” a term used in some focus groups as a synonym for Sim-com.

Language issues also came up in focus group discussions with children around the question of how they communicate with people who don’t know sign. Paolo, for example, explained that gesture and body language can be a successful means to communicate simple needs, whereas more complicated ideas can be shared in writing (but not without challenges):

Jennifer: How do you communicate with hearing people?
Paolo: Mostly I write back and forth, and it's easy. But sometimes, I'm like. Ugh, I've got to write it all out. One time I was at the store, and my mom asked for pen and paper [gestures writing in the palm of hand as if on paper], and the person was like, "What's that?" She tried again to show what she meant, but it took a while for them to figure it out finally.
Jennifer: So your mom taught you to write back and forth with hearing people, or is that something you learned here at school?
Paolo " It's only with some people that don't understand (gestures), and I have to write like that.
Paolo has learned how to interact with the hearing world directly from his Deaf mother, by explicit practice and implicitly through observation.

Unlike Paolo, who is Deaf of Deaf, most d/Deaf children do not have the opportunity to learn these adaptive approaches at home, and therefore they must learn such communication approaches at school. One of the teachers at a Deaf School near Boston emphasized the use of frequent field trips from preschool throughout high school:

Not all students have great language models at home. The parents do not expose their children enough to language. We are able to provide the exposure (of language) to the students. When they graduate from high school and start living on their own, they will have fewer opportunities for these activities than their hearing peers, mainly because of communication access. The students will be aware of their barriers.

This teacher talks about explicitly teaching the d/Deaf children how to interact with the environment and other (non-d/Deaf) people in the community. Rather than focus on specific approaches to communicating with others, the teacher notes the children's need to be exposed to the wider society and become aware of communication barriers they will experience.

In a final consideration of the bilingual/bimodal reading strategy attempted in the “Quiet-time Reading” video segment, Alex agreed that this is potentially a useful approach. However, he criticized the proportion of sign language to spoken English used, as he described the use as unbalanced - because "she's mostly talking." When I
asked a final question about this topic, whether or not it's important to learn speech and "talk," Alex responded:

    No, not really because if you need to talk (communicate) with someone you can write back and forth, or use a phone to write out a text. There are different ways to communicate, not everyone in the world has to speak.

    *Some people sign, some people speak.*

Bourdieu (2000) suggests that we embody a way of being that is tied to our self-defined identity, an identity that is constantly modified as we interact with others and our environment (Gee, 2000). The other side of a way of being is the categories and tags that others use to tell us who and what we may not be. The ways of being of the d/Deaf and hearing worlds are complex, overlapping, and sometimes – in conflict. This chapter has provided insights into how Deaf children come to understand these binary categories,
CHAPTER 6
WHAT d/DEAF CHILDREN THINK ABOUT HAVING HEARING OR d/DEAF TEACHERS

Across the focus group children reported having experience with a mixture of hearing and/or d/Deaf teachers in their Deaf Schools. Sue Mather (1989), along with other Deaf Early Childhood Educators, emphasize the value of employing Deaf teachers who can provide children with a strong Deaf, signing model in Deaf Early Childhood Education. This was a position that was strongly supported in the focus groups with adult deaf educators.

With and without prompting, many children in the focus groups shared their feelings about d/Deaf and hearing teachers. This discussion often segued into a discussion of experiences some of the children have had with hearing teachers in mainstream settings as well as speech therapists. Not all children spoke to this topic, but those that did provided interesting insights.

For example, at the end of my interview with ten year-old Alex, I asked whether he has had Deaf or hearing teachers in school. He began counting on his fingers the Deaf teachers he has currently. In his first year of middle school he now has different teachers for individual subjects, rather than one teacher throughout the day like he had throughout elementary. Noting that he has all Deaf teachers for the first time ever, we discussed:
Jennifer: What about before now, were they hearing or deaf?

Alex: Several were . . . First through fourth (grade) I had hearing teachers.

I guess they have all been hearing.

Jennifer: So before they've all been hearing, and now they're all deaf.

What's that like?

Alex: It's strange.

Jennifer: Why is it strange?

Alex: They respond more Deaf. Like they can catch things, and call us on it when they teach. They almost never use their voice. They always sign, and use a lot of expression. It's interesting.

His reaction of it being strange for a d/Deaf child to have Deaf teachers is not surprising, as a majority of teachers in Schools for the Deaf are hearing (Erting, 1985). Perhaps because I am a hearing researcher he carefully chose to describe his current situation of having all Deaf teachers as “strange” rather than exclaiming that it’s better or even “awesome.” This is one of those situations where my positionality as a hearing, signing researcher seems to be most directly impacting what the children say in the interview, or in this case not so much what he said as the delicacy with how he put it. We can also speculate that his use of the word “strange” to describe having all Deaf teachers this school year is an eloquent way of calling attention to the dominance of hearing teachers and relative underrepresentation of Deaf ones even in Deaf schools with strong an ASL orientation. Why, we are left to wonder, should having Deaf teachers in a school for the Deaf be out of the ordinary?
The Deaf School

Paolo was one of the few child informants who explicitly noted Deaf cultural norms in the video. When I asked what the children thought of the preschool class shown in the video, some children mentioned similarities with their class in things like classroom set-up and books, and other resources. Younger informants complimented the selection of toys.

The classroom environment was not very different than what we would find in the typical American preschool classroom. There was a pictorial alphabet lining one wall, labeled (in printed English) pictures of community members, including a doctor, a police officer, a dentist with a patient, a fireman, and the like. The room did not show any sign of being a preschool class in a Deaf School. The d/Deaf child participants did not mention the absence of any of the typical materials found in signing Deaf schools, such as materials featuring American Sign Language, usually in the form of a poster with a fingerspelled alphabet illustrating a 2-dimensional representation of appropriate finger placement for each individual letter. Likewise, most children did not comment on the teachers’ use of d/Deaf spatial positioning, eye gaze, or visual techniques for getting children’s attention such as when the lead teacher, Becky, points to a child making a comment, cueing her to pause her comment until others in the class visually attend to the speaker. In the adult focus group some participants noted the presence and absence of typical d/Deaf materials and practices in the video. One teacher in California for example, noted the absence of American Sign Language in the classroom:

I saw English all over the walls. It was just everywhere. But where's the ASL? So I didn't see anything bridging the gap between ASL and English.
I saw the doors labeled "door." Words all over. I just thought there were a lot of English words.

Another teacher at the same school read an implicit meaning in this:

It seemed they valued oralism over signing. You know, if the child could speak the words right or mouth the words right, then they were smart and they were applauded for their work. It seemed like the signing was less important than the ability to talk (speak).

A few child participants noticed some features characteristic of signing Deaf Schools. Paolo talked about the difference in seating arrangements of signing, d/Deaf classrooms, and noted that the chairs in the classroom on the videos were placed appropriately - in a semi-circle (not in straight rows):

Paolo: It was a Deaf School obviously. They all sat in like a circle. That's Deaf culture. If they were sitting in a row it would be hard to communicate. Sitting like that in a circle like that, everyone can see each other to talk.

Jennifer: How do you know this is Deaf culture?

Paolo: Because that's what I'm used to.
In a focus group in the larger study, a teacher commented on the Deaf practice of being aware of a visual environment and explicitly teaching d/Deaf children this awareness:

I had one student who kept moving around a lot . . . I had to stop that student because it was very distracting to the other students. Deaf people are very visual people. It's just like in hearing schools. They don't allow the kids to randomly sing or talk. It can be very distracting. It's the same at the Deaf School. We keep visual noise to a minimum.

In addition to teaching the children to be visually quiet in order to respect others need to attend to a visual environment, the teacher also expresses an implicit practice of community found within Deaf Culture. This teacher emphasizes the concept of the individual being responsible for the group, as, for example, minimizing visual
distractions for others. This group responsiveness is also present when the children of this study talk about the importance of being able to see everyone sign.

The "Deaf Culture" norm using curved seating arrangements might be recognized and adjustments made accordingly, but this preferred arrangement is not always in place in all Deaf Schools. This was evidently the case for Paolo as he described d/Deaf children complaining to get round tables where rectangle tables were used previously in his school's cafeteria.

Still Image 15: Children and teacher seated around a round table in cafeteria.

One theme that Paolo discussed was the necessity of having a signing friendly environment at a Deaf School. He made a point of identifying the signs on the wall in his school showing what he called "communication rules" on posted signs noting, "Please Sign." As rules are often created in response to unwanted behaviors, the sign stating these communication rules signified more than a preference, but also the possibility that
signing may not always occur without this reminder. This difference is illustrated by comments made in another focus group. Josh, a shy eight year-old, shared that he had previously attended another Deaf School in a different state and noted the differences between his current and past school, and the school in the video clips. The most notable difference was the comparison he made between the teacher's aide in the video and his previous school's hard of hearing and hearing teachers who used spoken language in the classrooms: "Sometimes they would sign, or talk and sign at the same time." Other children in the group added that the teachers in their current school do not use speech in the classroom, because not everyone would understand or have access to that information.

The concept of access to communication is a critical theme that is evident in Deaf Schools and as a Deaf cultural norm. Emphasizing this norm, Paolo maturely spoke of his mother's conscious decision to move closer to the school he currently attends once she discovered he is d/Deaf. He reinforced this decision by saying, "I like it here. Everyone is clear." Paolo's poignant description of the people at his school provides a visual depiction of his ability to understand and access his environment easily.

The lunchtime video clip provided comic relief for the children in all of the focus groups, in contrast to the serious mood elicited by the speech therapy and reading clips. The child participants giggled at the conversations in the video about chocolate milk making you "strong" and "working out" playing Wii video games; they mimicked the play-fighting interactions of the preschoolers around the lunchroom table; some participants playfully gagged in reaction to the young students' sneaking buttery fingers
under tables in the video; and several children nodded in recognition or approval when the butter-eaters were reprimanded.
The child participants’ reactions expressed a sense of shared d/Deaf childhood experience, and a knowing that communicated a deep recognition of sameness. The children made comments that suggested that tabletops were not just for hiding eating butter, but also for hiding comments from the knowing eyes of teachers or other adults. For example, Paolo and Joey plopped their chairs down from the 2-legged balancing they had been doing during the interview to demonstrate how they can sign under the table to each other, while maintaining half eye contact with me. Paolo says, "We talk privately, so they can't see."

The reaction to the lunchroom scene shows us how d/Deaf children are building an understanding of themselves and their cultural worlds independent of adults. Paolo explains: "Really lunch is my favorite time at school. We are all sitting around a table." Children in one of the other focus groups that also spoke of lunchtime and the cafeteria
fondly mirrored his sentiments about lunchtime. One of the younger girls in a group spoke of boys and girls sitting together at lunch, and “acting silly.” The children continued to share that they had to hide these playful behaviors from adults because teachers would be upset like the teacher in the video clip was about the butter eating.

The children in this study and the young children of the MSD preschool showed a glimpse into how children’s initiation into Deaf culture takes place in settings such as the cafeteria where they can practice playfully at Deaf social behaviors, like eating while signing, slapping tables, waiving to get another's attention, tapping, and visually attending to others for turn-taking. One teacher in a focus group explained the processes, by which the children internalize different elements by interactions,

I want to add that, you know, naturally in ASL, we need turn taking in language and we need to develop language and watching facial expressions and changing and just practicing and signing back and forth with each other. When people talk, they can hear themselves talk, but it's really hard for me to assess my own sign because I can't see myself sign. So we expect our students here to do that. It's very social, and building social skills and social language. They don't raise their hands and take turns. They just watch each other.

These joyous moments of cafeteria camaraderie are not available in mainstream settings. At the end of Alex's interview I asked if he had ever considered attending a mainstream school with hearing teachers and peers, and he responded that he was not sure if he would ever experience that, as he liked being at a Deaf School: "I can talk to
more people (in a Deaf School). If I were mainstreamed, I would be with an interpreter all day. They'd follow me around - always watching me."

**The Mainstreaming Option**

Like Alex, Paolo was in the early stages of identifying key differences between d/Deaf and non-d/Deaf persons. He had developed opinions based on his experiences and the opinions of those close to him - primarily his Deaf mother. He shared her feelings about the Deaf School she attended: "She liked it because the teachers could sign and there are d/Deaf teachers. Where she was (mainstreamed) she couldn't really talk to the teachers and had to use interpreters. She didn't like that." Both boys shared concern, and angst, in response to the topic of "mainstreaming" and at the thought of attending a public school with non-signing peers. That sense of isolation, being watched, and fear of the unknown appeared again after I questioned another group about attending a mainstream program. Nine year-old Jess and twelve year-old Melvin talked about their brief experiences in mainstream settings. Jess is adamant about continuing her education at the school she attends:

Jess: [shakes head hard] No! I'm staying!

Melvin: It's dangerous out there. This is a safe place.

Jennifer: It's a safe place. What makes it safe?

Melvin: I'd rather be here.

Jess: It's cool here, right? [To Melvin]

Melvin: It's way better than my old school!

Jennifer: But why?
Jess: I used to go to a mainstream school for a little bit, and I didn't talk all day while I was there. That happened until I transferred here.

Melvin: At my old school the teacher required me to wear my hearing aid while I was in school. I didn't want to wear it and be like a zombie. She should've worn it (the hearing aid) if that's what she wanted.

The binary distinction here between the d/Deaf and hearing worlds is very explicit here. The Deaf school the children attend is “safe” and “cool.” The mainstream setting, where children must talk and wear hearing aids, makes them feel like “zombies.”

As Jess and Melvin shared their feelings about hearing versus d/Deaf children, the other children in their focus group nodded. In the focus groups I conducted with d/Deaf children across the country it's clear that assumptions, fears, and shared practices about the differences between d/Deaf and hearing teachers, and Deaf and hearing schools are already firmly in place.

In one interview, a teacher explained why she thought it was important for d/Deaf children with little experience with non-signing, hearing individuals (d/Deaf children that have d/Deaf families) to become more aware and accepting of their peers:

It would be nice to expose them to hearing people. (If we were to) drop them in the hearing schools they can get a general idea of what it's like.

They will realize that they can be friends with hearing people. They (hearing people) are okay. It's okay.

The teacher was not addressing the fears that the d/Deaf children have about interacting with hearing peers. Rather, she was calling attention of the need to provide d/Deaf children with opportunities to gain awareness of the hearing world.
The children’s fears and assumptions that in mainstream settings they would be isolated and their peer communication always being mediated by an adult interpreter may not be far from the truth. Melvin’s "zombie" metaphor echoes Valente’s (2011) auto-ethnographic memoir as a deaf kid in a hearing school, and the specter raised by Valente of cochlear implantation of young d/Deaf children as a form of "Cyborgization"; a concern also discussed by Horejes and Heuer (2013) from a sociological critique in their piece on "The Cybernetic Deaf Subject." Interestingly, Cyborgs and zombies both symbolize a loss or lack of humanity or a soul.

This chapter presented perspectives the d/Deaf children hold about Deaf Education, signing Schools for the Deaf and mainstream (or Inclusion) settings. Their comments have implications for parents, teachers, and other adults making decisions about placements. Fear of isolation is a valid issue raised by several of the children, as well as an urge to avoid the unknown. Just as it is difficult if not impossible for a hearing person with no knowledge of what it is like to be d/Deaf in this world, a d/Deaf child cannot know what it is like to be hearing. It is not surprising that d/Deaf children would see the non- d/Deaf world that surrounds them as strange. As 12 year-old Joey poignantly notes, "I've been to an event where I was the only d/Deaf person and everyone was talking into microphones and stuff. It was weird."
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH WITH d/DEAF CHILDREN

Throughout my fieldwork experience, students portrayed a visually conscious behavior in the focus groups. These behaviors included the children calling attention to one another and recognizing peer participation during our interactions. Other children would note if their sight line or the sight line of another participant was disrupted. Observations like these and others were documented and considered from the focus group interviews alongside the content discussed with the participants found in previous chapters.

This concluding chapter provides important considerations from this study that has implications on future research with young d/Deaf children. The chapter will provide an overview of the study and dissertation, identify new approaches that emerged and the potential for added considerations and limitations while engaging this population, and emphasize the importance of future studies with d/Deaf children.

The pilot study seeking d/Deaf children's voice in Deaf Early Childhood Education initially left the impression that there was more to be gleaned from young d/Deaf children on this topic. The first interview that I conducted with one child grew to multiple children sharing their thoughts on Deaf Early Childhood Education in the context of d/Deaf youth slowly losing their collective voice from Deaf Schools around the country. These individual voices show what might be potentially collective ideas about
issues that concern d/Deaf children. Indeed these youth are concerned about Deaf Education and they are interested in having their voices seen. Found along side these views are the overall findings that resulted from conducting this study with d/Deaf children.

**Dissertation Review**

This study originated in my early interest in children's rights, my valuing of child perspectives, and my optimistic belief that there is much to be learned about Deaf Early Childhood Education through the eyes of children. In this study, I viewed Deaf Schools as key sites of enculturation into Deaf Culture and the d/Deaf community and for the formation of a Deaf identity. Unaware just how challenging the research task I set for myself would turn out to be, I forged ahead with the aim of asking what 'd/Deaf kids think about Deaf Education,' in Deaf schools around the country. Gaining entry to conduct research with young d/Deaf children about Deaf Early Childhood Education experiences was challenging, but resulted in an enjoyable, rewarding process. Children made many insightful comments. This dissertation presents the social context of this contemporary study; findings found within the data generated with participants, and conclude with resulting findings from the chosen methodology; as such, I hope that this study will be a guidepost for future research with d/Deaf children.
Emerging Possibilities & Research Recommendations

Early in the research design process I considered potential approaches I could employ to conduct research in a manner that respects young d/Deaf children’s language competencies and power differentials between me as a hearing adult and them as d/Deaf children. I looked for examples from research conducted in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic settings. Research frameworks that address indigenous cultures and languages pushed me towards the visually cued methodology I employed. In addition to the substantive findings presented in earlier chapters, in the course of doing this study I learned some new things about conducting research with d/Deaf children. I discuss implications of these method issues in this chapter.

Creating Visual Research Methods. In consultation with my committee and other Deaf and hearing scholars, I created a child-friendly assent protocol, using video and American Sign Language. The video included me (the researcher) addressing the viewers (the d/Deaf children) of the segment directly, in an office where I do my "homework." This concept was chosen purposefully to describe my purpose for being there and speaking to the participants in a familiar way - like the children in the study, I also had homework to do. The way I explained my role became important during my fieldwork.

From there, I proceeded to show the children the video camera that I would be using to film the focus group interviews, to "help me remember what you say" and that

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9 Most of the “hearing” researchers consulted have been Codas and have been specifically sought as I grapple with my privileged position, accessing two worlds, while researching this subject.
the children could “help” me, but they did not have to if they did not want to. The video ended with the yes/no question that asked if they wanted to participate.

The purpose of an assent simply aims to afford child participants the choice to participate, or not. The children's parents went through a more formal consent process prior, but this more simplified process of assent is important as well. On paper, my assent simply asks the children to talk with me, answer some questions, and watch some videos about Deaf Preschool. I could have shared this exact information (in ASL) and satisfied the Internal Review Board for my university, but I felt the need to be more accessible to the children, while providing the same content. Without explaining why I was doing what I was doing, I considered the children less than informed. In response to this I created the video assent protocol.

Still Image 19: Jennifer signing, "HELP"
Each time I began a focus group the short video was shown to the children chosen to participate. The result provided an immediate response from the children, often "yes" or "sure" and simple *nods* of their heads. The reaction from the children affirming participation informed me that they were comfortable proceeding with the study.

Along with creating a visual assent, I also developed still photo cards with images from the four video segments to refer to in the discussions after the videos had stopped. These still photo cards were not used in every discussion, but became a useful reference when asking the children to recall specific moments in the videos, by showing rather than explaining the moments I wanted them to discuss.

**Storytelling**

Speech Therapy


Reading

Still Image 22: Images from, *Quiet-Time Reading*.
The four still cards included moments that I felt would prompt more discussion if the children were not as responsive as I had planned. Overall these cards were not used with the older children in the focus groups, but were used and seemed to be beneficial with the younger children to assist with attention and recall of the particular individuals and subjects in the videos.

The combination of still photo cards, and the visual-verbal assent video were two main ways in which I created a visual research approach that correlated nicely with the video-cued method adapted from Tobin et al.'s work on *Preschool in Three Countries* (1989, 2009) and *Deaf Kindergarten in Three Countries* (2009). Beyond these visual strategies to research, there were also more practical implementations establishing a visual environment for fieldwork.
All of the interviews occurred onsite at Deaf Schools. I requested the use of a room that included seating arranged in a semi circle around a large screen to display the videos. I had arranged for the screens prior, but not the seating. This type of seating arrangement is often typical of Deaf spaces, as all parties need clear sight line of others in order to communicate. Some school sites provided conference type rooms that included larger tables surrounded by chairs. These settings were accessible for conversing with smaller groups, but proved more challenging to capture all individuals signing on camera. In these settings, I would arrange the seating to angle toward the screen and camera to capture all dialogue in the interviews, and allow for participants to see each other. See Figures 1 and 2 for arrangements.

Figure 3: Participant/Researcher Arrangement without table.
Figure 4: Participant/Researcher Arrangement with table.

The semi-circle around the conference tables was somewhat effective, but in some instances the table allowed for side-talk to occur under the table - as demonstrated by a couple of participants in Chapter Five.

There were moments when these purposefully created environments did not provide adequate visual access. At those times, the children would advocate for themselves and their peers to ensure access. This advocacy appeared when young boys and girls would reposition themselves to include others in the conversation; at other times, a child might be sure others were watching before sharing their response, or repeating my questions for their classmates that did not see the question as it was asked. These small strategies the children used to be inclusive were not unique to one
group, and occurred across the focus group interviews - with little to no prompting of the adults (me or the staff observing).

The combination of these visual features provided appropriate tools and environment to fully engage the d/Deaf child participants in this study. There were minimal (physical) barriers to communication, and participation of the children and researcher during the data gathering (focus group interviews). Another aspect of the study that is important to consider, and a source of additional findings, is how the children perceived me, the researcher, and their involvement in my study.

Why Me? Why Them?

In one focus group, after the children affirmed their participation in the study, I began to introduce myself - including my status as a "hearing" person with Deaf parents. This information immediately prompted one child to ask if I knew another researcher that had visited students at that school prior. He proceeded to say I looked like the other researcher, a male. At that moment, the comparison of me (an extremely pregnant female with long hair) to a male seemed nonsensical. However, I now see this comment as an intuitive observation about similarities in hearing (signing) researchers of d/Deaf children, who both happened to have d/Deaf parents.

The comparison to the other researchers assured me that the children in that group had a better understanding why I was there, but this also left me feeling somewhat uneasy. I wondered if the researcher approached the children similarly; and if the children were considered experts, as I viewed them? These children had been "studied" before and already had ideas of what I was doing there. In this particular focus
group, the children often commented on my agenda, and made attempts to understand who I was - similar to my questions of the researcher that came before me.

I was different from the researcher who preceded me in one more way - I was there doing "homework." As I introduced my purpose earlier in the visual assent (video), I needed the d/Deaf students' help with my homework. This notion remained important in the focus groups as the children saw me as a student rather than another teacher/adult that surrounded them in the school setting. I knew this identification had been in place when at one point a young girl questioned if I had graduated yet. Once I replied that I had not, she assumed I was in college (perhaps due to my obvious adult appearance). This verbal check reassured the girl that I was as she assumed, a student like her.

Beyond my role, the child participants also seemed to consider their own roles in the study. Perhaps due to the small population size, and the over-exposure to being subjects of study (Horejes, 2012) there was explicit caution in one of the groups of children I encountered. In one moment near the end of the interview Paolo asked, "I'm curious, why did you pick the three of us to be here?" This "Why us?" question makes sense; if these children view themselves as typical within the school that is suited for them, then yes, what makes them interesting? In another interview, another child noted that the class in the video clip showed a typical Deaf school. In this study, I wanted the child participants to note and identify what they view be different or the same, or interesting in the videos they watched, however this comment was somewhat problematic because what they viewed as normal also seemed unremarkable. What
was remarkable to them was the fact that these videos existed, and that the children in them were like them (the d/Deaf participants). I was made aware that some of the children recognized other children in the video clips - unsurprising when considering the critical masses of Deaf Schools and students in the country, and the potential for mobility of individual families with d/Deaf children that attend Deaf Schools.

Recall in Visual Methods Research with Children

In one of the earlier focus group interviews I asked the participants directly if they remembered certain aspects of preschool - like what they had watched on the video clips. At these moments, when I directly asked participants to recall experiences in preschool, I got responses, such as "I don't remember." At other moments, however, the children willingly attempted to share earlier schooling experiences and provided detailed examples. One of these detailed descriptions occurred when I asked Alex to compare the approach used by the speech therapist on screen to what he had experienced at that age. Alex then described the antiquated technology used by his speech therapist when he was "little," providing details in the description:

Alex: It was more like a machine I had to work with . . .

Jennifer: A machine?

Alex: It was this box about the size of a shoebox. It had cards you stick in the top of it that made different sounds.

The technique of asking about the past without directly using the term "remember" (i.e., State an example if such a question) became part of the questioning repertoire I used in all focus groups. Alex’s abilities to recall things and actions of his
prior teachers reinforced the notion that d/Deaf children can recall varied aspects of the past, but I had to vary my approach to elicit these recollections.

**The relevance of retrospective practices.** To develop a method for eliciting children’s perspectives on their past and current lives I first explored what other scholars have done. Researchers have been successful in gaining retrospective perspectives, reflections on direct social interactions that occurred earlier in their lives, from (non-d/Deaf) children, ages 9-14 (Singh, 2011) or even as early as 3-3½ years old (Dudycha & Dudycha, 1941). Developmental arguments have been made suggesting that children are readily capable of sharing personal narratives and stories that demonstrate self-construction and self awareness (Eder, 1994). While scholars note the "interdependence between memory recall and the continuously evolving self" (Neimeyer & Metzler, 1994), studies that show children's perspectives on their life experiences and their sense of self and identity can be accessed by researchers in ways that yield useful findings. Researchers like Helen Westcott and Karen Littleton (2005) have shown us that varied tools and media can support the process of inquiry with children. In a study on kindergarten readiness, Lacey Peters (2012) interviewed children and found personal artifacts useful in reconstructing the children's experiences verbally. Creative use of techniques and materials can add to existing methods to improve research with children, and draw attention away from the daunting task of answering to an adult stranger (Danby et al., 2011).

There are some exceptions to the remembering, or recall ability of children in different language and cultural contexts. One contrary example shared by scholars
Weigle and Bauer (2000) poses that d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing adults raised by hearing parents have very vague recollections of early years and "by virtue of later exposure to language, individuals who are d/Deaf yet are born to hearing parents may be expected to have later earliest memories" (Nelson, 1993). On the other hand, d/Deaf children born to Deaf parents are often provided access to language at an earlier age and therefore are able to recall events. d/Deaf children with early language exposure also have a better understanding of themselves in the context of those experiences at an earlier age, more similarly to their non-d/Deaf peers.

**Reflection in practice.** The child participants of this study using video-cued focus group interviews did not often engage in explicit conversation of past events tied to the video segments. There was a brief, nostalgic moment that occurred in one interview with some of the younger participants - those closer in age to their preschool peers on video. This interaction began with my question,

"Did you enjoy watching the movie?" "Yes," an eight year-old girl said. When I asked, "Why?" she said: "It made me think about kindergarten [signs "LOOK BACK"]. Another young boy added, "When I was like a baby my school had the same as this . . . " (He said while walking over and pointing at the toys on-screen). These children were the exception. In general, showing videos of a preschool class did not work to get them to reflect on preschool, although it was just a few years ago; this could be because the children in this study did not remember it well enough to explain, or perhaps they are not interested in reminiscing about their experiences. This, along with other feature limitations of this study is discussed further as considerations for future studies like this.
Limitations of the Study

In some ways this study aiming to use video-cued questioning to elicit reflections of children's experiences of preschool was not successful. The children were often unable or unwilling to express their memories or feelings about their past experiences directly related to the themes in the video clips. However, the study was extremely successful as an approach to gathering d/Deaf children's thoughts regarding the questions being researched.

Beyond the challenges of engaging children to reflect, there were other barriers that I note here, and at other points in this dissertation - the most glaring, my status as a hearing individual. In one way, my status as an outsider could be beneficial in that the children I engaged are truly the experts in Deaf Early Childhood Education and their experiences being d/Deaf. Likewise, the children may have seen me as someone that may need more explanation, because I do not fully understand what it is like to be them. More likely, my status also acted as a deterrent for some children to feel fully comfortable in sharing their thoughts and opinions about some of the more sensitive topics that arose, including (not limited to) speech therapy, and d/Deaf and hearing teachers of the deaf. A major factor that I had hoped would balance some of these status differences was my language fluency and approach with the participants; presenting myself as a student and a member of their community (in language use and direct familial ties). I see future endeavors like these to involve peer researchers that encompass more insider views, from deaf and Deaf researchers that will provide more balance as well.
Other obvious deficiencies of the study are found in the logistics of the methodology - including frequency of engagement and how/who were selected to participate in the study. Increased exposure with the participants beyond one-hour for each of the focus groups would have allowed for gained comfort between the children and myself, as well as more time for the children to digest the content and interact with the group about their thoughts. The challenge of more time and increased occurrences of interviews also lends to over-exposure as well. This could have negative implications if the children no longer want to participate or get bored with the subject.

The demographics of the children in the study do not mirror the larger demographics of d/Deaf children born to hearing parents; most of whom are mainstreamed. Other demographic information that may have some impact on the outcomes of this study is social and economic status of the child participants, and ethnic identities that the children assume. Both of these, along with gender, were not screened for in recruiting participants, but may have some weight in the results. However, these are unknown currently. As a result of the constraints of early recruiting, I had no control over the participants selected to participate beyond the requirement of age (between six and twelve years-old) and the children must have attended a Deaf School or program since preschool/kindergarten.

In review of all possible limitations found in the study, a final barrier occurred in half of the focus groups. In these focus groups, adults joined the children - not as participants, but observers. In the early phases of data gathering I invited staff to attend these sessions if necessary (to school policy), and in two of the focus groups there were a few staff present. These staff refrained from participating, and visibly refrained from
expressing any opinions throughout the focus groups\textsuperscript{10}. The staff sat behind or off to the sides of the group, and in a couple of instances seemed to assist as an ‘intervener’ or one-on-one aid for a couple of children that may have had challenges unknown to me. The presence of adults in these groups may have had minimal impact, but it should be noted that the children noticed their presence. The children in these groups would at times look to the adults for their responses to the discussions and/or the video clips. Without controlling for the involvement of adults joining these interviews, it is difficult to assume the impact and should be considered for future research planning.

**Multiple Implications**

A conscious ethical practice employing visually methods of research (Young & Temple, 2014) allowed me to see the d/Deaf children’s worldview as a fluid experience as they are actively developing their sense of self, and an understanding of the others around them (Bruner, 1987 & 2011). The participants are thoughtfully constructing their lives as Deaf individuals and figuring out what it means to be *Deaf*. Gee’s conception of identity as having four dimensions or layers proved to be a useful frame for my research. Gee’s four layers of identity are *natural traits*, *institutional definitions*, *discursive constructions*, and an *affinity* to others. The d/Deaf child informants in this study displayed such a complex and fluid notion of identity, as they defined themselves in terms of their natural traits (not hearing); the way they are identified by others, positively in Deaf settings, negatively in the hearing world; *discursively*, in the way that

\textsuperscript{10} The staff did converse with one another while the groups watched the video segments, but these comments were signed using minimal space and out of the children’s view. These comments were not included in this study.
use (sign) language to construct a view of themselves and others and of “people who sign and people who speak”; and in terms of their recognized affinity both with other Deaf people and with people who sign.

**General Early Childhood Education and Research with Children.** This study has implications not only for educators and parents of d/Deaf children, but also for early childhood education practitioners working outside of Deaf Education. The video assent script I developed for this study has the potential to replace the verbal assent protocol usually used with children. The pedagogical preferences presented by my d/Deaf child informants have implications for classrooms serving hearing children, practices such as the teacher matching clear facial expressions to words and maintaining clear lines of sight for everyone in the classroom.

**Implications for Deaf Preschools.** This study has shown that d/Deaf children are most concerned with Deaf school as a place where they feel they belong, have friends, and aren’t made to feel “weird.” This contrast the focus most d/Deaf early childhood education specialists put on language acquisition, bilingualism, and literacy. This study does not recommend lessoning the emphasis on language acquisition but rather the need to give greater centrality to d/Deaf children’s social/emotional development. Deaf schools should give more emphasis to scaffolding their students’ emerging Deaf identity, as well as to their language and literacy acquisition.
Implications for the staffing of Deaf schools. There are calls for Deaf Schools to employ more Deaf teachers (Marschark & Knoors, 2012 & 2014; Marschark et al., 2002; Spencer et al., 2000; Johnson et al. 1989). My study, while not suggesting that there is not a need for d/Deaf educators and models in Deaf Schools, shows that d/D children are less concerned with whether their teacher are hearing or Deaf than that that their teachers can sign fluently and act culturally Deaf. As Alex said of his favorite teachers who are d/Deaf: “They respond more Deaf. Like they can catch things, and call us on it when they teach. They almost never use their voice. They always sign, and use a lot of expression. It's interesting.”

Implications of Complicating Binary Notions of Hearing and Deaf. d/Deaf elementary aged students have a fluid and still developing sense of Deaf identity. They define Deafness as signing fluently and acting in Deaf ways, which leaves them (at times) confused, for example, by the fluency and Deaf cultural appropriateness of a Coda. On the other hand, these children express confidence and pride about their Deafness. They were critical of the larger hearing world for it’s inability to communicate with them, but not of themselves for having a lack of ability to speak.

Positive self-identity modeled by these d/Deaf children reflects the environment in which they are being educated, a “safe place.” Signing Deaf schools provide d/Deaf children with a strong foundation for developing a positive self-identity as a Deaf person. This is an argument for keeping Deaf schools open.
Concluding Thoughts

A researcher intent on gaining children's perspectives while addressing subjects that directly implicate children (i.e., Education) researchers must seriously consider the methods used to gain these perspectives. As much as researchers attempt to gain and share insight from a participant, it is always reported through the lens of the researcher (James, 2007). Keeping this caution in mind, researchers should also consider that a child's perspective on matters that directly relate to him/her is imperative and should be actively sought. While addressing potential "pitfalls" a researcher might encounter, James (2007) also reminds us that children have a significant and unique perspective on matters that concern them. While seeking these valued perspectives there are challenges that need acknowledgement, however difficult, these demands on the research can also be telling of the natural state of studies with children. In his study on children's perceptions on media, Tobin (2000) viewed the children's challenges to his position as an adult researcher as an attempt at resistance, and like Corsaro (1985) patiently engaged the children to gain their trust and child-like perspectives.

Scholars may have concern while working with children in research, as there may be doubt of the child's ability to thoughtfully engage in critical thinking and/or the ability to retell or reconstruct past events. Child-focused researchers like Tobin (2000) and Miller (1994) both confirm that children are able to actively engage in constructing and negotiating meaning making. Further, Eder (1994) suggests if there is consideration of a child's emotions (feeling safe and esteem) the child will have a stronger self-concept and be able to express themselves and individual perceptions more readily.
From this study, we have gained new insight from d/Deaf children. Participants like Paolo share adult-like perspectives that include awareness of issues that inform parents’ decisions about which school their d/Deaf kids should attend. Others share their understanding of why they may be subject to speech therapy in and out of class. Striking sentiments were expressed by many about the fear of being alone, surrounded by peers that did not understand them, or could not be understood in the mainstream. The themes addressed throughout the findings of this study lay foundation for future inquiry of research with d/Deaf children in thoughtful ways that engage them. Through the use of open and direct dialogue with these children, educators of d/Deaf children can move beyond the larger binary approaches within Deaf Education, and consider the direct impact of sweeping educational decisions on d/Deaf children.

This study with young d/Deaf children, in design and application, is the first of its kind, and ideally the first of many studies that purposefully include and engage d/Deaf children about Deaf Early Childhood Education. I employed visual methodologies in this study – combining a visual-video assent, still photo-cards, and video-cued interviewing - to create a visual, child friendly qualitative method of research to engage d/Deaf children in matters that impact them directly. The challenges I encountered required me to be flexible in my approach and design of this study with d/Deaf children. The results of this study show that young d/Deaf children like Alex, Paolo, Jess, and many others around the country, are active and willing participants in the discussion of Deaf Education, if we chose to pay attention.
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**APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Verbal Assent – Written English

We want to watch a movie we made about a Deaf preschool? After watching the movie is it OK if we ask you some questions about the movie? We want to know what you think about the movie. Is that OK with you? Do you want to do it? You don’t have to do this if you don’t want to. Do you have any questions?
Appendix B: Visual-Assent (ASL)– English Transcript

Jennifer: Oh Hi! Do you want to see what I’m doing? Come here, and take a look.

This is a movie that I’m watching of a teacher and a student. They are both deaf, and at a deaf school just like yours.

I’m watching this for my homework. I have to do homework for college. I watch the movie and write about it on my computer. I made this movie. I can show it to you. Do you want to watch a movie about deaf kindergarten? You might watch and think it’s like your school, or maybe different. You can tell me what you think. Do you mind helping me with my homework?

Just so you know you don’t have to help me. If you do, I will have a camera like this set up so when you tell me what you think I won’t forget what you say when I do my homework. I can watch the movie of you to help me remember.

Do you want to help me?