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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

The Experiences of Deaf College Graduates:
Barriers and Supports to Earning a Post-secondary Degree

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

in

Teaching and Learning

by

Renate Lilo Ward

Committee in Charge:

> Paula Levin, Chair
> Amanda Datnow
> Tom Humphries

2015

The Dissertation of Renate Lilo Ward is approved, and it is acceptable

in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2015

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my son Tyler, who as a Black Deaf man, was my inspiration to research this topic. And to my mother (Mutti) who has always been the wind beneath my wings (March 25, 1924 – July 23, 2014). You are dearly missed but forever in my heart.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

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I also want to thank my committee members, Amanda Datnow and Tom Humphries for both your teaching expertise in the classes I had with you and for the work you have done to push my thinking and improve my dissertation. I am grateful to the faculty I have had the opportunity to learn from over the last four years. I also want to thank my cohort members Alex, Shannon and in particular Ivette, who as another math teacher, understood my struggles, and the interpreter who volunteered her time and services to interpret four of the videotaped interviews.

Finally, I want to thank my mom, who in life and death cheered and spurred me on in everything I did in life including this journey; my children who always believed in me; my good friend, Gustavo, who would not let me think of giving up, and William for helping out with last minute editing.

***

Educational quotes at the beginning of chapters four to seven were retrieved from http://www.brainyquote.com.

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Abstract of the Dissertation

The Experiences of Deaf College Graduates:
Barriers and Supports to Earning a Post-secondary Degree

by

Renate Lilo Ward

Doctor of Education in Teaching and Learning

University of California, San Diego, 2015

Paula Levin, Chair

This qualitative methods study draws on Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, 1991), specifically intersectionality and microaggressions (Sue, 2010), to understand the experiences of Deaf college graduates in terms of the supports and barriers they recalled during their post-secondary education. Much of the research on deaf students in higher education pertains to White deaf students enrolled at colleges that have been organized specifically for deaf students or at mainstream settings that service a large population of deaf students. Little research has focused on the experiences of Deaf students in colleges that serve only a few deaf students.

The study participants included 15 Deaf individuals who graduated from one of three types of universities: Gallaudet, mainstream, or mainstream with a deaf program (mainstream/DHH). A semi-structured, open-ended interview was used to elicit Deaf graduates' recollections of their undergraduate college experiences in regards to supports

and barriers, as well as the ways in which aspects of their identity, other than deafness, emerged during that time. In hopes of gaining insight into how Deaf college graduates make sense of their post-secondary experiences, and how these experiences vary by identity and institutional factors, this study addressed three questions: 1) What do Deaf college graduates identify as supports or hindrances in their college experiences?; 2) how do these perceptions of supports and barriers vary by the type of post-secondary institutions they attended, whether it was a college for specifically for deaf students, or a mainstream setting?; and 3) What other features of their identity, (e.g., race, class, sexual orientation, and gender) in addition to deafness do they identify as having affected their college experiences?

The study yielded three findings. First, there are no institutional or social supports that are not, for some people and in some contexts, also barriers and vise versa. Secondly, each type of post-secondary setting provided supports to the participants but, what are perceived as barriers, varied across the three types of environments. Finally, the structural and cultural features of a Deaf student's university affect which facet of one's identity becomes more salient.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of all adults of every age?

Erich Fromm

Problem Statement

While there is extensive research on college retention of students without hearing loss, comparatively little research has been done on the factors that contribute to the retention of deaf college students. This is an important topic, as approximately 70% of registered students with hearing impairments depart from college before obtaining their degree (Schroedel et al. 2003). Particularly, there is little research on the retention of Deaf adults as experienced from their point of view. In addition, we could benefit from a better understanding of how Deaf students make sense of their college experiences in terms of their intersecting identities, that is, when deafness intersects with other identities such as race, gender, age, class, and sexual orientation. My research interests lie in this area of intersecting identities as well as Deaf students' experiences across a variety of post-secondary institutional settings.

Chappel (2013) noted in her research on Black deaf females that the lived college experiences of multi-dimensional groups have not been adequately addressed and so she chose to focus her study there. She investigated the impact of the intersecting identities of deafness, race, and gender on persistence in college at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, N.Y. Williamson (2002) studied successful African American deaf college graduates at a Northeastern predominately White college that

serves a large number of deaf students. These two researchers have contributed to our understanding of the lived experiences of deaf students with intersecting identities; however, they did not include in their studies students with other identities in mainstream settings, such as universities who service only a handful of deaf students.

Smith (2002) investigated the perspectives of deaf college students in mainstream postsecondary institutions, although she did not explore the experiences of Deaf individuals with multifaceted identities. While there has not been much research on the lived experiences of Deaf college students, these studies are a start. These studies provide a preliminary understanding of these lived experiences, but the phenomenon has not been systematically examined across institutions nor have researchers studied ways in which other social factors intersect with the various aspects of people's identities.

The exact number of Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing students enrolled in the nation's postsecondary institutions is difficult to obtain because this group is limited to those who identify themselves as such to the institution they attend. The Postsecondary Education Programs Network (PEPNet) needs assessment conducted by the National Technical Institute for the Deaf estimated that by 2003 there were over 25,000 deaf students in postsecondary programs across the United States (Billies, Buchkoski, Kolvitz, Sanderson & Walter, 2003). According to Marschark and Convertino (2008), more than 31,000 deaf students are enrolled in a variety of educational institutions in the United States at the postsecondary level.

Richardson, Marschark, Sarchet, and Sapere, (2010) indicate that most deaf students currently attend mainstream postsecondary institutions. According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Education (1999), approximately 83% of deaf students are

in mainstream classes at least part-time. In these settings, students can take advantage of the support services available, to varying degrees, which allow for access to discussions and activities within the classroom. Students with disabilities, specifically deafness, face greater challenges at the postsecondary level than do other underrepresented minority groups. These challenges often result in withdrawal from higher education. Seventy percent of Deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in college do not complete college degrees and this figure has not changed markedly over time (Albertini, Kelly, & Matchett, 2012; Stinson, Scherer, & Walter, 1987).

In explaining this phenomenon of deaf students moving into the academic mainstream settings, Padden and Humphries (1988) note that most deaf children went to separate schools until the 1960's. The attendance at schools for the deaf has been steadily declining since of the introduction of Public Law 94-142 - Education of All Handicapped Children Act, now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. Because of this law, all children, including children with disabilities, have the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education or FAPE. Therefore, the number of students in the schools for deaf students declined and the number of deaf students in mainstream classes rose. Now, with the technological advances and decreased risks of cochlear implants even more deaf students are found in the mainstream setting. A cochlear implant is an electronic device implanted into the brain that provides sound signals to the auditory nerve, bypassing the damaged part of the cochlea, thus allowing for sound perception (ASHA, n.d.).

This movement from separate schools for deaf students into mainstream educational programs also occurred at the postsecondary level in the United States where

only two federally funded postsecondary institutions are available exclusively to undergraduate students with a hearing loss, namely Gallaudet University in Washington, DC and The National Technical Institute for the Deaf at the Rochester Institute of Technology (NTID). Most postsecondary institutions serve only a small number of Deaf students. Some programs, such as those found at the California State University at Northridge and Rochester (NY) Institute of Technology, provide education to larger numbers of Deaf students. Gallaudet, the only university in the world established specifically to accommodate students who are deaf (gallaudet.edu/about_gallaudet/fast_facts.html). Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), is a private university which houses nine colleges and includes the National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID), a technological college for deaf students (http://www.ntid.rit.edu/about). RIT itself has more than 1,200 deaf students living among approximately 13,000 hearing undergraduate students on its campus (http://www.rit.edu/overview/rit-in-brief). With a 70 % attrition rate for those with a hearing loss, these students need more support to reach their goal of obtaining an undergraduate degree.

Lang (2002) indicates a need for continued study in the area of support services for deaf students, with a particular focus on what motivates deaf students to use these services and what occurs when they are not used. In the United States a study on the effect of the mainstreaming of young deaf children and their success at the postsecondary education level may be helpful. Based on my review of the literature, more research is needed on how deaf students experience obstacles and barriers, and how that may vary by the type of postsecondary institutional context in which deaf students study. Secondly,

more research is needed on how multiple-dimensional aspects of identity are perceived by deaf students as affecting their post-secondary experiences. Learning from successful Deaf graduates about their experiences and the factors they perceive to have played a role in their post-secondary success can inform policies aimed at improving Deaf students' retention rates.

This study is significant in three ways: 1) It addresses a little-researched phenomenon: Deaf adults who have successfully earned a four-year college degree in a variety of post-secondary settings including the mainstream setting or a Deaf post-secondary institution; 2) its findings may have implications on policies and supports aimed at Deaf students' postsecondary experiences; and 3) it contributes to research on Deaf education and college retention of Deaf students.

Researcher Positionality

It is important to acknowledge personal experiences and relationships that may affect the research process including my choice of research questions and data collection strategies, as well as the interpretation of the data. Some of these possible biases were controlled for and some are assets to the process.

I believe I have three main assets as aspects of my positionality. As a hearing person, I have been involved in the Deaf community over the past 30 years in many roles: as a parent of a Deaf child, as the spouse of a Deaf adult, as a teacher of the Deaf, and finally as the Deaf and hard of hearing (deaf) school psychologist at the elementary level in my current position. Through all these roles, the education of Deaf children has always been my passion. I also know that many of my former students do not obtain a college degree, and many who register at a postsecondary institution drop out even when

attending colleges with large numbers of Deaf students. Having been involved with the Deaf community for so long, I have been able to develop and refine my skills in American Sign Language (ASL).

I came to this research fluent in ASL and I am able to conduct the interviews without the mediation of an ASL interpreter. I am connected to the Deaf community through my past and current careers, through family members, and through friends I have made and cultural activities and social events in which I have participated over the span of 30 years. These experiences have given me insight into the Deaf community and its culture. Therefore, I believe that I have developed a sensitivity to Deaf culture and Deaf people. I believe that this group is underserved and oppressed. I expected that having this knowledge, understanding, and ability to communicate directly with the interviewees, helped the participants feel comfortable and at ease, allowing them to speak freely about their experiences.

While these three assets could be helpful, there were also some challenges that needed to be considered. In thinking about my positionality, I needed to ensure that these connections to the community did not introduce unhelpful biases to the researcher, such as being overly positive, not taking a critical stance, or making assumptions based on my experiences. I needed also to be sure that the types of questions I asked were thought provoking and that I approached to the data with a critical eye. In the methodology chapter, I discuss the specific measures I have taken to reduce bias in data collection and analysis.

Definitions

It is important to define the terminology that is used in this study in order to avoid confusion.

The Terms Deaf and deaf

"Deaf" with a capital D, refers to individuals with a significant hearing loss, who identify as members of the Deaf community with its history, culture, traditions, norms and values, and use ASL as their primary mode of communication. When "deaf" is written with a lower case d, it refers to people with hearing loss who do not see themselves as part of a linguistic minority group. It also is used when referring to the medical condition of hearing loss. The identity of people with hearing loss is a complicated because most deaf individuals are born to hearing parents. Their Deaf identity does not develop through their parents, but instead through Deaf adults, Deaf peers and schools for the deaf. For some of the participants, at different points in their lives they thought of themselves as deaf and later identified as Deaf. Some of the participants' identity changed depending on the context. Therefore, in this study, I use "Deaf" when referring to the participants because through the recruitment process they self-identified as culturally Deaf. I use the term "deaf" when references are more general.

The Term Sign and ASL

In this study the term "sign" will be used to refer to any of the several communication methods that may be used by people with a hearing loss. One method is Signing Exact English (SEE), a manually coded system that uses exact English word order and signs that represent exact English words that do not exist in ASL. Some ASL

vocabulary is borrowed. Another method, Pidgin Sign English (PSE) is a combination of

ASL and English.   ASL, however, is a distinct language that does not map exactly to

English because the syntax is different and some signs do not have English words.

Therefore, the term ASL is used in this study to identify the language used by culturally

Deaf individuals in the United States.

Chapter one introduced the study by providing the problem, the significance of

the study, and the researcher's background. Chapter two highlights literature that

informed the study, as well at the theoretical framework that was used in the analysis of

the data collected.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Learning is not attained by chance; it must be sought for with ardor and diligence.
                                                                                Abigail Adams

This review of literature examines research relevant to retention of deaf and hard of hearing (hereafter referred to as "deaf") students at the postsecondary level. The research focuses on the effectiveness of support services including mediated instruction, communication preference of students in a special or mainstream postsecondary institution, personal, social-emotional, and precollege factors, as well as effective instruction. Although previous research has told us some things about the college experience as it relates to retention, we need to further explore these experiences. I also review the literature on critical theory. I use this theoretical lens to analyze intersectionality and its impact on the experiences of the 15 Deaf participants. Intersectionality is the study of the multiple forms of oppression that intersect marginalized groups such as race, class, gender, disability, and sexual orientation, to name a few, and how the intersection of these identities relate to social inequality (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011).

Tinto's Theory of Persistence and its Critics

Tinto is the founding father of the Persistence Theory, a theory of attrition and persistence dating back to 1973. Tinto (1993) wrote that, on average, half of all students who enroll in a four-year post-secondary graduate within five years of entry. However, that leaves 50% who depart before graduating. Tinto stated that there were five areas that

contributed to students' persistence in obtaining a degree at the postsecondary

educational level. These include pre-entry attributes such as family background and prior

educational experiences; goals and commitments including the student's desires and

institutional objectives; institutional experiences, which may include faculty interaction,

peer group interaction, participating in co-curricular activities, and academics; social and

academic integration; as well as intentions and external commitments (Metz, 2004).

These factors are all seen as influential in a decision to depart or to continue on towards a

degree.

The dominant assumption in Tinto's theory is the importance of social integration

with the post-secondary institution. Tinto stresses the importance of individuals

assimilating into their institutions, and he places the responsibility for this assimilation on

the student. His work suggests that those who persist in college are those students who

are integrated both academically and socially. According to Tinto (1993) this

assimilation requires "breaking away" from one's past in order to become integrated into

the college culture. Guiffrida (2006) argues that the intent of Tinto's model was to

"describe developmental progression within a culture rather than assimilating from one

culture to another" (p. 451). The latter would be the case for minority college students as

predominantly White colleges and universities are based on Eurocentric ideals and

structuring. Many researchers object to Tinto's model because it does not address aspects

of identity and persistence as they pertain to minority groups (Maldonado, Rhoads, &

Buenavista, 2005).

In reaction to the limitations of Tinto's model, especially as it pertains to students

of color, scholars have modified his theory in order to address the issue of persistence of

minority groups. Multiculturalists' focus is on the institution and the monocultural aspects of the college, which include practices, policies and structures. These institutional aspects can alienate minority students (Rendón, 1994) including Deaf students. Deaf students fit in this category because they are members of a cultural group that includes all the characteristics of cultural groups including shared norms, values, and beliefs, as well as a shared language and assumptions about the world. Multiculturalists urge universities and colleges to create a culture that reflects the diversity within their campus, thus allowing students to make a connection with the institution.

Another critique comes from Maldonado and his colleagues (2005), who claim that both social integrationists and multiculturalists do not address student or group agency in mediating the college environment. These authors agree that students need to be connected to their college and the university culture should reflect diversity; however they claim student agency is also key to persistence in college. Maldonado and his colleagues (2005) looked at how student run organizations, such as the Student Initiated Retention Project, can have a positive effect on the development of programs and supports available to minority students with goals of increasing retention and academic success. Maldonado et al. (2005) believe these student-led efforts are a response to attacks made on affirmative action and the low retention rates of students of color. The conceptual framework that the researchers used included such notions as cultural capital, social capital, collectivism, and social praxis, ideas that are more applicable to underrepresented populations of college students.

In summary, Maldonado et al. (2005) remind us that research on persistence in higher education still shows that underrepresented students having difficulty completing

college. In response, researchers have questioned the dominant retention theories, such as Tinto's Persistence Theory.

By calling it a persistence theory, Tinto highlights individual characteristics of the students that lead people to persist in their postsecondary education. When a student fails, he places the responsibility on the student's inability to integrate academically and socially in the college setting. Others who write about college retention look at the features of the organization that either supports or restrict students. Institutions, as they are currently structured, do not succeed in retaining the majority of marginalized students. These researchers believe that the onus is on the organization to reflect the diversity of the student body thereby allowing these students to feel a connection to the institution. This questioning of the dominant theories of retention has resulted in studies that use theoretical frameworks that attempt to address the particular experiences of students of color and other underrepresented groups. Studies on the retention of Deaf students lag behind those of other underrepresented groups.

Disparities in Retention

Much research has been done on the schooling of underrepresented groups, especially their college retention. Research has studied the disparity in college entrance rates and degree completion for Caucasian and African American students (Newman & Newman, 1999). Newman found that in 1993, 13% more Whites entered college than did Black high school graduates and in 1994, 16% more Whites completed their degrees than Blacks. The Campaign for College Opportunity (2013a) indicates that, compared to other groups who enroll in college in California, Blacks are more likely to leave without obtaining a degree (see Figure 1). In predominantly White institutions, 70% of Black

students leave before obtaining a degree. In historically Black institutions, however, only 20% do not complete a baccalaureate education (Davies, et al. 2004).

Educational Attainment of California Adults 25 Years of Older

	California	Black	White	Latino	API
Bachelors degree or higher	30.3	23	39.3	10.7	47.9
Associates degree	7.7	9.3	9	5.3	7.4
Some college no degree	22.1	32	25.6	17.9	15.3
HS diploma or equivalent	21.1	24.3	20	24.6	15.1
No HS diploma or equivalent	18.9	11.4	6.1	41.5	14.3
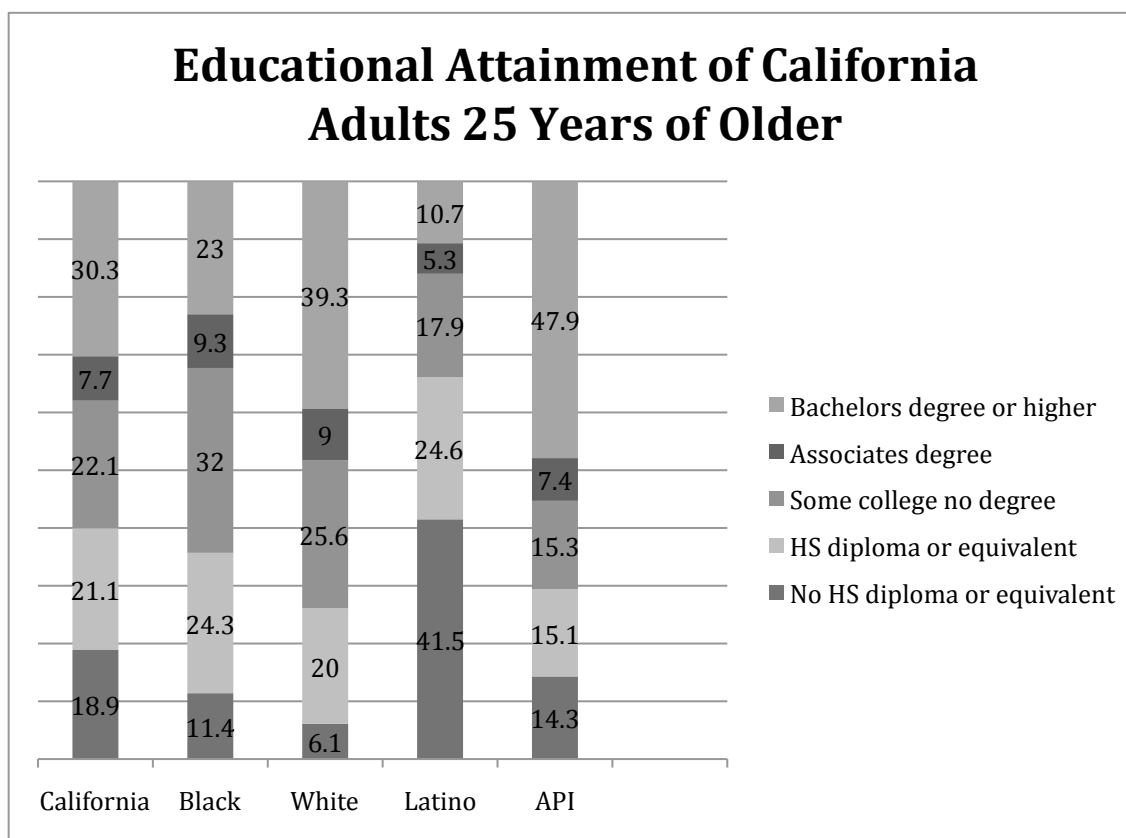
Figure 1. Educational Attainment (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013. p.5)

The Campaign for College Opportunity (2013b) also reports that, although Latino high school graduates enrolled in college at a higher rate than their White peers in 2012, Latino college students were less likely to obtain their undergraduate degree. Statistically, Latinos are less than one-third as likely as their White counterparts to obtain a bachelor's degree. Only 11% had earned a bachelor's degree, while 39% of Whites had.   In 1994, the disparity between Whites and Latinos was 18% (Newman & Newman, 1999).

Comparatively speaking, there are significantly fewer research studies on college retention of Deaf students. Because of their specific needs, deaf students face challenges at the postsecondary level that other underrepresented minority groups do not experience. These challenges may include securing the right supports, such as classroom note takers, sign or oral interpreters, tutors who use sign to assist with coursework, and assistive listening devices (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Other challenges may include, but are not limited to, academic and social difficulties and/or feeling disconnected from the college culture. These challenges can result in withdrawal from higher education (Boutin, 2008). Seventy to 75% of deaf and hard of hearing students who enroll in college do not complete college degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Marschark, Lang, and Albertini (2002) report that, of enrolled deaf students in two-year degree programs across the United States, only 35% graduate. Interestingly, only 40% of their hearing peers graduate as well. There is not a major difference between the two groups. However, in four-year programs, only 30% of deaf students eventually graduate. The U.S. Department of Education (2014) reports that 62% of first-time, full-time White students completed their degree within 6 years.

The Current State of Research on Retention of Deaf Students

Much of the research in the area of college retention looks at characteristics of deaf people to understand why they leave college at a higher rate than other populations. This research focus matches the Tinto persistence model.

Factors Affecting Persistence

Deaf students in the United States come to elementary school with a variety of backgrounds. Data from the Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and

Youth (2009-2010) conducted by Gallaudet University since 1968, shows that, of the deaf students receiving special education services throughout the nation, 77% of children with a hearing loss are born to hearing parents. Less than four percent have both parents who are deaf, and most of these children learn American Sign Language (ASL) as a first language. Approximately four percent have one hearing parent and one who is deaf or hard of hearing. Previous estimates have been 90% hearing parents and 10% one or both parents being deaf (Mitchell & Karchmer, (2002).

Many deaf children have parents who sign very little or do not sign at all and, therefore, only learn ASL in school. Still others are raised using spoken English, cued speech, Signed Exact English, or speech and sign simultaneously. These students may learn ASL at a later time in their life. Parents chose the form of communication used by the deaf child. Parents also chose whether their child is in a mainstream public school setting or a separate day class in a public school with or without partial mainstreaming, or they may send them to a special school, which can be residential or a day program. How parents respond to having a child with a hearing loss obviously affects the experiences of the child.

Therefore, deaf students enter college with a variety of experiences and academic levels that may affect how they approach the challenges they face in college and their academic achievement. Although academic preparation is an important factor in success at the postsecondary levels, many deaf students who are academically prepared withdraw from college especially during the first year (Albertini, Kelly, & Matchett, 2011). Other factors beyond academic preparedness have been associated with success and persistence

in the mainstream setting and have been investigated through research at the upper elementary and high school levels as well at the college level.

Luckner and Muir (2001) conducted interviews with 20 successful deaf students who were in the general education setting most of their school day, their parents, and those who worked with the students. They identified ten themes that emerged from these interviews. These students were in the upper elementary and high school grades and had hearing loss in the severe-to-profound range. Nine students used the oral method of communication and the others used some form of sign. Parents, students, teachers, interpreters, and paraprofessional note takers were interviewed and the students were observed in the general education setting.

Participants identified several factors that contributed to the success of these 20 deaf students. The themes included such factors as family involvement, friendship and extracurricular activities, high expectations and self-advocacy skills, collaboration and communication among various teachers and service providers (Luckner & Muir, 2001). Although generalizing is problematic due to the limitations of the study (one group of students in one state), the themes give insight into the traits, supports, skills that may contribute to the success of deaf students in mainstream settings. These themes, though derived from a study of students in elementary and high school mainstream classes, may add to our understanding of what contributes to the success of Deaf college students.

Other researchers have investigated organizational factors that contribute to the academic success of deaf students. While Luckner and Muir (2001) looked at factors that contributed to success in mainstream classes prior to entering college, another group of researchers investigated what they termed "personal factors" of deaf students who were

in college. These factors are intrinsic to the deaf student, whereas the Luckner and Muir (2001) factors are extrinsic to the student with the exception of self-determination.

Albertini, Kelly and Matchett (2011) investigated these personal factors, which affect the academic success of deaf college students. These factors, they claim, contribute to the academic achievement and persistence of a group of academically underprepared students in their first quarter of college study. The results of their study indicate that overall, the successful students were confident in how to access and use the variety of support services offered at their institution. In the areas of "skill" (e.g., identifying services and preparing for tests) and "will" (e.g., anxiety, motivation, and attitude), the students perceived these factors as areas of weakness. Those students who were assessed as stronger on the Motivation for Academic Study scale (e.g., study habits, attitude toward teacher), the Will component, and the Self-Regulation Component (e.g., time management) had higher GPAs than those who were assessed as weak in these areas. These personal factors, for this particular group of students, affected their academic performance and possibly their subsequent persistence.

Stinson, Scherer, and Walter (1987) also looked at factors of persistence among deaf college students at the National Institute for the Deaf (NTID), schools for deaf students much like a community college in that bachelor's degree is not granted. They studied the effect of 1) mainstreaming, 2) high school achievement, and 3) high school activities on achievement and communication skills. Achievement and communication skills were thought to impact academic and social integration in college for the students in this study. The three factors were considered in light of Tinto's conceptual model of persistence in which, according to Tinto (1993), the central aspect of the model is that the

quality of a student's interaction with the academic and social systems of an institution affects persistence.

Stinson et al. (1987) found that deaf students with greater social satisfaction were more likely to persist. Students who engage in a large number of extracurricular activities and were further from home were more likely to withdraw.   Students who lived closer to home were more likely to participate in college activities so this was found to be associated with persistence as well. Correlations were found between high school and college achievement tests' scores and grades; however, the link between GPA and persistence was not significant. This finding is contrary to previous research with hearing college students and might be due to the specific characteristics of the NTID environment. NTID has a preparatory program for incoming students who are not yet ready to enter a baccalaureate program, as well as offering associate and bachelor's degree programs, and master's and PhD programs through one of the other eight colleges of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). There are also numerous supports for those students experiencing academic difficulties. These conditions may have contributed to this finding. Stinson et al. (1987) hypothesize that as academic demands increase, when students move into more demanding programs, grades may come to affect persistence more. The particular dynamic by which increases in academic demands and grades affect persistence is an area that needs further exploration.

These studies suggest that personal factors, such as a desire to complete college and self-discipline, contribute to persistence in college, along with a student's academic preparation. Other factors such as family involvement and social skills were perceived by students in mainstream elementary and secondary classrooms as contributing to their

academic success. The research on the social and emotional factors that have been found to affect college retention of deaf students is discussed in the next section.

Social and Emotional Factors

Social and emotional factors can become barriers to a student's overall social satisfaction. Stinson et al. (1987) found that deaf students with greater social satisfaction were more likely to persist in college. Research has been conducted in this area to further understand the challenges deaf students face as they transition to college.

Both hearing and deaf students may experience social and emotional difficulties, especially during their first year. However, Deaf students may be assumed to experience more a problematic social adjustment as they transition to college. Lukomski (2008) investigated this question in a study on students' perceptions of their transitional experience. The study included 205 deaf students and 185 hearing students. The data were analyzed on the independent variables of deaf or hearing and nine dependent variable or scales. These nine dependent variables included discouragement, worry, body image, anger/aggression, alcohol, overall trouble, home, school, and coping.

The findings indicated that significant differences were found between the deaf and hearing groups in two of the nine areas. One finding was that the Home Stressors scale was significantly higher for the deaf group compared to the hearing students. Also the Coping Difficulties scale was significantly lower for the deaf students. Lukomski (2008) notes that this finding contradicts what the researcher might expect, considering the low retention rate for deaf college students. Lukomski states that having good coping skills does not guarantee persistence; nonetheless, the two may be related. He also hypothesizes that deaf students may perceive their coping skills as higher due to the

obstacles they must surmount in order to get into college, or that the students did not have a realistic view of their true coping abilities. The other seven areas showed no significant differences between the deaf and hearing groups. Gender differences were found in that women scored higher on the worry scale and the body image scale, whereas men scored higher on the anger scale. Deaf women had more worry than all other groups; however, hearing women's ratings were not significantly different from men's ratings in this area.

Lukomski (2008) suggests that social-emotional adjustment adds yet another layer of complexity to persistence and retention. More studies are needed to explore how these perceived social-emotional factors influence retention rates of deaf college students. One way institutions have dealt with possible social-emotional adjustment issues is to provide student support services.

Support Services and Retention

For all students, receiving support can contribute to successful retention in college. Deaf students share some of the needs with other underrepresented groups, but they also have their own specific set of needs when they are studying in mainstream college setting. For deaf students, support services are also important in terms of access and specialized support. According to Lang (2002), tutoring, academic advising, note taking, and real-time captioning are some of the most common types of support services provided to deaf students. Deaf students with additional challenges (e.g., dyslexia) may not always receive the appropriate support to be successful in college (Rydberg, Gellerstedt, & Denermark, 2009).

Another support that is vital to access is interpreting in the student's preferred mode of communication (e.g., ASL, Signed Exact English). In mainstream colleges and

universities deaf students depend on a third party, the interpreter, to access information. Studies have suggested that direct instruction is superior to instruction mediated through an interpreter (Davis, 2005; Winston, 2005). However, another study looked at the mediation issue and had different results. Marschark, Sapere, Convertino, and Pelz (2008) investigated classroom learning of deaf students receiving a lecture from a deaf instructor while hearing students received the lecture through a skilled interpreter or a novice interpreter. The study showed, through content-specific pretest scores, that deaf students enter college level courses with less content than their hearing peers. Posttest scores indicate that they also leave the courses with less content; however, when prior knowledge was controlled, posttests showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups. The study suggests that mediated instruction is not necessarily inferior when using an experienced, skilled interpreter.

Marschark et al. (2008) conducted a second experiment where hearing instructors who were able to communicate directly with both deaf and hearing students presented a lecture. In this experiment one lecture was presented using simultaneous communication (SC), where spoken English and sign are used at the same time, as the direct instruction modality for both the hearing and deaf groups. The other lecture was presented in spoken language for the hearing and oral deaf students, with voice-to- sign interpreting for signing deaf students. The effect of prior knowledge was again controlled. The results indicated that although oral deaf students score lower than signing deaf students and signing deaf students scored lower than hearing students, the results were not significant.

In a third study, Marschark et al. (2008) looked at the effect of two hearing instructors presenting lectures in SC verses ASL. Again there were no significant

differences in student learning from either instructor. A fourth condition was examined to find out how deaf and hearing students learn with an instructor who has native fluency in the students' primary language. This instructor was a native signer as a hearing child of deaf parents (referred to as a child of deaf adult or CODA). This instructor presented two lectures, one in ASL and the other in spoken English. Each group of students received both lectures. Interpreters were provided for the hearing and deaf students whether it was voice-to-sign or sign-to-voice. Although there were differences, as hearing students did better in all conditions, there was not a significant effect due to instructional mode.

This set of studies has important implications for practices involving deaf college students. Although deaf college students enter the classroom with less prior knowledge than their hearing peers, access to classroom instruction is not hindered by the communication method used by the student. However, the experience and quality of the instructors and interpreters can impact learning.

Barriers with Mediated Instruction

Indeed an ineffective interpreter can be a barrier to learning; in addition, other aspects of using an interpreter can erect potential barriers. Because there is a lag time with the use of interpreters, instructors in mainstream classrooms also need to be cognizant of barriers to participation for deaf students. Richardson, Marschark, Sarchet, and Sapere (2010) suggest, based on their study of deaf students in mainstream and separate classes, that deaf students may be more sensitive to the pace of instruction. This sensitivity is a result of the lag time of a few seconds behind the instructor's spoken language in mediated instruction. This lag time can result in a disinclination to ask or

answer questions as hearing students may have answered questions before the interpreter has finished asking them or the teacher may have already moved on.

Seating arrangements in the classroom and the number of speakers participating in the discussion can also create barriers to participation. In addition, communication preferences have also been found to have the potential to create barriers for deaf students' learning.

Communication and Language

Richardson et al. (2010) compared communication preferences of students who attended a post-secondary college for deaf students, National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), and those who attended a mainstream university setting, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). Sign, speech and sign, or notes were the preferred communication choices among NTID students when communicating with hearing peers. When with hearing peers, RIT students preferred using an interpreter or speaking for themselves (speech). When communicating with teachers in the mainstream classes, NTID preferred speech and sign or sign only; however, RIT students preferred speech. NTID students who were in classrooms where the teacher signed stressed the importance of mutual understanding more than RIT students who were mainly concerned with avoiding communication breakdown and maintaining effective communication. The latter used interpreters in the classroom and reported some frustration in both these areas while NTID students had the tendency to overestimate their comprehension even with a shared mode of communication. In addition to Richardson's study on communication preferences, others have studied the difficulties students may have with other aspects of communication at the collegiate level, such as reading and language.

Cuculick and Kelly (2003) confirmed in their investigation of deaf students'
reading and language scores that academic preparation is important to success in college.
The researchers investigated graduation patterns of 905 deaf students attending NTID
between 1990 and 1998. They also compared the graduation rates across various degrees
offered at this institution for deaf students. In their study, deaf college students who had
higher reading and language skills graduated with a baccalaureate or associate degrees at
higher rates. Students who read at 10th grade reading levels or above had the highest
percentages earning a baccalaureate degree. However, their research also indicated that
even those with good academic preparation withdraw from college. Eighty percent of
students who read at 9th to 12th grade reading levels and had good language skills did not
succeed in obtaining their AAS or BS degrees. These findings suggest that academic
preparation is not the only factor that affects students' decision to withdraw from college.
What other factors have been found to contribute to low attrition rates?

Effective vs. Ineffective Teaching

The effectiveness of the instructors who teach deaf college students was also
found to be a factor affecting student outcome. Richardson et al. (2009) found that deaf
students at NTID reported a desire for teachers who were skilled in content areas, could
communicate effectively, and were warm and sensitive. Mainstreamed RIT students
were concerned with the pacing of teaching and their reluctance to ask questions, likely
due to their reliance on interpreters but both of these concerns contributed to what they
perceived as quality teaching skills and instructors' content knowledge. Marschark et al.
(2008) found that learning was independent of whether instruction was delivered directly
by the teacher or through an interpreter. The authors suggest that the findings may

indicate that mode of communication is less important than the quality of the instruction for deaf students.

Lang, Dowaliby, and Anderson (1994) identified "critical incidents" in their analysis of effective and ineffective teaching. These incidents were recollections about classroom experiences of learning at the college level. Diversity and adaptability were two components of effective teaching that were found among the deaf students but not typically found in studies with hearing students. This finding indicated that students preferred teachers who could communicate in a variety of ways (e.g., signs clearly, uses facial expressions, body language and mime) and incorporate a variety of teaching strategies into their instruction. Other salient characteristics of effective teaching that were identified in this study included flexibility, willingness to help, warm and friendly, provides reinforcement and feedback, uses visual aids, involves students in learning activities, provides clear lectures and explanations, relates lessons to the real world, and is fair with course policies.

In summary, these research studies increase our understanding of the factors that lead to success of deaf students at the post-secondary level. Although we have some understanding of the characteristics that students possess as they enter college, as well as the organizational characteristics, such as interpreters, effective teaching, and support services utilized by deaf students, we also need to look at the deaf individuals as persons with intersecting identities. Intersecting identities refers to the concept that an individual's identity is multifaceted (Crenshaw, 1991). It is important to recognize that deaf individuals' identity can include other facets such as race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and class. Critical Race Theory is one of the theoretical lenses that allow us to take

this view. The next section introduces the theoretical framework that informed this research study. After a brief overview of Critical Race Theory, this section includes a discussion of one component of this theory, intersectionality. The section concludes with a review of the literature on deaf students with intersecting identities at the post-secondary level.

Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality

Previous research studies about the experiences of deaf students at the post-secondary level have used a variety of theoretical frameworks to inform their studies. Smith (2004) used an ecological perspective to understand deaf college students' experiences. This perspective focuses on the interrelationships between people and their environments. Specifically, she focused on the immediate settings in mainstream colleges. In addition, Chappel combined several frameworks in the research on Black deaf women at the college level, one of which was critical race theory.

Critical theorists are concerned with issues of power and justice. Class, race, gender, the economy, and matters of race, along with ideologies, discourse, education, religion, and culture all contribute to their analyses because these factors interact with each other to construct the social system in which we live (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). Critical Race Theory is a theoretical lens used to examine social inequity such as race as a factor of inequity, the property issue, critical race theory and education, and the intersection of race and property. It is also used to theorize race so it can be used as a tool to analyze school inequity (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The field engages in emancipatory action research. This research is conducted by and for those who care most about what they are studying with a goal of changing the underlying structures of

oppression. It is entrenched in dialogue with the disempowered in order to empower (Ledwith, 2007). Critical Race Theory uses narratives and counter-stories to illustrate social inequities that can be used to examine the strengths and weaknesses of events in the educational setting, and this information can be used to improve instruction (Chapman, 2007).

A central construct within Critical Race Theory is intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality focuses on the intersection among different forms and experiences of social subordination that confront individuals who are members of marginalized groups. Intersectionality is a description of the way these multiple memberships are experienced by the individual. Because of the relevance of intersectionality to this study, Critical Race Theory provides a useful framework with which to examine deafness and its interactions with other forms of subordination. One might ask why not use the existing application of Critical Race Theory to Deafness, caleld DeafCrit as a theoretical lens. There are several reasons for this choice. The major tenet of DeafCrit is Audism, a term created by Humphries (1977) to capture the erroneous notion that that people are superior due to their ability to hear or act like a hearing person. The central assumption of audism is to mold Deaf people to fit into the hearing world by acting like a hearing person (Gertz, 2003). Gertz argues that DeafCrit theory follows from Critical Race Theory in that the oppression that Deaf people experience matches other forms of subordination such as race, gender, and sexual orientation. DeafCrit theory looks at the meaning of deafness within the context of audism only (Gertz, 2003). One of the defining elements of Critical Race Theory is the focus on race and racism along with the intersectionality of other forms of subordination (Barnal, 2002). In this research study, the concept of

intersectionality focuses on deafness and other forms of subordination, by explored how these other forms of subordination and other aspects of identity impact Deaf graduates experience at the post-secondary level.

Hankivsky and Cormier (2011) discuss intersectionality as a concept, which allow us to recognize that "identities such as race, class, gender, ability, geography, and age interact to form unique meanings and complex experiences within and between groups in society" (p. 217). Crenshaw (1991) addresses intersectional identities in her research on women of color and violence against women. She applied this framework to explore the experiences of women of color and how their intersectional identities, that is being both a woman and "of color," overlap and produce marginalization within both groups. Crenshaw (1991) addresses three types of intersectionality as it relates to women of color. These include structural intersectionality, political intersectionality and representational intersectionality.

Crenshaw argues that structural intersectionality refers to the way in which these women's location within social systems produces experiences that are qualitatively different, due to the intersection of race and gender, than those of White women. Political intersectionality refers to the political agendas of the two groups that are often not the same, namely feminists and antiracists, and how this further marginalizes the issues of women of color by ignoring their unique intersecting experiences. Finally, representational intersectionality looks at how women of color are represented in our society through the culturally constructed view created through avenues such as the media, text, and discourse. She argues that this can become yet another source of disempowerment due to the intersection of race and gender.

Deaf students, as with many other underrepresented groups, may have multiple marginalized identities in terms of the intersection of the race, class, gender, and sexual orientation with their deafness. Research has examined intersections of race and class, disability and gender or race, and gender and race (Peterson 2006); however, few studies have been done over the last two decades that examine intersectionality with deafness, and even fewer studies have been done at the post-secondary level. There are high attrition rates of people of color in the United States and even higher rates for those whose minority status intersects with a disability, specifically deafness.

According to Feintuch (2010) in 2000, 11 Black students entered Gallaudet University, a university designed for deaf individuals. Six years later, only one had graduated, a 9% graduation rate. After implementing a new program in the spring of 2008 called Keeping the Promise: Educating Black Deaf Males (KTP-B), six students graduated and 76% of Black deaf men who started at Gallaudet in the fall of 2009 remained at the university through the academic year. This program came to fruition after the university was cited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in 2007 and put on probation partly due to its high attrition rates of minorities. In 2010 there were 1,784 students enrolled at Gallaudet. Blacks made up 10% and Hispanics made up 11% of that enrollment.   According to Feintuch (2010), in 2009 NTID's enrollment included a similar statistic: 10% Black students and 10% Hispanic. More research is needed to further our understanding of the college experiences of deaf students and the intersection with race, class, gender and sexual orientation.

Researchers and post-secondary practitioners need to hear the stories about educational experiences of deaf students and how their intersecting identities impact

them. In an attempt to better understand the phenomenon of multiple stigmatized

identities, both Williamson (2007) and Chappel (2012) addressed this issue in their

dissertation research. Williamson (2007) conducted a study with Black deaf college

students who had successfully graduated from a four-year mainstream college. Nine deaf

African American men and women participated in the study and all held bachelor's

degrees from a predominately White college that serves large numbers of deaf students.

Using a multiple case study design, her research explored protective factors in the family,

postsecondary programs, and community in addition to individual characteristics, and the

schools' role in the resilience of this underrepresented group. These factors, she claims,

contributed to both the academic preparation of these students prior to entering college,

as well as their ability to persevere in their efforts to earn their undergraduate degrees.

Williamson's (2007) interview-based study resulted in seven major findings. She

found that all the families provided protective factors that contributed to the students'

success in college; the student possessed individual characteristics that both prepared

and enhanced their ability to succeed; while in elementary and secondary school, both

Black and White teachers had a positive impact on their achievement academically; help

transitioning from high school to college or for the next step after graduating, was

minimal; the colleges did not provide any help or support with social and academic

integration; the Vocational Rehabilitation agency provided the most information on

colleges and financial support; and in terms of academic achievement, protective factors

had more influence than the demographics of the family.

Chappel (2012) investigated the complexities of being a Black Deaf female at

National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), a postsecondary technical college for

deaf students. Twenty-five deaf women were interviewed in the study. Chappel found

that these women were able to successfully manage in what she termed an "invisible

space" that was occupied because of their deafness, race, gender, or social class. The

prominence or "invisibility" of each identity was fluid, depending on the situation. Many

of the women felt they had more difficulties than students who were White, male or

hearing. These women perceived themselves as multidimensional and their multiple

identities shaped their experiences in college.

According to their accounts of their college experiences, they experienced

instances of microaggressions on campus in the form of racism, sexism and audism. Sue

(2010) describes microaggressions as,

> …The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or
> insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile,
> derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their
> marginalized group membership (p.3).

Many participants in the Chapple (2012) study noted that they vaguely felt

discrimination but were not sure if it was real or imagined. They believed that their

intersecting identities affected how others including staff, faculty, and other students

viewed them on and off campus. Some women spoke of being confronted often about

their racial identity, particularly if bi-racial, and others were confronted about their sexual

orientation or their unwillingness to accept traditional gender roles. Those women who

primarily communicated in sign also experienced feelings of being ostracized on the RIT

campus by White hearing peers, White deaf people, and oral deaf peers.

Difficulties with communication led them to feel disconnected from the college

community, which for some had a negative impact on their academic achievement.

Variations in sign or communication styles can create division among the deaf students.

Difficulties due to faculty without sign skills or knowledge of Deaf culture also caused

communication issues. The lack of responsiveness of the faculty and administration to

their complaints led some students to feel that their voices were silenced. The geographic

location of NTID on the RIT campus physically separated the deaf students. Even within

the dorms for the deaf students, White deaf peers said they feared being in areas where

Black deaf students congregated. Despite the challenges these women faced, they were

able to successfully remain in college.

Chappel (2012) argues that empowerment and self-determination helped these

Black deaf women persist in the face of the challenges encountered in college. One

source of support was the other Black deaf women they came to know on campus, and

with whom they formed alliances. Many of the women identified a person on whom

they could rely for support. Many were mothers or mother-like figures. Having the goal

to pursue a better life also helped them cope with the challenges and resist leaving

college. Ultimately, many of these women felt their options for post-secondary

education were limited and at NTID the pros outweighed the cons.

These two studies informed this research project in several ways. Williamson

(2007) used a multiple case study approach utilizing interviews to allow participants to

share their stories. The participants were from a predominantly White college that serves

a large population of deaf students and is located in the Northeastern part of the United

States. Chappel (2012) also conducted interviews, as well as focus groups and

observations in her study. Williamson, like Chappel, studied only Black deaf students at

one type of post-secondary setting available to deaf students. These are two examples of

studies of the lived experience of successful deaf students at the postsecondary level. However, more research needs to be conducted in a variety of post-secondary institutional settings and with deaf students with their intersecting identities.

Summary

The research discussed in this chapter addresses multiple factors that contribute to the educational experiences of Deaf college students. The research emphasizes the importance of support services for matriculating deaf students, social-emotional adjustment difficulties with the transition to college, and the impact of effective instruction on deaf students, and communication and language issues. In more recent years, researchers have begun to take an interest in the intersecting identities that exist along with deafness, and how retention rates are impacted by the experiences of these students.

The research on college retention of deaf students primarily relied on interviews to explore the lived experiences of Deaf students through their undergraduate years at universities that serve large populations of deaf students (Chappel, 2012; Luckner and Muir, 2001; Williamson, 2007). Other studies have used surveys, questionnaires or existing college statistics to gather data for their study (Albertini, et al., 2011; Feintuch, 2010; Richardson et al., 2009). All the studies took place at one or more of three post-secondary locations: Gallaudet University, NTID, or RIT, thereby limiting the scope of research on the experiences of Deaf students by omitting the experiences of Deaf students at more mainstream post-secondary settings. In addition, only a few have taken a critical perspective and looked at multiple intersections of Deaf individuals (Chappel, 2012; Williamson, 2007). By contrast, this research study used a critical perspective lens and in

particular the concept of intersectionality to explore Deaf college graduates' recollections of their college experiences in a variety of post-secondary settings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose

This study of 15 Deaf college and university graduates was designed to elicit their recollection of their post-secondary experiences. More specifically, these college graduates recalled their lived experiences of their undergraduate education, highlighting barriers that could have disrupted their path to the completion of their program, along with the supports that helped them to persist. The goal of this study was to examine how the perceptions of these graduates varied across their different institutional settings, and to consider what other aspects of their identity, which intersect with deafness, were perceived to affect their undergraduate experiences.

Studies of deaf students in higher education often focus on the experiences of White deaf students at three prominent post-secondary institutions that serve the deaf population. These include Gallaudet, Rochester Institute of Technology, and the National Technical Institute of the Deaf. In addition to the experiences of those who attended schools that serve larger groups of deaf students, it is important to examine those who are matriculating in programs that serve only a handful of deaf students, as well as the experiences of Deaf students of color. Research on other under-represented groups often includes people of color matriculating at predominantly White colleges and the challenges they face there. Among African Americans, approximately 70% of these students leave predominantly White colleges without a baccalaureate degree as opposed to 20% withdrawing from historically black institutions (Davies, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg,

Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, and Thompson, 2004). Might this phenomenon be similar to the experiences of deaf students at predominantly hearing colleges and universities? In any case, with approximately 70% of registered deaf college students dropping out before completion and an even higher percentage for deaf students of color, it is imperative to understand what contributes to the successful completion of a degree for deaf students.

Research Questions

This study used a qualitative approach to answer the overall research questions: How do Deaf college graduates make sense of their post-secondary experiences, and how do these experiences vary by identity and institutional factors? In attempting to answer these questions, the following three questions were considered:

1. What do Deaf college graduates identify as supports or hindrances in their college experiences?

2. How do these perceptions of supports and barriers vary by the type of post-secondary institutions Deaf graduates attended, whether it was a college for specifically for deaf students, or a mainstream setting?

3. What other features of their identity, (e.g., race, class, sexual orientation, and gender) in addition to deafness do they identify as having affected their college experiences?

These participants' recollections were expected to be informative about possible changes at the secondary level that may help to better prepare Deaf students for college. Their recollections were also expected to provide insight into institutional changes that could be implemented to better support Deaf students at the postsecondary level.

Research Design

This qualitative research examined the supports and barriers Deaf graduates perceived as impacting their experiences during their undergraduate college years. Researchers have successfully used qualitative methods to research college students who are Deaf (Chapple, 2013; Foster, 1996; Smith, 2004). According to Glesne (2011), this method allows for structures such as social, economic, cultural, environmental and/or political, to be used as lenses through which to examine individual experiences and the relationships between these structures of the individual's experiences.

The primary research methodology used was individual interviews. The open-ended questions asked the participants to recall their experiences during their years in the postsecondary institution where they received their baccalaureate degree. Questions focused on participants initial impressions of college life, and each subsequent year that they matriculated. The stories elicited from the participants included accounts of challenges and barriers that they faced during their undergraduate years.

Data collected through the interviews were used to explore how these Deaf adults' lived experiences in a variety of postsecondary settings supported persistence and gave voice to an often-silenced population. This method was chosen because it best suited the research questions by providing the opportunity for expansion of responses and for clarification when necessary, thereby allowing a fuller examination of the topics of college experience.

Recruitment

Given the population of people who meet the criteria of being over 18 years of age, possess an undergraduate degree, identify as culturally Deaf, and use ASL as their

primary mode of communication, the potential number of candidates for participation in

the study was relatively small. Emails were sent to the Disability offices of several

graduate programs with Deaf Studies and Deaf Education programs, asking them to

distribute recruitment letters to current Deaf graduate students in their programs (see

Appendices G and H). Emails were also sent to websites (see Appendix I) asking them to

post the recruitment letter on their webpage. I also posted the recruitment letter on my

own personal FaceBook webpage and contacted several deaf individuals that I know

asking them to recommend possible participants. These initial recruitment steps resulted

in a list of potential candidates, and then a snowball sampling method of recruitment was

used where participants were asked to assist in identifying other potential subjects

(LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a). An email was then sent to possible participants (see

Appendix E) asking for their participation.

Methodology

Open-ended/Semi-structured Interview

The individual interview is the primary source of data used in this study. I

developed open-ended, semi-structured interview questions for the individual interviews

(see Appendix A). Open-ended interview questions are valuable in a study because the

interviewee can describe their opinions or experiences in their own words. By giving the

participants the opportunity to respond however they choose, valuable information can be

gained that might not have been if closed-ended questions were used. With open-ended

questions there are neither right or wrong answers nor yes or no responses. The goal is to

elicit in-depth responses that provide a rich description or explanation. With semi-

structured interviews, an interview guide is developed and used to keep the participant on

track. This guide is followed, usually in a particular order, asking open-ended questions on topics the interviewer wants to cover. However, it is flexible in that the interviewer is able to follow relevant trajectories introduced by the interviewee if deemed appropriate (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). At the core of these questions were the social, emotional, and academic challenges and supports that were experienced by these graduates. The interview questions were designed to also explore the participants' perceptions of the campus climate and faculty relations' during their undergraduate years.

Interviewing Methods

Once participants had been identified and I secured contact information, I arranged for a time and place for the interview with the participant. Participants were recruited from across the United States and therefore distance posed an obstacle for face-to-face interviews. When in-person interviews were not feasible, interviews were conducted by means of video technology for the deaf, known as a Video Phone. This technical equipment allowed for direct access to the interviewee using a television or computer. The interview portion of this qualitative study consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions that were used as a guide. Because all the interview content was semi-structured, its direction took the lead from the participants themselves. No follow-up interviews were necessary. Instead, email was used to clarify or obtain more information as needed. I am proficient in the use of ASL, and I conducted the interviews using this mode of communication, as participants all used ASL as their primary mode of communication. However, one post-lingual Deaf participant (meaning she became deaf after acquiring language) requested that I conduct the interview in spoken English due to carpal tunnel in her wrists. Because she was postlingually deafened her speechreading

skills and speech were good. She also benefited from the use of cochlear implants, which she used for the interview.

Data Reduction Process

Each interview session was video recorded. ASL interpreters were not utilized in any of the sessions. The video recordings were imported into the transcription software program, Inqscribe, and transcribed into written English. Half of the videos were transcribed using a dictation software program in which I dictated the translated ASL into spoken English. The other videos were transcribed without the use of this software. This translation from ASL to English raises issues about accuracy of translation. American Sign Language does not have a written representation and because I am not a native user of ASL, an ASL interpreter translated three of the videos into spoken English. I also transcribed these three videos into written English and then compared them to the interpreter's translation to check for validity. I also asked the participants to review the interviews for accuracy. One interview was conducted in spoken English, and it was, therefore, not necessary to translate before transcribing into written English.

Data Analysis Process

The data analyzed included the interview transcripts and fieldnotes taken after each interview or after each review of the video. Each transcript of a participant was considered separately as a case. Each of the 15 interviews was imported into Dedoose, an analytical software program. Initially, I analyzed each interview independently using apriori codes from previous research in a top down process (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b). Therefore, I already had themes and preexisting codes such as institutional and social barriers and supports that guided my analysis and interpretation. As I viewed the

videos, a bottom up analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b) revealed new codes.

Categorical codes were assigned within the preexisting codes, such as "campus services",

and sub-codes were created, further refining the codes. A recursive analytical process

occurred where these new codes were then applied to all future videos, and previous

videos were reviewed and recoded until the process was complete. Then findings of the

individual interviews were then compared and contrasted to the findings of the others.

The findings across institutional context were also compared. I looked for patterns and

connections, as well as similarities and differences across the students and the

institutional settings. As each new case was compared to the others and linkages and

relationships were established, my tentative findings were refined by the new

information. This process continued until all cases were compared.

Efforts to Reduce Bias in Data Collection

My positionality, as a researcher with deaf family members and ties to the deaf

community through friends and colleagues, created a potential for bias in data collection.

There were five steps I took in order to minimize the effects of these aspects of my

positionality. First, I was especially careful in my question construction by conducting a

pilot study with deaf students, who were currently attending a post-secondary institution,

thereby testing the questions I planned to use for my individual interviews. Second, I

asked the pilot study participants for feedback about the clarity of the questions and their

appropriateness and relevance to the college experience. Next, I asked the research

participants to review their personal transcripts for accuracy. In addition, I asked

professional ASL interpreters to transcribe videotapes, which I compared to my transcript

to ensure accuracy of the translation to written English. I also asked colleagues in the

field of education to read portions of my transcript and using my codebook, identify

codes and themes. I then compared the coding across coders, looking for agreement, to

ensure inter-rater reliability of the coding process.

Confidentiality

Every attempt was made to insure the confidentiality of participants of this study

by confining identifying information to the participant and myself, the researcher.

Consent forms, transcripts and any data related to the research remained either in a

locked cabinet in my work office or saved on the password-protected computer in my

home for the duration of this study. Participants were made aware that video recordings

of the interview would be destroyed at the end of this study; however, audio recordings

were retained, with the participant's consent, for possible use in classroom or educational

conference presentations. Participants will be notified when the material will be used for

educational purposes, beyond the doctoral defense, and they can chose not to include

their data.

Participants

This study included 15 participants. By responding to my recruitment flyer, these

individuals self-identified as culturally Deaf, which listed this characteristic as necessary

for inclusion in the study. However, it turned out that not all of the interviewees had

identified themselves as culturally Deaf while in college. Several participants reported

that they developed a culturally Deaf identity after college. According the Padden and

Humphries (1988), the use the uppercase "d" in Deaf is used when referring to deaf

people who share a language, American Sign Language (ASL), as well as a culture. By

this definition, Deaf individuals use ASL as their primary mode of communication,

identify as members of the Deaf community and as such, view themselves as a linguistic minority rather than a person with a deficit or disability.

The participants in this study were between the ages of 22 and 45 years old. Two individuals' ages were not provided during the interview, and despite attempts to gain this information through email I did not obtain their ages. These two participants' ages were calculated by estimating their age of graduating from high school at 18years, then using the dates they provided in regards to their years in college and date of graduation. The mean age of the participants is estimated to be 31 years of age at the time of the interview.

The interviewees provided information on their current careers. One-third of the participants are currently in graduate school pursuing a master's degree. More than a quarter of the participants are currently teachers of deaf students (27%), and approximately one-eighth (13%) of the participants currently describe themselves as "homemakers". At the time they were interviewed, the remaining four participants were a financial analyst, a certified deaf interpreter, a freelance photographer, and unemployed.

Six of the 15 participants studied at the university designed to accommodate the needs of the Deaf and hard of hearing population, Gallaudet University. Four participants went to a university that had a deaf program designed to facilitate mainstreaming for these students. Two of the participants went to the same program on the West Coast while the other two participants went to such a program on the East Coast. One of the students attended a university that had a small program for deaf students for one year before transferring to the university with the larger deaf program.

And finally, five students graduated from a university that had few other deaf students; however, in different departments of study.

Table 1 provides demographic information regarding how many students attended the three institutional settings in terms of gender.

Table 1. Participants by Gender and Institution

	Gallaudet	Deaf Program	Mainstream
Male	2	1	2
Female	4	3	3

Of the 15 students, five were male and 10 were female. Two male participants graduated from Gallaudet and mainstream settings, and one graduated from a university with a deaf program. Females were more prevalent in the study with one-third attending Gallaudet and one-fifth each attending a university with a deaf program or a mainstream setting.

Two of the participants (13%) had Deaf parents. The remaining 13 interviewees (87%) had hearing parents. Due to this familial factor, the participants varied in how they communicated while in college (see Table 3).

Table 2. Preferred Communication by Institution

	Gallaudet	Deaf Program	Mainstream
American Sign Language	5	3	2
Pigin Signed English	1	0	0
Oral	0	0	3
Other	0	1	0

As Table 2 shows, two-thirds of the participants communicated in ASL when they entered college. All three of the oral students graduated from mainstream settings. Two of these three were not aware of Gallaudet or universities with deaf programs. One participant reported that she was not even aware of ASL or any other signed communication system. One student's communication system is identified as "other" because, in her words, "I was signing a whole bunch of BS."

Based on the participants' self- reporting of their ethnicity, just under three-fourths (73%) of those interviewed identified themselves as White. Slightly more than one-eighth (13%) of the graduates identified as Asian, with one being Chinese and the other being Korean. One participant identified as Latina and one identified as African American. Table 3 below represents the self-identified ethnicities of the 15 participants.

Table 3. Self-Identified Ethnicity by Institution

		Gallaudet	Deaf Program	Mainstream
White		4	3	4
African American		1	0	0
Asian	Korean	1	0	0
	Chinese	0	1	0
Latina		0	0	1

I end this chapter with an introduction to the 15 participants. I have given each participant a pseudonym based on the institution they attended. To make identification of institution attended by the participant more easily recognizable by the reader, pseudonyms of participants who are alumni of Gallaudet begin with the letter A (e.g. Alisha). Those participants who graduated from programs with deaf programs have pseudonyms beginning with the letter B (e.g. Brad) and those who graduated from mainstream universities have pseudonyms beginning with the letter C (e.g. Carl). In this way, the participant's institutional affiliation should be easily identifiable by the first letter of the pseudonyms of the participants.

Albert

Albert is a 31-year-old African American, Deaf man, who graduated from Gallaudet University. Albert was born to hearing parents but he was not the only deaf person in his family. Despite having a genetic factor for his deafness, his parents had never met any of his deaf relatives. All of Albert's immediate family learned to sign

ASL when he was a baby. Albert was mainstreamed in elementary school. He transferred to a deaf residential program for high school because the high school mainstream program was not strong, according to him. For the first two years of high school, he attended this school full-time and lived in the dorm, although he went home on the weekends to be with his family. For the last two years of high school he attended the public schools' mainstream program in the mornings and the deaf program in the afternoons. He continued to live in the dorm. Albert's mother never went to college and his father left before the end of his first semester. Albert's sister persisted for seven years in order to complete her degree, an achievement, which served to motivate Albert to complete his degree despite the challenges he faced.

Ashley

Ashley graduated from Gallaudet University. Her identities encompass being a White, Deaf woman who is also a lesbian. She is the only child born to her Deaf parents, and ASL is her first language. Both of Ashley's parents began college but departed after the first year. Ashley attended a school for the deaf prior to entering college. She was mainstreamed part-time for two years in high school without other Deaf peers until her last year when she moved from the East to West Coast without her parents and resided in the dorm. Ashley is currently working towards her master's degree in education.

Audrey

Audrey is a 22-year old who also graduated from Gallaudet and self-identifies as a White, feminist, Deaf woman. She was born to Deaf parents and went to a school for the deaf through high school. She took advanced classes for college from seventh grade through her senior year. In high school she was mainstreamed part-time at the nearby

public school where she took AP classes that transferred as college credit. Those kinds of classes, she believes, prepared her for writing papers and research papers. Audrey's father has an undergraduate degree. Her mother received an associate degree. Audrey grew up knowing she was going to go to college no matter what because, as she noted, if she did not go to college she would not get far in life.

Allison

Allison is a 32-year-old, White Deaf female who also graduated from Gallaudet University. Prior to attending Gallaudet she attended a community college, although she did not complete her associate degree. She then worked for 8 years before deciding to return to a four-year college and obtain her degree. Therefore, she entered college as an older student. She married while in college and lived off campus with her husband.

Alisha

Alisha is a 38-year-old Korean American woman, born deaf to hearing parents, who graduated from Gallaudet University. Before attending college, she graduated from a small deaf, mainstream high school program where she used an interpreter. Her mother uses some signs and her father mostly uses gestures to communicate with her. Both were born in Korea so their first language was Korean but they also know English. According to her she grew up using Pidgin Signed English (PSE). Her sister went to college before Alisha graduated from Gallaudet. The sister encouraged Alisha to go into the medical field as she had done, but after taking science classes, Alisha felt it was not the right choice for her. She reported that she chose Gallaudet because of the campus environment that included ASL Deaf culture, and full access to communication in class and in social settings.

Andrew

Andrew is a 25-year-old White, deaf male who is an alumnus of Gallaudet. He grew up attending a residential program for deaf students   for the elementary level and transferred to a mainstream setting for grades six through nine. He transferred to a school for the deaf for the last three years of high school where he lived in the dorm. Born to hearing parents, he is the only deaf person in his family. His mother, however, was involved with his elementary program so she learned to sign along with her son. His father most often used home signs to communicate with him. He reported that, at home, a mixture of English Sign Language (ESL) and ASL were used. His mother had an associate degree but he is the first in his family to receive a baccalaureate degree. He indicated that getting a college education was the only way to get a job that would provide for a good future. In addition, his parents encouraged him to achieve what they had not, a BA degree.

Beth

Beth is 36-years old who lost her hearing at the age of 14 after a serious bout of meningitis. She now self-identifies as a White, Deaf woman. However, when she began college, she could not communicate in ASL and said that she had a hearing identity. She began her college career at a community college and then transferred to a university with a deaf program. It was there that she developed her Deaf identity after struggling to fit in with the Deaf students who attended the program. With the help of a Deaf student who mentored her in moving towards a Deaf identity, she found her niche with the Deaf community at her university.

Briana

Briana is a 23-year-old who graduated from a Mainstream/DHH program. She is a woman who identifies as Chinese Canadian. Her hearing parents are from Hong Kong although they had relocated to Canada where she was born. According to Briana, her identity oscillated between Deaf and hard of hearing, depending on with whom she is interacting. She uses hearing aids, which she says benefit her. She took speech therapy as a child and can use both spoken English and ASL. Her mother knows how to sign well but her father only signs a small amount. Because she can speak well, she mostly uses speech with her parents. Briana's family moved to the U.S. where she attended a deaf residential school for preschool through grade two where she learned ASL. But her family was not happy in the United States so they moved back to Canada where she attended another school for the deaf. In high school she commuted to the same deaf school but she was mainstreamed for advanced classes.

Barbara

Barbara is a 27-year-old only child, born deaf to hearing parents. She identifies as a White, Deaf woman. She and her parents communicated in ASL. She went to deaf school until the sixth grade. She then transferred to middle and high schools that had large deaf programs. She was mainstreamed for a few classes in middle school but once she reached high school she was mainstreamed for all her of her core classes. By her sophomore year in high school, she started to think about college and possible majors for the future. Barbara graduated in 2006 and went directly to college where she spent seven years. She began at a program for deaf students, which is much like a community college, as it does not award bachelor's degrees, before transferring to the mainstream

program on the same campus. She spent four years at the first program and three years at the latter.

Brad

Brad is 40-years-old and was born deaf to hearing parents. He self-identifies as a White Deaf /deaf male depending on the hearing status of the person with whom he interacts. When his parents learned he was deaf, they placed him into an infant program where Pidgin Signed English was the mode of communication. His parents also learned PSE. Because he attended a deaf day school, Brad used PSE at home and ASL at school. Beginning in the second grade Brad attended the deaf school until midmorning, and then he was transported to the hearing school where he was mainstreamed for the afternoon. During his junior high school years, Brad went back to the school for the deaf full time, but for high school he returned to a mainstream program for first two years. Brad transferred to the Deaf school for the final two years of high school, the school from which he graduated. Brad initially enrolled in a university near the West Coast, which had a small number of deaf/Deaf students and a small deaf program. He transferred to Mainstream/DHH program and graduated almost seven years later. He left the program for one year after not being able to manage his academic responsibilities with his social life. When he returned to that college he had a renewed sense of purpose to complete his degree.

Colleen

Colleen identifies as a White Deaf female. She is 29-year-old and grew up oral in a hearing family and was mainstreamed throughout her academic career before college. She also graduated from a fully mainstream university. She benefitted from hearing aids

and used spoken language at that time to communicate. She did not have services during her academic career prior to entering a post-secondary institution; if she did not understand something, she would talk to the teacher. She was very motivated to learn. The teachers all knew she had a hearing loss. Colleen felt prepared academically for college because she took difficult AP classes in high school. She wishes that she had had more confidence in herself to advocate for her needs in obtaining more access to communication during that time. For example, movies in class were not captioned. She missed everything and just tolerated it. She never thought to ask the teacher for captioning although she knew about captioning on television. She was the oldest in the family but the first to go to college. While in college she developed her Deaf identity.

Carl

Carl is 24-year-old, and identifies as a White deaf male. He is the middle child of three and the first of the siblings to receive a college degree. Being the only deaf member of his family he grew up oral in a small rural town in a state located in the southeast. He did not begin to sign until 16 years of age when he began to meet other deaf people. Carl was mainstreamed throughout his elementary and secondary education, without accommodations, except for an FM system and preferential seating. He graduated from a mainstream university and, as with his schooling prior to college, he remembers having few campus support services. His father completed his education at the master's level, while his mother graduated high school and began college but did not graduate.

Christopher

Christopher is a 38-year-old White Deaf male born to hearing parents who learned ASL after they learned of his hearing loss at birth. His sibling also learned ASL. He

attended a mainstream school from Kindergarten through high school with an interpreter. During his sophomore year in high school his parents relocated near a school for deaf students. At that time he went to public school for most of his classes and attended the deaf school for one class in order to interact with deaf students to improve his language skills. He attended college in a mainstream setting directly after graduating from high school, using an interpreter and a note taker as accommodations.

Cathy

Based on Cathy's year of graduation and the duration of her attendance in college, she is about 28 years old. Cathy self-identifies as Caucasian and graduated from a mainstream university. She attended a public school that had a large deaf program where she was mainstreamed with other deaf students. She attended this program from Kindergarten through high school, and her classes included both mainstream classes and separate classes taught by deaf or hearing teachers using ASL. Cathy was born to a hearing mother, an immigrant to the United States whose first language was not English. Her mother signed but was not fluent in ASL. Cathy indicated that they tended to use a total communication approach at home, which included English and ASL.

Courtney

Courtney is a 45-year old female, who identifies as Latina and Deaf. She grew up oral as the only deaf person in her hearing family. She attended Catholic schools without accommodations throughout her pre-college education. She attended college, despite a lack of encouragement from her high school counselor or her parents. She had no knowledge of sign language or Deaf culture when she began higher education. She attended community college for seven years where she met other deaf students. She

reported that these students were also discriminated against due to others' perceptions that deaf individuals are less capable than hearing individuals. Her community college experience sparked her interest in becoming an advocate for the deaf. She took ASL and became involved with the Deaf community and developed a strong Deaf identity. After completing two associate degrees at the two different community colleges, she transferred to a four-year mainstream university, where she completed her bachelor's degree. In addition, Courtney completed her master's degree in the field of Social Work.

The following chapter describes these 15 participants' recollection of their experiences during their undergraduate years in college.   In their narratives, they discuss the supports and barriers they perceived as affecting their experiences during those years, from those first impressions upon entering college until they graduated.

Chapter 4: Recollections of Supports and Barriers

I know what it feels like to struggle to get the education that you need.
Michelle Obama

Research has shed light on our understanding of Deaf students' perceptions of supports and barriers at the postsecondary level. Lang (2002) and Richardson et al. (2010) investigated campus services, particularly interpreters, and how they serve as supports and potential barriers. Lang et al. (1994) studied the effectiveness of the instructors who teach deaf students in higher education. Luckner and Muir (2001) interviewed deaf high school students in mainstream settings and found factors they perceived as important for their success in the educational setting. Stinson et al. (1987) examined factors that were responsible for students' persistence in the college setting. These studies have added to our understanding of persistence among deaf high school and college students. However, these studies were either conducted at a single site, namely NTID, RIT or Gallaudet or they were a comparison of the mainstream setting of RIT with the institutional program for deaf students on the RIT campus, NTID. Smith (2004) interviewed deaf students from four mainstream colleges and identified factors in the academic and social environment that contributed to perceived satisfaction and success.

This study investigates and compares three postsecondary settings: Gallaudet, universities with large deaf programs, such as RIT; and mainstream universities with only a handful of deaf students. From the perspective of individuals with intersecting,

marginalized identities, these Deaf graduates shared their narratives about the supports

and barriers they experienced in one of these three settings. These stories allow people

who work with people like the participants in this study to become cognizant of realities

other than the dominant narrative of the White, middle-class deaf male in the college

setting. The results of this study provide information that postsecondary institutions that

serve deaf students can use to work toward change.

Based on interviews with the 15 Deaf college graduates, I was able to learn what

the participants identified as supports and barriers during their college experiences. The

interview questions were written to elicit the participants' views about the various

supports and barriers they experienced during the undergraduate years in order to answer

the first research question: What do Deaf college graduates identify as supports and

hindrances in their college experiences? There is one overriding finding: There are no

institutional or social supports that are not, for some people and in some contexts, also

barriers. The reverse is also true. At the institutional level accommodations, professors,

and other campus staff members that are typically considered supports were also

identified as barriers. Additionally, social networks, such as family and friends were

recollected as both supports and barriers. This chapter begins with the institutional

supports and barriers the participants remembered as part of their overall college

experience.

Institutional Supports and Barriers

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 guaranteed the provision of

accommodation services for students who are deaf in educational institutions. According

to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2011) note takers, interpreters, real-time

captioning and tutors are common accommodations. A response survey was conducted

by the U.S. Department of Education of students with disabilities at two- and four-year

postsecondary institutions for the 2008-2009 academic year. The findings indicated that

the most widely used accommodation was note taking (87%). More than half (65%) of

the students polled used sign language interpreters. Approximately half (56%) of them

used tutoring services. One in three students chose real-time captioning to access spoken

language (36%) and oral interpreters were used by about a quarter (28%) of those who

participated in the survey.

In this study, nine of the participants (60%) used interpreters, the most widely

used accommodation. Accommodations were used less often at Gallaudet than university

with or without a deaf program. Of the 15 graduates, close to half of them (47%) used

note takers. Approximately a quarter (27%) chose to use real-time captioning. Three of

the participants took advantage of tutoring services, two received help to improve their

English skills, and two accessed mental health counseling. One participant made use of

preferential seating and a FM system (a type of wireless technology that helps a person

with a hearing loss understand speech better in noisy situations). One student reported

having an oral interpreter until she learned ASL sufficiently to access language.

The next section describes the main supports participants perceived to be helpful

as they pursued their degree, as well as the barriers that they believed made college more

challenging for them than for college students without hearing loss.

Campus Services

Interpreters.   Deaf students who attend universities other than Gallaudet require

the use of an interpreter or another accommodation to access the spoken language used in

the classrooms. They must make a request for such services through the university's

Office of Disability Services. If students do not make the request, interpreters are not

provided. This responsibility is the student's. One participant in the study, Cathy, who

graduated from a mainstream university, arrived to her very first class and there was no

interpreter present. She reported that her high school or the college orientation staff had

failed to inform her of the need to contact the Office of Disability Services and make

them aware of the accommodations she required. Having attended a deaf program within

a public school setting, Cathy reported that typically she would show up for her

mainstream classes and the interpreter was already there. When she had afterschool

events or activities, the high school arranged for the presence of interpreters. So she was

surprised that, in the large state university that she graduated from, she was not identified

in some way as being deaf, an identification that would enable these services to be

automatically provided. Cathy described her surprise when she realized that she was

responsible for securing the accommodations she needed in college, as she recounted her

first days:

> They never informed me! I didn't know what I was supposed to do. No
> one contacted me. (Laughing) Funny because I did apply and go to the
> open house. I did have an interpreter there. When I was accepted and
> registered there was nothing on the computer screen to click to say that I
> need an interpreter. Nothing! I thought it was the same as high school
> and I would have a paper with my name and on the bottom it said DEAF.
> So I thought, but then I showed up at my first class and sat down and
> realized there was no interpreter! Shoot! So I found out about the
> Disability Office.

Most interpreters listen to spoken language then interpret what is said into some

form of sign, primarily ASL. However Beth, who graduated from a university that has

approximately 200 deaf students each year, lost her hearing in high school and began

college with little knowledge of ASL. She described what she learned prior to entering

college as "bastardized ASL" because, as she pointed out, she was signing Exact English,

Pidgin Signed English, her hometown signs, and home signs. She was provided with an

oral interpreter until she learned ASL well enough to access spoken English through this

visual language. All of the accommodations, which were put into place to provide

support, also presented barriers at times. For example, Beth remembered difficulty with

the quality of an ASL interpreter:

> I had one interpreter and the teacher talked, she was really high strung and
> she was always running around the room talking and the interpreter would
> sign so slow (sic). And I knew that I was missing a lot. I knew I was
> missing a lot. And I remember the first test that I took... now keep in mind
> that I was a straight A student all the way through everything. On the
> first test that I took I got like a C on it. And a lot of the stuff that was on
> the test I was like, I don't remember ever hearing her talk about this. So I
> went to [name of office of disability] and I told them that I wanted a
> different interpreter because I felt like I was missing a lot.

For some people, using an interpreter can be tiring. Brad, who attended a state

university with a small deaf program stated,

> Watching the interpreter, I got very tired watching all the time. So I ended
> up reading the book instead…. I started with the note taker but after my
> second or third year I got rid of that. I took my own notes because I liked
> watching interpreter then looking at the board and copy the notes. So I
> would go back and forth between these because the class was a three-hour
> class. So to watch the interpreter full-time was tiring. So in order to keep
> my mind awake I took notes as well.

In addition, interpreting services at the university level are typically confined to

the classroom and are not provided for events, clubs, or meetings with professors.

Colleen grew up oral and graduated from a mainstream university. In her fourth year of

college and after learning ASL, Colleen began using ASL interpreters. Colleen reported

her disappointment with the fact that she did not have the ability to join any club she

wanted. Although interpreters were available for classes, she could not go to an event

without requesting an interpreter or captionist. She could not partake of social events or

parties because interpreters were not available for these events. This issue can create a

barrier for deaf students. Another participant also voiced her annoyance with the lack of

access to campus life outside the classroom. Cathy spoke of her frustrating experience at

a mainstream state university:

> I didn't have after class activities or study groups because I wasn't given
> any interpreters for that. So, that I ended up not really participating in the
> college experience. I really never had that tie that would've been similar
> to others, like going out, getting drunk, doing all-nighters, being in the
> dorm, none of that was part of my experience.

Both Colleen and Cathy were in a mainstream setting that did not allow for full access to

the campus community. Thus, for these students, that feeling of belonging to a campus

community was not developed as it is for other students without deafness who had more

access beyond the classroom experience.

Sign language interpreters serve as important facilitators of communication

between deaf and hearing individuals or groups of deaf and hearing people. This

accommodation provides necessary support for deaf individuals who attend universities

other than Gallaudet. Even at Gallaudet, oral students are provided with interpreters in

order to access the official language of the campus, ASL. Despite being such an

important support, interpreting services were described as presenting a barrier at one time

or another for all the participants who used them. Participants reported challenges with

interpreters not showing up to class due to an emergency or novice interpreters who were

not fluent in ASL.

Note takers. Another accommodation available to deaf students upon request is a

note taker. Deaf students can find it difficult to watch the interpreter, watch what is being

displayed to the class, and take notes at the same time. For the participants who used

note takers, a student in the class was often given this job. Barbara, who graduated from

a school with a large deaf program, mentioned the use of a professional note taker being

assigned to her class that was too difficult for a student note taker. She found a note taker

very beneficial in this case because of the professional training of the person hired.

Seven participants used note takers, but only two worked with experienced professional

note takers. These two participants described the service as beneficial.   Christopher, one

of the two, graduated from a large mainstream university and reported that note takers

helped improve his grades. He stated,

> After using an interpreter for a few months I realized the challenge of
> trying to take notes. Again I went back to the disability office and told
> them I needed a note taker for my classes. So, they offered to hire
> someone to put in my class with me and write down notes for me. I would
> read the notes so it would help me to be ready to do the work I needed to
> do for that class… My academic performance went up because I had
> access to a note taker.

Overall, there were mixed reactions among the participants to their experiences

with this support service. Some felt note takers were helpful; others indicated negative

aspects of working with a note taker. Participants sometimes found that what the student

note taker found relevant to write down was not always relevant information for the deaf

student. Brad talked about his frustrations with note takers. "With a note taker, I started

with one earlier and I realized that other people wrote what they thought was important.

When I'd get the notes, they were not important for me." Those participants who used

this service said they became dependent on the classmate for notes and if the note taker

missed class, the participant did not receive the notes. They often did not receive the

notes in a timely fashion, which also became a frustration.   Cathy echoed similar

experiences with note takers:

> I had a note taker but I didn't use it because it was lousy. For one class
> they had to hire a professional note taker because the student wasn't good
> enough for that class. It was art history and it was tough because of the
> French words used, so writing that was difficult. So they couldn't use a
> student who was learning like I was. Many times the note taker would
> skip class. I would go but much of the time the student note taker would
> not be there. It was frustrating because I wouldn't get the notes.

 Another service the graduates mentioned and resulted in more complete notes was Real-

Time Captioning.

Real-Time Captioning. Real-Time Captioning (RTC), or Computer Assisted

Real-Time Translation (CART), was an alternative accommodation to having an

interpreter for some interviewees. Oral students, who do not benefit from an interpreter,

more often use real-time captioning. Real-time captioning allows for spoken English to

be instantly translated to written English text by a captionist who uses special equipment

to type out exactly what is being said in the classroom. This text is displayed for the deaf

student(s) to read on a laptop or monitor in the classroom. Real-time captioning also

creates a written transcript that can be given directly to the student to be used as notes.

Therefore, it is also a means of getting notes of what was said in class. Many of the

students who used this service found that the Disability Office would not provide both an

interpreter and real-time captioning for the same class. One student was provided with

RTC, a note taker, and an ASL interpreter, however this was out of the norm based on

other participants' experience. Brad talked about the benefits of real-time captioning for

him:

> Later I had real-time captioning and I loved that because the woman
> would sit next to me and type. If I had a question I just leaned over and
> typed on her laptop and it would project overhead and the teacher would
> answer it. But the best thing about it was that the captionist would send me
> the transcript so I just sat and I just needed to look at the professor
> explaining and I would write down the timestamp. Then later I could look
> at the transcript and I would know exactly what was said. It was perfect.

Barbara discussed her experience with RTC at a Mainstream/DHH program. She

indicated that the last year or two in her program there were three other deaf people in her

major; however, they were more oral and had good spoken language skills and did not

rely on interpreters. She noted that the oral students used RTC in the classroom. When

they were in a class with her, she would rely on the interpreter but could look at the RTC

screen if she missed anything. If she took a class alone, she had to decide between an

interpreter and RTC. She chose an interpreter, as it was a better match for her because

ASL was her primary language. Beth had been in a similar type of university and talked

about the support she received when she was not yet skilled with ASL: "Just with making

sure that I was understanding like giving me the support of a real-time caption and an

ASL interpreter both just because she knew I was not fluent yet." Another participant,

Angelica, who grew up oral and graduated from a mainstream university, used real-time

captioning as well until she learned enough ASL to be comfortable accessing information

through an interpreter.

Colleen and Courtney are two participants who had been in the process of

learning ASL used real-time captioning as a transitioning accommodation until they were

ready to use ASL interpreters. Brad preferred RTC but could not always get this service

due to limited stenographers. When RTC was not available, he used interpreters.

Barbara also benefited from RTC when oral students received this accommodation in her classes. She would look to the text when she missed something through the interpreter.

The interviewees did not indicate that RTC created barriers to access in the classroom with the exception of one incident where the machine did not work and the student was not able to access the information being discussed and chose to leave. On this occasion Colleen was working on a project with three hearing women and two of them disagreed with Colleen's suggestions for the project. Before class started, the four of them sat down with her captionist to discuss the project, but the battery on the machine was dead. She tried to listen but the classroom was too noisy and she could not hear. She tried to lip read. At that time the four of them were a bit angry and she reported that there was friction over communication. One of the women in the group blew up at her, though she was trying her best to understand. Colleen stated that she felt that she was attacked. She said she did not feel that her opinion was respected because she was deaf. One of the two women became angry during class. It was a very upsetting situation for her. In this example, failure of the technology created a problem for Colleen that as she reported, caused her emotional distress.

FM System and Preferential Seating. Carl also grew up oral, as did Colleen and

Courtney. For Carl, preferential seating and an FM system were his only

accommodations in his university where he was the only deaf person in his class. Being

oral, he relied on speech and speechreading to participate and understand what his

instructor and peers had said. Deaf individuals to understand spoken language use

Speechreading, also referred to as lip-reading, by using information sources such as lip

movements, body language, facial expressions, and context. Relying on the FM system

and speechreading, class size and seating arrangements presented barriers that were

minimized in smaller classes:

> In your first two years you're talking a lot of general education classes and
> they're huge classes. Some of them had more than 150, 130 people. Now
> the classes in the third and fourth years were down to about 20-30 people.
> I think our school had a 25-person limit.   So the size depended on the
> class. Some had more and some had less. But if there weren't a lot of
> people talking it made a difference. It was easier to see people and
> especially if we sat in a circle. That made it much easier. If there weren't
> too many people you could do that.

> Being the only deaf person in his classes and one of a handful of deaf students on

campus, he often experienced frustration at missing information and not being heard. He

indicated that at times he became very frustrated:

> Sometimes I would get really fed up. I would almost lose it sometimes.
> But I know I couldn't so I would have to kind of sit in class and kind of
> take what I could and not let out what is really going on. But people
> sometimes would talk and they would talk loudly and I couldn't follow
> them. And also for example, if I would say to somebody "what did that
> person just say, I missed it?" They would ignore me. They wouldn't
> answer. Or if I wanted to express myself sometimes people wouldn't
> listen. So that was very frustrating. I couldn't stand that.

For Carl making sure he understood meant asking others what he missed or what was said. He faced many challenges using only these two accommodations but he persevered.

Tutors. Tutoring was another university service that was used by four of the participants. Tutoring is a service that is typically available to all students, both hearing and deaf, as a campus resource. Two participants, Briana and Barbara, both attended the same institution with a large number of deaf students, albeit at different periods of time. They had access to signing tutors through the university's connection to another campus program that serviced only deaf students. For those participants who used tutoring, it was on an as-needed basis. Brad used a tutor for an advanced math class, as did Briana. Courtney, who graduated from a mainstream university, used tutoring to improve her written English skills. Some universities provided ample opportunities to access tutoring, while others were more restricted. Briana noted that her institution provided plenty of opportunity for tutoring while Alisha had difficulty fitting tutoring into her schedule. Alisha graduated from Gallaudet and stated, "I was involved with the swimming team so I didn't have enough time. My swim schedule and the tutoring schedule just didn't match."

Two graduates, both in mainstream programs, were unaware of tutoring services at their colleges. Courtney indicated that she wished she had known about them and Cathy expressed her frustration when she stated, "I didn't know if my college had tutoring program. I did not use anything, nothing." Three participants stated that they did not feel the need for tutoring services.

While three-fourths (73%) of the participants did not use tutoring services, they noted that tutoring was available if they were in need of academic support. Interestingly four participants, who were among those who did not use tutoring, actually worked as tutors for others at some point in their undergraduate years. Three of the participants tutored other deaf students and the fourth, Carl, tutored hearing students. He grew up oral, graduated from a mainstream program, and did not have services beyond preferential seating in the classroom. For the three participants who used this service, it was considered a valuable support as it helped to clarify material learned in class or homework difficulties.

Faculty and Staff

Instructors are a critical part of a student's postsecondary experience. Effective instruction and the ability to communicate with professors are crucial to an optimal classroom experience (Richardson et al. 2009). The college experience of these 15 Deaf interviewees was, from their perspective, quite different than those of their hearing peers. Even at Gallaudet, where all instructors used sign language, faculty level of proficiency could vary. For the most part, all the participants felt comfortable in regards to their communication with and support from their professors. However, sometimes working with staff and faculty could be quite challenging.

Four participants in this study were primarily oral at the time of their undergraduate experience, while other graduates signed using a variety of communication methods including PSE, SEE and ASL. Therefore, graduates who used an interpreter had a different experience receiving information than those who relied on speechreading. Classroom experiences, meeting one-on-one with professors, support of instructors, and

attitudes held by teachers were topics that emerged during the interviews with the participants.

Although the university did not provide an interpreter outside of the classroom, the graduates felt that meeting one-on-one with professors was not problematic. Most wrote notes back and forth or used speech and speechreading when using office hours to receive extra help. More often email was used to address difficulties the participant was having with homework or class material. Brad remembered, "Communication with the professor was fine. Sometimes I would go to the office during office hours and if I didn't have an interpreter I would write notes back and forth. I made do." For others, communication with professors was not so easy. Cathy recalled an experience that left her a bit stunned about the instructor's attitude:

> One specific class, art history, I remember I had to go to her office without an interpreter. Someone called a meeting or something strange. Because I went into this small office, so small like a cube. She had a graduate assistant who was writing everything she said because she does not like to write. So she spoke and the graduate assistant wrote everything she said then I would read it. It was awkward because the graduate assistant is not an interpreter. But it was just that the professor didn't like writing. I think that was the only one time. Maybe that's why I stopped going. If a professor asked me if I could stop by her office I would say, "no. I have no interpreter. That means you have to write. I don't read lips. I don't trust lip-reading. I can read lips but that means I have to guess and misunderstand. I prefer email. You know, everything is right there, very clear.

Three of the participants attended community college before entering the four-year university from which they graduated. Beth told a story about how one instructor embarrassed her in front of the class, on not one but two occasions, by expressing his low expectations of deaf students and his lack of knowledge about deafness:

On the first day of class in the math class, he told the class that we had a very special student in class and that he would like everyone to know that it's okay to have a special student in the class and made me stand up and introduce myself and let everyone know that I was deaf. And I was mortified! Oh my gosh! Maybe I really don't belong here. And then a couple of weeks into the class he had students go up to the board and solve problems on the board and he asked me if I wanted to try one. So I went up to the board. I was really good at math. So the problem was a really easy problem. And I sat down and he said, "See deaf students can be smart too." Again, I was mortified.

More often than not, the professors were remembered as being helpful. Briana used speech and speechreading with her professors and recalled a time when she needed a great deal of help from her professor. At that time Briana was very upset about failing a test in abstract math. After that she met with the professor every day asking him to help in order to try to understand and improve for the next test. Colleen, who grew up oral and learned ASL while in college, indicated that, in terms of her communication with professors, she used spoken English and the real-time captionist. When speaking one-on-one with a professor during office hours, which she did not use often, she had no difficulties using speech, her hearing aids, and speechreading. If the professor was Deaf, she would sign.

Two graduates talked about crises they experienced during college and their professors' response to them. Courtney faced a challenging situation toward the end of her undergraduate career, which her professor appeared to understand but then had a change of attitude:

I graduated with the class of 2006. But one class I had to take again because at that time I went through an awful divorce with domestic violence. I tried to finish my project and I talked with my professor and showed her the police report. I told her I was going through a crisis and I hadn't finished my work. She said, "It's okay. Take your time. Finish it whenever you can." I said, "Okay." Then when I finished and after all that

she said no and she gave me an F. She said, "Sorry. Take it again next semester! So, they couldn't give me my degree until I finished that class. So I finished that class the next semester and they gave me my diploma in 2007.

Although Audrey did not attend a community college, her narrative also shows how some professors had been supportive while others were not. She recalled her second year of college:

The second was a complicated year for me because that was the year I had cancer. So, the fall semester was fine, perfect. But I was still tired from spring semester when I had my surgery and everything. I went home for 2 1/2 weeks, two weeks. I had a lot of classes. I had to withdraw from some classes. Some I continued with an incomplete. That was tough year for me. Some professors were very understanding. Some were not very and said "No, withdraw, that's it or accept the grade." Some teachers gave me an incomplete so I could catch up in the summer, which was perfect. But some pressured me.

In addition to professors, academic advisors or counselors played a critical role as well for many of the graduates. Courtney recalls the beginning of her higher education career at two community colleges where she spent seven years obtaining two associate degrees, one in Early Childhood Development and the other in Child Development. She recalled not having a counselor assigned to her in the early stages and stated, "They didn't give me a counselor or someone to ask what could I do." She was finally assigned to an academic advisor in her second community college; however, she perceived the advisor's professional practices to be oppressive. She remembered her experience like this:

Finally I went to talk to a counselor there. But funny thing, that counselor who worked with the deaf, she...I gave her a list of classes I needed, and she told me, "No, those classes are too hard for you." I looked at her and I felt insulted…I got mad because I was frustrated…I said, "Excuse me, I didn't ask you what you think. I'm telling you what I want. I want to take these classes. It's not supposed to be easy for me. I know that." She was like, "Oh well, well, I don't know if there are enough interpreters. At that time I still didn't understand sign. I said, "Okay but you can give me RTC

for now." She said yes…she didn't really give me support…it was at that
time that I realized I had to fight all the time. I had to almost threaten
them to give me what I wanted. You shouldn't have to do that.

Beth had a similar experience at the beginning of her higher education journey.

She recalled talking to her counselor during her first year about where to transfer to a

four-year program to become a teacher for deaf children. "At the community college I

was going to, I went to talk to the counselor and asked him and he said, "Deaf people

don't usually become teachers." And I was like, "Oh, like that sucks." However, these

frustrations were not limited to community college experiences, which for four of these

graduates were part of their overall post-secondary experiences that led up to a bachelor's

degree. Cathy expressed her frustration with not having an interpreter or a consistent

person helping her navigate through college in a large mainstream setting:

With the academic advisor, the one who makes sure you are on track, how
many classes you have left, I had no interpreter. We had to write
everything. I tried to email them several times but they said I had to come
in person. You know, walk in. I had no personal…my own advisor! No
one! Because (the university) is too big. No one is assigned to you. You
just walk in and they would give you whomever are available to you and
you would talk to them and they just rotated counselors. So I had no one
consistent person to work with me at all.

Barbara experienced much frustration working with her counselors in a program

designed for deaf students that did not award bachelor's degrees. She had to transfer into

one of the other colleges on the mainstream campus to obtain a four-year degree. What

should have taken two to three years extended into four years because of what Barbara

perceived to be the ineptness of her counselors and changes within the program of her

major. She was trying to transfer to another major in one of the other colleges on

campus. According to Barbara's narrative, the counselor kept claiming the transfer was

not in her control, and consequently Barbara missed the deadline. Barbara explained that

her transfer kept getting delayed and she continued to be told that there was nothing that

could be done about it. She attributed this unfortunate turn of events to her counselor.

Allison, who graduated from Gallaudet, recalled another story illustrating

mistakes made by the advisor that almost delayed her graduation. She shared her story:

> My advisor looked at my credits, how many credits I had left. She said,
> "You just need to take 15 credits each semester and then you're good and
> you're finished. You will graduate in May." So that fall I signed up for
> 16 credits… and then that counselor left so I transferred to a new
> advisor… she said, "One minute, I want to count your credits," and she
> went through them and said, "You know that you have 30 credits left."
> and I said, "What? No!" She said "Thirty, yes… plus you still have to do
> your internship." I said, "Yes I plan to do my internship next spring so
> that is part of my credits." She said, "No…the other one figured out
> wrong. Adding these classes you have 30 credits." I said, "NO!" So I
> just grabbed my head and I thought I would have to push my graduation
> to December. So I didn't want that! I had to think of what to do and I
> signed up for as many classes as I could. I think I signed up for maybe 21
> credits. Twenty-one! Then I continued so I could finish that summer for
> the internship. So that's what I did and I still was able to walk in May.

Ashley, who graduated from the same university, did not know exactly what the

role of an academic advisor was. She recalled her early experiences trying to choose

classes without guidance from a counselor:

> I didn't have enough advice from peers. Like for example, the first
> semester for the first year I should have, I was lucky, I got advisement a
> little bit late, but they told me I should of taken different introductory
> classes like Introduction to English, Introduction to psychology,
> Introduction to sociology…then I was trying to decide which one I
> wanted. I didn't know the process the first year so I was very frustrated. I
> didn't like my class. I didn't know what I wanted. I wasted my first year
> taking classes that I wasn't sure of. My second year, someone told me I
> should take introduction to this, this, and this. Fine that's a good idea. So
> I took those classes and finally I decided what I wanted and I chose my
> major.

When asked if she had an advisor, she responded,

I had an academic advisor but she told me the information that she had to
tell me like, you have to have a 3.5 GPA and up, you have to take 12
credits…you know those things. She didn't tell me any advice on how to
navigate through our college right away. I think that's the normal standard.
I don't know.

Unlike the other participants who shared the stories, Alisha felt her academic

advisor, along with her mother and friends, helped her figure out which major was a good

fit for her. Her advisor helped her find an internship as well. Andrew talked with his

professors, his advisor and the dorm supervisor when he was stuck and needed someone

to talk to. Briana's advisor showed her a list of what she needed to complete in four

years. From there she chose which classes she needed and she enrolled in them online.

In addition to academic advisors who counseled in regards to course work, two of

the participants, Albert and Carl, took advantage of mental health counselors. Albert

struggled in his first year to adapt to a new environment where two murders happened

within months of beginning college. He described his experience:

And I remember calling my mother and said my friend was accused of
murder. I never thought it would be him. My mother was like, "Really?
Be careful. You don't know who these people are. You're in college and
these are all new people from different backgrounds. Really, you don't
know who they are." So, I was like, "Okay." So, my mom was telling me
it's important to be careful to stay safe and stay with people you already
know. That way I would have support and if you need help don't be afraid
to ask for help. So I was like fine and I did go and ask for help. The
counseling office helped and supported me. Yes, because I needed help.
Everything was so confusing and new.

Carl, in his third year, suffered from a serious depression. He talked about how he

handled it through counseling:

In third, I don't really know why, for some reason I got into a serious
depression. It was awful. It was a very dark time. I don't know why. I
don't know if it was the time of year or what but I was seriously
depressed…They had free counseling at the counseling center. I found out

about it online at the school website. My school had a couple of clinics. They had a health clinic. They had a mental health clinic, and they had clinical services that were also advertised.

For many of these graduates, communication issues and other difficulties with faculty and staff arose mainly outside of the classroom where interpreters were not provided. Working with counselors presented a variety of barriers that the interviewees found frustrating. Their stories included tales of the counselors do some of the following: treating them as inferior due to their deafness; making mistakes; not properly advising; or just not doing their job. In terms of faculty, many participants chose not to use office hours if they could avoid it and found email the most effective way to communicate when academic problems arose, often after checking with friends and classmates for clarification and help first. For Albert and Carl, having mental health counseling available right on campus was remembered by them as definitely beneficial at a time of crisis. Overall, the participants found working with faculty and staff to be both a support and a challenge.

Financing Higher Education

In addition to using campus services and interacting with those who work on campus, participants discussed the financial support and obstacles they faced during their undergraduate years. For many of the graduates, full or partial financial support was provided by scholarships, grants or more commonly, financing from Vocational Rehabilitation services (VR). Others, however, were not aware of VR services until later in their undergraduate years. Andrew's comment reveals his frustration about the lack of information on resources available to deaf students prior to entering college:

> Most deaf people get VR… but some hearing families are clueless about this and they go in college and realize that they have that service. Hearing families often are not aware that there is that kind of this support available that deaf people are aware of. I really became frustrated to get support. I got financial aid, loans but I wish I had known before. They should offer a list.

For those who did not receive VR support, some parents could help pay for college while others could not. Amy was married. Money, she reported, was often tight despite support from VR for tuition:

> The other thing that was stressful to me was with money because I didn't have the support for my parents that a lot of people had…I was working and going to the school at the same time. So it was challenging to find the time to keep my grades up and have money. We did crazy things to earn me money… Money was really tight, a lot of Top Ramen, a lot of eggs and a lot of mac and cheese.

Having financial support from the university or VR relieved the burden of the participants despite the fact that many of the students reported holding part-time jobs to supplement their income for things they needed for themselves or, in three cases, for their families. The jobs also motivated the interviewees to maintain good grades for continued support.

Summary

This study found that the deaf graduates' recollections of their college experiences included both institutional supports and barriers. In and of itself, this finding about college life is not unusual. However, because the participants' in this study are Deaf, the nature of the support and barriers are different. With deafness comes the need for accommodations to access spoken language and the curriculum that is not part of the hearing college student's experiences. Interpreters were, by far, the most utilized accommodation. Two of the participants were unaware when they entered college that

they were responsible for arranging any accommodations they deemed necessary for access; this process was unlike what they experienced in high school. Others were able to access accommodations when they registered for classes online. Once in place, this accommodation was remembered as a valued service. There were times, however, that, due to an emergency, an interpreter did not show up or an interpreter's inexperience resulted in missed information and a barrier to access. One student reported that watching an interpreter for several hours was tiring.

Note takers were another accommodation used by several of the participants with mixed reactions. Among the Deaf student's need to watch the interpreter, watch what is presented on the board, and takes notes, critical information can be lost. To alleviate this problem, note takers are provided upon request. Most of the interviewees who used note takers voiced dissatisfaction when fellow students provided the notes. They cited several reasons including notes that were not useful to them, long wait-time in receiving them, peer note takers who skipped class resulting in no notes at all that day, or classes that were technically too difficult for untrained note takers.

Real-time captioning was an alternative to interpreters for some and solved the problem regarding notes as well. This accommodation is a real-time speech-to-text transcription system that most often uses trained stenographers as captionists. The graduates who used this service cited having verbatim notes directly after class as a benefit of RTC. Limitations were said to be that one had to choose between RTC and an interpreter for a class. At times this option was not always available due to a limited number of stenographers at the institution. If the caption machine failed to work, the graduate was left without access.

Tutoring is a service that the U. S. Department of Education indicates was used by over half (56%) of students with disabilities at two and four-year colleges in 2008-2009. Yet, in this study, only four of 15 participants used tutoring as a supplement to their classes in order to clarify material or for help with homework. These four participants had access to tutors who signed. Two graduates enrolled in English workshops to improve their written English skills. Some universities offered ample opportunities to access tutoring while others had more restricted schedules. At two mainstream settings, tutoring programs were not made known to the Deaf participants in this study.

According to the participants, working with faculty on campus was easily managed for the most part. Nonetheless, without interpreters available outside of the classroom, students faced barriers. Most participants, when experiencing difficulty understanding the material or homework turned to their friends or classmates for help. If that optioned failed, they emailed the professor. As a last resort, they went to office hours where notes were written between the participants and the professor or speech and speechreading were used for students who communicated primarily in this way. Professors' attitudes at times deterred the use of office hours. In general, they considered their professors helpful.

For several students, academic advisors or counselors presented the graduates with more challenges than the instructors. In cases where the advisor did not sign, written notes were also used. Most of the stories related to difficulties that the graduates perceived were due to the quality of performance of their advisors. Problems ranged from not enough advice, being given the wrong advice, to condescending attitudes and outright oppressive statements made by those whose role was to guide the participants to

succeed in higher education. Nevertheless, for many interviewees, the advisors were usually helpful in times of need and confusion.

Financing college is a challenge many students face. Fortunately, many of the participants were aware of the Departments of Rehabilitation in their states through the efforts of their high schools. Most of the graduates received full tuition and dorm support as well as funds for books. Three participants received full scholarships or grants through the Honors Program at their institution. With VR support, scholarships and grants, the interviewees had to maintain a specific GPA, which contributed to their motivation to do well in school. One participant did not qualify for VR support due to a low GPA until he improved his grades. Being unaware of VR support was a frustration for a few of the graduates. One interviewee was not eligible for two reasons: she was not an American citizen and she was too young to qualify. One additional participant was too young to qualifying his first year. One-fifth of the graduates relied on family support in order to finance college. Though VR support provided relief from worry about how to pay for college, all but two of the15 participants held jobs while in college to provide income for personal expenses or living expenses.

In addition to the supports and challenges that graduates perceived related to financing college, campus services, and working with faculty and staff, the participants also discussed the social networks they encountered throughout their undergraduate years that impacted their experiences.

Social Supports and Barriers

While the higher education setting created challenges for the participants, they were able to navigate through their experiences by using the institutional supports

discussed above to overcome the barriers to their education. In much the same way,

social networks, such as family and friends, provided sounding boards where the

participants could voice their frustrations and ask for advice and assistance. Dorms,

sororities and fraternities, as well as clubs and organizations, provided spaces where

graduates could cultivate friendships with people who had similar interests. Yoss, Smith,

Ceja and Solórzano (2009) call these social spaces "counterspaces." Some of the

counterspaces for these graduates were student initiated and student-led; one example is

the ASL club. Other counterspaces were already established. Carter (2007) describes

counterspaces as informal or formal same-race peer networks that can be academic or

social. These spaces are created within the school to counter experiences with racism and

other forms of discrimination. A Deaf or ASL club established by deaf students in a

mainstream university can serve the same purpose and can affirm the students' Deaf

identity. According to Yoss, et al. (2009) building community among individuals with a

common interest in these spaces cultivates a sense of belonging. This community

building in turn develops their resilience. Despite the support received from all of these

social networks, the graduates also related their frustrations when friendships or

extracurricular activities became a burden and interfered with their academics or caused

emotional distress.

Informal Social Networks

Family.   All of the participants discussed family support as part of the narrative

of their undergraduate experience. Some parents helped to finance college while others

provided moral support or encouragement and advice. On the other hand, families were

also described as a hindrance, as with Beth and Courtney whose spouses were not

supportive of their attending college. Courtney went through a difficult divorce during

her undergraduate years and explains how she perceived the support she received from

her spouse: "I really felt I was single the whole time because there was no support from

my ex-husband at that time. He really was controlling and jealous because I was going to

college, but I went anyway." Amy was in a similar situation as indicated by her

statement about the man she married when she graduated from high school: "And at the

time I was with my ex-husband who was my high school sweetheart. I remember

showing him the acceptance letter and he was like, (nods head) he wasn't happy for me."

While in college, Colleen learned ASL and about the Deaf community. This

journey toward her Deaf identity caused a rift between her and her parents. Growing up

oral and attending a mainstream program without any classroom accommodations

seemed normal until she went to college and realized what she had missed. During her

last two years of college, Colleen was very angry. She felt upset with herself and her

family because she grew up without sign language. She expressed her feelings to her

parents. She recalls moving out of her parent's house because she was so upset.

Beth, Courtney and Colleen were three participants from the 15 who found their

relationship with family to be both a support and a stumbling block. Colleen does recall

her mother being very involved in her transition to college. Family also became a source

of motivation for some graduates like Albert, who did not want to disappoint his parents

by dropping out. Twelve of the 15 participants said that they were independent for the

first time when they went to college. Christopher's words show what an exciting time

beginning college had been when he stated, "What was really satisfying for me was the

fact that this was my first time living outside the home and I was on my own. I was

looking out for myself." However, becoming independent can also be a difficult time for some, as Albert noted. "My first year was awkward and it was also my first time being very far from my family, like 1000 or so miles. So, it was hard for me. I was homesick on and off. I missed my family a lot but I continued through it." Having that family support had been important for all the participants, particularly at the beginning of college. Nonetheless, this finding does not negate the fact that family relationships can sometimes produce strains and stresses that have a negative impact on college experiences as evidenced by the narratives of Beth, Courtney, and Colleen.

Friends. All interviewees discussed the support of friends. Regardless of the college one attended, friends played an important role in the lives of all 15 graduates during their undergraduate years. The graduates of mainstream programs mentioned friends less frequently due perhaps to the challenges Deaf individuals face communicating outside the classroom setting without interpreters available to facilitate communication.

Seven out of the 15 participants arrived at college with one or more friends also attending the same university. For these graduates, being among familiar faces made the transition to a new environment easier. By contrast, Allison had known a lot of the interpreters because her husband is in the field of interpreting and they would socialize with them. Her husband was her support system. Colleen had a few hearing friends from her mainstream high school program who attended the same college. The remaining seven participants made friends while in college. Making friends was easier for some than for others. Cathy, who attended a large state mainstream university, did not make friends until her third and fourth years in college, when she began focusing on her major

classes. These classes were confined to one department, in one building, on one floor. Students and faculty saw each other frequently allowing for friendships to develop as students got to know each other. Prior to taking her major courses, while she was completing the general education requirements, Cathy had no support on campus from friends. She did, however, have local Deaf friends, some of whom were in small colleges or community colleges in the area. She also had her boyfriend (later her husband) who, at that time, attended a college 40 minutes away. She often relied on him for support in understanding her homework.

The participants' narratives showed that friends were perceived, at times, to be hindrance to doing well in their studies. There were times when friends wanted to party, but it was not in the best interests of the graduate. Albert showed remarkable resistance to the lure of his new found freedom when, after a week of partying when he first entered college, classes began. His reaction to his friends encouraging him to party had been this:

> So my first night that my parents left, all I did was party, and I partied all week. There were no classes. Then school started and it was like whoa! Okay I can't continue partying and when my friends asked I told them, Sorry I can't party anymore. I need to continue with my classes.

Ashley spoke about difficulties with friends as well, and knowing when to step away from them. She stated, "There were problems of course. I grew, and you realize friends that you need to separate from because we didn't agree with each other, or some friends partied too much, and some friends I just didn't like anymore." Beth provided another example of how friends could sometimes be a challenge in the classroom with this story:

> There was one class that was a women studies class, and they were three of us in there and all three of us were friends. And so, at first were all

sitting together and it got to the point where they were talking so much that I told them, I'm going to sit behind you guys. So, I sat behind them. And then I was trying to watch the interpreter and I can see their hands just going back and forth in front of me. And I was like, 'Hey guys, let's switch places and I'll sit in front of you, and you can sit behind me and talk all you want, and I can pay attention.'

The narratives of these 15 interviewees tell stories of friendships in college that had different beginnings. Some friends were from connections with the Deaf community and through Deaf residential high school programs. Others made new friends through dorm life, sororities and fraternities, and sports, clubs, and organizations. When friendships could not be developed on campus, friends from outside of the college environment served as a support network. No matter where friendships began, they allowed the participants to receive advice, provided a shoulder to lean on, and helped with studying and homework. Even though friends could occasionally be distracting, according to these college graduates, friends made the overall college experience more enjoyable.

Formal Social Networks

Dorm Life. Ten of the 15 participants lived in the dorm and later apartments with roommates while in college. The other five participants lived their parents or their spouse. Those living in the dorm reported that it was an exciting part of college life. Christopher lived with his parents during his freshman year and commuted. He lived in the dorm his sophomore and junior year. In his final year of college he lived off campus. He summed up his dorm experience in this way: "Dorm life was very interesting and very fun too!" As a student at Gallaudet, Audrey was impressed by the level of support from

peers in the dorm and by her ability to communicate easily. Here, one can sense the

excitement:

> If you don't understand your homework you can send a text asking, "Hey
> did you understand the homework?" "No, I didn't understand." Then you
> could go downstairs and meet in 20 minutes or whatever and the two of
> you would find a room. That was one positive! Wow, deaf signing with
> direct communication!

The support was not only from peers but from the dorm staff as well, as evidenced by her

comment:

> All freshmen lived there…we gathered there, lived there. It was nice
> because it was the first building that would often have a lot of support
> services. They had staff that knew the kinds of questions that first year
> students would ask. So, if you went to them with something you didn't
> know they would provide the answer. That was one thing that was
> positive.

> When participants spoke about living at college, they typically talked about their

roommates. Those who shared their experiences with roommates had both positive and

negative experiences. Christopher developed a long lasting friendship with his dorm

roommate and spoke of him fondly:

> That roommate was a wonderful person. We still are friends today. We
> got along very well. He is still an engineer and I was in a different
> program. He had some things in common with me so that helped our
> bonding. We were able to tolerate through daily life together. We both
> grew at that time. We went through some growing pains but in the long
> run it always helps to have someone that you can bond with, talk about
> your day, throw some ideas at that person trying to get some feedback.

Alisha, who also graduated from Gallaudet, developed a group of friends though her

roommate:

> I knew one from my high school who helped a great deal. We were
> roommates. So, sometimes I would join with her friends and their friends
> and we became a group hanging out and socializing, and sometimes I
> would be with my own group.

In addition to the positive experiences, there were some aspects of living in the dorms that graduates remembered negatively. Ashley remembered socializing in the dorm, however, disagreeing with her roommate caused her to move out. Barbara also moved out and changed roommates due to conflicts. During the time Barbara attended the Mainstream/DHH program, she had several different roommates before her final year. As a senior, she was finally able to get a single apartment. Living alone allowed her to focus on school and get the courses completed that she needed to graduate. She indicated that there was much less stress living alone than with roommates.

Whether living on campus, in the dorms, or in a nearby apartment, the participants faced challenges and received support from other people similar to all college undergraduate students. Problems with roommates as well as meeting new friends were the primary topics of the conversations about living with others.

Sororities/Fraternities. Three women and one man interviewed, all of who had graduated from Gallaudet, joined a fraternity or sorority while in college. Being a part of these organizations provided support but, at times, were a hindrance much like dorm life. Andrew was very excited to join a Greek fraternity in his junior year. The experiences he had helped him grow as a person. But he also experienced challenges as his membership created problems with his friends. As he reported,

> I joined the Greek fraternity. I was excited. It was a wonderful
> experience. I experienced personal growth but negative people looked at
> that and thought I lost my identity. People felt that I was more involved in
> the Greek fraternity and that I shunned my friends. People who I knew
> felt that I became really stuck and was brainwashed with Greek fraternity
> things. But for me it was personal growth. I really was fascinated and
> motivated and wanted more growth from that. Without detaching from
> my friends. Really, there were many things that frustrated me in my third

year. Really, I wanted growth from that but I was pulled by my
friendships.

Another graduate gave details about the frustration she experienced due to her

choice of sororities. One sorority tended to house Deaf students of Deaf parents, or Deaf

of Deaf. Although she fit in this category, Ashley did not join this sorority but another

sorority and recalled others having problems with her decision. She explained it this

way:

> They would go to my mom and tell her I should quit my sorority and wait
> for the other sorority. It was stupid constant things…another woman
> …came up to my mother and me and told us that I should think about
> quitting my sorority so I could wait and be asked in the other sorority. I
> told her I'm happy in that sorority.

Discussing the same topic, Ashley remembered others' shock at her dating someone from

a different sorority. She went on to say,

> But now, the funny thing is my girlfriend she's in the other sorority. When
> we started dating in college, when I was at the different sorority, people
> couldn't believe it! They never had a lesbian couple from different
> sororities be together. That was nothing, but people made a big deal of it!

Ashley's final comment reveals how living in a sorority bought both annoying and

enjoyable experiences: "That experience was more positive for me. I enjoyed joining all

different groups…they were more my friends. If you wanted to join, they were fine."

For these four graduates, sororities and fraternities were places where they had

grown personally, provided opportunities to meet people with similar backgrounds or

interests, and left one with good memories despite some of the pitfalls that came with

being a member of a select group. Like many of the resources that the participants

perceived as supports that helped them through college, being part of a sorority or

fraternity also had some negative aspects, such as the disapproval they encountered from

others outside the organization or the lack of enthusiasm from friends who disagreed with their decision to join.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are categorized here as clubs, organizations, and sports. All but four of the participants discussed being involved in one or more extracurricular activities. Andrew began college excited about being involved in a variety of activities as he had been in high school. During that time, he found it easy to juggle the academic workload and the time commitment to after-school sports and clubs. So when he arrived at college he quickly became active in several sports and organizations. He soon realized college academics were much more demanding than high school. He recalled those early weeks of college when he stated,

> I was involved in sports and involved in organizations and I was involved in several things and I became very overwhelmed and felt lost…I felt high school was easy to be involved in many organizations and things but then college it wasn't as easy. I realized there were more responsibilities, more things that required a commitment.

He continued with his commitment to organizations such as the Senate Student Organization and Student Government until his term finished at the end of the year but it resulted in a low GPA, which concerned him.

Brad also found spending too much time playing basketball resulted in a low GPA. Although he did not join a formal sport he often searched out impromptu games on the basketball courts. He was still learning the concept of time management and he had not yet realized the time commitment his classes required. He explained what happened that first year:

I was stubborn. I love playing basketball growing up so what did I do? Instead of allocating time to studying for class and studying for tests I diverted my attention to the gym I wanted to go to the gym and play basketball. I wanted to play a pickup game. I'm playing in the time just went by two hours three hours and I'm playing and time is just going by. It was fun! It's a good way to manage stress, yes but not best decision as far as where my attention should be. My responsibility should've been with school. But I chose to have fun. So that was standard of what would happen during my first two semesters in college.

Alisha could not make time for being tutored because her swimming was too important to her. She stated, "I was involved with the swimming team so I didn't have enough time. My swim schedule and the tutoring schedule just didn't match." However, the women she met on the swim team became part of her social network during her college years. She recalled, "I would be with my own group, girls from my team, and we would go out and meet other friends and get together." For other graduates, being with others who had similar interests was an important feature of college life. Briana belonged to the Asian Deaf Club and the ASL Club on her campus with a large deaf population. Brad, who graduated from the same university but some years earlier, joined Deaf intramural sports and the Deaf Book Club. Ashley and Audrey both attended Gallaudet at the same time and joined a variety of organizations including Student Body Government and the Rainbow Society, an organization for LGBT students. Beth did not join clubs per se, but spent a lot of time in a lounge, which she described:

I wasn't in any clubs. I would go to, there was like a lounge at the bottom floor of a national center on deafness, so I'd go there a lot between classes and in the morning sometimes or in the afternoons. I would go in and there were always other the deaf students and they would always sit down and talk and we would share stories. It was an amazing experience really…a really amazing experience!

Colleen joined the Disability Club at her mainstream university and in her second year became president. In her fourth year she began the ASL Club with a deaf friend and was the ASL Club president. She stated that this club was "her world" and she created a place where she could socialize with people who signed. Through this experience she felt connected and not alone. She pointed out that in this space people wanted to see her and be with her. People wanted to learn sign and practice sign.

For most of the interviewees, these extracurricular activities provided support networks. For some whose time management skills were not the best, they contributed to poor grades. These clubs and organizations served as places where the graduates did not feel alone (e.g. ASL Club), allowed them to know others who shared similar interests (e.g. Deaf Book Club), or were places where others understood their experiences (e.g. Asian Deaf Club; Rainbow Society) in a supportive environment.

Summary

Navigating college is an exciting and stressful experience. Social networks, like family and friends, often become important in the lives of students and they turn to them time and again during these years. Now and then, they can create unexpected challenges. These dynamics were true for these interviewees as was seen through their stories of their social networks during their college years.

Most often, friends at college were people who the participants had fun with or could go to for help with homework or class material. Some friends were old acquaintances, met before entering college, who attended the same university. Other friends were new, acquired at the university over their undergraduate years. For a couple of the participants, social networks did not come from within the university but instead

from the Deaf community where they already had established relationships. Communication barriers impeded he ability of Deaf student to socialize on mainstream campuses. Access to interpreters was limited to academic interactions. Without such access in the larger social world, Deaf students were not able to participate in extracurricular activities, particularly informal social activities.

As has been the theme of this chapter, with supports can also become barriers. Sometimes friends could be a diversion that took the participants away from studies or distracted them in the classroom. Nonetheless, most often friends were described in a positive manner and some friendships were even maintained well after graduating and to this day.

Many of the participants frequently turned to their parents during the first year of college, especially during the early weeks and months. Those who did, spoke about keeping close touch with parents that first year and found that the need for their support dissipated as they became acclimated to college life. Some parents supported the graduates financially as well. One exception was Colleen, who grew up oral, and ended up leaving her parent's home while in college. Her decision resulted from her realization that her childhood was oppressive because she grew up without accommodations in her mainstream classes, without access to other deaf people and without learning sign language. For the non-traditional students, like Beth who was married and Courtney who was married with several children, support from their spouses did not come as they had expected it would. Other than these two cases, family was remembered as an important and necessary support. For some graduates, family was a source of motivation to complete college. Several graduates mentioned wanting to make their parents proud, not

wanting to disappoint their parents, or following in a sibling or parent's footsteps. This motivation carried them through to the end.

Friends and family are considered informal social networks. Formal social networks, on the other hand, are those that are part of the institution and include dorm life and sororities or fraternities. Dorms provided an instant group of people in which to find new friendship and renew old ones as well. Roommates were often cited as the challenge graduates faced with dorm life. For some, these challenges were due to compatibility issues or, for some who had hearing roommates, communication difficulties.

Fraternities and sororities as voluntary social organizations provided friends and companions with similar background or interests. The participants who joined these organizations enjoyed their experiences and realized personal growth. The negativity or challenges they faced came from others outside the organization such as friends who did not agree with their choice to take part in their activities.

Finally, participation in clubs, organizations, and activities both enhanced and challenged the college experience. Easy access to clubs and organizations provided a way to develop life skills, and these organizations became an important part of their college experience. Organizations were joined more often than sports and other activities. Several participants held positions within these organizations as well. This level of involvement provided an opportunity for the graduates to give back to the campus community as part of such things as student body government, student newspaper, competitive sports, tutoring, orientation, and student ambassador. Sports, whether competitive or intramural, were also a part of some interviewees' experience. But these responsibilities required good time management skills and the ability to

effectively "change hats," as Audrey put it.

Some participants found havens in counterspaces that provided support to their specific experience such as LGBT organizations, the Disability Club, or the Asian Deaf Club. But not all interviewees had equal access to organizations, sports and activities. For one who did not have such access, she created her own "counterspace" by establishing an ASL club where none had previously existed. Generally speaking, these experiences contributed positively to the graduates' life on campus, but they noted that care had to be taken such that their involvement did not negatively impact their academic achievement.

Discussion

Fifteen deaf college graduates were asked to talk about what they perceived as the supports and barriers they encountered at the university they attended which in this study included three types of higher educational settings. This study adds to the current body of knowledge by expanding the discussion to include campus services, faculty and staff, as well as social networks used by deaf students and how these impact the college experience both positively and negatively. Previous research on deaf students had investigated supports and barriers of deaf college students only at post-secondary institutions serving deaf students, more typically a single site and at specific institutional support, such as the use of interpreters (Marsharck, Sapere, Convertino and Seewagen, 2005).

This chapter describes the services and networks of successful Deaf graduates during their undergraduate years, in a variety of institutional settings. The participants told stories about working with faculty and staff, joining informal and formal social

networks, and using accommodations such as interpreting, note taking, real-time captioning, and tutoring. They talked about these services in terms of how they supported student learning and how the same services also created perceived barriers to learning.

More than half (nine of the 15) of the interviewees in this study used interpreters and recognized them as an important accommodation. However, the participants discussed barriers as they recollected times when interpreters were not present or their skills were weak. This finding is consistent with the Marsharck et al. (2005) study on college students' use of interpreters. Five of the participants recalled interpreters who missed class, two talked about the poor quality of the interpreter, three spoke about not having interpreters available outside of the classroom setting, and two conveyed their frustration about having to drop a class or chose another due to lack of interpreters. These data indicate that deaf students are missing class content and interaction when an interpreter is not present or not accessing the curriculum when interpreter's skills are inadequate. In addition, deaf students they may have limitations on which class they can take if an interpreter is not available during the scheduled class time. Accommodations are meant to allow students to fully access what their hearing peers are able to access. Inadequate implementation of this accommodation reduces or eliminates access for deaf students.

Real-time captioning was another service that was discussed by some graduates. More than one-fourth of the participants used real-time captioning as an alternative to interpreting for at least some period of time during their undergraduate education. Marschark et al. (2006) noted in their study on interpreting and text alternatives at the

post-secondary level that speech-to-text services are becoming more popular in higher education settings. Comments regarding real-time captioning were mostly positive. Barriers included a lack of stenographers to fill the demand for this service, as well as technology failure. When equipment failure occurred, as it did for one participant, access to spoken language in the classroom was cut off. One drawback that participants described was, by choosing this accommodation the use of interpreters was precluded. Participants recalled the transcripts that came from RTC as useful notes. It is unfortunate that deaf students cannot have both options, as Beth had been supplied with at her university, as it would help to rectify the problems that participants expressed about note takers.

Note takers were used by less than half (six) of the participants, and of those who used this service, two remembered note takers negatively. The quality of notes, absent student note takers, and timeliness of obtaining them were cited as barriers. These challenges can make studying for tests and quizzes or completing homework more difficult without thorough notes to reference. Once again, it puts deaf students on unequal footing compared to their hearing classmates. The remaining participants reported that they found the notes they received from note takers useful for studying, especially if they were working with trained note takers.

Luckner and Muir (2001) studied supports that contributed to success in the mainstream setting prior to college by interviewing 20 successful upper elementary and high school, mainstreamed, deaf students as well as parents and service providers who worked with them. Ten factors that contributed to success emerged from their data and included family involvement, self-determination, extracurricular activities, social skills

and friendships, self-advocacy skills, communication with and support for general

education teachers, preteach and postteach content and vocabulary, collaboration with

early intervention providers, reading skills and high expectations. Although these

students were not at the post-secondary level and some of their factors are not relevant to

the higher educational experience, there are some commonalities with this study's

findings.

As in Luckner and Muir's study (2001), successful Deaf college graduates in this

study viewed family involvement as an important factor. Family had been called upon in

times of need as well. Family also contributed to motivation or self-determination due to

not wanting to disappoint parents who encouraged them to go to college. The Luckner

and Muir study also found that teachers perceived good social skills as contributing to the

success of deaf students in the general education setting during their high school

experiences. These students were perceived as better able to acquire friendships, a factor

which was considered important to success and in the development of a sense of oneself.

Friends were also found to be important in this study similar to social skills and

friendship factor in the Luckner and Muir study. Friends were for a source of help with

class work and homework before turning to the professors. Friends were also available

for sorting out personal problems. But friends were also barriers when, for example, they

interfered with focusing on classwork or they engaged in distracting disagreements.

Luckner and Muir (2001) found communication with and support from general

education teachers at the high school level to be important to the success of these deaf

students. This connection with teachers was also considered to be a support for the

participants in this study. As with other supports, professors could also be a source of

barriers related to their accessibility, attitudes, and ASL skills at Gallaudet. In addition to friends, family, and educators, involvement in extracurricular activities was important for the students in Luckner and Muir's study as well as those in this study. In their study, parents perceived participation in after-school activities to be important to deaf students' success in the mainstream. Focusing solely on academics was seen as frustrating and social activities provided a balance and helped students to develop confidence and experience. In this study, friendships were made in these social spaces, places where the graduates gathered and interacted with other students on their campuses. Some of the interviewees developed their Deaf identity through participation in clubs for deaf students. Other participants felt that they gained experience in leadership by holding positions in clubs and organizations. For some graduates too much involvement in clubs, organizations, and activities negatively impacted their GPA by taking too much time from their studies.

In this research study, college graduates were asked to tell their stories of the supports and barriers they remembered experiencing as undergraduate students. While these findings match some of the factors that Luckner and Muir (2001) identify, the authors only investigated and discussed how these 10 factors contributed to the success of upper elementary and high school students in the mainstream setting. They investigated the perceptions of successful deaf students, parents, educators and other staff who worked with these students, focusing on only the positive factors that contributed to the deaf students' success in the general education setting. In the narratives of the participants in this study, family, friends, faculty, and extracurricular activities were remembered as

hindrances as well as supports. The interviewees' stories tell us how they experienced

obstacles that had to be overcome in order to be successful at the post-secondary level.

Although one would expect deaf students to be better able to succeed in college

given all the appropriate supports, the main finding with regard to the question: "What

do Deaf college graduates identify as supports or hindrances in their college

experiences?" is that institutions, agents, activities, campus services and social networks

are both supports and barriers, depending on the context, the person and other factors.

One of those factors is how well accommodations are enacted. The existence of

accommodations does not guarantee that deaf students have equal access to classroom

learning. Accommodations do not always "level the playing field." This uneven

"playing field" is even more evident for deaf students studying in mainstream settings.

Accommodations are not provided outside of the classroom environment and therefore

deaf students do not have access to the full college experience. This finding indicates

that supports and barriers can be different depending on the institutional setting.

Investigating how supports and barriers vary by the type of post-secondary institution one

attends can be helpful in order to better understand how to remedy these issues and

provide better supports for deaf students. Therefore, the next chapter looks at how these

support and barriers differ among institutions, by comparing the recollected

undergraduate experiences of the participants who attended Gallaudet, universities with

DHH programs, and mainstream universities.

Chapter 5: Institutional Variations in Supports and Barriers

Until we get equality in education, we won't have an equal society.
Sonia Sotomayor

There are not many studies of deaf students in higher education. There are even fewer studies that specifically compare the experiences of deaf students at different types of post-secondary settings. This chapter discusses the findings related to the study's second question: How do these perceptions of supports and barriers vary by the type of post-secondary institutions the students attended, whether it was a college specifically for deaf students, a program with a deaf program, or a mainstream setting?

In this chapter, each type of setting is discussed in terms of how graduates of the institutions recollect their experiences with institutional supports and barriers as they pertain to campus services and institutional agents like faculty and staff. Included as well are findings about how institutions differ in terms of students' recollections of the supports and barriers presented by social networks of friendships, sororities and fraternities, and extracurricular activities. I begin with a discussion of the Gallaudet experience. Next, I examine the mainstream/DHH institutions, followed by a review of mainstream institutions. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the findings. The narratives of the participants provide important examples of how students' experiences are affected by their specific kind of academic environment. The findings from this study can help post-secondary institutions to be better equipped to support students' adjustment to college in terms of academic, social and emotional development. In this way, deaf

students will be more likely to persist through completion of their college degree.

The Gallaudet Experience

Six of the 15 participants graduated from Gallaudet University and graduated between three and a half and seven years from the time of initial registration. This university offers a variety of majors for deaf undergraduate students that lead to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree. Up to five percent of hearing students may be admitted per entering class. Therefore, this setting offers a specialized experience for the deaf students who attend Gallaudet. According to information found on their website (gallaudet.edu/about_gallaudet/fast_facts.html), as of fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment was 1,031 students. This figure included deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students in degree and non-degree programs who attended full and part-time. The website also indicates that there are more than 21,000 alumni around the world. How do these six alumni of Gallaudet recall their undergraduate experience in terms of the challenges they faced and the supports they received?

Institutional Supports and Barriers

Like other colleges and universities, Gallaudet offers campus services such as interpreting, note takers, tutoring, real-time captioning, counseling, and English coaching. The six participants who graduated from Gallaudet rarely used campus services. Only three alumni mentioned using any services and these services were interpreting, mental health counseling, and written English language support. One would think interpreting services would not be necessary in a fully accessible signing environment. However, deaf students use a variety of communication methods such as oral and cued speech. Not all students use ASL as their primary language. All of the participants who graduated

from Gallaudet used sign or ASL. Of the six participants from Gallaudet, only one did

not use ASL. Alisha used Pidgin Signed English (PSE) when she entered college, which

is a combination of ASL and English; she did not, however, use the services of an

interpreter. Interpreting services are also provided for internships. Audrey discussed

using interpreters for her internships and it seems that the quality and accessibility of

interpreters had not been a barrier. Audrey described her experience with interpreters as

follows:

> I had four different internship experiences at Gallaudet because in DC it is
> so easy to network and make the connections you need. And the
> interpreters are great there and they have fabulous training and experience!
> I didn't have an interpreter 24/7. I had an interpreter just for meetings.
> For the times you were just chatting or at lunch that was similar to the
> experience I had in high school during the mainstream.

Another service that Albert remembered using was the counseling and

psychological services. He remembered Gallaudet making a genuine effort to support the

students during a difficult time for the community when two murders occurred on

campus. He recollected how the university was sensitive to the emotional impact of this

crisis on campus and campus leaders reached out to the student population:

> Gallaudet knew that it was our first year and the murders happened to
> some people's friends. They let us know if we needed help to contact this
> person at this number. So I went into that building and asked where to go
> and then they helped with everything and gave me the support I needed.

Finally, the only other campus service that a participant remembered using was an

English workshop used to improve written English skills. Alisha spoke of her biggest

challenge when she entered college and how she handled it:

> I think my biggest challenge was maybe translating ASL to English and
> vice versa for writing. I didn't know how to write something I could sign

or I could write something but I didn't know how to sign it. I had difficulty with both of those things.

I went to an English workshop. My teacher encouraged me to go to English workshops that explained the writing process. It was a writing workshop where the teacher explained about writing English. I didn't really have the opportunity to go to tutoring. But I used the support services for writing and then I would understand when they explained.

The graduates did not report difficulties with the services they accessed and appeared satisfied with their experiences. Were the interviewees equally satisfied working with staff and faculty?

Gallaudet is a bilingual educational environment that provides full access for its students through ASL and English. When I address the issue of accessibility on this campus I am referring to communicative accessibility. ASL and English are used for learning and communication (gallaudet.edu/about_gallaudet/mission_and_goals.html). Faculty and staff use ASL to varying degrees of proficiency to communicate directly with the students. Andrew pointed this out with his comment: "The university required, if you want to join, be a professor and are hired there, you are required to take ASL classes. So, they were really motivated." Due to this fact, instruction in the classroom was direct rather than mediated through an interpreter. Andrew went on to say, "You could see they wanted to teach us and I wanted to learn from them. It was really motivating." However, there were times when the instructors' ASL proficiency created communication barriers in the classroom. Ashley recalled that this problem did not occur very often and she described her response when she did not understand:

It happened once in a while. Each department has six or seven teachers so they rotate around and sometimes you get that same teacher for two or three courses… after that first time I tried my best to pay attention. If I

didn't understand I asked some people in class to see if we all have the same understanding.

Because the instructors used ASL, the students experienced the professors as more supportive and accessible. If difficulties arose with course material or homework, the graduates could communicate directly with the professor and were able to use office hours. Ashley's comment was a typical response and summed up the easy access to professors: "If I struggled with the class, I would email the teacher and meet. I would go to class, sit down, and discuss what was wrong."

Although the participants did not find it difficult to communicate with faculty, sometimes the personality of the professor made for uncomfortable communication. Audrey recalled, "I would often go see the professor, but frequently it would depend on the professor. If I felt comfortable with her, I would go see her. For some professors, I would just go along with what I could do."   Typically, making arrangements to meet with instructors was not an issue, but at times the students' schedules did not match with office hours or the professor failed to respond to emails requesting help. Audrey recalled,

> Sometimes it didn't match my schedule to stop by. If the professor didn't have long hours I would send an email instead.   Some don't respond so I would have to email them several times and then show up in their office. But it tended to not be a problem.

In addition to professors' ability to meet for help with course work and ease of communication, faculty was remembered as having been helpful in other ways as well. Audrey remembered the math department had been flexible in terms of a class that was too easy for her while her classmates struggled:

> I took classes with a large group of students who struggled with math. I already got a high score on the ACT before I went into Gallaudet. It was high. So when I looked at the schedule, I had already taken pre-calculus

twice in high school. Because I wanted to take calculus…but to make a long story short it was really easy. I have never been a B student in math. I've always gotten A's, always. So they looked at that and said okay we will do an independent study. So it was one-on-one with the teacher… So they decided to make an independent study for me. So that was cool! It was a good match for me. Right away they saw it was too easy for me so they decided to have me do an independent study until later.

Andrew also found the university willing to be flexible when he had to repeat some freshman course work during his fifth and final year. He had received an automatic grade of D because another student copied his work during his first year at Gallaudet. He talked about this situation and said,

> I failed (the class) for the reason that it got messed up by the other student (cheating). Then, the fifth year, I took freshman classes as a fifth-year student. So, I felt too advanced for freshman (classes). It was too simple. So they offered a teacher's aide position instead. So, I got an amendment. So I said fine. Why not?

Alisha found her academic advisor supportive when she directed Alisha to the Career Center for information about a summer internship that she had applied for and received. She also turned to her advisor when she was having difficulty deciding on a major. In another example, Ashley relied on a professor when she received unhelpful advice regarding how to conduct the research on her capstone project for the honors program. This narrative demonstrates how faculty could be both a support and a barrier:

> One woman, she was pretty important woman in that during the whole process suggested I should do a case study. A case study should be at least one year. She said it's a one-year project so go ahead. I went along with that, typed the format and everything. Then my advisor, whatever, one woman, finally said to me "case study means you observed the school for more than one year." I said no, I observed the school for two months but the project itself is over one year. The other woman was wrong in that sense. So the deadline was soon and I couldn't have passed it. So I approached the woman about it and she's said well you'll get an F… Luckily my support… she is a professor at Gallaudet University, she went with me to support me. It was nauseating. If I didn't pass it I would lose

my scholarship too...they gave me an incomplete and I typed and typed until I finished the second proposal, handed it in, and they accepted it. I was so relieved!

What is demonstrated by these stories is that Gallaudet seemed to provide an environment where communication itself was not an obstacle and where professors understood the experience of deafness. Although communication and attitudinal barriers were substantially lower in comparison to other universities, this outcome alone did not create a campus where the faculty and staff were considered unequivocally supportive. Institutional supports and barriers still existed in one form or another. Was this also true in terms of social networks?

Social Supports and Barriers

Gallaudet is considered to be a campus that offers an environment where communication is fully accessible to the deaf students who attend it. Gallaudet's mission statement includes the following: "Campus activities' core value is to offer opportunities to foster leadership, character, citizenship, social responsibility and civility for the students and campus community (gallaudet.edu/campus_activities.html)." They provide a variety of events that students can attend. The university also offers student organizations and clubs as well as fraternities and sororities to enrich the college experience.

Alisha recalled her first impression of the accessibility to communication: "Wow! It was all visual! I never felt left out you know. I could see what was being said and I could choose to be involved in different conversations." However, there were oral students who used spoken English and some who were just learning to sign and communication could be a struggle as Audrey pointed out:

Some of the students had come from a variety of backgrounds. Some had been the only deaf person in a mainstream program. Some needed to use their voice and talk. So there was some frustrated now that they were thrown into a different environment…some thought that we were signing too quickly. They couldn't understand what we were saying so we would have to slow down our signing. Others required an interpreter so when they spoke we had to watch the interpreter. Sometimes I had a hard time connecting with those students who spoke instead of signing. Discussions would take off with our ASL and they had difficulty. That was one negative struggle.

In the signing environment at Gallaudet one is expected to be able to sign and the onus is on the individual who does not sign to learn in order to be able to communicate with the Deaf students and Deaf staff. In a mainstream university the deaf person must arrange for an interpreter to cross the communication barrier. Audrey spoke about what is expected of students who do not sign: "The oral kids, they used interpreters. They can use interpreters for up to two years…they are encouraged not to prefer them and to sign for themselves and to learn to sign." Audrey's comments indicate that there were difficulties communicating between oral and deaf students. However, Deaf students who use ASL and those who use other manual signed communication systems typically can communicate with each other with relative ease.

One finding that was notable from the stories of the six alumni of Gallaudet is that five of the graduates mentioned knowing one or more friends or acquaintances when they entered the university as freshman. These established friendships were students who attended their high school. This experience was particularly common for those participants who attended deaf residential programs in high school. They also knew other students who chose to go to Gallaudet from such events as sports competitions and deaf camps. Audrey talks about this phenomenon:

And again I'm from a deaf school so I knew some people who were there from different deaf schools. So when I went to Gallaudet I knew who this was or I knew that person…people I had met through camp, basketball tournaments, soccer tour, and sports in general, or academic competitions too. People I have met before I arrived so I knew them…

Alisha, who is the only student of the six who was educated in a small deaf program in a public high school setting, started college with only one already known friend. She remembered how knowing someone helped her make new friends early on: "I knew one from my high school who helped a lot as we were roommates. So, sometimes I would join with her friends and their friends and we became a group… socializing."

Older than the average student, Allison had attempted community college, left, and worked for eight years before returning to Gallaudet to complete her studies. Her friendships were with interpreters she had befriended earlier through her husband who worked in the field. She recalls her campus social life as different from the norm:

A lot of my friends were older, not really those younger students. My husband worked as an interpreter so I knew a lot of interpreters. Often the interpreters would be waiting around between classes or on a break and I would socialize with them. I enjoyed coffee or chatting with them. I preferred their stimulation than the younger students who talked about parties or "I really like this guy this week" and I felt, "god I don't care." So, I preferred a more mature crowd… many of them did say come to a party or a bash get together and I was like, "no thank you." I wasn't interested.

Living in the dorms provided another opportunity to meet new people and make new friends. According to Audrey, all first-year students were required to live in the freshman dorm. Audrey recalled knowing people when she arrived, which helped with the transition into college, but making new friends did as well and the dorm was a great place to do it:

> There were new faces that I met too. It was really in that dorm building where everyone met each other…I was excited and of course nervous because I was on my own but not so much, because of my friends I already made would be there to help me transition. When my friends and me arrived we chatted and of course we are still friends, but I also made new friends during the transition.

Because all their peers were deaf, the participants were able to socialize in a more typical residential university campus. Andrew stated, "I did party in college." Audrey echoed this fact: "Oh, I partied, yes. Gallaudet has many different parties. I would go to parties I would take-up parties myself. I would go to them off campus. I would go to a bar, yes, when I could." Not only did the interviewees remember socializing with whomever they chose, they also remembered studying together. Albert and Alisha liked to gather friends into study groups for homework. Albert stated, "A lot of study groups helped." Alisha recalled studying with friends:

> I remember every night studying with friends asking them if they understood and they would explain it to me or sometimes we had a study group. Sometimes I had a study buddy, a friend in the same class.

Ashley tended to study with her best friends as well. Recollecting her experiences, she stated,

> I tended to study with my best friends, a group of us three of us. Sometimes we would go to the library together. Although we didn't have class together, we did homework together.

Participants remembered making friends through sororities and fraternities that were part of the Gallaudet campus. Because of the accessible campus the participants had the opportunity to join such organizations if they so chose. Four of the six graduates reminisced about belonging to one of these organizations. Audrey, Ashley, and Alisha all joined one of the three sororities available on campus. Andrew joined one of the four

fraternities. His memories were both positive and negative. Andrew lost some friendships due to his membership in his fraternity. In remembering how he tried to salvage friendships with those who did not like the changes they perceived in him while living at his fraternity he stated, "I discussed with them about life and that things have to move on. If they didn't believe that then [shrugs] we have to disconnect [from friends] to grow. If they want still to be connected with me then they need to understand it's my choice [fraternity] not theirs."

Regardless of the negative aspects of membership, each participant remembered enjoying their experiences with these organizations and felt it helped them to grow personally. Alisha remembered finding friendships through her sorority, stating, "My second year I joined the sorority and that helped a lot." Audrey mentioned her sorority when discussing the social problems that occurred on campus and relying on friends to deal with things. She recalled campus life when she stated, "There was drama often all over the place. There was always drama going on. I was in a sorority too…I talked to my friends to let things out if I was upset."

The graduates recalled having had the opportunity to join any organization they were interested in during their time at Gallaudet since, they reported, no barriers to communication existed. Audrey remembers participating in a plethora of extracurricular activities in addition to her sorority:

> I was involved with different organizations like my sorority, Rainbow Society, Green Gallaudet, which encouraged recycling. There were many different things. I was involved in volunteering work throughout my four years. I worked too. Not only was I a student, but also I worked for student body government and the government honors program too.

She also reminisced about the stress that was created by being so involved: "I had to take care of different roles and I was always changing my hats. Sometimes it was stressful with school, work and changing hats a lot." She also spoke about the positive aspects of participating in a variety of organizations and clubs. She stated, "I developed who I am. I found my strengths and my weaknesses, the areas I needed to improve. I developed work ethics. I learned different skills… social skills." Allison did not spend a lot of time on campus as a married woman but she did try to be involved in some way: "I volunteered for the LGBT group discussions because many of my friends LGBT so I supported that as much as I could."

Andrew summarized his college experience in terms of social networks, epitomizing the accessibility in all aspects of campus life and how socializing in a variety of situations helped him to grow. He said,

> It was wonderful. There was a lot of personal growth and it was the best time in my life. People of course party. There was academically socializing, organizational socializing, volunteering socializing. They had different groups where my skills grew in leadership and social networking. I learned how to communicate with people, those who were superior to me or below me, grassroots. I learned about organizational structure. Really, many things that really I grew from.

Summary

For these six alumni, Gallaudet offered a college experience that was purposely designed to provide access for deaf students to faculty, staff, students and a social life that included extracurricular activities, dorms and sororities/fraternities, much like hearing students on a hearing campus. Despite this goal, some barriers still existed that created challenges for the participants. Communication was sometimes difficult between oral and Deaf students, as well as when professors' signing skills were weak. Some

professors' personalities discouraged students from approaching them when they needed help or had a question. Other barriers were experienced as well as evidenced by a graduate's recollection that her academic advisor had not provided counseling on course selection.   However, the participants were able to make use of office hours freely if they desired and speak to staff members without the need of interpreters. The interviewees reported that there had been many options open to them in terms of clubs and organizations, as well as accessible campus events. The extracurricular activities provided opportunities to cultivate friendships. Nonetheless, challenges were also a part of the participants' social college experiences. Friendships came with differences of opinions and disagreements over such things as what sorority or fraternity was joined. Some participants became involved in too many clubs, sports, and organizations so that stress became an issue or grades suffered. In general, the participants found that accommodations and campus services were not necessary for full campus participation, and the supports of social networks outweighed the barriers.

Mainstream/DHH Universities

Four participants graduated from two different universities that have a deaf program on campus thus encouraging a large number of deaf students to attend their undergraduate programs. Two graduates attended a university on the West Coast and two attended a campus on the East Coast. Like Gallaudet, these universities are organized to serve deaf students, and the faculty and staff are familiar with deafness and have experience working with these students.

Institutional Supports and Barriers

Going to college at a university with a deaf program provided the four graduates access to more deaf students than would likely be found on other mainstream campuses. The participants reported that the university provided accommodations to access spoken language in the classroom such as real-time captioning, note takers, and interpreters. Tutoring with people who signed was also an available service. As has been previously reported by participants, having these services had not always been considered to be a support. Even so, Beth recalled how easy it was to receive the services she needed:

> They have everything! I went in to meet with the counselor and the counselor signed and they were like, "what do you need?" And they gave me, because I wasn't fluent in ASL…knowing that I was unable to communicate well enough to understand the interpreter in class, they gave me a real-time captionist and an ASL interpreter and a note taker! So I had all of that!

She also clearly remembered her first day and her astonishment walking into her first class:

> So I had, my first semester, my first day…my first class, I still remember it like it was yesterday. It was an 11am geography class. And I walked in and it's in this building, big beautiful building, and I walked into the classroom and it's like one of those long lecture halls. So I walked in and I see in the front corner of my class there must've been 8 deaf students all sitting in the corner talking to each other! There were two interpreters, a screen with the projector and a captionist! ...It was on a screen because there were so many of us. So I walked in and was kind of like blown away! Holy smokes! Wow, like "What is this?" So different!

Briana explained how she obtained campus services online during registration for classes. She indicated that while registering for courses, she would sign up for the accommodations she needed such as interpreters, note takers or real-time captioning, which she used for her liberal arts courses. She indicated that she preferred real-time

captioning for lecture-style classes because she could receive the transcript and she would

review it later. In this way she would not have to watch the interpreter and take notes.

Instead she could sit back and watch the interpreter, then get the notes in a document sent

to her at the end of the class. Briana used note takers during her four years at the

university. Brad, however, did not like the quality of the notes he received and therefore

he discontinued using them early on:

> With a note taker, I started with one earlier and I realized that other people
> wrote what they thought was important. When I'd get the notes and they
> were not important for me…sometimes students would volunteer and they
> would get paid, I think. I'm not sure, but it was a volunteer student. They
> would come from a pool. If you couldn't get one from the pool, you
> would ask someone in your class if they wouldn't mind taking notes for
> you. But I would get the notes that had no value for me. They wrote what
> was important for them. So I wrote my own notes.

Beth recalled her university being "so incredibly supportive." Briana echoed the

same thought about the campus services available to the deaf students on her campus,

stating that her university "… had really good access services." Nonetheless, once in a

while, these students recollected experiencing barriers. Beth talked about receiving

interpreters who were not highly qualified. She recalled,

> But there were some times that I would get interpreters that were
> kind of "green." I had become accustomed to the super highly
> qualified interpreters and I didn't need captioning anymore so
> when they would give me an interpreter that wasn't super, highly
> qualified, like a recent graduate, then I would have to kind of fight
> a little bit.

Brad had transferred to the same university that Beth had attended, after spending

one year at a university, which enrolled only a handful of deaf students. He remembered

his experiences with campus services and his use of real-time captioning and interpreters.

He indicated that, at the time he attended, he could not use both at the same time: "Then

later… I had real time captioning. I wanted it all the time but they couldn't. So I went

between real-time captioning and the interpreters." When asked why he couldn't use

RTC all the time he stated, "They didn't have enough stenographers." At times, Brad

also had difficulty arranging for interpreters for classes:

> There were 200 to 300 students and only about 50 interpreters so
> sometimes interpreters weren't available for a class. So, they had to move
> things around and sometimes a class didn't have an interpreter, every once
> in a while.

> Brad, Briana and Barbara also mentioned occasional incidents when an interpreter

did not show up. Brad recounted this experience, and how he advocated for himself in

this narrative:

> Sometimes the interpreter didn't show up for class so I would go and
> complain. They would say, "Sorry the interpreter called in sick," or
> something. Or sometimes I would go to class and there was no team
> interpreter for three hours! The interpreter arms would be in pain, so I
> have to let her take a break. But other than that it was always a team
> there.

When this situation arose, Briana stated that she would watch what was written on the

board. Brad indicated that he dealt with it in different ways:

> If the class had been something like history, where the teacher
> talked a lot, I would leave.   But if the class had been for math, I
> would stay and just write the problem down from the board. So I
> kept myself busy.

> Despite having supports such as real-time captioning and interpreters, Brad

dropped out of college after two years attending his university. He explained why:

> I dropped out of [name of school] in '95 to '96. That was after my third
> year of college. I dropped out that was because I didn't have control of
> my decisions. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't have a major and
> my grades weren't good.   It was the whole thing. So I dropped out
> thought I would do something different with my life. Then I went to work

I was happy for a while then I found that I couldn't get promoted or
advance without a college degree. So I went back to school.

Brad recalled having a new outlook on education after spending a year in the work force.

He compared his grades before and after his return: "All Cs. Cs, C-. I did just enough to

pass. And then when I went back to school later I got better grades like A-, B+." After

Brad returned to college, he sought out more supports.

In addition to interpreters, note takers, and real-time captioning, Brad, Briana and

Barbara also used tutoring. Briana explained about the tutoring services available at the

university she and Barbara attended, indicating that there were many hearing tutoring

centers for specific areas of study like physics, computer science, etc. However, there

was also a tutoring center for the deaf students with professional tutors who signed:

They provided professional academic tutoring services where they knew
how to sign and every week I would go and they would help me with the
things in my homework that I didn't understand.

Brad described how tutoring helped him:

I took advanced calculus. I had a hard time. So I had tutoring. It took me
two times to pass. The first time I got a C- but that wasn't good enough
for my major. I had to have a B or above. So I had to take it again and I
got a B.

In addition to tutors, all the students found that the professor were mostly

supportive. Barbara indicated that in terms of support from professors most…were good

and treated all the students equally. However there were some professors who she

remembered as treating deaf students somewhat differently:

We had to cross register for the [name of school] interpreters. But when
I went into the [name of school] campus the teachers called us [name of
school] students. We are not [name of school] students! We are [name
of school] students! The only reason we are under [name of school] is to
receive interpreters' services, note takers, C-print, but that is only for

support, that's it. That doesn't mean we are [name of school] students.
We are [name of school] student. It's just because we are deaf.

Briana talked about the support she received from the professors if she needed help:

I would go and meet with the professor and ask for help and say, "I don't
understand this. You need to help me." And fine, they would help me.
Many, many of the professors are friendly. They are used to seeing the
deaf students because [name of school] is mainstreamed.

When Brad needed help, he found it easy to communicate with the hearing professors

through use of an interpreter, which was provided outside of the classroom or through

writing:

If I need to communicate with the professor I would get an interpreter or
we would write notes back and forth. But later I started emailing.
Emailing wasn't around in 1997, 1998 times. I started emailing after that.
It was easy…. I would discuss with them about what I had not understood.
What should have been emphasized, things like that.

Beth remembered feeling supported from professors because they could sign:

Even in undergrad, there were some teachers who would teach classes in
sign. There was an English class that I took with a deaf teacher…so,
taking a class with the deaf teacher for the first time was amazing!
Amazing, to be able to understand what everyone around you was saying,
to be able to communicate with the teacher directly and not rely on
interpreter.

In addition to support from professors, the graduates also received support from

their academic counselors, though some of these counselors created barriers. Barbara

recalled having many difficulties with counselors in terms of inaccurate information and

having to deal with changing staff. Briana found the counselors helpful in planning her

coursework and Beth felt her counselor had been very helpful as evidenced by her

comment: "Just with making sure that I was understanding like giving me the support of

a real-time captioning and an ASL interpreter, both, just because she knew I wasn't fluent yet."

Through these stories Briana, Barbara, Brad and Beth shared their experiences of institutional supports and barriers, including campus services and working with faculty and staff in this mainstream setting. Although accommodations and professors were for the most part readily available, there were times when things did not go smoothly and they had overcome obstacles. Interpreters, captionists, note takers, and professors were not the only people who provided support to these four students. Friends made while in college also affected their experiences.

Social Supports and Barriers

Friends are an important part of the college experience. Developing friendships can be a challenge for Deaf students in any mainstream setting. These four participants graduated from mainstream programs that, because of the deaf program on campus, had a large number of students with a hearing loss, thereby offering more opportunity to develop social networks.

Unlike the graduates who went to Gallaudet, three of the four participants who attended the universities with deaf programs did not know anyone else in their program prior to entering college. Briana was the only participant who entered her university with already established friendships. While in high school, she had attended a summer program at the university. Therefore, when she entered, she already had become friends with students in that program. Barbara recalled that her first year was difficult due to the fact that she did not have much of a social life "because it was all hearing." However, the university she attended consisted of eight colleges, one of which was for deaf students.

Barbara had spent four years on this part of the campus and indicated that she had a great

social life there, but because the program did not grant bachelor's degrees, she transferred

to a mainstream setting. She pointed out that during her first year in the mainstream

program, she relied on her deaf friends who remained at her previous college. Beth

stated that she "knew not a soul" when she transferred from a community college to her

university. Brad was also in the same situation when he transferred from a university

with a small number of deaf students to one with a deaf program.

Making new friends is a part of the college experience. When Barbara

transferred into the mainstream college, making friends with hearing students presented

some barriers but they were surmountable. She reported that after the first year she

started socializing more with hearing students. In terms of her social life Barbara

indicated that, "there was always the issue with communication, however, you could

move beyond that." Brad had more of a social life on this campus compared to his first

year experience at the other university: "There was more of a social life at [my second

school]. More, all of my friends were deaf at [my second school]. At [my first school]

90% of my friends had been hearing." Despite having made deaf friends Brad said he

tended to study alone. When asked why he stated, "I'm not good with groups. Beth,

who was new to being around deaf people made a friend on her first day:

> So I sat down and set with the other deaf kids and I was really nervous
> because they were signing so fast and I couldn't really understand a lot of
> what they were saying. And I had one girl who sat next to me, and her
> name was Kelly. She introduced herself and asked me my name, and I am
> still friends with her to this day. Just started talking with her and I think
> within a semester I was signing like, I was signing ASL.

As Beth met more and more deaf students she recalls feeling a connection with her school: "I felt a lot more sense of belonging. A lot more, a lot happier and invited to a lot of the events and stuff." When asked who supported her most she indicated "The other deaf students for sure because just feeling a part of something made me feel like I could do it."

According to Briana, she was able to socialize easily with both hearing and deaf friends because of her speech skills. She reported having a deaf social life and deaf friends as well as hearing friends from her math classes. She often went to the hearing friends for help with her math homework. She indicated that her social life was wonderful but she had to manage her time between playing and working hard. She described it as a challenge to manage having fun socializing and going out while at the same time maintaining a 4.0 GPA. However, she claimed to be able to manage both by sleeping less. She stated,

> If I messed things up by socializing too much when I had a lot of much homework to do, I would just sleep less and sit at the computer until I finished and then things would get back to normal.

Clubs and activities were other avenues to meet friends on campus. Briana participated in several extracurricular activities besides going out with friends:

> I went out but I was also involved in clubs. I was involved with the Asian Deaf Club, the badminton club, and a variety of sports. I was involved with many, many clubs…and the ASL Club where hearing people were in the club and we taught them to sign and you can't voice. You had to turn off your voice. It was called the "no voice zone." It was cool.

Beth was not involved in any clubs or activities because, as she reported, she had to balance her social life and her married life. She stated that she did this by "sacrificing my social life, unfortunately." Brad recalled being involved with sports:

> I played a lot of intramurals…basketball, flag football…a deaf team. We played with hearing people. Oh, I was in a book club too…we would read a book for a while and get together and discuss it.

When asked if they used an interpreter, he indicated that there was no need for one: "No, no. They were all deaf."

Although Barbara did not mention being involved in clubs, sports, or organizations she did offer this advice to deaf high school students entering college:

> Socially, I would tell them to join as many clubs as possible, to get involved in sports and competitions, to get themselves out there to meet all they could meet, to show up at things to find out what's going on and get involved with people.

Summary

This section described the experiences of four participants who graduated from universities that have large numbers of deaf students and a deaf program on campus. The participants discussed barriers and supports in areas related to accommodations, working with faculty and staff, friendships, and extracurricular activities. In contrast to the Gallaudet graduates, these participants required accommodations to access classroom instruction, communication with faculty and staff, as well as well as participation in events or activities that were campus-wide. Like Gallaudet, the services were readily available. The participants reported that requests for accommodations were simplified by incorporating the form into the online course registration process or by meeting with the academic advisors, depending on the university one attended. Unlike Gallaudet, access to communication in the classroom was mediated and was dependent on the ASL skills of the interpreter. At times the participants found it to be a challenge to find highly skilled interpreters. This experience is similar to the Gallaudet graduates who chose their

professors carefully, evaluating their ASL skills through conversations with other students before choosing a class. However, in the mainstream universities with deaf programs where most interpreters were remembered as having been skilled, participants were less in control of choosing their interpreter.

Mediated instruction also meant that there were times when the interpreter did not attend class for some reason, and a class therefore became inaccessible. This outcome was not a concern at Gallaudet where instruction had been direct. In terms of communication outside of the classroom with faculty and staff, interpreters had to be arranged, where none was necessary at Gallaudet. If an interpreter was not available, the students used spoken English, for those who could, or note writing. Gallaudet faculty and staff had a great deal of experience working with deaf students due to the nature of the university. Those who worked at the mainstream/DHH universities also had considerable experience with working with deaf students, as there were many on the campus. At Gallaudet, faculty's personalities impacted whether a student felt comfortable approaching a professor. None of the Gallaudet graduates spoke of faculty or staff having negative attitudes regarding deafness. One of the four participants who attended the type of university described in this section shared stories about some, albeit few, professors' attitudes toward deafness that left her frustrated at times.

The graduates of mainstream/DHH universities reported that there had been many options for students who wanted to participate in extracurricular activities. There were club and organizations that could be accessed with an interpreter, as well as those run by and for deaf students. Needing an interpreter to participate in clubs or events was a noteworthy difference between the campus lives for these four graduates as opposed to

Gallaudet graduates. Like the Gallaudet graduates, the participants at mainstream/DHH

universities reported that time management was an important factor on how much

participation one was able to handle.

The participants at mainstream/DHH universities reported that interacting with

hearing peers required them to adjust their communication method thereby making it

easier for the non-signing hearing person to understand. Three of the four participants

said they had both hearing and Deaf friends, though most were Deaf. This mix of hearing

and Deaf friends is in stark contrast to Gallaudet where all friends were deaf and it was

said that the students tended to group together in terms of language (e.g. oral, PSE, ASL).

One interviewee, who graduated from a Mainstream/DHH university, indicated that she

used spoken English while the others used gestures or notes to communicate.   Several of

the interviewees who graduated from Gallaudet told stories about campus life in the

dorms, or as members of sororities and fraternities. In contrast none of the four spoke

about sororities or fraternities, however, living with roommates, whether on campus or in

apartments just off campus, presented similar barriers in terms of how compatible they

were. One difference was that at these universities, roommates were sometimes hearing

and that created challenges in terms of communication.

In comparing these two types of universities, there are similarities and differences

in the supports and barriers worth noting. For example, Gallaudet offered an

environment designed explicitly for the deaf population, while mainstream/DHH

universities are organized to have readily available accommodations and resources to

help a deaf student succeed. Gallaudet offered direct instruction with professors who

signed, while at mainstream/DHH universities instruction was mediated through an

interpreter. In both settings however, the graduates faced barriers related to communication access in the classroom on those occasions when a professor's or an interpreter's signing skills were weak. Both settings allowed the graduates to socially and academically integrate into the universities; however, the degree to which it was possible varied by setting. Based on the above comparisons, the particular nature of the post-secondary institutional environment seems to have affected Deaf participants' experience of college. In the next section I will discuss the third post-secondary setting, mainstream universities without deaf programs and how participants of this study experienced supports and barriers.

Mainstream Universities

This section presents the experiences of five participants who graduated from a mainstream university setting with few deaf students. Also included are relevant experiences that Brad had when he attended such a university for his first year before transferring to a more supportive environment. Each of these universities has an Office for Students with Disabilities and is required by law to provide accommodations. As in the previous two sections, this section includes students' recollections of supports and barriers in areas such as campus services, working with faculty and staff, and experiences with extracurricular activities as well as friendships.

Three of the five participants who graduated from these mainstream programs grew up oral and did not communicate in ASL upon entering college. Because they had little knowledge of the resources available to deaf students or knowledge of the Deaf community, they said they were not aware that there were other post-secondary institutions that provided more support and access to students who were deaf.

Institutional Supports and Barriers

Carl grew up oral and graduated from a university in the Midwest region of the

United States. He did not use many accommodations in class because he did not sign as

an undergraduate student. His accommodations were basic and included preferential

seating and the attempted use of an FM system but it often did not function properly.

Because of the limited accommodations, he faced many challenges in the classroom

trying to access spoken language:

> I think I had the same kind barriers that I had ever since kindergarten.
> Teachers facing the blackboard while talking and writing, making it so I
> can't see their lips. I can't see what they are saying, the background noise,
> noisy rooms, bad acoustics, people talking, and sound not being clear.
> Sometimes I would miss things that people had said, what teachers would
> say, and I would ask another person what they had said and they would
> answer, I will tell you later. But I didn't want to know later. I wanted to
> know then. I think that the people were more of a challenge to me than the
> school.

He described the limitations of the support services:

> Well I would sit in the front and if there was a film or something,
> sometimes you can get captioning…that didn't really happen that often.
> Sometimes I would ask someone if I could borrow their notes…So, I
> would have to pester people a lot. Bothering people.

Carl described his frustration with trying to have full access in class:

> Sometimes I would get really fed up. I would almost lose it sometimes.
> But I know I couldn't so I would have to kind of sit in class and kind of
> take what I could and not let out what is really going on. But people
> sometimes would talk and they would talk loudly and I couldn't follow
> them. And also for example, if I would say to somebody "what did that
> person just say, I missed it?" They would ignore me. They wouldn't
> answer. Or if I wanted to express myself sometimes people wouldn't
> listen. So that was very frustrating. I couldn't stand that.

If Carl did not understand what was being said in class he had to advocate for himself:

I would raise my hand and say, "what did you say?" I would do that as many times as I need to. So, I would keep repeating, "Tell me what you said. Tell me." So, sometimes people would say, "I'll tell you later. It is not that important." But, I would say, "It's important to me. Tell me now. Maybe you don't think it's important but it is important for me to understand."

Even small group discussion creates barriers due to the noise level in the classroom:

I didn't like the small group discussions because the whole classroom would get too noisy. And when the total class was having a discussion I would try to look around and catch the person who was speaking. I felt like I was watching a tennis game with my head going back and forth trying to find the ball.

When asked how he would deal with this he indicated that he spoke to the professor. He also added that his contribution to the group was limited due to his incomplete comprehension of what was going on:

I would tell the professor that I didn't understand anything people had said. They would say that was fine. For group projects, when we had to write things down, then I would see other people's notes and I could see what they had said. If I couldn't hear the question, I would ask somebody. Sometimes I would add a little bit to what had been said. I only got pieces of information. They'd give me what they thought I needed and that's all. I would just ask people. That's how I dealt with it.

Despite what was described as a very frustrating experience, Carl persisted in his studies. His third and fourth years became easier as he began taking classes in his major, which led to smaller class sizes and an easier time accessing spoken language:

Well, first of all class size got smaller. In your first two years you're talking a lot of general education classes and they're huge classes. Some of them had more than 150 to 30 people. The classes in the third and fourth years were down to about 20 to 30 people. I think our school had a 25-person limit. So, the size depended on the class. Some had more and some had less. But if there weren't a lot of people talking it made a difference. It was easier to see people, especially if we sat in a circle. That made it much easier. If there weren't too many people you could do that.

Colleen was also raised oral and entered college without knowledge of ASL. Her first impression of college was being surprised by the large size of the classes. For her, campus services included real time captioning, which she had never experienced before in elementary and high school. She was able to read what the teachers said as well as other students, and she wished she had this service in high school. She used RTC throughout the first three years of college. From the start of college she began taking ASL classes with other hearing students and also took Deaf culture classes. For that reason, in her final year, she was able to use an interpreter because she felt her ASL skills were strong enough at that point. She had the interpreter mouth the words as well to aid in understanding.

Courtney was the third participant who grew up oral. She began her higher educational experience at a community college. Her frustration with the lack of support there was evident, as she recalled not having a counselor when she started taking courses:

> That summer, I signed up for anatomy and physiology because I wanted to become an RN. But, when I went I was overwhelmed because there was no support and it was a different environment. It was kind of hard, plus I was married too. So I didn't have a lot of support for that.

When asked to clarify she stated,

> Like financial help, counselors to tell me which classes to take, to make sure I am on the right path, or tutoring information that I didn't know about. I didn't benefit from sign language because I didn't know sign language at that time but they could have given me RTC. I can read, you know, like real-time captioning where the person types. I could have benefited from that but I didn't know that was available at that time.

She went on to explain why she did not have the support: "At that time I didn't have a guidance counselor. I just happened to sign up myself. I picked the classes myself. I read the catalog and it said that is what I need, so I said okay and I pick that." After

receiving a certificate in child development she attended a second community college

where she finally learned about ASL:

> I went into college and went to the cafeteria and I saw a man who was
> deaf who signed and I knew some basic signs, the alphabet...my name
> is...I wanted to talk with him but my skills were not good enough…I
> felt bad. He thought I was an ASL student in college…I said, "What's
> ASL?" I didn't understand what was ASL. He said sign language
> class…I said, "Oh. No I am not taking that class." Then I thought
> how could I explain so I showed him my hearing aid. He was
> surprised and said, "Oh, you are one of us." And accepted me right
> away.

From this person she also learned about the counselor at the institution who

provided services to the deaf students on campus. She recalled being upset by the

practices of the counselor in providing accommodations for the deaf students. She gave

an example how the counselor unfairly treated them:

> For example, if a student wanted to take a class in the morning and other
> deaf student wants to take a class in the afternoon, the counselor said they
> must pick one and wanted to place them in the same class together so the
> interpreter can be in one class not two. So one student had to drop
> because they wouldn't do the morning. But that's not fair! The interpreter
> should be available in both the morning and the afternoon. It doesn't
> matter if it is the same class!

She went on to give other examples of the unfair practices at the institution:

> Another one, I remember fighting for a movie they showed in class
> and they didn't provide CC and the interpreter wouldn't interpret it.
> There were so many things. For those people they couldn't find an
> interpreter for they could have provided RTC but they said, "no, you
> don't read English well enough. You can't have RTC."

Courtney found that she had to fight to receive real-time captioning as well:

"Then I started to learn the system, about student complaints and student rights…So, the

counselor gave me RTC…Then I finally took sign language classes… within one year I

had picked up sign. After that she used an interpreter and also a note taker. She recalled

what it was like to experience full access with these accommodations:

> Finally I understood the teacher word for word. I have to work hard.
> After that it was easy for me with sign. And also a note taker so that gave
> me the opportunity to just relax and watch the interpreter and not have to
> look around all the time and stress out.

After receiving two associate degrees from the community colleges, Courtney

transferred to a program that granted four-year degrees. There she used interpreters and

made friends as well: "It was cool because I was excited with this new challenge. I had

interpreters some of those interpreters I already knew so that was nice. I met friends fine

throughout that time. I had no problem with that."

Cathy, Brad, and Christopher all grew up using ASL in school and at home.

Cathy used an interpreter and a note taker while in college, although she limited her use

of note takers because she did not find them helpful: "So, I used the interpreter and note

taker, but not for all my classes, only for one or two classes. Those two, that's it." She

indicated what she did not like about note takers: "I didn't trust others with their notes

and they didn't always give it to me on time. It tended to be a week later. Time was

wasted."

In addition to problems with note takers, Cathy recollected barriers with the

interpreter and not being represented well:

> I think it was a challenge for me to get a good interpreter …the
> interpreters were used for the K-12 and couldn't take on the more in-depth
> content that a college class provided. So I was quite bilingual and so I had
> the ability to tell them. And these interpreters, at the time, were used to
> the one way of listening to the teacher and signing. But they weren't used
> to necessarily having to understand me, and voice interpret for me, so I
> could fully participate, because they're always stopping me and clarifying.
> And finally, it got to the point where I said never mind, and I didn't really

express myself. So, the other students…did not know my intellectual capabilities. They did not know who I was. I was not well represented. So that was frustrating experience!

Cathy echoed Courtney's frustration about not having a person to go to for

support:

> Well finally I went to the disability interpreter coordinator and said if, you know, if I don't for example, like an interpreter and she said, what's wrong! And I look back I realized that she had never given me an orientation about what my rights were as a consumer of interpreters as a deaf person in college or university. She never told me, I had never gotten a manual. I had never gotten an orientation. Nothing! So I didn't know that I could have asked her prior to that point so oh well. Whose fault was that? Was it mine? Should I have said to her, "No, this is what I need?" But how was I going to know what to know what I could ask for.

Cathy felt she had to learn about college on her own. Because she did not have friends on

campus she discussed college issues with her friends at other higher education

institutions:

> So, I just kind of talked with friends at other community colleges and shared some experiences with them about it. I had my own personal support group but they weren't from the same college I was at. They were community colleges or the other small [name of city] institutions.

Tutoring was another service that was available but was not used by any of the

participants. Courtney and Cathy were not aware of tutoring services. Cathy was

frustrated when she did not understand the homework and professors were not helpful:

> I can read and write and understand that fine but sometimes things like the professor would assign homework, and I would look at it and think, 'What's that?' I don't know if maybe I was clueless, but I don't know if my college had a tutoring program. I did not use anything, nothing…I don't know if they even have one. I never used it. So a lot of questions I had about homework, I would try to ask the professor. But sometimes the professors, some professors' personalities were not helpful, or they would draw the line with, 'you should know the answer.' Okay, I didn't understand this homework.

When Cathy did not understand the homework and did not get support from her

professors she went to her boyfriend who was attending another college:

> I used him like my sounding board to check in if I understood things
> correctly. Deaf people tend to move forward then check in to make sure
> they are understanding and then move forward. I feel that [name of
> school] didn't really allow me to check in. I had no one to check in with.
> So I reverted to my boyfriend. He was more "hearing." He was in the
> mainstream without other deaf people. He didn't grow up Deaf like me.
> Now he is Deaf but before he was more knowledgeable about "hearing"
> things. So I could check in with him. He became my support system.

The participants' experiences with campus services were very different for the

oral graduates than for those who used ASL. Carl often experienced frustrations with

access during his undergraduate years due to his limited use of accommodations.

Courtney and Colleen benefited from real-time captioning until they acquired enough

ASL to benefit from interpreters. Cathy, Brad, and Christopher had the least difficulty

accessing spoken language and the curriculum with the use of ASL interpreters and note

takers. They were also aware of the law and knew their rights, having attended deaf

programs or having been in mainstream high school settings with interpreters.

Courtney's experiences fighting for her rights for accommodations show some of the

barriers that were faced in working with staff in the mainstream setting. What other

experiences did the participants have with faculty and staff?

Courtney spoke more about the challenges she faced with professors' attitudes

and how she made things work for her:

> The only challenge I might have had was with the professor's attitude.
> But I learned to talk with them before I started class and I told them that I
> was deaf and I will need CC [closed captioning] on videos, I would need a
> note taker and all of that because at that time the university had disability
> services. I finally got services through that. They sent an email to the

professor warning them that there would be a deaf student in the class and they would provide an interpreter.

When talking about her interactions with administration and staff, she said she did not feel she faced barriers. Instead, she talked about a lack of awareness about deafness:

> I had to explain all the time because they were really clueless about deafness. So, in my mind I had to be prepared for, not their attitude, but like they didn't know. So I had to explain, 'You know I am deaf, that is the kind of services I need.' So I would explain to them. They would say, "Oh okay" and they would work with me. I didn't really have problems with staff.

Cathy's experiences with staff and faculty were much more challenging. She told a story about one situation where the teacher did not see her as an equal to other students:

> …I had to take Communication 101 course…everybody had to give a speech. So I signed up for it because that was required for the degree…the first day of class…the adjunct said to me, "You don't have to take this class. This class is oral presentation. You use sign language. I'll just waive you from this requirement..." I said, 'Oral means presentation. I can do it in sign language.' She said, "Oh no. This focuses on your English skills. I said, 'That's not a problem. I have an interpreter.' I explained this to the adjunct person and she said, "Oh no. I'll just waive you from it." And I said, 'No, I don't want to be waived. I want to keep it!' Because I thought to myself there are going to be times that I am going to need to practice to stand in front of an audience and give a presentation.

Cathy could not quite understand what the instructor had been thinking, and after she told her story, she continued with this reflection:

> I think that they thought that, because of the fact that I was deaf, or because I used ASL, it was going to be difficult to interpret. They wouldn't have thought that about Spanish or English. But because I was deaf, I don't know if they thought I was dumb, or that deaf people couldn't do what other people could do or, there was just that resistance.

Cathy recalled that because she did not have an interpreter outside of the classroom she chose not to meet with professors but to use email instead:

But with professors I didn't tend to meet with them in person. I used more indirect contact like email or a call if I had to. I would never go...the teacher had office hours, I didn't' go because there was no interpreter again. Outside of class you didn't get an interpreter, meaning I would get bored writing back and forth.

After having an incident with a professor who would not write, she set up what she called "boundaries" in her meetings with them:

If a professor asked me if I could stop by her office I would say, 'No. I have no interpreter. That means you have to write. I don't read lips. I don't trust lip-reading. I can read lips but that means I have to guess and misunderstand. I prefer email. You know, everything is right there, more clearly.' That was my communication with professors, with boundaries between us.

Cathy's frustration with academic advisors was also evident in how she recollected having no one to go to for support:

With the academic advisor, the one who makes sure you're on track, how many classes you have left, I had no interpreter. We had to write everything. I tried to email them several times but they said I had to come in person. You know, walk in. I had no personal, my own advisor, and no one…No one is assigned to you. You just walk in and they would give you whomever were available and you would talk to them and they just rotated counselors. So, I had no consistent person to work with me at all.

Social Supports and Barriers

Friendships are more difficult to cultivate in a mainstream setting where communication issues abound. Cathy discussed her relationship with classmates, recollecting that friendships were nonexistent prior to moving into her major classes:

The only things that had been consistent were my classmates. So during the four years it went from students being pre-art forming the art-major cohort. And that consistency made it easy to develop more open communication. But before that, with the others, there were no physical or personal attempts to chat…. In my other classes like math and science and all of those I didn't have "friends" in those classes.

Because there were communication barriers with her classmates and interpreters were not available outside of the classroom, Cathy was well aware that her social life was not the same as her hearing peers:

> My hearing classmates would say something like, "Last night I went to a party. Why didn't you go?" I would look at them puzzled, and ask, "Why would I go? You know I can't talk with people!" They would say, "Oh yeah, right, right." So they almost forgot that I was deaf. You know, forgot. During the day I can lip-read but at night, like at parties people have had alcohol and become harder to understand lip-reading. So their experiences with socializing were different than mine because I have to think carefully about what kind of challenges I will have, what kind of communication barriers it maybe will have. So I avoided it. They were more willing to accept invitations and go. Whereas, I didn't have that freedom. It wasn't easy.

Cathy relied on her friendships in the Deaf community as well as family for her social life:

> I didn't feel lonely. I think because I already had local friends.
> They weren't connected with college but I had friends around me.
> I was lucky, but if, if...I grew up in San Diego. Suppose I went to
> some hearing college in Iowa maybe I would have felt lonelier.
> But I had my family, my mom who signed a little bit and my
> friends so, that helped.

> Christopher and Carl were the only two of these five participants to live in a

dorm. Christopher became good friends with his hearing roommate. He fondly recalled his friendship:

> He had some things in common with me so that help our bonding. We
> were able to tolerate through daily life together. We both grew at that
> time. We went through some growing pains but in the long run it always
> helps to have someone that you can bond with, talk about your day, throw
> some ideas at that person trying to get some feedback.

Carl, however, did not get along with his hearing roommate. He recalled that they did not speak to each other much and stated that this might have been part of the problem.

He stated that he dealt with the incompatibility between the two of them by avoiding

being in the room with him. The following year, while remaining in the same dorm, he

chose to live alone.

Unlike Cathy, Christopher developed a few friendships on campus, perhaps

because he lived in the dorm and was more integrated into campus life: "I had a

wonderful support system through my parents, my roommate, and a few friends. I had a

small group of friends that I socialized with that I would ask for advice." Cathy

wondered if living on campus would have made a difference for her:

> Would I have known about them if I had lived on campus? You know how
> there is that sharing of information when you live on campus. But I had no
> "friend" on campus. I had a friend but she wasn't at the same university.
> So, I had to find out information myself, alone. There was no orientation,
> nothing, someone to...you know.

Colleen had a few deaf friends later in college after she learned to sign. She just

happened to meet a couple of people on campus and then met others through them. The

one with whom she was a good friend was mainstreamed like herself. Her boyfriend was

with her so she was not alone. He had already completed a year in college and she felt

that a lot of her support that first year came from him. She was the only participant of the

five who had a few friends from high school who attended the same college. She

reported that provided considerable support.

Brad also made some friends at his first university although there was a larger

group of deaf students there than at any of the other five students' universities:

> Yes it was a small group, like maybe 30 deaf students. But understand
> about 20 of them and I don't mean to sound awful, I wouldn't call them
> deaf. They would like, they could only hear in one ear and they grew up
> hearing environment and they spoke. They only needed a note taker so
> maybe they were 10 deaf fluent signers. So I socialized with them but at

that time they were all older than me. They were like going back to school at night. They had families and were married. I was 18 or 19 years old. My roommate was deaf and we got along well.

He also met friends on campus and through friends: "I met, for example, a guy who was in the next room, we talked and I taught them sign language. Then, I met some through my friends." He explained how it was different from being among deaf peers.

I was fine but not like when I have deaf friends you know what I mean. I had friends but one or two knew sign. The rest gestured, which is fine. It was good for playing basketball with someone that was fine. You were doing activities but if you were sitting in a group chatting I was left out a little bit. Or if they wanted to listen to music I mean that's not something I can do.

Although he stated he was more isolated at this school he shrugged it off as being his normal: "Really I grew up a little bit isolated myself, so I was fine with that." He had also been asked if he used study groups and he confirmed the previous statement by stating: "I'm not good with groups." For Brad, being alone was not a problem.

Carl also made a few friends while in college: "Well, I was meeting people, new people. I made some connections. I still keep in contact with some of these people. I haven't lost contact. I haven't been without friends. I still see the people I met back then." When communicating with his friends he used speechreading and sometimes would miss what was said. He recalled friends being more tolerant than classmates when he asked for repetition:

Just like in the school part, if you don't understand something you have to ask people. But with friends they were a little bit more understanding then the people in the classrooms. They didn't understand. Some of my friends knew me. They knew what I needed. They knew the situation so they were more tolerant. So that helped, if I needed something, if I missed something.

Carl also indicated that he tended to spend his time at the movie theatre to get through his frustrations and challenges rather than rely on friends: "I think going to the movies because that was a place that I could sit back and ignore the rest of the world for a few hours."

In addition to going to movies, Carl was also involved in clubs: "As far as clubs, and activities, organizations, I was involved in leadership education…I was more involved in the honors program." Colleen was also involved in clubs. She became president of the Students with Disabilities Club. She reported that she learned about ADA and about her rights by being a part of this club. Meeting deaf people and learning ASL, was life changing for Colleen. She and her good friend started an ASL club at school for deaf students and hearing students learning ASL and they who would get together often. Courtney was actively involved with the Deaf Club during her years in community college as well as at her university:

> When I was in the community college I was involved in the Deaf Club for
> seven years at that time. I was a member, involved, once a month we met.
> And in the BA University I was the president of the Deaf club and we
> taught sign language to the hearing students there.

Summary

Based on the stories of these five participants, there were many challenges that the graduates had to overcome to succeed in the mainstream university setting. For the three students who grew up oral, access to communication in the classroom seemed to be a particular challenge. Having grown up without communication supports, they stated that they lacked the knowledge about the accommodations that were available. Accommodations were limited to real-time captioning, preferential seating and FM

system. Attending a mainstream high school with a deaf program did not help a participant know how to self-advocate nor how to access services. Two of the participants were not aware that they should have had guidance counselors. They were left on their own to figure out the system and manage tasks such as choosing classes and getting accommodations. Nor were they aware of resources, such as tutoring programs, on campus. This experience was vastly different from the experiences at Gallaudet and the universities with the deaf programs.

Comparing the narratives of the interviewees at Gallaudet and the mainstream universities shows their experiences would fall on opposite ends of a spectrum. The experiences of those who graduated from mainstream/DHH universities would fall in the middle. In thud mainstream/DHH setting accommodations were easily accessible, and staff provided proper guidance due to their knowledgeable about the needs of these students. In the mainstream university setting, several of the participants recalled having to fight for their rights to receive what they believed they needed. Graduates who did not know their rights under the ADA law felt powerless to speak up. Not until they gained this knowledge and felt empowered did they demand better services. Those interviewees who had strong self-advocacy skills and knew their rights did not recount stories of frustration in terms of acquiring accommodations.

Stories about working with the faculty and staff also indicated stark contrasts between the three types of universities. Unlike Gallaudet and the mainstream/DHH universities, the faculty and staff on mainstream campuses had little or no experience working with deaf students. One interviewee did not recall facing barriers in communicating with faculty but that was because she took preemptive steps. She

explained that she educated the professors about deafness prior to the start of classes. The burden was on the student and not the university to teach awareness. Several of the graduates of mainstream universities recalled being treated as "less than" their hearing students by faculty, staff and hearing students. Participants also described their related feelings of frustration and anger. Participants in the other two types of settings did not discuss this type of treatment from others.

Support to overcome these frustrations came from a small network of friends whom the graduates made on campus or from friends and family off campus or both. These participants' stories revealed that they made friends, albeit a few. There had been ample opportunities to develop friendships at Gallaudet with all students being deaf. On the mainstream/DHH campuses, there were a few hundred deaf students that one could befriend. The participants' stories, of life on a campus with few or no other deaf students, revealed that developing friends presented a challenge due to the communication barriers. They recalled friendships being more difficult to cultivate in the first two years because general course requirements meant large class sizes and little consistent contact with their hearing peers. Later, they remembered when they began their major coursework, and classes had been smaller and the students in their classes tended to be the same. At that time, their hearing peers had opportunities to get to know them a little more personally and both parties began to communicate freely.

Participation in extracurricular activities was also limited on the mainstream campuses. Gallaudet was accessible and deaf program settings provided interpreters when necessary for extracurricular activities. There were also clubs and organizations on these campuses for the deaf students. In contrast, on mainstream campuses interpreters

were not provided outside the classroom for any reason including meeting with professors. Therefore, unless there was an established Deaf Club or the participant began one, extracurricular activities were inaccessible, and thereby limiting places to cultivate friendship even further. As with graduates from the mainstream/DHH institutions, sororities and fraternities were not part of these five participants' experiences. Three of the five graduates commuted while attending college. Living in the dorm meant having hearing roommates where communication was a challenge. In the mainstream universities, there were few if any other deaf students to live with on campus. Both of the participants who lived in dorms, decided after a year or two to live alone in the dorm.

This chapter presented how Deaf college graduates remembered their college experiences based on three different types of post-secondary institutions represented in this study. The participants' stories were used to investigate how supports and barriers compared across settings. I turn now to a discussion of how these findings compare to what we know from previous studies about the factors affecting the persistence of deaf students.

Discussion

Many studies have been conducted to understand why students withdraw from post-secondary institutions. This study investigated Deaf students who successfully remained in college. Tinto's (1993) theoretical model attempts to explain why some students persist and others withdraw from higher education. Tinto proposes that there are five factors that contribute to persistence in college:

- Pre-entry attributes
- Goals and commitments

- Institutional experiences

- Social and academic integration

- Intentions and commitments

Two of these are particularly important as we consider persistence with deaf students on college campuses: Institutional Experiences, which include involvement in campus activities, and Social and Academic Integration. Persistence, according to Tinto, is dependent upon the nature of the social and academic integration between the institution and the student is positive or negative.

In this study the students were in three types of post-secondary settings: mainstream, Gallaudet, mainstream with deaf programs. The latter two types of institutions provide a modification to the social environment when compared to the mainstream university setting. This environment allowed the participants to feel more comfortable socially. All three types of institutions discussed above require modifications in order to provide integration of deaf students into the academic environment. At Gallaudet these modifications included faculty and staff who could communicate directly with the participants. The two other types of institutions required accommodations such as interpreters, note takers and real-time captioning in the classroom environment. Some of the graduates in the mainstream and the mainstream/DHH settings found full academic integration difficult. Barriers included use of interpreters who did not sign well, FM systems that did not always work, as well as faculty and staff who did not know how to work with deaf students. However, the interviewees' levels of social and academic satisfaction were never static. It continually changed as their interactions with these two systems led to positive or negative

experiences. These experiences were shared in stories that discussed the supports and hindrances faced during their undergraduate years.

Social integration at the postsecondary institution is a dominant assumption of Tinto's theory. For the six participants who graduated from Gallaudet, the campus environment was intended to allow for all the students to successfully integrate into the university community. However, some of the participants faced challenges when trying to integrate socially based on their ethnicity, language used (e.g., ASL, PSE), educational background, and parental hearing status. One participant struggled to integrate into the community due to her non-traditional status as an older, married student.

The four interviewees who graduated from universities with deaf programs had more opportunities to integrate socially than those who graduated from fully mainstream universities. In addition to interpreters being provided for clubs, activities and events allowing them to partake in campus life, students in these institutions also benefited from the proximity of the separate college for deaf students on the main campus, which allowed them to access clubs and organizations for these students. With large numbers of deaf students, the participants had opportunities to meet peers and develop friendships.

The five individuals who attended mainstream universities remembered not having access to interpreters outside of the classroom. For them, social integration was not truly possible. The communication challenges that arose with hearing students made it difficult to develop social connections. Four of the five graduates reported that they had made a few friends on campus. With the limited access to classmates, other students, staff and faculty, clubs, organizations and events on campus, the participants could not become fully integrated into the college culture, as Tinto claims is necessary for

successful completion of college. According to Tinto, students without access to the social environment of the institution are at risk of isolation and withdrawing from college. Yet, all these individuals succeeded. The participants turned to family and friends off-campus as important sources of support since they had so few social links at school.

Four of the participants in this study were students of color. For three of the four graduates, challenges related to their ethnic differences on predominantly White campuses were recollected. Tinto's model asserts that all individuals must socially integrate into institutional life. Tierney (1997) indicates that Tinto himself points out problems with this assertion, and acknowledges that adult students do not necessarily fit into his theory (Tierney, 1997). Multiculturalists, like Tierney, point out that minorities also do not fit into this integration model. According to a strict interpretation of Tinto's theory, underrepresented students need to give up their culture to acculturate into the dominant culture of society that is reflected in post-secondary institutions. The African American participant in this study who graduated from Gallaudet recounted experiences that left him feeling alienated from the culture that existed there. Tinto (1975) states, "lack of integration into the social system of college will lead to low commitment to that social system and will increase the probability that individuals will decide to leave college and pursue alternative activities" (p. 91). More than 93% (14 participants) of the interviewees never considered withdrawing from college. Tinto's dominant assertion concerning social and academic integration, by itself, fails to explain how the participants continued to graduation, although they were not able to fully integrate. Tinto's theory also claims that, in addition to social and academic integration with the institution, four

other factors also contribute to a student's decision to depart or obtain a degree (Mertz, 2004). These include pre-entry attributes such as family background and prior educational experiences; goals and commitments; institutional experiences; and intentions and commitments.

These 15 participants succeeded where many others have not, despite some of the graduates not fully integrating. For many of the students, challenges were abundant in college. It may be that, for these participants, there were sufficient supports in place to balance things out. The participants turned to family and/or friends, on or off campus, when support was needed. They also had other outlets for frustrations such as sports, leadership roles, and ASL club. Additionally, they had good self-advocacy skills. Therefore, when faced with a challenge or barrier, such as those with accommodations, many of the participants knew what to do to change the situation. Determination to reach their goal of graduation and intrinsic motivation were also characteristics of the participants in this study. These individuals were committed to the goal of obtaining a bachelors degree. Some of the things the participants remembered as motivating factors included: not wanting to disappoint others; a desire to prove someone wrong who had the mistaken belief that a deaf person cannot complete college; and following a sibling's post-secondary accomplishments. These factors, some of which are similar to Tinto's, also contributed to the decision of the interviewees to persist to graduation.

Overreliance on Tinto's integration theory fails to account for the successes of students like the 15 participants in this study. Maldonado et al. (2005) claim student agency is important to persistence in college. This is evident in Colleen's efforts to find a place where she would feel accepted. This resulted in the establishment of the student-

run ASL club she and her deaf friend founded on her mainstream campus. This connection is also evident in the types of clubs available for students at Gallaudet and mainstream/ DHH universities. Clubs that support the LGBT population or specific ethnic groups like the Asian Deaf Club all fulfill the need for student agency through these organizations by and for specific underrepresented groups of Deaf students. These clubs gave the participants opportunities to feel connected to college life. The accessibility at Gallaudet and mainstream/DHH campuses contributed to the participants' sense of belonging to their learning community.

The participants also explicitly recounted that when they were students, they believed that they could achieve their goals and succeed. For the participants who graduated from Gallaudet and mainstream/DHH universities, all but one attended a deaf institution full or part time at some point in their secondary education. These are places where students develop a mindset of "I can." All of the participants held high expectations and challenged themselves. Several of the graduates of the fully mainstreamed universities stated that they wanted to prove to others, for example high school teachers, that they were wrong and that they could succeed in college. Others possessed strong intrinsic motivated powered by the need to make their parents proud and not disappoint them, or because siblings had succeeded in achieving post-secondary degrees. Self-advocacy skills were also important in making sure they received the supports they felt they needed to be successful. In addition, all the participants said they went through college with the knowledge they could turn to friends and family when support was needed. These mindsets drove the interviewees to persevere even when faced with obstacles that may have driven others to withdraw from the university.

Based on participants' stories about their college experiences, the main finding of this chapter was that each type of post-secondary setting provided supports. However, what are perceived as barriers varied across the three types of environments. Gallaudet offered the most accessible campus for the Deaf participants. This accessibility allowed the participants whose culture matched more closely to the Deaf, predominantly White culture of the campus to integrate more fully both academically and socially. Tinto's (1993) theory of persistence would predict that these students were more likely to persist to graduation. For the students of color, particularly for the African American participant, ethnic differences created challenges that their White classmates did not experience. Tinto might say that these students needed to assimilate into the culture of the institutional environment in order to successfully integrate. As Tierney (1992) points out, a different perspective would be to view it as the institution's inability to function in a world that has become multicultural. Based on the narratives of the participants, there were also subcultures of the Deaf culture within Gallaudet. Here too invisible cultural hierarchies exist as they do with race and ethnicity. Differences in such things as language, secondary educational setting, and parental hearing status brought social challenges for some of the participants.

The stories of the graduates who graduated from mainstream/DHH universities also indicated that accommodations were both supportive and barriers to access in the classroom environment. Socially there were enough deaf students on the campus to allow for friendship with similar peers as well as with other hearing students. The participants were more able to socially and academically integrate by using an interpreter to access social activities and organizations if desired. However, full integration could

not occur because these deaf students did not have full communication access or did not choose to adopt the hearing, White culture of the campus. For Deaf students that would mean choosing not to be a part of Deaf culture and for the participant of color, breaking away from her native culture.

Finally, the fully mainstream environment offered the most restricted opportunities to integrate with the institutions. Four of the five students lived off campus and becoming friends with hearing students were difficult to cultivate due to the communication barriers. Social events were inaccessible because interpreters were not available outside the classroom to facilitate communication. Academic integration was particularly limited for those who had little or no accommodations. When those accommodations failed, such as interpreters not showing up, further limitations to integration occurred. One student completed college in three and a half years because she disliked the experience so much she wanted to end it as quickly as possible.

Although each institutional setting allowed for different levels of integration, not all the graduates were able to attain integration academically, socially, or both. It is known that social and academic integration are more likely to result in graduation from college, however, the stories of these participants indicated that what drives a student to persist is much more complex. The institutional barriers at each of the three settings made for different challenges to completion based on how the environment was organized to support deaf students. Gallaudet offered many supports to offer a sense of balance with challenges or even to overcome them. Each mainstream setting also provided ways that the Deaf students could succeed by providing supports that aided in persistence despite limited integration. The most challenging type of environment was

the fully mainstream setting, where on institutional supports were more limited than at Gallaudet or mainstream/DHH institution. When institutional supports were limited the participant accessed their personal social networks or established their own clubs where they experienced limited social integration. Furthermore, the percipients had personal attributes that helped them to persist, such as a strong sense of intrinsic motivation, having clear and achievable goals, having a positive self-image, and good self-advocating skills. In the next chapter I discuss how participants see themselves and how their sense of identity affected their college experiences.

Chapter 6: Identity and Post-Secondary Experiences

The paradox of education is precisely this - that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.

James A. Baldwin

This chapter describes the ways in which the participants think and talk about their identities in relation to their post-secondary experiences. Their narratives help to answer the following research question: In addition to deafness, what other features of their identity (e.g. race, class, gender), do they recollect as having affected their college experiences?

Little has been written about the impact of Deaf peoples' multiple identities of deafness, race, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Similarly, there are few studies about the impact of these intersecting identities on their post-secondary experiences. An expanded understanding of the multifaceted identities of Deaf individuals and their influence upon post-secondary experiences will inform efforts to effect social change and make post-secondary institutional cultures more inclusive.

This study investigates intersectionality, the impact of multiple identities on an individual, through the stories of these 15 graduates. Kimberly Crenshaw (1989) first coined the term in her article on Black women written with a Black feminist viewpoint of law. Intersectionality posits that race and racism are interconnected with other forms of subordination for individuals or groups of people (e.g. Black women) and how claims these identities cannot be examined separately (Barnal, 2002). Intersectionality is one of

the defining elements of Critical Race Theory, derived from Critical Theory. In this study, I use Critical Race Theory as a lens where the central feature is deafness (e.g., White/Deaf/lesbian/woman). I begin with a description of the ways in which the participants identified themselves. I describe how, depending on the institutional setting, different aspects of participants' identities become more prominent.

Intersectionality

All of the participants identified themselves as Deaf. However, not all of the 15 participants discussed other identities; only eight of them described ways in which identities, other than Deafness, were important to their experiences during their college experiences. Many factors may account for the seven who did not discuss intersecting identities. For example, for Deaf mainstreamed participants the predominant identity relative to their peers is their deafness. The experiences of the remaining eight participants are not understood fully by looking only at the deafness dimension of their post-secondary experiences. One must also take into account how these other aspects of their identities interact with their deafness to shape their experiences.

In his interview Albert, a Gallaudet graduate talked about himself as a Black man. Alisha, another Gallaudet graduates, discussed her Korean heritage. Audrey identified herself as a White woman, a feminist, and a lesbian and her friend Ashley, also White, identified herself as a lesbian as well. Allison was an older non-traditional student who self-identified as a White woman, and spoke of age as having affected her experiences in college. Briana, who graduated from a mainstream/DHH institution, talked about her Chinese heritage and her identity as an Asian Canadian. Cathy and Courtney attended mainstream universities and indicated they were Finnish American and Latina,

respectively. All of the other female participants who were White did not talk about themselves in terms of the additional identity of being a woman. Nor did the White men discuss any other aspects of their identity, except for their deafness.

Intersecting Identities at Gallaudet

The following four participants' graduated from Gallaudet University where deafness most students were deaf. Because deafness was not a major difference, other aspects of the interviewees' marginalized identities (e.g. gender, race, sexual orientation) came to the forefront. At Gallaudet, the Deaf culture was dominant one, and the process of "othering" pushed the other identities to the front.

According to Jensen (2011), "othering" is a frame of mind where an individual or group is classified as "not one of us." The person or group of people are considered in some way to be less human, and are therefore, less valued and respected. For individuals with intersecting identities, a person is not simply one identity all the time. Instead, as these examples demonstrate, in particular contexts, particular identities became more salient than others.

Microaggressions

Several participants with multiple marginalized identities reported others' attitudes and actions that Sue et al. (2007) characterized as microaggressions. These researchers define microaggressions as daily, brief, and commonplace occurrences in the lives of racial minority groups. These occurrences can be statements or behaviors with the intent of communicating messages that are antagonistic or demeaning (Nadal et al., 2011). A microaggressions is not identified by a single event but reoccurrences of small acts of injustice that are directed at an individual (Solórzano, et al. 2000). These acts

have an effect on the individual's daily life as well as the individual's mental health. The cumulative effect of these instances can, in turn, cause a student to withdraw from a hostile institutional environment. Microaggressions occur against racial minority groups as well as members of any marginalized minority group, such as women, LGBT persons, and of course deaf people. This concept is useful in untangling the intersecting identities, as multiple forms of oppression can be examined through the actions or words of others directed at these seven participants. Although they do not label them as microaggressions, the participants in this study recalled actions and words that can be characterized as microaggressions. Moreover, these microaggressions were related to an identity other than deafness.

Albert did not expect to experience racial microaggressions when he entered Gallaudet as a freshman. Nor did he realize right away that what he was experiencing was racism. Having grown up in a Black community, his deafness was what stood out as different to himself, his family and friends: "I grew up…with Black people around me all the time…a Black school, Black residential program, Black church. My family was all Black. I didn't really experience racism. I experienced more looking down on deaf people." When he attended Gallaudet, he recalled deafness not being an issue, but he did not expect being Black would have a negative impact on his experience there: "Then at Gallaudet it was reversed. Now deafness was nothing to look down upon but being Black was. It was reversed."

At Gallaudet, Albert and his parents saw only a few Black students on campus. They were concerned that he was in a predominantly White institution:

Before why would I look for other black people because they were everywhere? But then I went to Gallaudet where I remember my parents looked at me and said, "Are you okay?" and I said, "I think so. Why?" They said, "Where are the black people (looks to the left and to the right)?" "You're right. I know. Where are all the black people? I don't know but I think I'll be fine." They said, "Okay, but if you need anything let me know." I said, "Okay fine. I will be, I think."

Albert was aware of his difference and he spoke about how he felt when he first stepped on campus: "I was nervous that they would look at me like I was too different. You know, because I looked different from everyone else. Everyone was White." He went on to talk about his first impression of feeling different:

When I got to the deaf university I finally understood, okay I'm deaf. I'm a deaf person but they still looked at me as different. I didn't understand it was because I was Black… People would look at me as a Black person. Deaf…not really because they were all deaf and that was fine.

Albert told a story about an article he had written for the school newspaper where another student questioned his authorship of the article. The following example shows how these insults are based on negative stereotypes:

Well, I remember I wrote for the school newspaper and someone said to me, "Are you Albert?" and I said yes. And he said, "Did you write an article for the paper?" and I said yes. And he said, "Who wrote it for you (looked at them quizzically)?" I said, "Who wrote it for me? What do you mean?" He said, "You couldn't have written it yourself." I said, "Yes, I did write that article myself." Then he said, "Really?" I said, "Yes. I'm also in the honor roll program too." He said, "Oh I'm sorry (hands up- "backing off") I didn't know that." So I said, "Yes, okay."

When asked why he thought the other student said that, he replied, "Because I was Black."

I asked Albert if other things like that happened, and he shared another episode that occurred while with his friends. He, as the sole Black person in the group, was singled out to prove his status as a student:

> For example, I went to my friends' dorm often. It wasn't at my dorm. It was another dorm and they would always ask me, even though I was with a group of friends, for my ID. They would ask, "Where is your ID?" and I would show it to them and I would say, "You've seen me before. You know I'm a student here." Because you need to have ID to get in the dorm and I understood that. That's fine, but they knew that I was a student and they would ask for my ID. I showed my ID and they would let me through but they didn't ask my friends.

Albert was asked if his friends were White in order to clarify the situation, and he responded: "Yes all of them. But we would go to the same places as a group and they didn't ask them but they asked me." At the time, Albert was not cognizant of the concept of "microaggressions" as evidenced by his reaction: "and I was like okay, that's fine." Later, after thinking about it he realized what happened: "So I didn't really understand that people were being condescending to me because I was Black until later when I analyzed it and I thought, that was really condescending of them. I didn't realize it until later." I asked Albert what was the most difficult aspect during his time at Gallaudet. He said that the most difficult time was when he recognized the insults and verbal slights that were targeted toward him, as a Black man, were manifestations of racism:

> I think racism. Because I was aware that this is racism and I began to speak up and say, this is racism and it's not great, and people were very defensive. That was my challenge my final year of college because people who did it weren't sure how to react when people say this is racism, you know, probably.

Sue et al. (2007) claimed that because American society is so entrenched with racial inequities, discrimination against people of color often occurs without the White person's awareness.

Albert shared another incident where he was intentionally or unintentionally insulted due to his membership in a marginalized group. In this case, he pointed it out to the person and described that person's reaction:

> I remember when I applied for a job as a recruiter for Gallaudet…So I explain my experience working as a student ambassador for three years.... I felt great that I got the job. But then my friend said, "You got the job because you're Black." I told him, "No, that's not true. I got the job because I worked for that office for three years. I am definitely sure that if I were White I still would have gotten the job anyway." He said, "No, it's because you are Black." I asked him, "Why, do you think you are more qualified?" He said yes. "Okay because?" He said, "Because I'm the president of my organization." "Okay that's racism!" He said, "No, no it's not. You're my friend. We have been friends. I'm not racist because I have a Black friend." But I said, "That is racism what you're speaking here." He said, "No, I didn't mean that. I didn't mean that." "I understand that you didn't mean it but that's what you did." It is strange but that's one example.

Albert summed up his experience at Gallaudet as describing the university as being unsupportive to Black students:

> I didn't really have a lot of support related to racism there that's for sure. When I graduated and I worked there it was like, this needs to change because I remember feeling alone. There were no other Black students. I remember when I graduated I was only one of six to graduate!

But Albert also continued to see the good in people:

> I think I can only assume the best of everyone and I hope that was not on purpose. But when I look back, maybe they were clueless. Maybe it was just because of growing up in an environment where everyone was White. I don't know. But I think I should have looked for other Black students out there and see if we could have supported each other better. I remember when I worked there and if I saw another black person I would chat with them and they would say, "Thank you, I was wondering where the other Black people were." and I would say, "I always wondered the same thing before (laughs).

Audrey also remembered being treated unfairly in college, in terms of her status as a woman. Audrey described herself in terms of her multiple identities:

> I came into Gallaudet very naive. I am white. I am deaf. I am a woman. I always felt strongly about that. I was always very feminist oriented. Fighting for equality. Equality in my deafness…disability awareness… But at the same time I realize that Deaf is not just a disability but we are more of a language separation.

She spoke candidly about an experience working with a man where she perceived the situation to be about his inability to accept her as both a woman and as president of the organization:

> So, when I was the student government body president I felt a lot of pressures to be masculine instead of feminine because you are wearing the pants on everything and making the decisions. I had a man who was vice president, and this was very frustrating, because he thought of himself as the president and me as the vice president. Even though it was not that way because I was the president. Sometimes it was hard to get him to recognize me, he was kind of stubborn about that, as a woman…. as a woman I would feel frustrated because he was looking at me as a weaker and passive individual. But I am not passive and I am not weak. And so I would have to point that out.

Audrey also remembered instances of heterosexism, a term used to describe attitudes, biases and discrimination in favor of opposite-sex sexual orientation and relationships (Shelton & Delgado-Romero, 2011). She recalled times when people repeatedly questioned her sexual orientation in a derogatory manner.

> Then as far as the lesbian aspect I had never thought of myself as straight or lesbian and I had had boyfriends in the past and I felt open to women and I had women friends. So people were kind of confused about who and what I was and they kept asking me, "Well, what are you? Are you queer?" Then once I got into a serious relationship with a woman then I thought more and more that I could identify as a lesbian because I was in a longer-term relationship with a woman and I started to understand the differences between the identities.

Ashley also recalled a heterosexist event that occurred when a Black administrator signed a petition, which was being circulated through her church, opposing gay marriage. Word spread throughout the campus and anger erupted in the LGBT

community. The administrator was temporarily suspended and the Black community was

outraged:

> She signed that petition and of course the gay and lesbian students of
> Gallaudet felt outraged because she is in charge of the budgeting for gay
> and lesbian events and organizations. She made public her beliefs. There
> was an upheaval because people of color, that group, felt ...well Gallaudet
> put her on suspension.

Following this incident, discriminatory comments were made in Ashley's presence,

which she found insulting as a lesbian:

> Then people would say racist comments or they would say homophobic
> comments and sometimes it was my friends who said that… I was upset.
> Some of them, who I was close to, I did say hey, and others I just let it go.
>
> Alisha, who identifies as Korean as well as Deaf, discussed how she and others

perceive her identity:

> If I'm in the hearing world, I will look at myself as a Korean. In the
> hearing world, people look at me as a Korean person, not deaf or not a
> woman. But if I'm in the deaf world, they look at me as a foreigner. They
> think I am a foreigner. But no, I grew up in America but I signed
> different. So they think, because I don't sign so great in ASL, I am from
> another country and I have to tell them no.

Prior to entering college Alisha identified more as a White person than Korean. It was

not until she was in college and began meeting other Asians that she began to explore her

identity as a Korean person. Here is what she said:

> I saw myself as White first. Because I have interacted with White people
> and I was around White people. When I was with other diverse groups on
> campus, I felt we were not the same… the first year I was like I didn't
> want to meet them we're not the same I don't know why. I felt like a
> banana I was a banana and I needed to reverse the banana… because a
> banana, on the outside looks like Asian but inside it is white. So, I
> realized that and changed. I am really Asian and needed to accept myself
> as a Korean person.

I asked Alisha why she thought she had never seen herself as Korean, and she responded,

"Because my mom and my older sister never told me, 'you are Korean. Be proud of

yourself as a person. That is what we are.'"

Differentiation Within the Deaf Community

The idea of "othering" (Jensen, 2011) occurred even within the Deaf community

where some deaf individuals were seen as "less than us." People who have never met a

deaf person or who know little about deafness, likely assume that there is only one deaf

experience. Needless to say, like other groups of people, there are differentiations within

the deaf population itself. This categorizing of people within the Deaf community

appeared in some of the narratives of those who graduated from Gallaudet. Andrew

referred to this differentiation within the Deaf community as Deaf politics and gave his

idea of how the two groups differed:

> My university had heavy politics, called deaf politics, where Big D,
> meaning those were really strong deaf group and don't want hearing
> people involved, and then those who are small D, who feel often happy to
> interact with the hearing world where people see how they can help each
> other. Some people really started to identify and separate and I felt (hands
> open).

Andrew identified himself as "lowercase deaf" but nonetheless he supports Deaf culture:

> I think it's wonderful. Very fascinating and very curious how the Deaf
> culture has changed in the last 20 to 30 years. But unfortunately right now
> Deaf culture is not doing so great. With the growth of technology people
> have lost the social aspect. Deaf schools have broken down. I will always
> love and desire support from Deaf culture.

Other participants also provided examples of microaggressions. The events they

described were based on communication ability, parental hearing status, or the type of

educational facility they attended prior to entering college. Alisha recalled,

> I felt barriers with elite status like the Deaf group from Deaf families, the deaf group who were not from Deaf families, the mainstream group, the group with from deaf schools. I was mostly with the mainstream group who grew up oral too and we would socialize together. We would sign together but it was PSE sign. The other groups were fluent ASL.

When asked to elaborate she recollected being ignored and explained how exclusive the others were:

> I would try to say hi and they would dismiss me. They already knew each other through Deaf families, friends, through the deaf schools where they would compete against each other's schools. All that helped them to know each other I was never involved with deaf schools K-12. I didn't know anyone in that group.

> I asked Alisha what affected her the most at that time. She recounted her envy at

what the people in this group shared with each other:

> What impacted me the most was the similar experiences that they had, which was that they had been involved in YLC-youth leadership and I was never involved in that. They would discuss it and share memories and they shared a bond that was nice I didn't have that. I wanted to have that, to share those memories and those stories and have fun telling that. I wanted the same and I had missed all that they would talk about, things that I didn't understand. Those memories and conversations about it were more of a tradition that they had.

Despite feeling snubbed by this group, Gallaudet was an experience that she remembered

with awe:

> Wow! It was all visual! I learned to socialize and learned a lot about the people's perspective, and the ability to share. I never felt left out you know. I could see what was being said and I could choose to be involved in different conversations. Must I be involved with everyone? I can't be friends with everyone so I had my own group of friends.

> Ashley recalled sororities that were dichotomized: "So they had one

sorority/fraternity that was generational Deaf families and the other sorority/fraternity

that wasn't." She talked about difficulties she had making friends in high school because

her Deaf parents did not graduate from college and how that kind of division continued at

her university:

> My parents didn't graduate from college. So, when I moved to Maryland I
> had a hard time finding friends because the parents all graduated from
> Gallaudet. So they were not interested in my parents because they only
> were high school graduates and that continued, because in Gallaudet I
> didn't join the sorority that was well known for generally Deaf of Deaf
> families. I joined the other one.

These stories demonstrate the complexity of the concept of identity and reveal

how identity and post-secondary experiences are interdependent. Everyone has multiple

identities, which may include race, gender, ethnicity, age, class or sexual orientation.

The context of these situations at college resulted in different aspects of the participants'

identities coming to the forefront. Based on the stories of the graduates, identities other

than deafness becoming more salient most often at Gallaudet because deafness was the

shared feature. When aspects of their identity other than their deafness were highlighted

through a new context, those other identities became the more salient characteristic.

Graduates who attended mainstream/DHH universities, however, had different

experiences with identity shifts.

Intersecting Identities at Mainstream/DHH Universities

Three participants from mainstream/DHHI universities talked about their

changing identities. The primary identity for two of these participants, Briana and Brad,

depended on social context. For example, Briana's sense of her own identity varied

between hard of hearing and deaf depending on whether she was with hearing or Deaf

peers:

Around deaf friends I am Deaf. Around hearing friends I am Hard of Hearing. I am used to switching between the two. I have the best of both worlds. At Gallaudet it is a little bit different because everyone is deaf with Deaf professors. But [name of school] is a mainstream program but you have a large Deaf community. There are about 1200 deaf students out of 14,000 hearing students on the campus. So that's a pretty good number of deaf students so you always have a social life… with my Deaf friends I would turn up off my voice and just use ASL. With my hearing friends I would talk.

This dichotomy was also evident with Brad but in terms of identifying as Deaf vs. deaf. He compared his experience in a deaf residential high school with being in a mainstream university. With hearing peers he identified as deaf and with deaf peers he identified more as Deaf:

When I was in a residential school full-time deaf, I self-identified as Deaf probably because I felt very empowered being on a campus filled with thousands of deaf people. And any hearing person I talked to was fluent in ASL. Then later on when I went to hearing colleges, I met hard of hearing and oral people and made friends with them.... and spent a lot more time in the "hearing world" and started to realize that I wasn't self-identifying myself as Deaf, but rather deaf.

When asked if this Deaf/deaf dichotomy shifted when he socialized with Deaf people during his time in college, he responded, "Yes, during college."

Beth, who graduated from a university much like Briana's, experienced "othering" within the community of deaf students who attended her institution. Early in the school year she felt rejected by her deaf peers. Her experience provides evidence of the differentiation within this group. She stated,

I did feel a little bit rejected by the deaf kids…Because I didn't have the language proficiency that they had so there was a lot of this [signs "think hearing"]… Yeah they said you're [signs hearing at the forehead] and I didn't know what it meant and they did this [C + C moves downward- meaning not able to communicate effectively] and I didn't know what that meant…. So asking a student what that meant…He wouldn't tell me what

it meant…so the guy in the copy room was like, "Come and see me and have lunch with me and I'll help you get there." So he gave me some tips. He was like, "Turn off your voice." That was the big one. He was like, "Turn off your voice."

As with Gallaudet, the immediate social context of the participants at mainstream/DHH universities influenced the way they perceived their identity. In general, there were fewer stories about shifting identities from the participants who attended these institutions than from those at Gallaudet. The perspective of a changing identity was even less apparent in graduates from mainstream universities.

Intersecting Identities at Mainstream Universities

There were no stories of code switching or differentiation within the deaf population at their institutions from the five graduates who graduated from mainstream universities. There were too few, if any, deaf students on campus for this phenomenon to occur. Courtney, the only student of color in this group, did share stories that occurred in a mainstream high school that set into motion her will to persist in college. Her examples illustrated how institutional agents can categorize people based on perceptions of a marginalized group:

> I did talk to my high school counselor about college and she told me, "Oh, you know you are Latina so maybe you will get married and have children and not go to college. So it was double discrimination because I was deaf plus Latina too…Yeah, so I had that in my head… I was like, "Oh, okay." At first I didn't understand. I didn't think she insulted me. I looked at her thinking, "Why did she say that?" and it made me think. But at the same time it made me mad and gave me fuel to prove to her, I will prove her wrong.

She went on to say that her guidance counselor never told her about the math and English requirements needed to get into college. She said that the counselor's beliefs or stereotypes about her intersecting identities almost limited her future choices:

For other students she did tell them because, I think those students already knew what they wanted, or someone told them. So they knew what to ask for like for example, "My plan after high school is to go to college. I need four years of English and math." But my counselor never asked me what I wanted. She just assumed...First because I am deaf and second because I am Latina. Maybe she didn't have confidence in me.

Courtney had the fortitude to reject this typecast that her counselor tried to impose on her and went on to succeed at the post-secondary level, driven by the need to prove her counselor wrong. She reported that the anger drove her to succeed:

Anger, because I was mad people were negative and critical of me and in my mind I was thinking people are so negative and I will prove to them that they are wrong. I will. So that is what gave me the motivation to persist, you know…I felt proud that I proved people wrong. That I can! That felt good.

Courtney had a similar experience as Alisha, in that she did not initially identify ethnically as a Latina women until she was older. Courtney spoke at length about coming into her Latina and Deaf identities and her recognition that she had several identities:

At first I never identified myself as Latina because I grew up in [name of city] and my friends were Black, Hong, Vietnamese, very mixed! Then, when I became older and people spoke Spanish to me I was like, okay do I look Spanish? …I grew up with my culture but I did not really strongly identified with that. I didn't really identify as deaf at that time either. My parents said, "No, you are not deaf you are hard of hearing." …I was 24 when I started to speak Spanish… My parents spoke Spanish but they don't speak Spanish to me. Anyway, I picked it up and learned about their culture and everything. Later I met Deaf people and that is when I learned about Deaf Culture. I was shocked and thought, this makes sense and applies to me. My identity, I have a little bit of American, a little of Latina and a little of Deaf… my identity changed to deaf with a capital D.

Despite describing herself as a Latina currently, when she was growing up, Courtney distinguished between being Latina and being Mexican American: "I identified myself as Mexican American and hard of hearing growing up."

For the five participants in this type of setting, their Deaf identity became more salient as they interacted with hearing peers, faculty and staff in the classroom and on campus. The hearing people on campus did not considered them to be members of a linguistic minority with a culture and history by the hearing people on their campuses, but instead they were categorized as disabled; instead, they were characterized as disabled and, viewed through a deficit lens. Other identities did not come forward as it did for the interviewees who graduated from Gallaudet. At mainstream universities, people typically could not see past the graduates' deafness and as a result, they were devalued or discriminated against due to their disability. This phenomenon of "ableism" (Campbell, 2008) is clear in one of Courtney's experiences. She remembered witnessing the community college counselor placing deaf students into easy classes because they were viewed as unable to handle the hard classes:

> I finally took sign language classes and met some deaf people and I saw their situation-awful discrimination…they all had the same story, that's too hard. Find an easy class… I don't know, maybe they qualified for the low class but how can she say, no you can't? It's not up to her to decide, you know? One person told me his story and I was shocked.

Carol had grown up oral and her experiences in college helped her to develop her Deaf identity. While in her fourth year, Carol reported that she began to identify as Deaf. She had been learning to sign throughout her time in college. She reported that it felt natural for her to use ASL. She began experimenting with taking off her hearing aids and experiencing the quiet. She stated that she wondered a lot about her identity, which was influenced by all of these things. She even began thinking about going to graduate school possibly at Gallaudet or at a DHH mainstream university.

Carol's identity as a Deaf person continued to evolve while in graduate school. Although she ended up attending a mainstream university, her cohort at her graduate program consisted of five Deaf individuals and one hearing student. She was with them every day and they spent time in class and studying outside of class. She recalled that they felt like family. She remembers that they became close and supported each other. She indicated that most of the Deaf students in the cohort had attended deaf residential schools, had deaf parents, and were native speakers of ASL. However, one deaf person was mainstreamed growing up, but she used sign. It was at that time that she decided to stop using her hearing aids. She was working with Deaf students and did not feel a need for them. She stated that she has not worn them since 2008.

Courtney also developed her Deaf identity while attending a mainstream university. Growing up, she identified as hard of hearing. She remembered her parents not allowing her to identify as deaf, although she did not understand the difference between the two categories: "I didn't really identify as deaf at that time. My parents said, 'No, you are not deaf; you are hard of hearing.' I said, 'Okay, what's the big difference between the two?'"

Courtney began taking ASL classes while in community college, and there she met other deaf students like herself. She became involved in the Deaf Club and remembers it as being an impetus to her becoming a part of the Deaf community:

> When I was in the community college I was involved in the Deaf Club for seven years at that time…I have to tell you about that time during my BA that I was involved with the Deaf Club. Once a month I would go and help but I took over children's activities. That is how I got involved with the Deaf community… I did activities with the kids like Halloween we'd have a haunted house, gifts, and activities for CODA's [children of deaf adults] and deaf children… I really delved into the Deaf Community.

For Christopher and Cathy, their deafness was what set them apart from others during their post-secondary years. Cathy recalled that working with other hearing students outside of class made her feel badly about herself as a Deaf person:

> See after class, sometimes the teacher would assign groups to do group projects, you know. And they would have to be done outside of class time. And back at the time I went, the disability office services were not providing interpreters unless it was in the classroom. So any kind of group project or study group meeting I had to communicate with the other students through writing. So, if I was with these, say it was a group of four, I would ask would you mind emailing to me, I'm deaf. And I kept apologizing, see I'm deaf...I kind of felt like I was the loser in that picture.

She recalled having difficulties using the interpreter because the professors were not used to working with them. In addition, she remembered instructors who did not think she was capable because she was Deaf.

> …Teachers did not understand how to work with deaf students there. So, like first of all they would say to the interpreter tell her this and tell her that. I would have to get their attention and say talk directly to me. Or, maybe they would give me easier or less of a requirement and they would say, "Oh, you don't have to do this work. It will be too hard for you." And I thought to myself, I came to college I want the same quality challenge as any other student would get. I didn't want any exceptions.

Christopher recalled having to teach others about deafness even when he did not want to:

> There will be situations where I had to teach people, educate people about deafness even though I didn't want to. I had to stand up for myself. If I don't stand up for myself and I would have been passive. I didn't want that happening to me. So, I sighed and rolled up my sleeves and explained to him and I pointed out the ADA [The Americans with Disabilities Act] requires that you must hire an interpreter, etc.

He also experienced offensive incidents due to people's preconceived notions about the abilities of deaf people:

> My younger years, first or second year in college, specifically playing basketball, I was still meeting a lot of new faces. And I tried to join, pick up a game. They looked at me and said, "Deaf can't. Deaf can't." They didn't want me to play. I felt my self-esteem deflate. I had to prove myself. So, over time and with much exposure they realized, "Oh he can play. He can play."

Although this study only investigated post-secondary experiences, Christopher's statement provides evidence that acts of oppression are a part of a Deaf person's daily life at all stages, particularly for those with other marginalized identities that intersect with deafness:

> Well, I always knew that I was deaf but I didn't really start to develop my deaf identity until I was really in my 30's! Just through life experiences. I have been through some unfortunate job experiences after college where I've had to continue to stand up for myself. I have been laid off four times but I have never been fired. I have always had good job performance. So, I always wondered, in the back of my head, is that related to me being deaf? But I don't give up. I persevere.

For those students who graduated from mainstream universities their deaf identity was their most prominent identity while in college. Because there were few, if any deaf students enrolled, the staff, faculty, and other students had little experience with people with hearing loss. Deafness was the defining identity because it was the difference that stood out the most between the dominant hearing culture of the university and the Deaf participants who attended these programs.

Summary

This chapter presents the participants' recollections of their experiences in college as they relate to their identities. The findings are discussed in terms of Critical race Theory, particularly in terms of the concept of intersectionality. Participants told stories of their experiences with acts of microaggressions related to racism, sexism,

heterosexism, audism, and ableism. The participants of color shared stories of racial microaggressions that affected their college experience. Microaggressions were also experienced by participants who were slighted by their peers because of hierarchies within the Deaf culture. Other participants described mistreatment due to ableism and heterosexism. In addition, two participants discussed how their identity shifted depending on social interactions in an institutional environment that was a mix of hearing and deaf students. The institutional environment of the participant influenced which identity that became more salient as the participants had different types of experiences.

On the Gallaudet campus, where all the students are deaf on a predominantly White campus, the participants' Deaf identity was most salient. Competency in ASL and the common life experiences were important for one's identity as Deaf. But the experiences of some participants caused other aspects of their multiple identities to emerge. For example, differences in language use and physical appearance became more apparent when the Korean participant encountered White Deaf people, thus causing these features of her identity to become more salient. No longer was she categorized as "the same," as she had been when socializing with others who used PSE, but she was now considered to be different than the White Deaf-of-Deaf parents of the dominant group. Similarly, the African American participant's Black identity became more salient when he experienced situations where he was devalued base on his physical differences. White Deaf women who were lesbians had similar encounters with small acts of aggressions related to their gender and sexual orientation.

Two of the four students who graduated from mainstream/DHH universities found their salient identities varied, depending on whether they were with hearing friends or

deaf friends. These graduates' identities shifted between hard of hearing and Deaf, or between deaf and Deaf depending on their social situations. One participant tried to hide her hearing identity and establish a Deaf identity with her Deaf peers during her undergraduate years. Though they did not discuss acts of microaggressions related to these identities, they too found that different parts of their identity emerged more strongly at different times.

For the participants who graduated from mainstream universities, their deafness made them stand out as different on their campuses. On predominantly hearing campuses their deafness was not apparent in public settings such as walking around on campus. However, when communication was necessary, their Deaf identity was the primary feature that others noticed. All of the students recollected experiencing insults or biases related to the non-deaf people's perceptions of a person with disabilities. The Deaf students were often treated as less than or unequal to able-bodied individuals. Four of the five participants who graduated from mainstream universities knew little, if anything about Deaf culture during their first year as an undergraduate student. Being viewed by hearing staff, faculty and peers through the lens of disability resulted in daily interactions that highlighted their deafness. As a result, three of the five graduates began to consider their deafness in a different light, challenging the assumptions of ableism and developing their Deaf identity while in college.

Each institutional setting provided different experiences in terms of the identity of the participants. The interactions that the participants had with peers, faculty and staff within their respective post-secondary institutions influenced which identities became more salient at any given time, which in turn, influenced their everyday experience. Four

of the participants developed their Deaf identity while in mainstream colleges and two Gallaudet graduates began to see themselves in terms of their ethnic identity. These conclusions reflect the research findings that when there are few deaf students at an institution, the deaf identity is more prominent. As deafness becomes more common, as at Gallaudet, other identities become central. The next section examines the literature related to identity, intersectionality, and microaggressions as these pertain to ableism and audism.

Discussion

These recollections of life at Gallaudet and mainstream universities provide good examples of what Crenshaw (1991) calls structural intersectionality and representational intersectionality. In her article on women of color Crenshaw considers how these two types of intersectionality can merge to become another form of disempowerment. These two concepts are helpful in understanding how four of the six participants at Gallaudet had qualitatively different experiences than their White male, straight, Deaf peers. In terms of structural intersectionality, women, lesbians and Blacks have as lower place in the American social systems. For these participants, representational intersectionality speaks to the devaluation of lesbians and Black men because of the ways they are represented in cultural imagery. Both of these types of intersectionality come together to influence the participants' experiences in college. Each additional part of a person's identity must be considered in conjunction with deafness. For example, for the two White/Deaf/lesbian participants, consideration of women's issues, heterosexism, as well deafness is important for understanding their college experiences.

The finding that emerged regarding the participants from universities with mainstream/DHH universities was that Deaf individuals sometimes move between different identities related to their hearing loss. One participant identified as hard of hearing with hearing people and Deaf with Deaf people. This identity shift required a change in how she presented herself. For example, as a hard of hearing individual she used her voice but as a Deaf person she turned off her voice and used ASL. Another participant indicated that he identified as deaf with hearing peers and Deaf with Deaf individuals. This shift represented a change in how he thinks about his deafness, as a person with a disability or as a member of a culturally linguistic minority.

The majority of the findings of this study can be understood in terms of intersectionality. However, this lens is not as useful in understanding what is happening with these participants in terms of their variable identities. Although the differences could be considered multiple identities, they are more akin to gradations of deafness. The concept of one identity becoming more salient than the other, based on the social interactions, is an important feature of this finding discussed in this chapter.

Foster and Kinuthia (2003) model of identity proposes that individuals are a collection of characteristics that are fluid, can respond to different contexts, and are dynamic. They conducted a study on the identities, as described by the participants, of deaf college students. The study included deaf students who were Asian Americans, African Americans and Hispanic Americans. They found that their identities were best conceptualized in terms of four factors that include individual characteristics as well as situational, social, and societal conditions. In considering this group of participants, social conditions are the most relevant explaining the shifting identities. Social

conditions refer to interactions with others and how these interactions can influence the person's identity, which can vary by situation (Foster & Kinuthia, 2003).

The authors also include powerful emotions among the factors that influence identity. These factors include negative feelings such as rejection or feeling different and even discomfort, while positive emotions include feelings of acceptance and feelings of being similar. It may well be that in order for these participants to achieve feelings of social identification with their peers; they adopted the identity that was more compatible with those with whom they interacted.

For those participants who attended mainstream universities, others on campus viewed them as people without the ability to hear. Humphries (1977) coined the term audism to describe the long history of oppression and discrimination Deaf people have endured due to society's perception that the ability to hear is superior. The graduates of these institutions in my study were no exception. Because the universities had so few deaf students and the faculty and staff had little experience, if any, working with this population, the assumptions of university employees about deaf people resulted in negative behavior towards them. Educating people on campus about deafness became the participants' responsibility rather than an institutional obligation.

The interviewees' stories provide evidence of ableism as well. Keller et al. (2010) points out that ableism is a worldview where being able-bodied is central to what is considered to be normal and disability deviates from that norm. The authors also contend that microaggressions occur on a daily basis towards people with disabilities. Deaf people within the Deaf community and their allies do not view deaf people as disabled, but rather members of a linguistic minority group with a culture and history.

However, society at-large views this population as disabled. This study has shown that microaggressions towards Deaf people due to audism and ableism are a daily occurrence in the mainstream setting.

This study has shown that for Deaf students, the type of university one attends will result in different experiences in terms of microaggressions and acts of oppression as they pertain to their membership in marginalized groups. Potential college students need to be aware of the dominant culture of the university they are considering and how this culture will affect the kind of experiences they may have. From this study we can see that experiences related to identity varied at Gallaudet, mainstream/DHH universities, and fully mainstream universities. Including this factor in one's consideration of a post-secondary institution will allow graduating high school students and adults choosing higher education to make a more informed choice.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.
Herbert Spencer

Overview of the Study

I conducted this study to elicit the stories of Deaf adults who have successfully

completed their undergraduate studies in three different types of undergraduate settings:

Gallaudet, mainstream universities with deaf programs and mainstream universities

without deaf programs. The purpose of this study was to explore what these successful

students perceived as supports and barriers during their college education, as well as how

they made sense of their experience in terms of their identities. Since 70% of deaf

students withdraw from college before receiving a degree, my goal was to learn from

their experiences about what helped them to be successful despite the odds against them.

I grounded the study in Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, 1991). The primary

focus of Critical Race Theory is race and racism and how these intersect with other types

of subordination. Although Critical Race Theory is predominantly about the Black/White

paradigm, the theory has been applied to other marginalized groups. LatCrit Theory, for

example, positions Latina/o as the central marginalized group (Trucios-Haynes, 2001).

Tribal Critical Race Theory, or TribalCrit has it focus on Indigenous Peoples (Haynes

Writer, 2008) and, an emerging theory called DeafCrit, focuses on the intersectionality of

deafness and audism (Gertz, 2003; Humphries, 1977). I also drew from Critical Race

Theory, placing deafness at the center of focus as I explored how deafness intersects with other forms of subordination.

Crenshaw (1991) specifically used the Critical Race Theory framework to analyze the impact of the intersection of gender and race in terms of violence against women of color. Crenshaw's intersectional framework was used in this study to analyze how Deaf graduates talk about their intersecting identities, how these multiple identities are perceived as contributing to their experiences, particularly of oppression, and how these experiences vary in by institutional settings. Intersectionality is a concept that looks at how socially constructed categories such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation intersect each other to produce qualitatively different experiences depending on the larger context.

In addition, the stories were analyzed in terms of the concept of microaggressions (Sue, 2010) which used to isolate small acts of aggression in the narratives of the participants and to describe the mechanisms used to oppress and discriminate against individuals with one or more marginalized identity. Microaggressions are described as daily occurrences that communicate negative messages and are directed at people who are members of a marginalized group or groups.

Previous research on persistence of deaf college students and Crenshaw's (1991) intersectional framework led to the development of the overarching questions that guided this research study: How do deaf college graduates make sense of their post-secondary experiences, and how do these experiences vary by identity and institutional factors? Three sub-questions were considered in an attempt to answer these questions:

1. What do Deaf college graduates identify as supports or hindrances in their college experiences?

2. How do these perceptions of supports and barriers vary by the type of post-secondary institutions Deaf graduates attended, whether it was a college for specifically for deaf students, a university with a deaf program, or a mainstream setting?

3. What other features of their identity, (e.g., race, class, sexual orientation, and gender) in addition to deafness do they identify as having affected their college experiences?

Summary of Findings

This study used a qualitative approach to answer the research questions. I conducted interviews with 15 participants who shared their recollections of their post-secondary experiences with specific attention to perceive supports and barriers, as well as their social identity. Of the 15 participants, four were people of color. The 15 participants graduated from represented three types of universities settings:

1. Six graduates from the deaf university (Gallaudet)

2. Four graduates from mainstream universities with a deaf program

3. Five graduates from fully mainstream universities.

The interviews were transcribed and coded using apriori and emergent codes. They were then compared and contrasted, and analyzed for themes and patterns. I used a recursive process as new codes emerged. The data obtained through the interviews and

the data analysis resulted in three major findings related to the three sub-questions of this study.

<u>What do Deaf college graduates identify as supports or hindrances in their college experiences?</u>

Supports the students remembered included institutional supports such as accommodations provided through campus services. These services included interpreters, note takers, real-time captioning (RTC), tutoring, and mental health counseling services. Other institutional supports were perceived to come from faculty, residential counselors, and academic advisors. Social supports included family and friends who were previously known as well as new friends made through dorm life, sorority/fraternity membership and extracurricular activities.

The major finding was that the supports and barriers were not fixed. For some people and in some contexts, supports were barriers and vice versa. Usually considered supportive, interpreters could become problematic when they were unskilled captioning machines could break, and note takers could fail to show up to class. In terms of social networks, supportive friends in one context could be unsupportive in others. Belonging to too many clubs and organizations could negatively impact academic grades. These are just a few examples of how supports can become barriers as understood by the participants. Similarly, barriers could be overcome when, for example, the participants advocated for themselves, requesting a better interpreter; a change took place, such as receiving a different academic advisor or by getting to know hearing peers better over time.

<u>How do these perceptions of supports and barriers vary by the type of post-</u>

secondary institutions Deaf graduates attended, whether it was a college for specifically

for deaf students, or a mainstream setting?

Institutional barriers and supports varied by institutional settings. Gallaudet

participants did not report using accommodations. Socially the participants had the

opportunity to develop friendships with few concerns about their ability to communicate

with others. Social barriers were related to the typical struggles experienced in any

college setting, and the ability to join extracurricular activities was only limited by time

management and scheduling issues.

At mainstream/DHH universities, supports were reported to be readily available,

including tutors that signed. The participants who attended these institutions had peers

who were also D/deaf or hard of hearing, and faculty and staff were experienced in

working with this group of students. At these universities, accommodations such as

interpreters, RTC and note takers were also remembered as barriers. Recalled examples

of the barriers included not being able to have RTC because the number of captionist, and

notes from note-takers were not always received in a timely fashion. Because of the deaf

program on campus, extracurricular options included clubs and organizations that were

created by the Deaf, and for the Deaf as well as use of interpreters when they were not.

In mainstream universities, support and barriers to access campus life were

remembered more vividly. Graduates discovered that receiving accommodations

sometimes required fighting for their rights. Access to extracurricular activities was

limited because interpreters were only provided in the classroom. The ability to develop

friends on campus was restricted by one's ability to use speech and speech reading, and

participants often experienced these communication barriers as frustrating. In addition,

faculty and staff were not trained to work with deaf students, and participants remembered interacting with faculty and staff who held negative assumptions about the abilities of D/deaf people.

What other features of their identity, in addition to deafness (e.g., race, class, sexual orientation, and gender) do they identify as having affected their college experiences?

Much of the research on the experiences of d/Deaf people has focused on White d/Deaf people. Some of the more recent research has focused on the experiences of Black d/Deaf college students (Chapple, 2012; Williams, 2007). However, race is not the only other defining feature of a d/Deaf person's identity. In addition to one's racial identity, age, class, sexual orientation, and gender can intersect with deafness giving individuals different experiences. These intersectionalities must be taken into consideration. These features of identity can come forward in response to small acts of aggression, called microaggressions. The participants were insulted, snubbed, or subjected to hostile microaggressions, which stemmed from negative attitudes and stereotyping directed at different aspects of their identities and the result of their membership in a marginalized group or groups (Sue, 2010). As noted by Crenshaw (1991) the different categories that comprised their intersecting identities, including race, gender, ability or sexual orientation, become more prominent depending on the situational or social conditions of the participants.

I examined other features of the participants' identities in addition to deafness including race, gender, age, and sexual orientation, which affected their experiences at college. Different facets of the participants' identities became more salient depending on

the environment or social conditions. Microaggressions directed toward specific aspects of the participants' multiple memberships in marginalized groups, triggered which identity became more prominent. These small acts of hostility, based on aspects of identity other than deafness, appeared only in the narratives of the graduates at Gallaudet. When deafness is the feature of identity that students shared, other identities come to the forefront. These shifts occurred in specific social conditions and are, therefore, contextually based; in this case, the context is the Deaf environment. In addition, the Deaf participants at Gallaudet who were White remembered feeling marginalized based on class, mode of communication, or Deaf heritage.

The stories of the participants in both types of mainstream universities provide further evidence that the university environment and situational conditions influenced which features of the participants' identity became more prominent. At the mainstream/DHH universities, hearing and deaf students (in large numbers) socialized and lived together. Features related to deafness were the only aspects of identity that emerged from their stories. Depending on whether they were in social interactions with hearing or Deaf peers, participants' deaf identity shifted between hard of hearing and Deaf, deaf and Deaf, or acting hearing (the late-deafened participant) or Deaf. For participants who had attended mainstream universities where they were the only deaf person in their classes or on campus, a Deaf identity was almost always the most prominent identity. Additionally, for some graduates who entered this environment identifying as deaf or hard of hearing emerged with a Deaf identity, which developed over time and life experiences.

An important finding of this third questions, is that the structural and cultural

features of a Deaf student's university affect which features of one's identity become more salient. This study reveals that regardless of the type of university a deaf student attends that student will receive supports and face barriers.   A person's identity is not fixed and circumstances will influence which identity becomes more prominent. Additionally, in any institutional setting, students can experience microaggressions, whether these are based on perceived identity in terms of deafness, race, sexual orientation or gender. Needless to say, these microaggressions can have a negative impact on the college experience. The students at Gallaudet more frequently perceived identities other than deafness. Students at the other universities perceived their primary identity as Deaf, and did not recollect identifying in other ways. The experiences the participants shared regarding identity informed this study in several ways:

- D/deaf identity was fluid and can move between Deaf, deaf, or hard of hearing depending on social interactions with hearing or Deaf individuals.

- Deaf identity became more salient when the deaf population in the institutional environment was limited and vice versa.

- Deafness was not the exclusively defining identity. These Deaf individuals have multiple identities that become more salient depending on the specific context or situation.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. Generalizability is limited by the small sample size of 15 participants. I intended to study individuals who self-identified as Deaf while in college; however, several of the participants self-identified as Deaf at the time of the

study, but not necessarily while in college. Therefore, the study included deaf individuals who used spoken English or sign, other than ASL, while studying for their bachelor's degree. This group of participants developed their Deaf identity while in college or shortly thereafter. This mixture of participants still does not capture the diversity of the deaf population as a whole, further limiting the ability to generalize this study.

Another limitation is the result of the use of a single form of data collection, the interview. Open-ended interviews elicited perceptions of individuals' experiences based on recall; therefore, time may have altered the participant's recollection of the actual events. Unlike interviewing current college students who are in the mist of the actual experience, the emotional effect of events has also diminished. In addition, entire events may have been forgotten. Despite these possible limitations, the study captures how these Deaf individuals, who successfully completed their degrees, remembered the details and the emotional impact of their experiences. These perceptions, therefore, may provide insight into what institutional changes can be made to improve the experiences for Deaf students in order to increase the retention rates at colleges and universities in the United States.

Suggestions for Future Research

One implication of this study is that the supports the institutions put into place to enhance student persistence are not always experienced as supportive. Educational institutions must be aware that supports can also be experienced as barriers, some so daunting that they can lead to a lack of persistence. This study did not fully investigate what the participants did to overcome barriers. For example, in this study several participants relied on friends to help with homework rather than seeking the help of a

professor who was unapproachable or a tutor who was not accessible. What other strategies were used? Future research might focus on these aspects of the college experience and how students' responses to barriers promoted persistence.

The limitations of this study also suggest an area of future research. This study provided important information about the Deaf participants of color. This study reviewed the findings of two previous studies on Deaf Black college students. However, more research needs to be done on this marginalized group as well as other ethnic groups such as Latino/a and Asian Deaf college students. Due to the small sample size of this study, as a whole, and the limited number of the Deaf participants of color, a larger study needs to be conducted that focuses on Deaf college students in a variety of settings. In addition, this study revealed diversity within the deaf population based on communication, elementary and secondary educational background, parental hearing status, and race. There are less visible but powerful hierarchies within the Deaf community that affected some participants' experiences in college. This social dynamic is an area that may be of interest to researchers.

The interviews also revealed stories of participants who began their post-secondary studies at the community college level. Their narratives indicated that many barriers and few supports exist in these settings.   Investigating the lived experiences of deaf students in community colleges, in terms of barriers and supports, would also contribute to improving the graduation rate of deaf students at the post-secondary level.

Intersectionality and Deafness

The concept of intersectionality focuses attention on the intersection among different forms and experiences of social subordination. As Crenshaw (1991) points out, the experience of a black woman cannot be understood by looking at each of her identities separately. Instead, they must be considered as interacting, and the question becomes: how this interaction results in multiple forms of societal disadvantage? In this study, I applied the concept intersectionality to investigate the different intersecting identities among the 15 Deaf participants.

The findings of this study of Deaf college graduates confirm that the concept of intersectionality is crucial for understanding the experiences of Deaf college graduates. Most studies within the deaf population pinpoint deafness as the central (and sometimes only) attribute of population under study.

There are two ways in which intersectionality allows for a more nuanced and valid approach to understanding persistence among Deaf students. One is that the concept reflects how participants themselves actually describe their identities, and supports the examination of how Deaf people's identities are influenced by and change based on the context of the institutional setting. Knowing a deaf person attends a university is insufficient information to describe that person's experiences. Instead it is also necessary to know other aspects of the person's identity (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age) in order to fully understand their experience in college and how these experiences might impact their persistence. Secondly, as this study revealed, there is no one "university" experience for deaf students. Attending a mainstream university is very different from attending a university with a program for the deaf or attending

Gallaudet. Powerful structural and cultural aspects of institutions can bring different aspects of one's identity to the forefront. This study's findings suggest that to understand the post-secondary experiences of Deaf students, one must carefully examine the multi-dimensional identities of students as well the ways these identities find expression in different institutional settings.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The stories told by participants in this study demonstrate diversity among deaf college graduates in their experiences and in their sense of themselves. In addition, there is diversity among institutions of higher learning that deaf people attend. With almost three-quarters of deaf students not completing college, it is clear that institutional responses to disability support is not very thoughtful, creative, or innovative. By not attending to the diversity of the students enrolled in the institution, institutional agents are not providing appropriate and effective supports that meet the needs of these diverse students. A single response to diversity is not sufficient. Institutions need to move beyond this "one size fits all" policy to providing support for deaf students. Institutions must take their responsibility to raise graduation rates of diverse students more seriously. They must come to know all the students who attend their campuses and respond in more creative ways to their diverse needs and strengths.

Why do support services for deaf students continue to be ineffective, even after years of evidence of ineffectiveness? Perhaps bureaucratic and economic factors play a role in institutions interest to treating "diverse students" all the same. There may also a tension between what students want and what they need from institutions and their

agents. And there is clearly a tension between students' wants and needs and institutional agents wants and needs.

Institutions of higher learning must rethink their approach to providing support for deaf students. The current policy is not working. Graduation rates for deaf students have changed little over time.   What has come out of this study is that students, as they describe themselves, are much more diverse than institutional agents are willing to accept, at least as evidenced by their supports and services.   No longer is it just a matter of preparing students for institutions of higher learning. Such institutions must also be prepared for diverse students, and what this study points out is that there are important variations within the population of deaf college students as well as between deaf students and hearing students.

Just as institutions must recognize variation within the population of deaf students, they cannot ignore the role that institutional setting plays in affecting the experiences of deaf students. The power of institutional setting suggests that there is not a uniform effective support network for deaf students across all post-secondary institutions. What institutions need to do will vary according to the type of setting. The narratives of the participants revealed that the three types of institutions deaf students attend share some commonalities in support and barriers, but they also have important differences. When describing their experiences at Gallaudet, graduates reported barriers in regard to the signing ability of some faculty and staff. Weak faculty signing skills can limit communication in the classroom. Unproductive communication can become a barrier to student learning. Working with staff who cannot sign well can be a frustration for students as well. Institutional agents at Gallaudet should consider a policy that

requires a greater level of proficiency in ASL and greater levels of support for employees learning ASL than is currently in place.

In addition, Gallaudet needs to consider the needs and experiences of the students of color in providing more effective educational opportunities. The administration should consider implementing a mentoring program for students of color involving both faculty and peers. Recruitment needs to be readdressed to ensure there are other students of color available to mentor the incoming students. The Keeping the Promise Program (KTP) was established in 2008 to increase retention of Black deaf males but has now expanded to include both genders as well as Latino/a students (Aina, 2014). The author reports that, over the past three years, retention rates have been over 90% for both populations targeted by this program. As of the Fall 2014, there were 1031 undergraduate students at Gallaudet, but only 9 Black and 16 Latino students graduated. Much more needs to be done to recruit and retain students of color, particularly these two populations.

Mainstream universities could improve dramatically in their abilities to provide full access to college life for deaf students. In institutions with few deaf students, every person, regardless of hearing status, should have to ability to engage in the college experience. Therefore, mainstream universities need to ensure that deaf students have communication access to everything their hearing peers have. Deaf students have the right to participate in clubs, events and other activities similar to their hearing peers. Students have the right to have an interpreter when they arrange meetings with their professors or academic advisors. The campus policies and procedures need to reflect those rights. In addition, interpreters need to have the skills to interpret at the college

level. Note takers need to be professionals instead of classmates, and tutors need to be

able to work and communicate with deaf students. Orientations need to be provided

specific to the needs of these students, perhaps arranging a one-on-one orientation that is

fully accessible. Diversity training, including an understanding of the deaf population,

also needs to be provided to staff and faculty.

In essence, being in college is not just about the classroom learning experience.

Deaf students have a right to the full range of post-secondary experiences on campus by

having full access to professors and academic advisors, as well as clubs, organizations

and events on campus. Hearing from successful students about what supported and

limited their experiences gives us the knowledge to reduce or eliminate the barriers that

exist in terms of communication access in the classroom and on campus, training of

faculty and staff, recruitment and support of students of color, and providing a campus

culture that is accepting of the diversity that is a part of the Deaf community.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Student Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

Hi. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. The interview should take about an hour. I hope it is a good experience for you looking back on your years in college. Congratulations on your accomplishments. Not everyone is able to remain in college and finish their degree. That is why I am doing this research so that more people will have the success that you have had.

High School Experiences/Preparing for College

Before we have a conversation about your college experience I want to find out a little about your high school experience.

Tell me a little about high school. For example, did you go to a school for the deaf or a public mainstream high school? What was high school like for you? When did you start thinking about going to college? Were you the first person in your family to attend college? When you graduated did you feel ready for college? How?

Now, let's talk about after you graduated from high school. What was your path to college, where did you get your undergraduate degree from and during what years did you attend school?

Initial Impressions

Basically I would like you to tell me about your college experience. Think back to when you first came to college, what was your experience like?

What were your first impressions when you started college?

Tell me about a time that was really challenging for you during that time? (Tell me more about that. How did you handle the situation? How did you advocate for yourself? How did you know what to do? Why do you think that happened? How might it have been different for somebody else? Did you talk to anyone about it? What did they say?).

What was your social life like? What did you do to facilitate this? Do you think it might have been different for someone else?

How did you interact with staff and faculty? How might it been different for someone else?

Later Experiences

Let's move a little further into you college experiences. Let's say your second or third years. What was that experience like? Again, think about the barriers you faced and things that were going well for you.

Tell me about when that you felt most successful? What do you think helped you to be successful? How?

Tell me about a time that you felt particularly stressed. How did you deal with this?

Use follow-up questions from above as needed.

End Experiences

Let's think about the experience you had towards the end of your undergraduate years. Describe that time to me.

What experiences did you have that were most satisfying for you? How did they differ from the beginning of your college experiences? What do you think made the difference?

Describe to me the things your found most difficult in your finally years of college. What did you do in this situation? What was helpful or not helpful?

Use follow-up questions from above as needed.

For some people, their college experiences are affected by being a man or a woman, gay or straight, a member of certain ethnic or racial groups, and so on …this hasn't come up as we talked to far. Tell me about what you remember about your college experiences that were shaped by other aspects of who you are.

Thank you for talking so frankly about your experiences. Here at the end, I just need to ask you some quick questions, about you: such as your age, race, highest level of education, and current occupation.

Ask if there is anything else they'd like to talk about/that they remember about their college experiences, and/or "is there something you thought I would ask…and would like to talk about?" and/or "if a Deaf high school student were to ask you, "what advice would you give me to have a good college experience, what would you say"?

Appendix B: Informed Consent for Participation in Research

University of California, San Diego
Consent to Act as a Research Subject

The experiences of Deaf college graduates: Barriers and supports to earning a
post-secondary degree

Renate Ward, a graduate student in the Department of Education Studies at the University
of California, San Diego, is conducting a research study to examine the academic success
of Deaf graduates of four-year postsecondary institutions. You have been identified to
participate in this study because you have completed an undergraduate degree and
identify as Deaf. There will be approximately 18 participants in this study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that contribute to Deaf students
remaining in college. This study that provides a platform for the sharing of the
experiences of Deaf adults during their undergraduate years and what may have
contributed to their success.

If you agree to be in this study, the following will happen to you:
You will be asked to participate in an interview lasting between 1-1.5 hours. A shorter
follow-up interview for clarification or more information may be required and would last
no more than 30 minutes. I will be conducting the interview using ASL as the primary
communication mode.

Participation in this study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include
the following:

1. A potential for the loss of confidentiality: There is a small possibility of a loss
   of confidentiality in this study. Your interview will be video-recorded and
   may include audio recording as well, if an interpreter is used. Your interview
   will be kept strictly confidential, available only to me for the purpose of
   analysis and an interpreter to verify translations. The interpreter will sign a
   confidentiality statement. Your name will not appear on any transcripts
   resulting from the interview. Your name and identity will remain
   confidential in any publications or discussions. The transcriptions will be
   kept in a password-protected file or in a locked cabinet for the duration of
   the study. *Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by
   law. Research records may be review by the UCSD Institutional Review Board
   and faculty of the UCSD Department of Education Studies.* Per your preference
   indicated on the audio recording consent forms, transcripts will either be
   used for future educational purposes or destroyed upon completion of the
   study. Any audio recordings that result from this study will be held for in a
   locked cabinet for a period of 15 years. Video-recordings will be destroyed
   upon completion of the study.

2. There is minor risk of stress, discomfort, fatigue and boredom. However, you have the right to skip or decline to answer any question that is asked, to take a break if needed, and to end your participation at any time.

3. There is a minor risk that members of the Deaf community will read the study and attempt to identify the participants, however, no identifying information will be contained in the report.

Because this is a research study, there may also be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable. You will be informed of any significant new findings.

The alternative to participation in this study is to not participate.

There is no direct benefit for participating in this study. Your participation, however, will contribute to research on college retention of Deaf students. Your participation could contribute to future policy and program changes in postsecondary institutions serving Deaf individuals.

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw or refuse to answer specific questions in an interview or on a questionnaire at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide that you no longer wish to continue in this study, you will be required to contact me via email, VP or other technology-based software (e.g., Skype) of your decision. If you agree to participate in the interview(s), you will be compensated for your time with a $20 gift card at the completion of the study.

You will be told if any important new information is found during the course of this study that may affect your wanting to continue.

The PI may remove you from the study without your consent if the PI feels it is in your best interest or the best interest of the study. You may also be withdrawn from the study if you do not follow the instructions given you by the study personnel.

In compensation for your time and travel, you will receive a $20 gift card for participating in this research at the completion of the study. If you withdraw or are unable to complete the interview no compensation will be given.

There will be no cost to you for participating in this study.

If you are injured as a direct result of participation in this research, the University of California will provide any medical care you need to treat those injuries. The University will not provide any other form of compensation to you if you are injured. You may call the Human Research Protections Program Office at (858) 657-5100 for more information

about this, to inquire about your rights as a research subject or to report research-related problems.

Renate Ward has explained this study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach the principle investigator Renate Ward, at (617) 688-5329 (voice/text), or at r2ward@ucsd.edu. Also, questions about the study can be addressed to her advisor, Dr. Paula Levin, plevin@ucsd.edu. You may call the Human Research Protections Program Office at (858) 657-5100 to inquire about your rights as a research subject or to report research-related problems.

You have received a copy of this consent document.

You agree to participate.

_____   _____
Subject's signature   Date

Appendix C: Audiotape Recording Release Consent Form

The experiences of Deaf college graduates: Barriers and supports to earning a post-secondary degree

Principal Investigator: Renate Ward

As part of this project, an audio recording may be made of you during your participation in this research project. Please indicate below the uses of these audio recordings to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the audio recording, your name will not be identified. You may request to stop the recording at any time or to erase any portion of your recording.

1.   The audio recording can be studied by the research team for use in the research project
                                                                        _____
                                                                        Initials

2.   The audio recording can be used for scientific publications.
                                                                        _____
                                                                        Initials

3.   The audio recording can be reviewed at meetings of scientists interested in the study of education and educational practice.
                                                                        _____
                                                                        Initials

4.   The audio recording can be reviewed in classrooms by students for educational purposes.
                                                                        _____
                                                                        Initials

You have the right to request that the recording be stopped or erased in full or in part during the recording.

You have read the above description and give your consent for the use of audio recording as indicated above.

_____
Signature   Date

_____
Witness   Date

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Renate Ward, (617) 688-6329 or r2ward@ucsd.edu.

Appendix D: Video Recording Release Consent Form

The experiences of Deaf college graduates: Barriers and supports to earning a post-secondary degree

Principal Investigator: Renate Ward

As part of this project, a video recording will be made of you during your participation in this research project. Please indicate below the uses of these video recordings to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the video recording, your name will not be identified.

1.   The video recording can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

                                       _____

                                       Initials

2.   The video recording can be used for scientific publications.   _____

                                       Initials

3.   The video recording can be reviewed in classrooms by students for educational purposes.

                                       _____

                                       Initials

4.   The video recording can be reviewed at meetings of scientists interested in the study of education and educational practice.

                                       _____

                                       Initials

You have the right to request that the recording be stopped or erased in full or in part at any time.

You have read the above description and give your consent for the use of video recording as indicated above.

_____

Signature   Date

_____

Witness   Date

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Renate Ward, (617) 688-6329 or r2ward@ucsd.edu.

Appendix E: Email to Participants

The experiences of Deaf college graduates: Barriers and supports to earning a post-secondary degree

Principal Investigator: Renate Ward

Dear College Graduate,

My name is Renate Ward. I am a deaf school psychologist with the San Diego Unified School District, as well as a doctoral student in the Teaching and Learning Program in the Department of Education Studies at University of California, San Diego (UCSD). For my dissertation project I am interested in learning more about the undergraduate experiences of members of the Deaf community who have successfully earned a BA or BS degree within the last 15 years. I will be carrying out this study as a researcher from UCSD.

As a former teacher of the deaf and as a parent of a Deaf adult child, equity in the education of marginalized populations is a prominent concern to me. Therefore, I am very excited to embark on this study. Through friends in the Deaf community your name was mentioned as a good candidate to participate in this study. Your experiences can be a great help to me and may benefit other Deaf youth and adults who wish to pursue a four-year degree. This study gives you the opportunity to tell your story and contribute to research on higher education for Deaf students.

Please take a look at the attached informed consent form for more information about safeguarding your privacy if you choose to volunteer. Volunteering for the study would entail participating in an interview. This interview will last no more than 1.5 hours and may require a much shorter follow-up interview. If you chose to participate you will need to provide the best means of contacting you to arrange an interview. To do so, you can email me at r2ward @ucsd.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about the overall project please email me at the same email address, and I will be happy to arrange with you a time to meet (via face-to face, VP, or computer technology) to discuss whatever areas you need clarified.

I am also looking for more participants and would greatly appreciate if you can forward this email to anyone Deaf friends or acquaintances who have completed a college degree. Thank you so much for helping me with this research project!

Renate Ward

Appendix F: Interpreter Confidentiality Statement

The experiences of Deaf college graduates: Barriers and supports to earning a post-secondary degree

Principal Investigator: Renate Ward

I, _____am a certified sign language interpreter who has been hired to interpret an interview or to verify the transcription of a videotape of an interview of a person who uses ASL as their primary means of communication. I am bound by my profession and hereby reiterate that any information or involvement in this study will be maintained in the strictest confidence.

_____   _____
Signature of Interpreter   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix G: Disability Services Email

To: The Office of Disability Services

I am a doctoral candidate conducting a research study on college retention of Deaf students, through the University of California, San Diego CA. My name is Renate Ward and I am the Principal investigator. I am writing to request assistance in the distributions of letters to Deaf individuals in your graduate programs. It is my hope that identification, through those who utilize your services, will provide me with possible candidates.

Would you please forward the attached recruitment letter to possible candidates from your institution? Your help in locating possible participants would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Renate Ward
Principal Investigator

Appendix H: Recruitment Letter

Deaf participants needed for
a research study
University of California, San Diego, CA

Dear Members of the Deaf Community,

I am looking for Deaf college graduates to participate in a research study
where you will talk with me about your undergraduate college experiences.
To be involved with this study, you must meet these qualifications:

Over 18 years of age
Identify as culturally Deaf
Use ASL as your primary mode of communication
Completed a four-year college degree within the last 15 years

If you are eligible, please consider helping my research move forward on college
retention of Deaf students. The research will involve an individual interview and a
possible short follow-up. If you participate in the interview
you will receive a $20 gift certificate for your time.

If you email me at r2ward@ucsd.edu, I can answer your questions, obtain your
email address, and send you the informed consent form. I look forward to hearing from
you soon!

Renate Ward
Principal Investigator

Appendix I: Web Site Email

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral candidate conducting a research study on college retention of Deaf students, through the University of California, San Diego CA. My name is Renate Ward and I am the Principal investigator. I am writing to request assistance in the recruitment of Deaf individuals to participate in my study. It is my hope that you can download and post the attached recruitment letter on your web page in hopes that it will provide me with possible candidates. Your help in locating possible participants would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Renate Ward
Principal Investigator