ABLEISM IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY
AND THE FIELD OF DEAF STUDIES:
THROUGH THE EYES OF A DEAFDISABLED PERSON

by

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

" We can't be both a culture and a disability."
- Dr. MJ Bienvenu (Munder, 1995)

The quote implies that Deaf people *cannot* be both a culture and be labeled

disability because being Deaf means possessing a language, values, and history; not

brokenness and something that needs fixing. Culturally Deaf people in America have

tried to distance themselves from being labeled disabled for years. They say that they

have a language and a culture and that they should not be under the umbrella of

disability. The term "disability," they claim, does not describe them because they are

able to do things physically and mentally, emphasizing their able-bodiedness by showing

and proving to society that they are capable of doing such.

The purpose of this thesis is to show that the culture and the community of Deaf

people and Deaf Studies do internalize ableist thinking and ableism. Through a critique of

Deaf Studies scholarship and through an autoethnographic account of being

deafdisabled[1], this thesis challenges the idea that being Deaf is just a culture not at all the

social model of disability. Deaf people consistently believe that the social model of

disability does not apply to them in the same manner as people with disability. This

thesis also challenges that disability is a biological reality and socially constructed as it

applies to the Deaf. It is important to note that Deaf Studies, community, and culture are

marginalize and oppress the deafdisabled as they yearn to be an accepted member of the

Deaf world. Many deafdisabled do not feel welcome in this world due to the medical and

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[1] Deafdisabled refers to a person that is both deaf and disabled, (Burke, 2013)

social model of thinking of Deaf people. The behaviors of a large number of the Deaf communicate to the deafdisabled that their disability makes them inferior. In resisting the disability label, Deaf people project an ableist attitude in their approach to a situation or discussion about disability. Additionally, when they define a Deaf person with a disability, deafdisabled, and/or see a hearing disabled person they shift into the idea of the medical model of disability. This is what I will call disability irony.

This thesis hopes to promote a better understanding of how the absence of disability studies within Deaf Studies and the denial of disability enhances the attitude of ableism towards disabled and deafdisabled people. Deaf Studies and the community of Deaf people should be an example of acceptance. Their experience of oppression from hearing able-bodied, sighted and able-minded people should offer lessons on intolerant, discriminatory and unacceptably ignorant behavior. They should not turn their backs on the deafdisabled and disabled people, but be an example to world of acceptance and appropriate human behavior. The fundamental research question is this– What is the role of ableism within the field of Deaf Studies and Deaf community public discourse?

Disclaimer:

This thesis does not deny the fact that there is oppression of the Deaf. Nor is it meant to minimize or deny the physical and emotional pain that Deaf children go through when growing up, or the oppression, discrimination, and privilege that hearing people have against Deaf people. It is, however, intended to expose oppression within the Deaf community by Deaf able-bodied, sighted, and an able-minded culture in an attempt to better the university I love, and the Deaf community of which I am quite proud to be a part of.

Before I go any further into my discussion of ableism in the Deaf community and in the field of Deaf Studies, it is quite important to dig deeper into the meanings of *disability, audism,* and *ableism.* Of additional importance is a closer review of the difference between audism and ableism. By understanding the difference between the two terms a clearer understanding of the reason ableism exists in both the Deaf community and the field of Deaf Studies.

Definitions: Disability, Audism, and Ableism

Disability

The common definition disability is defined as "limitation in the ability to pursue an occupation because of a physical or mental impairment; *also*: a program providing financial support to one affected by disability" (*Merriam-Webster's*, 2013). Other dictionaries define *disability* in a similar way, such as dictionary.com; "a physical or a mental handicap [sic], especially one that prevents a person from living a full, normal life or holding a gainful job" (*Dictionary, 2014)*. The reason why I chose those websites to define disability instead of some of the other well-known medical health definition such as, World Health Organization (WHO) and National Institutions of Health is because the common everyday definition found through a Google search and most seen and understood by many is the exact definition I just gave. The thesaurus detail I found the synonyms for disability from *Merriam-Webster's* webpage such as: "challenged, differently abled, exceptional, impaired, lame, paralyzed, quadriplegic; immobile, immobilized; ill, sick, unfit, unhealthy, unsound, unwell; blind, deaf, hard of hearing, and mute," (*Merriam-Webster's*, 2013).

The World Health Organization defines disability as an umbrella term that covers impairments, "activity limitations, and participation restriction" (WHO, 2014). Therefore disability is not just a health problem; "It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers" (p. 1). Thus, using the WHO's definition of disability, it is the society that defines who is and who is not disabled.

A common perspective held by society defines what is normal and what is abnormal. For instance the "loss" of hearing has been defined by most people in our hearing society as well as the medical world as a disability; Deaf people are disabled (in their opinion). The negativity of reaction to this definition of disability by the Deaf comes from years of documented mistreatment and oppression. Historically, the hearing society and the medical field have tried many different ways to "correct" the loss of hearing. Educational practices of oralism, medical interventions to enhance hearing, and reducing opportunities exposure to the language of the Deaf are examples. The medical model of disability ultimately promotes the reasoning of the need to "fix" the Deaf and disabled..

Within this academic area, one can find a better understanding of the difference between the social and medical model of disability. Disability, defined through the medical model is a condition that suggests or requires a treatment to "repair" an "abnormality." By repairing this condition, one may become more "normal" and able to work and contribute positively to society. Those who believed in the medical model do so in an effort to reduce the expense of the disabled population by fixing them so they might be more employable, thus less of a financial burden on society. Additionally, the medical

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model seeks to define disabled people by how they might be cured or rehabilitated, (Langtree, 2010, p. 1).

In contrast to the medical model, Tom Shakespeare notes, disability is defined as: "The disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities" (p. 267). The social model focuses on the barriers to access, independent living, and other means of oppression of the disabled by society. It defines disability as a social creation, where the medical model defines disability in terms of individual deficit, (Shakespeare, p. 198).

Hearing people that do not have an understanding of the Deaf culture believe that Deaf people need to be fixed. Some of their beliefs include that Deaf people are incapable of doing things just because they cannot hear, and when trying to 'fix' them they take away their language and force them to learn how to 'hear' and speak. A long history of oppression and discrimination against Deaf people exists and it continues today. This is called audism.

Audism

One might ask what is oppression towards to Deaf people? Is it Ableism? Or is it Audism? What is the difference between ableism and audism? Audism is defined as discrimination towards those who cannot hear, (Bauman, 2004). Tom Humphries first used the word audism in his 1975 unpublished article. Humphries wanted to have a term that defined oppression and discrimination against Deaf people; he analyzed the terms of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and came up with audism. He defined it as, "the notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who

hears" (Humphries, 1975 & Bauman, 2004, 2008). An example of audism is described by Humphries:

> [Audism] appears in the form of people who continually judge deaf
> people's intelligence and success on the basis of their ability in the
> language of the hearing culture. It appears when the assumption is made
> that the deaf person's happiness depends on acquiring fluency in the
> language of the hearing culture. It appears when deaf people actively
> participate in the oppression of other deaf people by demanding of them
> the same set of standards, behavior, and values that they demand of
> hearing people, (p. 240).

This was describing individual audism, which meant that it was people, especially hearing people who discriminated against and judge Deaf people just because they cannot hear.

Harlan Lane expanded the definition of audism later in his book, *The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community* (1992, 1999). Audism is defined as an institutional audism in the book. Lane explains:

> The corporate institution for dealing with deaf people, dealing with them by
> making statements about them, authorizing views of them, describing them,
> teaching about them, governing where they go to school and, in some cases,
> where they live; in short, audism is the hearing way of dominating, restructuring,
> and exercising authority over the deaf community. It includes such professional
> people as administrators of schools for deaf children and of training programs for
> deaf adults, interpreters, and some audiologists, speech therapists, otologists,

psychologists, psychiatrists, librarians, researchers, social workers, and hearing aid specialists (p.43).

Therefore the definition of *audism* is further explained from individual audism to institutional audism meaning that hearing people inside institutions such as schools and any educational and institutional system telling Deaf people what they should be doing. This form of audism has domination over the Deaf community.

Two different definition of audism brought into discussions at Gallaudet University by Dr. Dirksen Bauman in his Dynamics of Oppression class. He recalled: "In 2000, only four of twenty students had seen the word before the first day of the class; in 2002, fourteen of twenty had," (p. 239). Bauman wrote an article after 2002 and wondered if both definitions of audism could be further explained as "metaphysical audism."

Metaphysical audism comes from "*metaphysics"* which means that all humans have desire to know, (p. 242). Bauman further explains:

> We are impelled to understand the world and its various inhabitants, even
> if for such simple reasons as the desire to know what foods are safe to eat
> and what tools are the best to use. Each time we ask, ''What is. . . ?'' we
> look for an essential character that binds a thing together. We create
> categories and sort the world accordingly. This is our perennial search for
> the nature of something, for its essence, (p. 242).

Consequently, what brings humans together as an essential character, in the definition of *Metaphysical Audism* thinking, to be a human being the person must speak and have a language. Based on this definition, Deaf persons are not human beings because many

Deaf people do not speak so this means that they do not have a language. Fundamentally, the point of metaphysical audism is tied to phonocentrism and how speech was thought of as an essential part of language and language an essential part of human identity.

Now we have three definitions of audism: *individual audism, institutional audism and metaphysical audism.* Over the last thirty years, Deaf people became aware of audism and have spread their knowledge of audism inn the Deaf community and the Deaf culture. Deaf Studies has discussed and still is discussing the term. Dr. Genie Gertz brought up something that is still new in the field related to audism: *Dysconscious Audism.* Gertz in *Opening Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking* wrote the commentary off of Joyce King's work "Dysconscious Racism." The term "Dysconscious" according to King does not mean, the "absent of consciousness" (p. 135). It means that people are aware of what racism is, however lacked depth ideological discussion regarding racism of what it really means, its history, and understand of how racism was built systemically (p. 135). Gertz credits King for the idea of the term *dysconscious* and used audism as when hearing and/or Deaf people are aware of audism but lacked depth ideological discussion about what it really means, its history, and the understanding of how audism was built systemically. Given a better understanding of what dysconscious audism is, Gertz writes, "implies that the person does have an inkling of his or her consciousness but does not yet realize it is impaired," (223). For Deaf people to have an idea of what audism means but does nothing about is dysconscious audism.

Audism is what Deaf people experience everyday in the hearing society. Similar to audism is the term ableism: the discrimination toward those who are disabled. Ableism

is what disabled people experience in the able-bodied, sighted, and able-minded society everyday, even in Deaf society. Lets look deeply into ableism.

Ableism

The field of Disability Studies looks closely into all aspects of disability: the definition, the history. Linton (1998) explains, "Scholarship in this field addresses such fundamental ideas as who is considered a burden and who a resource, who is expendable and who is esteemed, . . ." (p. 118). From within this field the term ableism has emerged.

Disability Studies, according to The Center on Human Policy, Law, and Disability Studies of Syracuse University, "refers generally to the examination of disability as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon" (p. 1). This area of academic inquiry promotes the way disability is defined and then viewed historically, socially, and politically. Added by Linton (1998), "The social, political, and cultural analysis undertaken by disability studies form a prism through which one can gain a broader understanding of society and human experience, and the significance of human variation" (p. 117).

Linton discusses the oppression of disabled people as ableism. The ableist point of view is one that is discriminatory against the disabled as a group in favor of the nondisabled. Included by Linton, ableism is described as, ". . . the ideas that a person's abilities or characteristics are determined by disability or that people with disabilities as a group are inferior to nondisabled people" (p. 9). Ableism perpetuates the negative social identity placed on members of society who have a disability. This negative identity or stigma is attached when one does not "fit" neatly within a social situation, category, or setting. Goffman writes, ". . . an individual who might have been received easily in

ordinary social intercourses possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us" (p. 132). Even more frightening, Goffman adds, "By definition we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human" (p. 132). For some, giving up these ableist views threatens the way they view the world and/or how they define themselves in it.

Ableism is a term defined as a systemic "discrimination or prejudice against people with disabilities," (*Merriam-Webster's*, 2013). According to the dictionary ableism as a term was first used in 1980; however society has been discriminating against disabled people for centuries. In Lennard Davis' article, "Constructing Normalcy" *in The Disability Studies Reader* also edited by Davis, where he emphasizes that being 'normal' in an able-bodied society has always existed. Historically, disabled children and disabled adults were put into a place or a 'home' where doctors, nurses, and other caregivers would take care of them. At one point disabled people were so displeased with how they were being treated in the 'homes', --- neglected, not being taken care of, intentionally left to die, that they began a protest.

Throughout history there have been several rights movements in the United States: women's rights, civil rights, gay rights, and disability rights. The disability rights movement in America began in late 1960s and grew during 1970s. Disabled people and their supporters protested and demanded laws be created to protect the treatment and rights of these human beings. Laws such as the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and in the 1990s, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), were passed to protect disabled people from discrimination and promote equal access to all life activities. Although the outward and

open discrimination has lessened, ableist attitudes and ableism continues to exist today. These attitudes and oppressive behaviors range from subtle to the obvious in society, universities, the university's disciplinary programs and many cultures.

While Deaf people are themselves subjected to ableism, they are often ironically perpetrators of ableism. One distinct culture where ableism exists is, the Deaf culture, within the deaf community and within Deaf Studies program. Historical evidence will explain why these attitudes, oppressive behaviors, and discrimination exist in the Deaf community and the field of Deaf Studies.

History of Ableism in Deaf Community/Culture/Studies:

19ᵗʰ Century

In order to understand how Deaf people have ableist attitudes, this historical reasoning has to be discussed. The 19ᵗʰ and the 20ᵗʰ centuries are the earliest history that discusses ableist attitudes within the Deaf community. In Tavian Robinson's commentary in *Deaf and Disability Studies: Interdisciplinary Studies* entitled, "We Are of a Different Class: Ableist Rhetoric in Deaf America, 1880–1920," challenges Deaf Studies with historical evidence that Deaf people possessed ableist thinking towards people with disabilities or deaf people with disabilities in the 19ᵗʰ century. Referring to this subject, Robinson writes, "By the late nineteenth century, many community elites shared this sentiment, explicitly resisting notions of deaf people's defectiveness while accepting ableist ideas about other people with disabilities," (p.5). In response to the ableist comments made by hearing abled-bodied made about Deaf people, Deaf able-bodied people used insulting ableist terms to describe those who were both Deaf and disabled.

Additionally, he mentions that Deaf people during that time were worried about passing without having any physical demonstration of the disability. For example, "…if they did not do all they could to 'pass' as normal, able-bodied citizens, and they discriminated against those who could not pass due to additional disabilities" (p. 9). Deaf people were not to show any physical difficulties such as cerebral palsy, being in a wheelchair, nor could they exhibit any intellectual disabilities or any mental illness without the fear of discrimination or possible negative attitudes toward them. If Deaf men wanted to work or be part of the elite group called National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, they must be "normal, " (p. 11-12). This is important to acknowledge, as there has been ableist attitudes since the 19th century or earlier and provides reason for why and how there is ableist attitudes today.

20th Century

In the 19th century, as Robinson's article mentions, the exclusion of hearing disabled and deafdisabled people happened because the jobs that were available required the people to be physically fit. It continued in the 20th century when hearing able-bodied men went off to fight in World War I and II. In Susan Burch's book, *Signs of Resistance,* she writes about Deaf communities in 1900-1945. She adds, "Deaf community's strategy of working to appear normal was at once subversive and conservative. Challenging the mainstream view of deafness as limiting, leaders fashioned an image of the capable, able-bodied Deaf citizen. At the same time, the fear of being too different led many to discriminate their own," (p. 5). The jobs deaf able-bodied men had were at Goodyear and many other manufacturing jobs. This led to an idea of deafdisabled people as pariahs

because they looked different and/or they had consumed the body normative that hearing able-bodied had perceived the disabled body.

This also supports the idea that Deaf leaders who were involved in rejecting deafdisabled did the discriminating and did not consider them part of the culture as Robinson mentioned above. Burch also submits,

> For Deaf leaders, the issue did not center on discrimination against disabled people. Most members of the Deaf elite saw nothing unsuitable about barring 'truly' disabled people from precious jobs. This included blind people, physically disabled people and mentally retarded [sic] people—the other people labeled 'unemployed' people… … some urged that Deaf workers be considered a foreign language group rather than physically handicapped (p. 121).

Another reason for not including disabled people in the battle for discrimination against deaf and hearing people with disability and/or deaf people with disabilities was because deaf people did not want to be seen as "the problem of a visible handicapped of the cripple—whose appearance is so often objected or aroused a damaging sympathy." (p. 123). Thomas Anderson a president of National Association of the Deaf (NAD) in 1940, was one of the Deaf elites that had an ableist attitude towards to disabled people. In his book *Illusion of Equality: Deaf Americans in School and Factory 1850-1950,* (1999), Buchanan writes that Anderson intensely did not want to be associated with people with disability, (p. 104).

> 'What I want to do most of all,' he explained, 'is to get the deaf out of this conglomeration of black and whites, diseased and maimed, for it is a godammed

[sic] lasting disgrace to be deaf if we are to be considered as lumped with these

and seeking governmental `aid',' (p. 121)

Consequently, this verifies that, "for more than one hundred years, deaf adults have uniformly rejected claims that they are handicapped or disabled," (p. 128). This type of rejection continues today.

In view of this ongoing struggle to be an accepted culture, it becomes clearer as to why a debate about deafness as disability exists. In the late 20th century (the 1970s and 1980s), the Deaf community started to be very visually "verbal" about their culture and their language. For example, in 1988 there was a protest at Gallaudet University that became the watershed for the culture of Deaf people, as Deaf students, faculty, staff and their hearing allies wanted a Deaf president for the university. The underlying issue here being, the Deaf community believed there was no reason why a qualified Deaf person could not or should not be running the university of the Deaf.

Shortly after this protest, M.J. Bienvenu (1989) wrote that she believed Deaf people should not be labeled disabled, "I cannot agree that Deaf people belong in the disabled group. To me, what lies behind this view is the assumption that there is a defect—a broken-ness. But the meaning of Deaf is **not** 'cannot hear'" (p. 1). She further explains that it was appropriate for Deaf people to support the disabled group as they fight for their rights, but to be labeled she states strongly, " . . . **disabled, we are not**!" (p. 1) Another version of this can be found in *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture*, as Padden and Humphries (1988) support this rejection of the term disability claiming, " . . . the term 'disabled' describes those who are blind or physically handicapped (*sic*) not

Deaf people" (Padden and Humphries, p. 44). This is one of the most influences of deciding who and who is not part of the culture. With the advent of Deaf Studies, there is a history of ableism. A critical review will appear in the following chapter that focuses on Deaf Studies.

Key Concept:

DEAF-SAME:
The Concept

The concept of DEAF-SAME is how many Deaf people see themselves. No matter the issue of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, or religion, the identity of Deaf is considered important. When we visit a mall, the airport, or our favorite restaurants, we are often surrounded by hearing people who do not sign. When we see people in these venues who are also Deaf, we feel thankful, and all that matters is that we are Deaf, right? "DEAF-SAME, THAT-THAT".[2]

Deaf people have often associated themselves as a cultural minority and have denied the label as a disabled group. The label "disability", without question, in the Deaf culture is a very negative term, especially when used to describe Deaf people as disabled. But they cannot hear, which is a loss of one of the five senses that some believe is needed to *survive*. Deaf people resist and fight against this ideology and hegemony. The declaration that it is better to hear and speak than sign and visualize enforces phonocentric[3] thinking. When using the term "disability" in Deaf culture, it is often resisted and triggers feelings of negativity by many Deaf people. This is due to a long

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[2] English gloss of a statement of emphasis in American Sign Language
[3] For more on phonocentrism in relation to deaf, see (Bauman, 2004, 2008)

history of oppression and the way Deaf people have been treated as intellectually disabled as well as physically disabled.

Again, no matter the fact that Deaf people have other identities, all that seems to matter is that we are all the same by virtue of being Deaf. Through my research, observations, and life experiences, I have arrived at a point where I question the DEAF-SAME concept; something is not quite true or is missing from the list. What happens if a Deaf person is a wheelchair user or has Cerebral Palsy (CP) or if that person is blind or has an unseen disability or difficulty? What are they, Deaf or Disabled or Deaf and Disabled?

The Question of:
"Are you Deaf or Disabled?

Deaf people who are culturally Deaf have always asked me, "which do you prefer to be: Deaf or disabled?" I have always felt conflicted when they ask me because I *have* a disability *and I am* Deaf. I recall a moment in my schooling when a graduate student was asked by a Deaf instructor with low vision, "In all honesty, am I Deaf *or* disabled?" The student said, "Deaf, you already have the culture in you." A classmate of his with Cerebral Palsy then asked, "Wait, wait, wait. If he is Deaf, then what am I? I grew up Deaf and already have the culture in me too, so??"
The student replied, "Oh that's different, different; you have a disability."
The classmate with CP exclaimed, "Why?? Why is that different? You tell me."
Silence…

This type of question, conversation and action has occurred repeatedly for the last seven years of my time at Gallaudet University. This drives me to question the accuracy

within the Deaf Culture and of the DEAF-SAME concept. Disabled people who are also Deaf have been oppressed and have experienced ableist attitudes about them by both hearing and Deaf cultures.

From the very beginning of my life I have been oppressed by the hearing culture because I am a deafdisabled person; oppressed by not being able to understand, communicate fluently, and by being bullied because of my appearance. I also have experienced oppression within and as a member of the Deaf culture because I have a disability as well as being Deaf. I have often been asked the question, "Which one are you, Deaf or disabled?" since I am a Deaf person with a disability.

I have questioned this myself, "Why do I have to choose between Deaf or Disabled?" My identity has always been questioned by the Deaf culture. The question asked by the instructor was problematic and the answer that the student automatically answered when the instructor and the CP student asked was problematic as well. Allow me to explain.

"Am I Deaf *or* Disabled?" Deaf people, through my observation and experience, have always had a binary thinking that a person must be either one *or* the other. In the culture itself, most of the time, it is expected to be Deaf first then the other identities come second and third. The word *or* itself gives the power to the person who does not have low vision or a physical disability to determinate ones' identity. It also gives the privilege of an able-bodied and sighted person to automatically assign and determine the person's identity of which disability is visible or invisible when the privileged person does not have a disability.

Disability prominence in deciding which disability is worse deciding between being Deaf *and* low-vision and Deaf *and* CP. Through my observation the visibility of a disability in Deaf culture determines the label a disability. On the other hand a person whose disability is not as visible determines that this person is simply part of the Deaf culture. Therefore, a Deaf person with low-vision is more acceptable in the Deaf culture than a person who is Deaf and has Cerebral Palsy.

When the CP classmate asked "Why is it different?" when being told that she was different and that she has a disability, the student did not have any answer. Therefore, it was his privilege to determine that his classmate with CP who grew up Deaf and has the culture inserted is disabled and is not part of the Deaf culture. The student did not have anything to justify why his CP classmate is not part of the Deaf culture when asked why was it different. Though the discussions of the multiple identity oppression theory it will provide possible reasons why Deaf culture has a binary thinking of having to choose one *or* the other.

Multiple Identity/Oppression Theory

In addition to a description of choosing identity a multiple identity oppression theory is provided here. An analysis of how this theory describes the oppressions of the Deaf culture by the hearing culture and the way the Deaf culture's attitudes took on the same characteristics as a dominate culture and has oppressed some of their own people is reviewed. I will also use comparisons of Deaf people's experience as an oppressed group and those of deafdisabled to show that the same oppressive behavior within Deaf Studies and Deaf culture exists.

When a person has more than one identity that tends to overlap for example, being deafdisabled or bisexual or biracial, and the culture of each oppresses and forces the person to choose one *or* the other in an example of multiple identity oppression. The theory of multiple identity oppression was presented by Reynolds and Pope (1991): "Clearly, many individuals in our culture have multiple identities and are members of more than one oppressed groups, thus making such dichotomization both inaccurate and limiting" (174). When being forced to dichotomize, oppression happens either way by one being forced to choose whether the one is "either/or" instead of "both/and."

Being forced to choose one label to define in order to be included is oppressive. The reason for oppression towards people with multiple identities is because "people create these categories to simplify the complexity of multiple identities and multiple realities" (p. 175). Therefore, people who are not bisexual, biracial, or deafdisabled think that it would be much simpler to choose one *or* the other; it should make their lives easier. Reynolds and Pope prove that it is much more complex than that. There are women who are also people of color who also identify as lesbians and many disabled who are also gay, bisexual, or lesbians, (p. 175). The authors further describe this theory and its consequence as "a multiple oppressions is when an individual is a member of two or more oppressed groups; as well as the combined oppressions with their own issues" (p. 175).

One might decide to approach their oppressions separately (Reynolds & Pope, p. 178). For example, a deafdisabled person may choose to approach her oppression as a Deaf person fighting against oppression from hearing culture rather than fight against both Deaf and hearing able-bodied oppressions, as "the shift in focus may be affected by

one's environment, reference group, or individual needs. Often a person is most likely to focus on whichever oppression is most salient in her or his life" (p. 176). However, by focusing on only one issue could become ones of the person's other identities. For example, being deafdisabled and focusing on Deaf issue of not providing interpreters as an access to communication has been solved. Yet, another issue arises in the same situation where having access in a building due to building's broken elevator results in disabled person being left alone outside. As a result, this person has to fight another issue against its own people.

The previous example illustrates a look into what "complexities of multiple identities such as addressing the implications of when those identities are from oppressed groups and when they are from dominant groups" (p. 177) facing individuals identifying in multiple groups. As a deafdisabled person they not only had to fight to gain access to communication, but literal access to the event itself. As such, the oppressed (Deaf people) became the oppressor (Deaf-ableist). It becomes too complicated that a person will use one of the four Multidimensional Identity Models, (Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Jones & McEwen, 2000), "Identifying with only one aspect in a passive manner," (p. 406), which means that a person will just identify with whatever identity that is assigned him or her by either "society, college peers, or family" (p. 406).

The second model presented by Reynolds & Pope, 1991 and Jones & McEwen, 2000 "Identifying with only one aspect of self that is determined by the individual", one or the other by the person themself. The third model, "Identifying with multiple aspects of self, but choosing to do so in a 'segmented fashion'", depending on where he or she is, for example. If a person is in a setting with a group of Deaf people, he/she will identify as

Deaf and when being with a group of disabled people he/she will identify as disabled. And the fourth model, "identifying with multiple aspect of self especially multiple oppressions, and has both consciously chosen them and integrated them to one's sense of self." Here the individual identifying as who she is will find a group that has the same identities (p. 406). Finding one's identity is very hard because of society, peers, and family. They all expect you to somewhat be like them. I found myself moving through all these models. In chapter three I will offer examples of how I discovered my deafdisabled identity. This theory will also be implied there.

Map of the Thesis

This thesis will focus, expand, and discuss ableism, ableist attitudes, and oppression that Deaf Studies and Deaf culture have exhibited against deafdisabled and disabled people. The literature review chapter will expand and discuss ableist and anti-ableist scholarship within in the field of Deaf Studies. A good deal of literature review has been written about the oppression of Deaf people, the debate about deafness as a disability (or not), and the inclusion of Disability Studies within the field of Deaf Studies or vice versa. In an effort to add to the discourse or better understand the ableist views held within the Deaf community toward other Deaf members of its community with disabilities, a review of various pieces of literature from Deaf Studies to Disability Studies and a view into each studies is important to discuss.

Additionally in chapter three, I describe my experience at the world's only Deaf liberal arts university, Gallaudet University, where I found my second home. At Gallaudet I never thought I would be oppressed for being different. After seven years at Gallaudet University I am sad to say that it is not true. I was oppressed from the moment

I stepped onto the university campus. The rejection I felt in not being part of the culture, not providing a sustained discussion of what deafdisabled people go through everyday, not receiving equal opportunities and access as Deaf able-bodied and able-minded people received, and more importantly not having the ability to be myself without being asked, "Which one are you?? Deaf or Disabled?" This thesis will conclude with suggestions on what Deaf Studies and Deaf culture should do to include deafdisabled people in their studies and culture.

Chapter Two:
Deaf Studies: A Review of Ableist Rhetoric

This chapter provides background of Deaf Studies as a field, an analysis of the concept of culture, the denial of disability, and anti-ableism in Deaf Studies. Providing background about the field of Deaf Studies will deliver an understanding of how Deaf Studies resists the disability concept and internalizes ableism and ableist attitudes towards disabled and deafdisabled people.

Deaf Studies is an academic field that examines Deaf culture, its history, and its experience of oppression in the hearing society. The students who choose the major of Deaf Studies learn, take in and bring their advocacy for Deaf able-bodied people to others to understand and promote the fight against oppression of the Deaf culture. Obviously, students and professors discuss the term disability and what it means to them. A consistent theme, "I do not consider myself as having a disability" is all over the academic field of Deaf Studies. When talking about oppression anywhere, they, Deaf able-bodied and able-minded people, continually refer to the hearing culture as, "They do not understand us. They will reject us when we interview for a job. They will discriminate against us. Most of the hearing people label us as having a disability." Deaf Studies sets forth the idea that Deaf issue is the first and the only issue about which there should be a focus and which should be discussed. This chapter is important, because it will show that there is a problem with Deaf Studies as a field, for its ableist views towards disability, disabled people, and deafdisabled people. The chapter is also important because it shows Deaf Studies' inconsistency in applying the social model -- for example, for some Deaf Studies scholars the social model only applies to deaf people but does not imply to people with disabilities.

Overview of Deaf Studies

The field of Deaf Studies had its breakthrough as early as 1971 when Frederick Schreiber, Director of National Association of the Deaf, shared his beliefs that having Deaf Studies would educate Deaf people about what their people have done for them in the past and subsequently improve their future (Bauman, 2008). Schreiber questioned, "If we can have Black Studies, Jewish Studies why not Deaf Studies?" (p. 7). The discussion of Deaf culture continued as Deaf Studies was becoming a field. In the mid-1970s Deaf culture began to grow and resist the oral education method. Deaf art, Deaf poetry, and Deaf stories about oppression and isolation in hearing families and schools (Ladd, 2003) were frequent. In 1974 the field of Deaf Studies promoted Robert Panara's first article "Deaf Studies in the English Curriculum". In the early 1970's through an ASL linguistic research lab and through the journal, *Sign Language Studies,* which William Stokoe founded, "early works on the sociological and culture aspects of sign language" began, (Bauman, p. 7).

During the 1980's, Deaf Studies as a field gained recognition in colleges such as Boston University and California State University, Northridge, (p. 7). One key source for discourse included in the field at that time was the historical protest in 1988 at Gallaudet University when the world was watching the Deaf President Now (DPN) movement. Deaf people wanted to be heard and had enough of the oppression and discrimination against them. A defining example of this was occurring at this prominent university. Gallaudet is the only liberal arts university for the Deaf. For the university continuously to be led by a hearing president was unbearable. Students, faculty, staff, and supporters of the cause protested, closing down the university for a week. By the end of that week, Gallaudet had a new and Deaf president. That week really made the world realize that

being Deaf is a way of being. That protest had influenced on the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. Finally the department of Deaf Studies at Gallaudet University was established in 1994. Deaf Studies has collectively created many different publications, art, poetry, and more to represent the oppression, history, language, and culture.

Paddy Ladd, who wrote *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood,* explains a great deal about Deaf Studies, particularly the scope of discussions and what the field has to offer. In his first chapter he questioned, "What is Deaf Culture, Why is it of such importance in the Deaf liberation struggle? Does it have anything to offer to majority societies, anything to teach them?" (p. 1).

The Concept of Culture

The discussion about the concept of Deaf people as a "culture" appeared in the middle 1960's to early 1970's. William Stokoe formed his argument that American Sign Language is indeed a language through his observations of students using ASL in and out of class while teaching English at Gallaudet University. Stokoe, as mentioned earlier, founded the ASL Research Linguistics Lab that included work from today's Deaf scholars, such as MJ Bienvenu, Ben Bahan, and many others Deaf scholars in the 1970s and1980s. When Deaf people began to realize that ASL is a language in the 1970's they began to discuss the concept of culture.

One of the most consistent concepts to emerge from Deaf Studies is the concept of "Deaf Culture." Carol Padden was acknowledged as the first to publish this notion in a 1980's article, "The Deaf Community and the Culture of Deaf People." The article defines the difference between community and culture. It also looks more deeply into

what Deaf culture should look like. "Deaf community," Padden writes, "is a group of people who live in a particular location, share the common goals of its members, and, in various ways, work towards achieving these goals. A community may include persons who are not themselves Deaf, but who actively support the goals of the community and work with Deaf people to achieve them" (p. 5). The Deaf culture is "more closed" with Deaf people; "more closed" meaning those who identify as Deaf, behave as Deaf people, use ASL, and share the same beliefs as Deaf people (Padden, 1980).

Padden uses the capital D for those who are culturally Deaf, and small d for those who are not. Deaf, medically, usually means a range of hearing loss. "However", Padden states, "…the type of hearing loss is not a criterion for being Deaf. Rather, the criterion is whether a person identified with other Deaf people, and behaves as a Deaf person" (p. 8). The culture values its language, ASL, and "Currently, an all-important value of the culture is respect for one of its major identifying features: American Sign Language" writes Padden, (p. 8). If a Deaf person does not know much ASL but respects and accepts the language as it is, then they are "okay" in the culture (p. 8). Therefore, a deafdisabled person should be part of the culture as well. When discussing Deaf culture there is a form of essentialism included of who is part of the Deaf culture.

Essentialism is a criterion of what it takes to be in a team, or in this case a culture. Padden mentions that to be in a Deaf culture the person must be Deaf, use and value ASL, know its history, and have a common understanding of what being Deaf is like, (Padden 1980). The essentialism in the Deaf culture can be very marginalizing as if there is a checklist of how Deaf the person is, how well the Deaf person can use ASL, to which school did the Deaf person attend, and in some cases from which family did the person

come: a hearing or Deaf family? This kind of "list" does not seem to be inclusive of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and disability.

In continuation of this discussion of Deaf culture, Humphries (2008) shares, " . . . Deaf people have historically maintained a discourse that was about themselves, their lives, their beliefs, their interpretation of the world, their needs, and their dreams" (p. 35). He describes this as "culture talking." Humphries goes on to say,

> . . . culture talking for Deaf people was not always about 'culture,' and
> we began talking culture only recently (first in the 1960s) when we began
> to desire to call our private world a 'culture.' And when we began to
> want our public image to be more like our private image about ourselves.
> (p. 36).

Over the years, Deaf culture has been shared with the hearing world in different ways for many reasons. Oppression, lack of control over ones' lives, and lack of trust have led to the careful sharing of the Deaf world. Once a Deaf culture was proclaimed, there was a "public insistence that we produce evidence of culture" (Humphries, p. 37). This culture included our language (ASL), literature, and art. Humphries contends, "Our task, and the one that concerns the field of Deaf Studies so strongly at this time, has been to understand what the voice of this "new" Deaf Culture is (p. 37). In other words, it is the field of Deaf Studies' task to spread awareness of a new idea of Deaf culture?

Ladd agrees with Humphries regarding the discourse and the core discussions of culture within Deaf Studies. Ladd further makes notes of the struggle to fit into disability's medical and social models, as well as the level of hearing loss as a prerequisite of membership into Deaf culture, thus forming a "culturo-linguistic model

has produced a contemporary Deaf discourse which refuses this categorization and denies that degree of hearing impairment has relevance for cultural membership," (p. 35). Additionally, Padden agrees with Humphries that to label the Deaf as having a culture is the right thing. Therefore, when Deaf Studies discusses the concept of culture they also deny the disability label and perpetrate the attitude that being Deaf is superior to being disabled.

Deaf Studies and the Denial of Disability

The denial of disability in Deaf Studies is engaged to the question of disability. One of the questions is often asked, "So, what makes them, the Deaf, different from people with disabilities?" The answer is their language and their culture. According to Lane in *Opening Your Eyes*, "a Deaf person values being Deaf and possesses the other attitudes, values, morals, and knowledge particular to that culture" (p. 284). Lane further argues that Deaf people, according to his knowledge about Deaf culture and as an ally to the Deaf Studies field, do not have a disability. He states,

> Disowning the disability label will therefore be the honest thing to do. In
> the second place, consider what the disabilities rights movement seeks:
> above all, better medical care, rehabilitation services, and personal
> assistance services… …Deaf people do not attach particular importance to
> any of these services—no more than any other able-bodied group (p. 285).

Lane reviewed the social construction of the term disability looking at examples of height and IQ as determining disability in particular. Lane shares, "The Social Theory of Disability maintains, then, that the category of 'people with disabilities' arises out of the work ethic of our capitalist society: People who are not working legitimately . . .; they

have needs that the rest of society should meet" (p. 278). In his writing he goes on to define disability as "a classification of a physical, behavioral, or mental difference from the norm that is attributed to biological causes in a particular culture in a given era, as a result of the interventions of interested parties" (p. 281). So, if we accept the Deaf culture, we understand Lane's statement regarding the denial of the disability label, "Disowning the disability label is therefore the prudent thing to do because the provisions that society makes for people with disabilities often do not suit the interests of Deaf people and may even run counter to them" (p. 285). That is to say that when Deaf people accept the Deaf culture it would make sense not to accept labeling themselves as disabled.

Although Lane offers a number of examples to the creation of the disability label and reasons to deny it as a Deaf person, he suggests a contradictory view or reason why such a label is and may continue to be accepted, particularly to gain access. Lane writes:

> The dilemma is that Deaf people want access and as citizens in a
> democracy have a right to access – access to public events, government
> services, and education – but when they subscribe to the disability
> definition in order to gain access, they undermine their struggle for other
> rights, such as an education for Deaf children, and an end to efforts to
> discourage Deaf births in the first place. (p. 289)

In other words, citizens of the Deaf world have been forced through the creation of government policies and technologies of normalization to accept being labeled as disabled to received access to their fundamental right as a human being and as a citizen.

Hope, however, he sees in the continued activism of the Deaf. He notes the changes brought about by activism in other marginalized and minority groups such as blacks in America, gays and lesbians, even Native Americans and women, (p. 289). He believes with continued efforts the Deaf will be joined by other social sciences and humanities in opposing the label of deafness as a disability.

Deaf Studies and many Deaf people maintain that they are not disabled. However, they acknowledge and support the Americans with Disabilities Act. Although supported, the opinions and feelings regarding the ADA are complicated. Lane states in *Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community* (1992, 1999), "The much heralded Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the fruit of one of the greatest, and saddest, ironies in the annals of minority oppression" (xii). Yet Lane argues that the ADA forces the Deaf to label themselves as disabled while they continue to argue they are not. It seems as if Deaf Studies and Deaf people according to Lane are blaming the disability construction for their struggle to be viewed as a culture. Lane writes, "…worse yet, subscribing to the disability construction of culturally Deaf people undermines the Deaf agenda, which aims for acceptance of ASL and Deaf culture" (p. xiii). In addition the law requires schools to provide better education to be provided to students in their "best" language. Lane argues, "it is because of the disability construction that laws requiring schools to use their pupils' best language do not apply to children whose best language is a signed language" (p. xiii). In short, Lane does not believe that Deaf people belong under the umbrella of disability.

Deaf people continued to fight for their rights as a culture in the 1990's. Their views on disability began to arise. In a 1995 article included in the Chicago Tribune, the

author Barbra Munder interviewed MJ Bienvenu about her view on Deaf as

disabled. Bienvenu, a strong advocate of the Deaf and who strongly resists the term

disability said, "If you call me disabled because I'm deaf you mislabel me as abnormal.

Being deaf is simply a different perspective. I'm just like the rest of my family--I work,

have deaf friends, socialize and am a member of deaf culture. What's wrong with being

deaf," (p. 1)? She goes on to say:

> The Americans with Disabilities Act is the biggest problem facing deaf
>
> people today, she said. It has given us many good things, including
>
> increased availability of interpreters, captioned television programs and
>
> TTY's (keyboards that allow deaf people to use the telephone), but with
>
> the perspective that we are disabled. We can't be both a culture and a
>
> disability, (p. 1).

Many other Deaf people agree with that. It causes conflict here when a deafdisabled

person has both, where do they go? Not part of a culture because they have a disability

and not disabled because they are Deaf, it does not make sense.

Deaf Studies also seeks respect from other people outside its field. "If we respect

constitutive rules, which may differ from ours, then we must recognize that the deafness

of which I speak is not a disability but rather a different ways of being," (Lane, 1992 &

1999). However it does not respect the choice of a person that is struggling to find his/her

identity of being both Deaf and disabled.

In his work from *Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community* Lane

writes*:*

Now members of the minority will tell the person who is trying to pass or

cover that he is kidding himself. …instead of trying to be like the

oppressor, he should take a militant stand. …embrace the unique

characteristics of his minority. But to pass and cover or fight back –

either way his behavior is determined by the oppression he is subjected

to, (p. 98).

Alternatively, it is saying that if a Deaf person is trying to pass as a hearing person that

this Deaf person is not going to be able to "pass" or will get "overlooked" as a hearing

person and he/she should be proud of being Deaf. It seems to be a hypocritical view for

the same behaviors and oppressions perpetuated by the hearing culture to Deaf culture are

perpetuated onto the deafdisabled and disabled by the Deaf culture and the field of Deaf

Studies.

Deaf Studies has distanced itself from the disability label and chooses not to be

compared to Disability Studies. In her article for PMLA, "Talking Culture: Deaf People

and Disability Studies", Padden suggests Deaf and Disability Studies have both divergent

interests and convergent issues. She sees them bringing together views for example on

segregation from different perspectives. Where some hearing disabled individuals were

isolated from society in institutions and asylums and deaf children, especially those from

hearing families, were brought together able to be surrounded by individuals like

themselves. "This is a complicated legacy," writes Padden, "both alienating and

comforting." She continues, "… for the first time in their lives by real-life versions of the

self, in deaf teachers and fellow deaf students," (p. 510). Specifically, when it comes to

Deaf people it becomes complicated since most Deaf people want to be together because they share the same language, ASL, and the collection of experiences of being Deaf.

Having a culture and language are the important reasons why Deaf Studies supports a distance from the idea of labeling the Deaf as disabled. "Truth be told, deaf people see themselves an odd fit in disability studies. We've been segregated for such a long time that we see our history as set apart from others, and it feels strange to have the company of other disabled people" (Padden, p. 508). She argues for the continued separation in part of Deaf and Disabilities Studies because of the common history of the Deaf. She shares that the Deaf see the world in visual terms and quotes "George Veditz, who called us, 'first, last, and for all time, the people of the eye,'" (p. 513).

Padden does not, however, call for a total separation by the two studies due to the common nature of their shared histories of suffering, discriminations, and oppression. Poignantly addressing this issue she writes:

> Yet, together these fields of inquiry can be brought to bear on some the most important issues of our time. Who better to discuss issues of body and society than we who have long suffered social project inscribed on ourselves? Where better to discuss these issues than in academic programs on university campuses, where the resources of scholars from across disciplines are available? What disability studies and deaf studies can offer are the shared and separate perspectives that are needed to make some of the most important human issues intelligible to everyone. (p. 513)

Padden has in fact provided dialogue about her view on Disability. Her early publications such as, "The Deaf Community and the Culture of Deaf People" and *Deaf in America:*

Voices From a Culture, had an impact on deciding on who is disabled and who is not. She still believes that Deaf people are not disabled. However, she has mentioned she believes that Deaf and disabled people should be open and share their oppressive experiences and perspective which will bring about a whole new perspective on both.

I continue to question, when a person is both Deaf and disabled, deafdisabled, what role does this person have in both? Because according to Bienvenu, Deaf people cannot be both a culture and disabled. The Deaf will marginalize the deafdisabled because of their differences and the social model of disability is contrary to the views in the Deaf culture. When this person seeks help from the disabled group, in most cases, the communication breaks down because of language and cultural differences. As a result of this the person is stuck in the middle with nowhere to go for support. This is where the view of anti-ableism in Deaf Studies begins.

Deaf Studies: Anti-Ableism

Not only Deaf Studies do have Ableism there are some Deaf Studies scholars that have anti-ableism view and anti-ableist attitude. In Burch and Kafer's book *Deaf and Disability Studies: Interdisciplinary Perspective,* there are 14 essays that discusses broadly about Deaf and Disability Studies, Deaf and disability label, and the intersects of Deaf and disability. Burch and Kafer mentioned that both studies have its difference between politics, identities, and languages. However what they have in common is, "is a strong desire to intervene in Deaf Studies and Disability Studies" (p. viii). Deaf and Disability Studies do have flaws, Deaf Studies focus only on Deaf elites and avoids discussions about intersectionality of deafdisabled whilst Disability Studies is accompanied by "whiteness and economic privileges; the field tended to concentrate

mostly on visibility marked physical disabled than on mental illness, cognitive impairment, or non-apparent disabilities and chronic pain" (p. xviii).

This section I will include only two essays from this book because it discusses what Deaf and Disability Studies have in common and its differences and what they should do to abide their differences and work together. Not only the studies itself but in Deaf culture and disability society how they should abide their differences will be discussed in this section too.

Yerker Andersson in his interview with Burch, has the same views as Padden on her view of Deaf culture and Disability Studies; contrariwise, he seems to be more open to what Disability Studies has to offer. Burch interviewed Andersson and asked him what he thought of the views Deaf Studies has for Disability Studies and vice versa. She also questioned what could both studies do to become one large category. Andersson answered her questions suitably.

When asked what do they have in common and their differences, he answered that they share experiences, oppressions and histories; the difference is… language. He goes on to explain that language differences are hard to explain to the disability groups because they have different communication needs. Andersson shared, "I struggled with colleagues when talking about access issues because deaf people's needs are different" (p. 196). He also mentions that people have to be careful with their assumptions because it could be a person that can hear but cannot speak and use sign language to communicate.

The view of each is that Deaf Studies focuses more on deaf people and the social aspect of their lives (p. 193). Also language is the main key difference. As for activism,

Deaf Studies focuses on advocating for the Deaf and the different ways of doing what Disability Studies does also. Disability Studies tends to look at the concept and has paid "more attention to diversity within the umbrella of disability" (Andersson, p. 194). While Deaf Studies pays more attention to the "unifying features of being deaf, such as the concept of deafhood," (p. 194), rather than knowing the difference of what it is like being Deaf.

Andersson thinks that if both fields merge it will expand their knowledge and share different experiences. He comments, "That realization also reminds us that deaf studies has not yet fully considered the experiences of people who both are deaf and have other disabilities… when this level of understanding is reached, either in tandem or as intersections, fresh new understandings are more likely to occur" (p. 198). If Deaf and Disability Studies merge, a whole new perspective will be brought into both fields.

Their distance from the disability label is due to their view of the label as negative, destructive, and dehumanizing to their rights of being a human being. According to Brenda Brueggemann, Deaf people in the culture are actually afraid to say that they are disabled or have a disability because they do not want to lose their cultural pride and give up on their long-fought battle to be recognized as a culture. Deaf Studies reinforces this concept.

As Brueggeman writes of the ongoing tango between Deaf and Disability Studies, she shares how the two are at times together in their dance and resistant as is found in the tango itself. She shares in her work that what she is exploring and writing about, " . . . is not about building binaries, delineating differences, or even articulating boundaries but more about subtle bodily shifts each makes as, in the dance, first one leads and then the

other" (p. 248). She observes this behavior in the academic, social, and public areas where their important actions can be found.

Deaf Studies and Disability Studies have always been viewed, according to Brueggemann as, "cousin of a distant cousin" (p. 250). She explains that in the academic world they both have tension as if it was a tango. Brueggemann justifies that both Deaf Studies and Disability Studies are important because they both discuss the values, the struggles they have in the "normal" hearing and able-bodied society. Deaf Studies and Disability Studies are both overlooked by people because they are seen as a subject and an object, which is why they both need to overlap or become interdisciplinary studies. They both are beginning to work within humanities-oriented fields.

Additionally both fields, according to Brueggeman, are producing more "qualitatively and quantitatively impressive array of new work in 'life writing'" (p. 258). Not only, however, do the Deaf and disabled struggle through oppression and access in normal life activities, but also Deaf and Disability Studies struggle to find their way into their own and other academic arenas. Brueggeman's observations additionally show how both Deaf and Disability Studies fields tend to "situate themselves in relationship to self, each, and other" (p. 255). If one remembers the Gallaudet protest around former President Jane Fernandes, outsiders and insiders could cite this as an example of not being deaf enough; a clear example of the hierarchy existing in the D/deaf world. Brueggeman continues with examples of a "caste system" when reviewing Disability Studies and the "crip-casting . . . found across disability identities . . ." (p. 256). Here she discusses the system of "privileged cripples and the able disabled." She summarizes by saying, "In tango and in tandem, however, it

seems that both fields tend to step lightly or even around relationships with others or even as "others" themselves, on the identity floor" (p. 257). Causing tension to both fields is the discourse around deaf as a disability or not.

Another point of view is presented by Douglas C. Baynton, He makes an argument in his writing, "Beyond Culture and the Deaf Body" (also found in *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking,* edited by Bauman, 2008), that deaf people should not make the label of disability as such a terrible thing for the Deaf and people with disabilities. They are fighting for the same thing. He explained, "When Deaf people say that 'disabled' does not describe them, it is generally this model [the social model of thinking Deaf and disabled people are less human]*,* they reject. It is precisely this model, however, that Disability Studies scholars (and disability rights activist) also reject" (p. 295). Baynton also made comments that the term "disability" meant talking about what Deaf people have in common with other people who have disabilities (p. 295). This he sees as a dangerous shift to begin with because this was and is the reason why Deaf people resist the disabled label. He continues by stating, "Many Deaf people have tried to distance themselves from this image by distancing themselves from any notion of disability and insisting that their identity is based on cultural rather than physical difference from the hearing majority," (p. 295).   In other words, being Deaf is not a physical issue; it is a different way of being.

Finally, he writes that the reason for the split of the field of Deaf Studies and Disability Studies is the resistance to the disability label, " . . . and that being Deaf is neither a pathology nor a medical matter. Most of us in Deaf Studies have correspondingly defined our work as a branch of ethnic studies, separate and distinct

from Disability Studies," (p. 296). The significance of this quote shows a consistent view that Deaf people have always had an ableist attitude against deaf people with disability. Baynton makes a challenge with the term 'normal;' he proposes that we establish expectations based on what is normal for the majority and design our built environment to serve that norm—and to exclude, often, any who fall outside it. Deaf people are disabled in the sense that they fall outside most cultures' notions of normality and are on that basis denied equal access to social and economic life. (p. 297).

It appears from some of the previous literature reviewed that Deaf people accept and define what is normal to them and often exclude what does not fit in the normalcy of deaf culture, which may include deaf people with multiple disabilities. "The common argument" Baynton writes, "that Deaf people are a cultural and linguistic group and *therefore* are not disabled wrongly characterizes culture and disability as mutually excusive" (p. 297). In other words Baynton is basically saying that it is wrong to say that Deaf people cannot be a culture and have a disability label. It is very much possible to be a culture and accept the disability label.

> The social model of disability is entirely compatible with an understanding of Deaf people as a cultural minority group, and as a complement to the cultural model, accounts for much about Deaf experience that the cultural model cannot. Not only it is entirely possible for Deaf people to be both a distinct cultural group *and* disabled, it is necessary if Deaf and Disability Studies scholars are to provide a coherent account of the Deaf community (p. 297).

If Deaf and Disability Studies scholars provide a clear statement of what it means to be Deaf then it would be clear that Deaf people are a culture or disabled. But since they do

not, then what could it hurt and/or lose if Deaf people accept both, culture *and be*

disabled? The only thing that accepting the disability label could hurt is losing some of

their cultural pride. I argue that they (Deaf people) still have to figure out what it means

to be Deaf first. Meaning they have to figure out what being Deaf means to them, who do

they accept, what do they accept, and who decides what Deaf culture is? Is Deaf as a

whole, inclusive or is there a strain of essentialism?

       In continuation of this discussion, Lennard Davis writes in his work,

"Postdeafness"*, also found in Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking.* Although he

discusses deafness and ethnicity, he also comments on Deaf Studies, Disability Studies

and disability itself. He mentions that Deaf Studies and the cultural attempts to promote

that they are not disabled or a part of the Disability Studies field, so by doing this it

shows and acts as the ableist movement. Davis states, "Many Deaf people have said, 'I

am not disabled like a crippled person or a mentally retarded person [*sic*].' But the

problem with that refutation is that it uses ableist concepts. It implies that each Deaf

person would be diminished if they considered themselves disabled," (p. 323). He says of

the deaf culture that the umbrella of disability is not where the deaf culture wants to go,

"but of where else will they be part if they are not an ethnic group or a minority group",

(p. 324). Davis questions, "If disability and ethnicity are rejected, what is left?" (p. 324).

He hopes and argues that the Deaf culture and Deaf Studies should "develop a theory of

Deafness," (p. 324). Davis, here, is arguing for a new construction of a postmodern

identity.

       When we discuss the issue of Deaf people being disabled, the Deaf easily resist

and defend themselves, but what they do not realize is that there are people that are Deaf

and have other disabilities. Mairiam Corker challenged that thinking of resistance against the term disability in her book *Deaf and Disabled or Deafness Disabled.* She brings out a different outlook of oppression within the culture, because a person does not fit into the image of the stronger culture. Corker communicates that no one wants to be on the other side because they are different, or they will have to hide their differences to be part of the group or it could be a "threat to the survival of a strong identity," (p. 20).

In review of this body of literature, oppression and marginalization dominant the writing of the authors' works presented. The entire notion of disability, its negative connotations and the advocacy for respect and acceptance can be found in both Deaf and Disability Studies. One important issue is well summarized by Corker, "The fact that someone is oppressed does not mean they are free of prejudices against other oppressed groups in society . . . For as long as we are divided and fighting our own exclusive causes, we continue to be oppressed" (p. 21). As long as we disagree with whatever label we have, we will continue to oppress *and* be oppressed.

Over time when able bodied Deaf people say that they are not disabled, but then however act and treat others differently, they do not realize that they are imitating the power of the hearing culture, as a dominant culture that marginalizes them as a disabled group. Corker mentions in chapter three that a dominant group has the tendency to create inequality and choose who they want in their group/culture in a language and/or discourse event when discussing this specific topic:

> The marginalization of discourse has particular consequences for deaf
>
> people's inclusion in social model theory, along with that of other group
>
> of disabled people for whom textual, discursive, and social practice is

inextricably linked to both impairment and disability. Through analysis of

connections between the sensory realm and concepts such as narrative

identity, it is argued that as long as discourse is marginalized, there can be

no deconstruction of linguistic, social or attitudinal oppression, and

therefore only limited social change. (p. 72)

As Corker suggests Deaf culture has the tendency to be impatient or have an oppressive

attitude when a deaf individual with a physical disability tries to communicate, tries to

have a discussion with, or live and work alongside them.

Often the Deaf community rejects people who are Deafdisabled promoting the

perception to deafdisabled so that they feel they have to look normal in order to feel a

part of the Deaf community. Corker writes of this feeling that, "we are often under

pressure to fit, or perhaps because we have been rejected from an alternative framework

which we would have chosen given the choice. Thus for many deaf and disabled people,

choosing between Deaf *or* hearing, *or disabled* does not represent a real choice of *social*

identification at all" (p. 21). Being forced to choose an identity is not at all a good

feeling. However, this behavior exhibited by many Deaf people is continued placing this

type of pressure on other Deaf people, who are different, requiring them to choose

between being Deaf or their other identity. Many Deaf able-bodied, sighted and able-

minded people do put pressure on other Deaf disabled people to choose one identity

between Deaf or disabled.

Through historical accounts and a review of the literature supports and provides

understanding into the factors behind this, the reasons this may be; why Deaf able-

bodied, sighted, and able-minded people distance themselves from being disabled; one

must still ask the question, why? Should ableism in this or any culture be accepted? The following chapter will offer a first-hand account of this behavior and its effect on more than just one Deafdisabled individual.

Chapter Three:
Autoethnographic Narrative

Ableism in the hearing and Deaf societies does exist. This chapter will provide an insight from my experience of being oppressed, discriminated, physically, emotionally, and mentally bullied by both communities, Deaf and hearing. This chapter will also present a theory that matches the experience of being oppressed by determining the identity of being Deaf not disabled and being considered as a severely disabled person in the hearing society. In order to receive a better perspective of ableism in both the Deaf and hearing community, an in-depth autoethnographic account is provided.

Deaf culture has a long history of being and feeling dehumanized. One example of this was the manner in which the dominant culture, the hearing, hindered the use of their language, American Sign Language, (ASL). Another example continues in the need to "fix" the lack of hearing, and being minimized by the dominant hearing culture, (Ladd, 2008). Many people in Deaf culture think that the doctors, audiologist, speech therapist, and teachers who force them to speak, use hearing aids or cochlear implants are profiting financially and controlling their lives.

Now, after proving their cultural identity and the lack of a need to be fixed by the dominant culture, Deaf culture has somewhat become free of feeling burden to educate the dominant culture. They have taken, unfortunately, some of the dominant group's of being told what they are; something that they really disdain so much from their own experience and have placed it on another group of their own with characteristics a bit different from their own. Different, how? In the previous chapter, a discussion was presented about Deaf able-bodied, sighted, and able-minded who marginalized deafdisabled group from their culture. That difference is deafdisabled people who are

both deaf and have one or more disabilities. Throughout the following chapter, I will discuss how I have experienced, feeling dehumanized, and more importantly oppressed by the hearing and Deaf able-bodied culture as well as the field of Deaf Studies.

As an autoethnography, this chapter will include the story of my experiences of being oppressed as I grew up in the hearing and Deaf culture in general, at Gallaudet University, and within my Deaf Studies program. It also includes a look at it through the theory of multiple identity oppression.

Autoethnography:
What is it?

This thesis is an autoethnography that shares my story of growing up as a deafdisabled person. It includes my experience of how my identity as a deafdisabled person affected me and how I coped with it. According to Ellis, et.al. (2011) Autoethnography "is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (p. 1). In other words it is a type of research that analyzes personal experience into the culture (Dyson, 2007).

An autoethnography is a growing body of research that most people use to analyze their lives into a culture perspective with one or more theories. The method of autoethnography is what I call self-questioning and self-analyzing through a theory of their choice. The self-questioning and self-analyzing term I refer to comes from Boyle and Parry (2007):

> By its very nature, autoethnography is characterised by personal experience narratives, auto-observation, personal ethnography, lived experience, self-ethnography, reflexive ethnography, ethnobiography,

emotionalism, experiential texts, and autobiographical ethnography (p.

186).

Boyle and Parry (2007), discussed an opinion from that this is possibly a dangerous method of research because "there is no perfect methodology and autoethnography does have its problems. We also admit that exposing the vulnerable self through autobiographical processes can be fraught with personal and professional risk and, in some instances, can be considered the most dangerous fieldwork of all" (p. 186). With that being said, this field of research is so new that it could be ignored. However, it has many positive attributes. One of the positives is that an autoethnography research according to Ronald Ricci (2003), can challenge some "epistemological position of traditional (read positivist) research", and "as a result, autoethnographic writing takes an overt stance against silent authorship and its implication of objectivity" (p. 593). Therefore, it is my hope that my autoethnographic narrative with multiple identity/oppression theories can be one of those that challenges its traditionalist research.

The subject of this auto-ethnographic study was diagnosed with cerebral palsy (CP) just two months after birth. The mother and child had a blood incompatibility caused by the RH factor (mother was blood type O-negative, child was blood-type O-positive), which lead to hemolytic anemia. This condition causes the red blood cells to be destroyed faster than they can be reproduced. Because red blood cells carry oxygen, the lack of oxygen caused many serious complications. One common effect is cerebral palsy. Diagnosed with cerebral palsy at age two months, my parents and I embarked on a great

journey. At 13 months, my parents received news of another side-effect. I was also deaf.

I, among other 90% of Deaf people, come from a hearing family. I am fortunate that my parents and my sister learned sign language to communicate with me from the very beginning. As a Deaf child with cerebral palsy, my parents treated me no different from how they treated my hearing, able-bodied sister. I knew I was somewhat different from my sister, not because I was Deaf, but because I have CP. There were some things that she could do that I could not do, for example, play t-ball, soccer, and basketball at an early age. Other than that everything at home was equal; we both were treated no different.

But because of some communication difficulties at home, I felt my "hearing-loss" was more important than my CP. Because if I were hearing, I would not have missed out on any conversations or walked through and barely paid attention to what they were talking about. If it was important I could choose to get involved in the conversation or not; I missed out on all of that. However because my parents, family and I (at a young age), were not aware that there was a Deaf culture or a Deaf community, I was forced to take up the disability label. Therefore I was at a passive stage of the multiple identity/oppression theory, which meant I was told of who I was, Meredith Lee Burke, the disabled little girl, who we do not know of her future.

Meredith Burke:
The beginning

That disabled little girl with leg braces, kneepads, a helmet, big hearing aids, and a walker; I was just an innocent little girl that had nothing of which to be afraid. In my early years it was necessary for me to wear leg braces, kneepads, a helmet, use a walker and wear big hearing aids. I am a child of supportive, educated and hearing parents. However, my hearing parents were unsure of my future when they saw me struggling to feed myself in a high chair; three-fourths of the food on the floor and one-fourths of the food in my stomach. Yet, I was smiling, happy to be able to feed myself. As I look back today, I reflect on my past growing up and how I dealt with being oppressed and the feeling that something was taken away from me as a deafdisabled person.

Those moments with leg braces, kneepads, helmet, big hearing aids, and walker were one of the toughest moments of my life. I remember hearing and deaf able-bodied people pointing at me, making fun of me, and imitating the way I walked, and the way my right arm looked (my CP effects my right arm and my balance). I was always

assumed as retarded or something was wrong with my brain because of my physical appearance. I always had my head up and ignored what they did or said about me.

Therefore, in this situation I was passive about my identity as a disabled little girl who was always picked on because of my CP. I could not identify myself but those who were audiologist, doctors, psychologist (white-coated people), and society said that I was just a little disabled girl for whom they had small expectations. The bar was set very low based on their diagnosis at the time. My parents did what they were told by those white-coated people on the information shared. Based on the information shared, my parents did not think I was able to excel at most things.

The mockery always has bothered me inside and the most comfortable place for me to be who I was as a kid was at home and at Easter Seals where they provided occupational, physical, and speech therapies. Although, I hated going to therapies, I admit it was a place where I could express freely without having to see people pointing at me, making fun of me, and imitating me.

My Therapies

When I walked through the sliding door from the ages of two to ten, into Easter Seals the feeling of tension from being bullied and picked on eased. The place smelled like a swimming pool. Easter Seals had an indoor pool at the back of the building where clients with multiple disabilities could have therapy and learn how to swim. The waiting room was like a doctor's office's waiting room with the receptionist sitting there at a brown desk and multiple chairs for clients and their families to wait. The receptionist made sure clients who arrive from a school bus were safe. I remember the seats were navy blue and brown. I sat there patiently waiting for my physical therapist, Bobbie, to come a get me for my session.

The physical therapy (PT) room had different sizes of balance balls, mats, long stretching bands. Most of the time I did not want to do physical therapy because Bobbie would challenge me to do more. It was physically and mentally draining. The exercises included mostly core strengthening and balance. The type of cerebral palsy I have affects balance greatly. The long stretching bands were to help stretch out my right arm. For fun, we would play soccer and basketball. I knew I needed the challenge of PT. If I was not challenged then the years of therapy would have been a joke and I would not be as flexible and mobile as I am today.

Occupational therapy (OT) was next immediately after the exhausting physical therapy. I remember I did not like OT at all because it was more challenging than PT as it focused on my fine motor skills. Entering the OT room, buttoned up shirts and coats with zippers hanging up, different bright color putties with marbles and coins in them, boxes of marbles, coins, and pencils, desks and chairs for writing activities, many different types of threads for tying shoes activity, and puddings for the spoon activity were in the

room awaiting my arrival. I remember the feelings of frustration well. I could not zip up the coats because my fine motor skills were not developing as they should. I was even more frustrated with myself when it came to the buttons. I hated the button activity! It was so hard to push the button through the hole. The therapist pushed me until she saw me getting really frustrated and gave me a "button connector" so I could lessen my frustration.

The fun part of the therapy was the putty activity. The putty with marbles in them was easy because the goal was to get the marbles out of the putty and then put them back in the putty. The next activity required me to pick up coins off the floor and keep them in my hands. It was extremely challenging for me because my right side is more involved than my left so I tried to complete the activity with only my left hand. Obviously trying to hold coins and collect coins from the floor at the same time posed a problem. My therapist would tell me to do it with my right hand. I would struggle all the time, but then again, if she had not challenged me my right hand probably would probably be less useful.

My hands, arms, legs, and core muscles were all tired yet relaxed. I was tired from all the activities, but I was not finished yet. Speech therapy was next, the most fun part. Seriously, for me as a "society identified" disabled child, speech therapy was my favorite. Because of my deaf accent and my CP-ASL, I needed to speak, as speaking is easier than signing for me to a hearing person. Speech therapy was critical for me as a CP child because the therapy itself not only provides therapy for speech it also provides individuals with CP "mouth and throat coordination and strength" and it also helps reduce "pulmonary aspiration, chocking on food or liquids, breathing abnormalities,

increased coughing, dehydration, and malnutrition" (Cerebral Palsy, 2014). I was always looking forward to the pudding exercise as part of the mouth and throat coordination and strength exercise. The exercise was to eat the pudding out of a straw; it was hard but fun. If it were not for Easter Seals, and all the therapies in combination, I do not think I would be able to be part of both Deaf and hearing communities.

Pre-K-12
Social and Academic life

For my entire social and academic life from pre-school to high school, I was bussed everyday. I lived in the suburbs of Columbus, Ohio about 30 minutes southwest of all my schools. My schools were all in the northeast part of Columbus. The school(s) that contained the program for Deaf and hard of hearing students was and still is called, Columbus Hearing-Impaired Program, (CHIP).

The CHIP program is a program that provides self-contained classrooms with teachers who specialize in teaching students who prefer to receive their education in either the SIMCOM[4] program or the oral program or through an inclusion model with interpreters. Often the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) make that choice. In the CHIP program the pre-school-kindergarten school that housed the programs, SIMCOM and oral programs, on separate floors. Also in this program two elementary schools house the separate programs; Huy Elementary held the SIMCOM students, while Alpine Elementary, held the oral students. Huy and Alpine were a few miles away from each other. The middle and high school the two programs' students are in mixed group where both SIMCOM and oral students learn together.

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[4] Short for simulation communication as when signing and voicing at the same time is enforced.

My parents, because of my CP, chose the SIMCOM self-contained program. Even then, it was a battle to get me in the CHIP program at first. I was the first physically "dual handicapped" student to enroll in the program. The educational consult at that time was reluctant to admit me for this reason. They were concerned they would not have the ability to meet my needs. My mother, who was a high school teacher, along with my grandmother, who was a school district director, understood the system and worked to accomplish my admission. I was admitted to the CHIP program in the fall of 1988. I was barely three years old.

Although the discussion here still is centered in the passive model of the multiple identity/oppression theory, it was during the next years I began to move into a more self-identifying model. In the passive model, I have an identity that I have been "told to accept", that was "dual handicapped" which meant I have two disabilities. Deaf was still considered a disability in my world at that time and cerebral palsy was an obvious obstacle, therefore, two disabilities equal "dual handicapped."

The term you will see in the next discussion is used to describe what my bullies, as well as people who were and still are ignorant of the meaning and use of a gesture, the

R-gesture. The R-gesture is the common bent elbow; limp-wrist tapping the chest gesture used by children and unfortunately, some adults to signify when something or someone is retarded (R-word). The reason to avoid the use of the R - word in full is because numerous negativity surrounds it and it causes a great deal of pain. This gesture, along with the word it represents, is painful on a very personal level.

Now, what about my experience as a dually disabled person in pre-school, kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school? I can say that I had bullies, was made fun of, and was insulted by my peers. At Huy Elementary, I was an easy target to be made fun of by both hearing and Deaf peers. My Deaf and hearing peers would throw papers and stuff at me, purposely trip me, push me, and I was also easy to imitate. The Deaf peers would imitate the way I walk and the way my head moves. The hearing peers would more likely use the R-gesture and make ugly faces right in front of me and laugh at lunch or recess. When the teachers were not looking, my bullies in class and outside at recess would use the R-gesture right in front of my face almost everyday. Most of the time, teachers knew who were the bullies but they had to catch them in the act to punish them.

When I got home from school or therapy sessions after school, I rarely told my parents what happened because it was an everyday thing. If my parents could do something about it, it would only be effective for a short period of time. So, I learned to stand up for myself as I grew up. The message from my parents when I told them was basically, "take no ****, if they continue to pick on you, you stand up for yourself," even if that meant taking physical action, so be it.

Through school, I had to be pulled out of class for a 30-minute therapy session three times twice a week. That was part of my isolation when I started to realize that I was different. At that point, I received my identity passively as a "dual handicapped girl" who needs therapy. So, when did I learn? I learned by relearning all the materials I missed while in therapy at home with my mother. As mentioned earlier, she was a high school teacher and she retaught the material to me in the evening who I mentioned was a high school teacher.

Below is my schedule from Pre-K to 5th grade:

Meredith's Pre K-5th Grade Schedule

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9am	Class	Class	Class	Class	Class
10am	Class	Speech Therapy/class	Class	Speech Therapy/class	Class
11am	Class	Class	Class	Class	Class
12am	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1pm	Class	Physical Therapy/ Occupational Therapy	Class	Physical Therapy/ Occupational Therapy	Class
2pm	Class	Class	Class	Class	Class
3pm	Bus	Bus	Bus	Bus	Bus
4pm	Home	Easter Seals	Home	Easter Seals	Home
5pm	Dinner	ES/Home	Dinner	ES/Home	Dinner
6pm	HWK/relearning	Dinner/sports event/HWK/relearning	HWK/relearning	Dinner/sports event/HWK/relearning	Family night/sports events

As I transitioned to middle school, I had to start all over. Teachers and students who did not go to Huy Elementary were not familiar with my situation and did not know what I was capable of doing; before I knew it there was a cycle of transition from the old to the new. I had always struggled with transitions. In middle school is when the way I identified myself shifted from passive to self-identifying with respect to multiple identity/oppression theory. At age 11 my identity was Deaf because I wanted to fit in with the "cool Deaf group" that were potential student leaders of the CHIP program. I forced myself to ignore my CP identity because it was just a part of me that set limits on me.

Yet, marginalization by ignorant students and at times the educational consult continued. In middle school there were four different groups divided by their English abilities and students' ability to take some or all-mainstreamed classes. My cerebral palsy affects my ability to do things such as, writing legibly, needing extended time to take tests. Still my ability to think 'normally' academically was not affected. I was placed in Group Two for the first two years. This meant I was at the second group from the bottom. Group One was aligned with the remedial stage, Group Two was developing stage, Group Three was progression stage, and Group Four was the able-to-be-mainstreamed stage. Finally, after working hard for two years, I was moved up to Group Three in eighth grade. The difficult process of trying to compete and show people that I am smart and deserve to receive that recognition was part of the reason why I was not happy with having CP; self-identification as one aspect, DEAF was MY identity not CP, period. That continued all the way through high school.

The same transition cycle from elementary school to middle school occurred from middle school to high school. It had become a more emotional and mental struggle than a physical struggle. I moved through all those frustrations, pain, hurtful thoughts and comments. I was emotionally and mentally drained from people saying, "Meredith can only do this. She can only be at this level. She will not be able to handle mainstreaming classes." Last, but not the least, the most hurtful and infamous quote made by the hearing able-bodied educational consultant, "She will not be able to go to college." I still believed her and so did my parents. At the time, we thought she knew better. She was the person who handles my Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This plan was to protect my rights, provide interpreters and any other needs provided through my IEP, protections provided through federal law (IDEA and ADA). So, we went along with *her* plan through high school.

We followed along with the plan until the final months of my senior year. My mother, an educator, and I discussed my future and my goals. Together we decided I would remain in high school one more year and try inclusion into regular college preparatory classes. I had completed two vocational programs and all my requirements for graduation, so what could it hurt? The educational consultant fought us. We fought back. In the end, I mainstreamed my entire fifth year, receiving a 4.0, ranked 25th in my class and became a member of the National Honor Society. In retrospect, the apprehension from the educational consultant came from many factors; non-the least was the fact that I was the first Deaf with a physical disability student to be educated through the Columbus Hearing Impaired Program (CHIP). Now this all ends in a question. If I

were just Deaf with no Cerebral Palsy, would I have gone through all this? My answer is probably not.

One example of this is my academic journey. I went to a regular high school that had more than 30 Deaf and hard of hearing students included in a student population of nearly 1000. Would I have preferred to attend a Deaf school? The answer is no, because of a long history of oppression towards deaf and disabled students and my CP, I fear I would have been placed in a special needs classroom in a Deaf school. Hearing people who work in the education field of the Deaf have essentialist habits of thought. They place students who scored better in English and had a greater reading ability into mainstream part-time or full-time. Those who scored lower were placed in self-contained classrooms and when they reached their junior year in high school, they were placed in a Vocational School to prepare them for jobs after high school. This happened to my peers and I who attended the CHIP program schools. Deaf schools also did that to those who score better in English and signed ASL fluently, are often placed in AP classes or placed in a better Deaf school. Deafdisabled students who do not sign ASL fluently or do not score better in English, are often placed into a special needs classrooms and into Vocational School, or into a Deaf school with other deafdisabled students. Maryland School for the Deaf in Frederick and Maryland School for the Deaf in Columbia are examples of this. Much of this happens solely on the inability to accurately test and meet the needs of deafdisabled students. Therefore, there is oppression in the mainstreaming program; the Deaf school towards deafdisabled students and to me as well.

One example of oppression and exclusion by Deaf able-bodied people in high school occurred outside of school, in part of my social life. I never went to any youth

camps growing up because of my CP. I knew I would be excluded from events or activities that many kids go to because of both my deafness and my cerebral palsy. One day before my senior year in high school, a friend of mine showed me a flyer for a Deaf Church Camp and strongly encouraged me to go. So, I thought, "it is a Deaf CHURCH Camp and I still had that mindset that I identify myself as Deaf person. I also had assumed that they should be inclusive of everyone because they were Christians." I went. The first day of camp everyone was shy and did not know anyone. I had friends who attended the same high school as I. That was good, right? I got to talk to them and did not come to think of being excluded. As the second day and the third day came and went, I started to see and sense the exclusion by my peers. My peers did not talk to me nor did they include me into the conversations. Every time I would try to come up with something to talk about and they would talk to me but it was always ended abruptly. I was also alone most of the time walking back to the bedroom and no one would wait for me except the counselors.

Close to the end of the third day I felt so excluded that I was ready to leave. I was not included in any conversations nor did I feel wanted there. I went looking for the women's director who was also my high school interpreter. I asked her to please "COME HERE RIGHT NOW!" I cried and told her that I wanted to leave. I also told her that I feel that the girls think I am stupid and they were not speaking to me as I tried to have conversations with them. She tried to comfort me and would tell the girls to include me at some point. I stayed, but did not enjoy the rest of the week. I was actually GLAD that I was able to go home. A Christian Deaf Camp was the last place I thought I would be excluded.

Now, here I began to realize even at a *Deaf* Christian Camp I had to question my identity. Does it depend on where I am? The third model, self-identifying as possessing multiple identities but those identities depend on where I am. Viewing it this way, I identified myself as Deaf in a hearing environment, both able-bodied and disabled communities, and disabled in a Deaf environment. When I am in a hearing environment, such as restaurants, airports, family and hearing friends' events, and even at Special Olympics events, I always had to have my phone ready to communicate. Even though I am a good lip reader and familiar with voice when using my hearing aids, I still had a great deal of filtering to do and asked frequently for people to repeat. In this example I identified as Deaf in a hearing environment.

My first and last Deaf camp experience really made me think "Am I acceptable in the Deaf community/culture?" All through my education it was always based on my disability as a girl with cerebral palsy. My parents once said to me, "If we had a choice between cerebral palsy or Deaf, we would have chosen Deaf because of the community, culture, language, its history and you would be accepted." I started to see that there *is a* segregated aspect to my identity as a Deaf person in a hearing environment and disability in a Deaf environment. This segmented aspect of my identity continued as I enrolled at Gallaudet University.

Gallaudet University:
Undergraduate
Social and Academic life

I went to a community college for two years. The experience there was pretty much the same as my fifth year in high school. In the middle of my second year, I decided I wanted more education, but where would be the best place for me to get a

higher education and where would I be happy? I remembered the visit to Rochester Institution of Technology and Gallaudet University in 2003. I remembered that I told my mother that if I were to go to college, it would be Gallaudet University. I felt at home there when I first visited the university. It was something about the university that just had my attention; it was the openness of communication. Everyone was signing and my eyes were opened wide and I finally felt free from squinting and having to read everyone's lips. I felt free to sign without using my voice (occasionally) and understanding everyone when they were talking to me. I ended up applying to Gallaudet University and a few months later I got accepted and was off to go in August of 2006.

When Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students go to Gallaudet for the first time, students are often hit by culture shock, because everyone is communicating in ASL. In dorms there are lights that go on and off when a person presses the "doorbell", and for many it is their first Deaf school with many Deaf teachers, counselors, administrators, and having direct conversations without interpreters present. Their Deaf identity when they leave the campus becomes a proud Deaf identity. Many hearing students leave with much more understanding of the Deaf culture. I came to Gallaudet with a Deaf identity, expecting much of culture shock since I came from a hearing family and my education was through hearing teachers that signed and for some classes with an interpreter. So, I thought since I identified as a proud Deaf person that my CP would not matter. I use ASL, but I am aware that it is not understandable at first, and that Deaf able-boded people on Kendall Green would accept me as a Deaf person; hence the DEAF-SAME concept.

I woke up, disappointed, as it was all a dream. What really happened was Deaf able-bodied students were oppressive. I was ignored and many Deaf able-bodied peers

did not want anything to do with me. They noticed my cerebral palsy first. For the first time in my life a campus of Deaf people noticed my CP first rather than my inner self. This was when I intensely questioned my identity, am I Deaf or disabled? This felt as if I was alone in a mainstream school on a Deaf campus. I often felt that being disabled or identifying myself having a disability was immoral in the Deaf university. The beginning of my Gallaudet experience was an oppressive one.

Here in the third model of the multiple identity/oppression theory, I found myself officially segmenting my identity at Gallaudet University. I struggled to find myself there. Did I really belong at Gallaudet University? Was I even supposed to be here? I did not know how to identify myself. I just went with Deaf outside the campus and was forced to identify myself as disabled inside the campus, but it was hidden.

New Student Orientation (NSO) and my first semester at Gallaudet University was the most horrific experience, apart from the protest of 2006.[5] Meeting new people and trying to make friends was difficult and an experience I do not want to face again. I had a roommate who I knew from Ohio and I knew I could not rely on her alone to make friends. She was a graduate student, who was very busy, out studying with groups, and tried to be supportive of me. I felt very lonely and depressed, so much so that I almost thought of not returning to Gallaudet for my second semester.

As I tried to talk to able-bodied peers on campus, they would say "oh hi" (nervously) and look for their friends that were around or would say, "I have class", but I see them still there talking to someone they know. Sometimes I felt that they thought I

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[5] A group of Gallaudet students, faculty, and staff protested against a president selectee in 2006.

am dumb or something because when they did not want talk to me they would find excuses and sign differently and slowly so that I could understand them. They made facial expressions as if they were in a hurry, and I could see and sense that right away. I sat alone in the cafeteria most of the time and it was not a good feeling. I still see this happening to this day that people with disabilities sit alone in the cafeteria and I know how they feel; I have been there, felt the exclusion.

As part of my identity as a Deaf person, I use ASL. However, is my CP-ASL understandable? No, not easily at first and I know that; but when Deaf able-bodied people receive my CP-ASL, they are immediately confounded and very uncomfortable and try to quickly end the conversation. When I use my CP-ASL it seems like an accent that is hard to understand until people get used to it then it is not so hard anymore. When I sign, I know my ASL is hard to understand. I feel very frustrated when people pretend to understand and nod their heads when I am expecting a response or something different. I know when people do not understand me because I feel it and I see the not sure facial expressions. It is frustrating enough for me to try to sign clearly but it is more frustrating when people pretend to understand.

My second semester became my watershed when I joined a sorority. It felt as if it was a positive thing; however, with some of my sisters' support I still had to fight my battles because many did not understand what I was going through. But joining the sorority gave me a boost and encouragement to grow and to be Meredith Burke, the Meredith Burke that used to fight for what she needed and wanted. It felt better that I was not sitting alone in the cafeteria or elsewhere. People started noticing me, started to talk to me, and invited me to go out with them. I became more assertive, felt more

confident, and my self-esteem was more positive. I thought I could do anything at Gallaudet University. It is sad that I had to join a sorority to be recognized on campus by wearing my Greek jersey. "Oh, you joined the sorority, wow!" said people on campus. I have questioned and said this so many times, "If I did not join any sorority I would just be another deaf person with a disability and be ignored."

In the classroom(s) I was always the quiet one at first and an observer. This was my first school of the Deaf without the use of my voice I have used all my life in school. I became insecure about my use of ASL. Most of the time, I would observe the teacher for a couple of classes to see if the teacher would be fair and flexible with different students' ASL. Once I saw the teacher was flexible and the peers were understandable of the differences in ASL that is when I would jump in and start making comments and answering questions. The teachers were often pretty impressed with my way of thinking and my answers as they encouraged me to be involved and be more assertive in answering or sharing my thoughts. When teachers SIMCOM I usually feel relieved but at the same time I have a conflicted feeling because I have the ability and the advantage to SIMCOM back and/or voice without signing[6] and the teacher would understand me immediately without looking at me. I would know easily that they understood what I said and I felt relieved because I did not have to repeat myself with seeing students looking at me with their eyes squinted and their heads tilted trying to get what I am saying. That conflicted feeling was telling me, "Meredith… you know that there are students around you probably rolling their eyes at you for using your voice to get the teacher's attention before even looking up to see if they had their arm up waiting to answer." I felt

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[6] I do not voice alone during class I know it is very wrong and disrespectful to voice alone in class.

uncomfortable in class often until I majored in Deaf Studies; one of the best decisions I have made in college.

I decided to major in Deaf Studies because I wanted to learn about my identity, my culture, and my rights as a Deaf human being, and to learn more about how Deaf people fought for their rights. Also, because of my identity as a disabled person on campus, I wanted to understand what being Deaf really meant. Deaf Studies provided that. It was not until Fall of 2010, my last year as an undergraduate student when I took Dynamics of Oppression, (DST 311), where it made me find what I was missing and better understand what Gallaudet has been doing to me as a Deaf and disabled person.

Dr. MJ Bienvenu, who wrote "Disabled Who" in 1989, taught DST 311. While I challenged her with her thoughts of the term of disability, I began to realize, "Oh, *this* is what Gallaudet, the place I call my second home, is doing to me as a Deaf and disabled person." Gallaudet University/Deaf Studies/Deaf culture is making me chose between being deaf or disabled. I honestly struggled with that mentally, physically, and emotionally. Why did I struggle? Partly, it was a pride issue to call myself disabled. Knowing the perceptions of the Deaf Society and society in general, calling myself disabled was difficult. I identified my as disabled on campus, it was still difficult. Deaf society, I am talking about "I am not disabled, like those people with wheelchairs, who are mentally R-word [sic], and those who limp, walk funny." So I thought, "I do not use a wheelchair nor am I R-word [sic], and many people walk funny." That thinking that I had was an ableist thinking influenced by the Deaf culture. Consequently, I thought if I continue to identify myself as a Deaf person first then I should be part of the Deaf

culture. But something was blocking me from getting in. Was it my Cerebral Palsy? *Of course* it was.

Gallaudet University
Graduate School:
Classroom experiences

I struggled my whole life being deaf and disabled. In the passive stage, I used to call myself "dual handicapped." In the second model I decided to identify myself with one aspect, Deaf, until I attended a Deaf church camp where I was confused with my identity as a Deaf and disabled person. I realized it depended on where I was, the third model, segmented model. Now in this section you will see where I finally reached the fourth model; identifying myself as a whole new identity, a deafdisabled person.

My experience as a graduate student in the classroom was very rich. I was glad I decided to go right after graduation of my undergraduate degree. The people in my cohort are now my closest friends for the rest of my life. We came together from different parts of the country and overseas, lived with different experiences, different oppressions, and possess different personalities. At the beginning of our journey the question of being labeled disabled and the issue of disability in our discussions did cause heated discussions with different opinions. I recall holding in my tears when I felt so squashed during and after Deaf Cultural Studies class when discussing the label 'disability.' Most of the students were Deaf able-bodied, sighted, and able-minded people who really resisted the disabled label and were critical of any author who wrote about being disabled in the society. I was asked which I would pick Deaf or disabled first. With pressure I felt I had to pick Deaf first.

We took Enforcing Normalcy that next semester. I felt "finally" that was MY course where I finally felt safe, able to talk and discuss being disabled in society in general and in the Deaf culture in particular. My shoulders felt relief from holding and carrying two heavy bricks labeled "NOT DISABLED" after trying to explain for one semester long that it is ableism and ableist thinking that some of my cohort peers had. As the course went by I became more comfortable and assertive in my other classes with my cohort because they were now getting what I was trying to explain before. If it were not for Enforcing Normalcy, I do not think I would feel free to be myself, as Meredith, a deafdisabled person. By saying I feel free, I mean as a deafdisabled person in Deaf Studies field, I always felt that I had to be careful with what I say when discussing disability. However, in Enforcing Normalcy, it was a course that discussed disability in general, therefore I could discuss my experience as a disabled person without having it turn into a disagreement.

I changed my identity so many times, from deaf and CP, deaf and other disability, and deaf plus. I felt more depressed saying "what the hell am I? Deaf or disabled, or deaf and disabled?" Because Deaf culture and Deaf Studies at Gallaudet taught me that the term 'disability' is an awful thing. Until I was accepted into a cultural studies program with a wonderful 2011-2013 cohort, I learned and struggled at the same time with my identity of deaf or disabled deaf and disabled or deaf disabled. I read Marian Corker and Eli Clare's books and many other books about reclaiming my identity. I learned a new word during those two years of graduate school, intersectionality, which means I am NOT deaf or disabled, or white or woman or…or…or…. I am all of them; with the new word I have reclaimed my identity as a deafdisabled person. With this new identity, I

moved into the fourth model of the multiple identity/oppression theory, identifying

myself as a whole, I finally felt whole and found the real Meredith Lee Burke for I did

not find myself growing up.

Gallaudet University: OSWD and Administration

Reclaiming my identity, as a deafdisabled person was the best thing I could have

ever done in my 28 years of living on this planet. While I reclaimed my identity I came

to another frustrating moment that actually made me feel, "why do I have to go through

this again?" A few weeks prior my graduation, I was invited to go on a "walk through

campus" designed by Office for Students with Disabilities (OSWD). The walk through

campus was intended to have students with disabilities tell where improvement is need

with the buildings or if a sidewalk is not paved correctly, or a fire exit is not ADA

adaptable, and many different things where the campus is not accessible. Many

representatives from administration people were there, including constructions serviced

and the facilities department. OSWD's goal was to better communicate and facilitate to

the administration solutions to problems students had previously mentioned or criticized

such as the design of the pavement or access that was blocked and, as consequence, was

not ADA compatible. Obviously there exists a legal imperative to fix these problems, but

the OSWD did not have the financial budget or authority to make these types of changes

on campus.

The walk through campus did not go as well as OSWD thought it would. The

students, two students with cerebral palsy including myself, three wheelchair users, and

one deaf blind student, were very assertive about what we felt was wrong on campus. A

conversation between an administrator and a student turned out to be a hostile one. As we walked and one of the students stopped and asked an administrator, "Is that the fire escape?" as he motioned to the right side of the Andrew Foster Auditorium. He responded, "yes."

"Do you realize that is not ADA compatible?" asked the student.

"What do you mean?" questioned the administrator.

"There is a step there. In order to get out of Foster in a hurry, there will be people needed to help the wheelchair user get out. Can you by any chance fix this?" asked the student.

"You can get on the grass area, easily." Replied the administrator.

I walked to the area and looked at the step, in order to get on the grass, the wheelchair users will still need to get on the step and then get on the grass, so there is no way out for wheelchair users. I walked back to where the people were standing or sitting, and caught the most disturbing comment by the administrator, "You, disabled students, are too expensive." I was boiling inside, shut down, wanting to cry, and stopped talking. Another student made a comment and said, "I am sorry that we are expensive but I, and we, have the right to be here on this beautiful campus and be able to mobile around. If you can make this campus accessible for able-bodied people, then you can make this campus accessible for students with disabilities."

We, disabled students, are "too expensive?" The law of ADA states that people are to provide a reasonable accommodation. When Deaf able-bodied, sighted, and able-minded people request an interpreter for an event or an appointment, and by law the

person/people who are in charge are to provide that accommodation. When people do not provide that accommodation, Deaf people's reaction is mostly, why? Their answer, "Too expensive; our budget does not allow us to do that." Deaf people tend to get upset and often times demand an accommodation or their money back, or look for legal recourse. Perhaps, this sounds familiar? This is exactly what that administrator and the Deaf Culture did to us, deafdisabled people that day. When it comes to requesting an accommodation for us to be able to function safely in life on this planet, it is not only morally right, but legally as well.

Another issue between Deaf students and the disabled students also occurred. The homecoming event in October has always been huge for the Gallaudet students and their alumni. There was an issue with accessibility with an event planned off campus. Disabled students objected to this venue due to accessibility. They went to the chairperson(s) of the event planning and shared their concerns. Their response was, "You are only two percent of the population of the Gallaudet University student body that is complaining about this." The disabled students were offended by that comment and went to the Dean of the Student Affairs and his response, "that was a mistake by the chairperson(s), it is actually 14%." The event was subsequently canceled. Had better planning occurred and a lack of ableism present among the planners, it is likely thought would have been given to including ALL students and alumni at this event. Additionally the lack of foresight and attention brought by deafdisabled students caused the cancelation of an event and in many ways an enduring grudge and ableist view of deafdisabled students on the campus of Gallaudet and in the Deaf community.

After Gallaudet:
Meredith Lee Burke:
A proud DeafDisabled person

Only through my educational experiences could I finally put a name to the bullying, oppression, and discrimination I saw throughout my life. Although these are only a few of a multitude of examples, they are forever etched in my mind. To some, these experiences would break them and cause them to surrender. Thank you to those who have had the courage to stand up for themselves and others.

The most understandable of much of this, is that it is human nature to be curious, reserved and sometimes shun those who are different. But what is truly surprising is that from a community/culture who has fought so hard and continues to be oppressed, there is less compassion and inclusiveness to those who suffer equally the same treatment.

This shows that we, deafdisabled people, still have a long way and hard fight against oppression and ableism in the Deaf culture/studies and Deaf community. Not only do we need to deal with the Deaf culture/studies or community, but we need to fight the hearing able-bodied world too. One of the goals of this thesis is to spread awareness of what Deaf abled-bodied, sighted, and able-minded culture and Deaf Studies are doing to my deafdisabled, hearing disabled peers, and me

Chapter Four:

Conclusion

There has been oppression in the Deaf culture by Deaf able-bodied, sighted, and able-minded people for years. Not only they (Deaf abled people) been oppressed by the hearing culture, so have they become oppressors of disabled and deafdisabled people. The Deaf culture has pushed and tried to distance themselves from both the term disability and disabled people. The repeated statement, "I am not disabled," the pushing away of the term 'disability', and the conscious or unconscious exclusion of the deafdisabled people as they try to be a part of the Deaf culture is found consistently. The DEAF-SAME concept: finding other Deaf people at the airport, restaurants, the mall, and just walking down the street from point A to point B, with no distinction of race, sexual orientation, class, or disability and that we are all Deaf together appears to be just a hopeful wish. The literature review and my life experience as a deafdisabled person provides evidence of that.

Being able to pass as an able-bodied person grants Deaf able-bodied people jobs over physically disabled persons, whether or not the disabled person is Deaf or hearing. In *Signs of Resistance*, Burch discusses how it was important for a Deaf person to show that they are abled so they could get a job. This is one of the reasons that led the Deaf to say, "I am not disabled." Robinson's article, "We Are of a Different Class: Ableist Rhetoric in Deaf America, 1880–1920," he discusses how Deaf elites have had ableist thinking throughout the years and numerous examples provide evidence that it continues today.

Due to the abundant history of oppression towards Deaf people, labeling them as intellectually disabled, trying to forbid them from getting married, and the shameful times in the United States when eugenics was considered an appropriate choice to be administered on deaf individuals, denial of deafness as a disability continues to be maintained. For example, Thomas L. Anderson, former National Association of the Deaf president, specifically said that he wants to get the Deaf culture out of the disability label using ableist terms. Unfortunately for the deafdisabled within the Deaf community, these declarations also provide an acceptance of beliefs and behaviors that maintain oppressive and discriminatory behaviors from the dominant Deaf able-bodied, sighted, group.

Bienvenu's article on "Disabled Who?" argues that Deaf people are not disabled. She said that it is okay to support the disabled people while they are fighting for their rights BUT to be labeled, as one is disrespectful. Also relevant of review is Padden and Humphries's book *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture*. Found there is a list of who is considered disabled, and Deaf people are not part of that list. Where, therefore, do deafdisabled people lie: in only the Deaf culture, in the disabled category, or in both?

In discussion of what Deaf culture is, Padden (1980) explains that Deaf culture is something that Deaf people collectively share. They share the same language, values, beliefs, and identity. Humphries agrees with Padden in his commentary, "Talking Culture and Culture Talking" when he says that Deaf people have talked about what they believe a culture of the Deaf is. When Ladd wrote *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood,* it spread so much understanding of what Deaf culture is, as it expanded Padden and Humphries' concept of the Deaf culture.

A Journey into the Deaf-World (1996), discusses Deaf experiences. Bahan, Hoffmeister, and Lane co-authored the book. They wrote of the minorities as of Deaf gay, Deaf-Blind, and Deaf people of color that they have some kind of association of their own that they could go to when they need legal support. However, they implied that deafdisabled would be taken care of by the Americans with Disability Act, so they do not need an association.

The question of disability in Bauman's (2008) book *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking* included Lane, Davis and Baynton's answers. Lane states, with his knowledge about Deaf culture, that Deaf people are not disabled because they have a language, a history, and a culture and that they should be an ethnic group. Davis answers and says if they are not disabled and rejected as an ethnic group, where would they go? He may be implying that the Deaf culture should accept the disability label. Baynton argues that the very reason that Deaf people are resistant to the disability label is the label itself and that continues its ableism inside the culture. He also implies that Deaf people *can* be both a culture and disabled.

When not wanting to be compared to Disability Studies or be labeled as Disability, Padden (2005) believes that Deaf Studies should be a separate study; however, they ought to share their experiences. This is because what Disability Studies offer might have some pointers to the Deaf Studies or vice versa. She mentioned that what these two have is a different perspectives in life that could be used as a good model for both.

The discussion of Deaf or disabled or Deaf and disabled and the "tango" between Deaf and Disability Studies is what Brueggemann, Andersson, and Corker discuss. Brueggemann discusses the tango between Deaf and Disability Studies as Deaf Studies

tries to distance themselves from Disability Studies. Yet she also shows their similarities and describes their dance as together and resistant. She ends with her hope that Deaf Studies and Disability Studies consider a merge because they have so much in common and both may be strengthened by a merge. Andersson describes the reasoning of Deaf culture's distance of the disability label and states that if they would just look at it in terms of the big picture it may make them both stronger if they accept the disability label. Corker argues that the oppressed Deaf Culture has turned and become the oppressors of the deafdisabled people, a non-dominant culture.

When people choose their own identity they tend to go with what they are. However when it is being questioned or being forced to choose an identity that a culture wants the person to be, there is often oppression or the feeling of pressure to choose because he or she does not want to make a culture or a group to dislike him or her. A multiple identity oppression theory raised many good points by Reynolds and Pope (1991). There are four models of how people will identify themselves. The four models are passive manner, determined by the person itself with one aspect, multiple identities but in a segregated manner, and finally the person creates his or her own multiple identities. I, for example, went through these models. As a passive manner, I felt pressured to be Deaf. Then, I determined my identity as a Deaf person. When I entered Gallaudet, I felt I had to choose my identity as either Deaf *or* disabled, depending on where I am. Finally, after struggling with what to call myself, I wrote an article on *Buff and Blue*, Gallaudet newspaper that students run with a faculty advisor, I came up with my own identity as a deafdisabled person.

Included in this argument are my experiences as a deafdisabled person. I have experienced oppression in the hearing society and the Deaf culture. Using I have chosen to describe my experience of being oppressed by two communities, hearing and Deaf. Possessing a social stigma in the Deaf culture, I am one of the outsiders that are often pushed out.

Previously I mentioned my experience at a Deaf Church Camp where I assumed that my Deaf peers would be supportive and inclusive because they were not only Deaf, but as Christians are taught it is good to be welcoming and inclusive. The result of that experience, however, was oppression and ableism there. Unfortunately in my experience, I found it there and everywhere, even at Gallaudet University. I was thunderstruck to find that a place I call my second home, Gallaudet University, surrounded by Deaf people who have experienced oppression outside of the safety and comfort of its tall, black metal fence, would thrust upon their own people, deafdisabled, the oppression they profess to stand against.

I found to be such an oppressive experience for me that I considered going home after my first semester. I did not. I gave it another shot and joined a sorority. It made my experience there much better, but even with joining a sorority, I still had to fight my battles there. My ASL is not easily understandable at first. My awareness of this at times makes things even more difficult. Many Deaf able-bodied peers are not comfortable with my ASL and often pretend to understand and/or cut the conversation short, socially. In class I often observe the first few classes and get comfortable before starting to sign because I am insecure about my ASL being understood.

Throughout my two years in graduate school with the wonderful people in my cohort at Gallaudet University, we all learned and studied together, and shared experiences of oppression. We discussed the different types of oppression we experienced individually and as a group: racial, sexual orientation, religion, sexism, ageism, audism, language, and ableism. I experienced ableism in the cohort my first two semesters while discussing disability in class. My cohort members were open to trying to understand, but their words did not make it look that way. After the first year ended, they finally understood what I was trying to explain and became very supportive of themselves and me.

Other examples from Chapter Three were from interactions with officials at Gallaudet University. Some members of the Gallaudet administration need to take a deeper look into what they are saying outright and what their actions say implicitly. The fight against all types of oppression is based in the moral rights of all people being created equal and all should be supported and provided acceptance and equal access to all life has to offer. Statements implying or outright saying that disabled, deafdisabled and deafblind students are too expensive when a request for accommodations or request for equal access is made are degrading, discriminatory, and morally wrong. Legally, according to the ADA, we have a right to ask for and in most cases be granted such accommodations. Lack of access to interpreters needed to accommodate the Deaf at Gallaudet would be unheard of. Why is safe and equal access for physically disabled or for the blind any different? However, when we request something, it is frequently asked and answered, "Why? What is it for? It is already there. You can get to the grass easily." What is *seen* as reasonable to those who have not experienced being in a wheelchair, or

having cerebral palsy, or being blind is not at all accessible or reasonable to the deafdisabled on campus. Swift, uncaring comments do not promote an attitude of working together for the good of all students at the university or show any feelings of concern on the part of administration.

Deaf able-bodied, sighted, and able-minded culture and Deaf Studies does exhibit ableism and ableist attitudes towards deafdisabled and disabled people. As Brueggemann describes the tango between Deaf and Disability Studies, the tango itself is a struggle of something and "it takes two to tango." Deaf Studies and the culture itself have for so long tried to distance themselves from Disability Studies and the disability label as well. Brueggemann throws a curve ball by mentioning indirectly that the reason that Deaf culture distances themselves away from the disability label is because the Deaf are afraid to lose their cultural pride. If they were to say, "I am disabled", it might take away the cultural power that they have fought to earn and lose their inner pride. I have for so long understood that pride because I have lived it as a deafdisabled person. My pride is diminished once I have to ask for help. Yet, pride alone does not permit an exception to thinking it is appropriate to execute oppression on deafdisabled and disabled people. I definitely hope that soon or before my life is over on this planet that Deaf Studies will merge with Disability Studies.

Deaf and Disability Studies as interdisciplinary field of study will shake the world because both courses combined together will learn from each other and most probably will earn respect for each other. Currently, there are many disagreements between Deaf able-bodied, sighted, and able-minded people and deafdisabled as well as hearing disabled people. The Deaf people continue their statement, "I am not disabled because I

do not use wheelchair or have CP, or am blind," and continue to oppress their own people who are also disabled is an ableist action. Therefore, if Deaf and Disability Studies merge or somewhat agrees to engage in deeper, more empathic discourse about disability and work together, I believe that somewhere they will gain respect. The reason why I believe so much of this is because I have been teaching Disability Studies online for Gallaudet University and the Department of ASL and Deaf Studies. From my experience, I feel and see students who take my class benefit from the readings and discussions related to disability that I provided them. They gain more knowledge and respect for the term "disability". I know this can work; though it takes time and effort to teach, respect, and show that *disability* is not always a negative thing.

I personally did not want to make Gallaudet University and my hearing and Deaf-able bodied peers look bad. It is not my intention. My intention is to try to say, "HEY! Stop making me feel like I am not meaningful to this society of Deaf culture. Stop shutting me out of this culture where I feel I belong. I *communicate* in the same language as you do." Despite the fact that I feel that Gallaudet University is an ableist university and that I am surrounded by "I am NOT disabled" pride, I have lived inside the fence of Kendall Green for seven years. Gallaudet University and many of my professors have offered me a "voice" and allowed me to explore the world around me and my place in it.

The university and the Deaf Studies department have taught me something very important. It is to fight for what I believe in and to speak up against wrong doings. I love the university so much that when I see or "hear" ableist actions are being imposed against the deafdisabled and/or hearing disabled people, I am disappointed. I forgive and I try to

teach the oppressors about what they are doing and why it is wrong. It is my hope that

this thesis is one way to do this.

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