18. Beyond Culture: Deaf Studies and the Deaf Body

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THE CONCEPT OF DEAF CULTURE is fundamental to the field of Deaf Studies. In recent decades, the distinctive cultural attributes of the American Deaf community have been documented and described at length, among them a shared history, a rich literary culture, rules of etiquette and naming practices that differ from those of the larger hearing society, a strong tendency to marry within the group, a unique means of transmitting cultural knowledge between generations, and of course a complex visual language. In addition, like other cultural minority groups, Deaf people have established a variety of social, political, and economic organizations, as well as a periodical press, dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Perhaps most importantly, Deaf people share fundamental values that differ from those of the hearing Americans around them, in particular having the value of American Sign Language (ASL) and the Deaf world. The existence of a deep, rich, and long-standing culture of American Deaf people is now beyond reasonable dispute.[1]

As important and useful as it has been, however, the concept of Deaf Culture increasingly appears inadequate by itself as an explanation of the Deaf community and the experiences of Deaf people. For example, recent research has shown that Deaf people process visual information differently than hearing people, and in some ways more efficiently. This has complemented a growing emphasis in recent years on the centrality of vision to Deaf experience, with some Deaf people suggesting that they instead be referred to as "Seeing people" or "Visual people."[2] The statement by George Veditz that Deaf people "are facing not a theory but a condition, for they are first, last, and all the time *the* people of the eye," has become a popular aphorism among Deaf activists.[3] Deaf people now often speak of "deaf eyes," a characteristic and recognizable way Deaf people have of using the eyes. Under an exclusively cultural model, how do we discuss such phenomena? What, moreover, is the implication of arguing, as Deaf people long have argued, that it is in the *nature* of deaf people to use signed languages, a view that has been given support by linguistic research into language acquisition and development among deaf children? All of these suggest that Deaf people differ from hearing people in physical (or, more precisely, sensory) ways that are not explained by culture.

This is not to say that sensory difference by itself is sufficient to explain Deaf identity. For example, many people identify themselves as hearing impaired, hearing disabled, deaf, or hard of hearing who are not culturally Deaf: they do not share the values of Deaf people, they are not (or only partially) fluent in the language of the community, and

they do not identify as Deaf and are not seen as Deaf. The cultural distinction between deaf and Deaf, while sometimes ambiguous, is nevertheless a crucial one.

Consider, however, another kind of outsider to Deaf identity: hearing people who grow up within a Deaf family, marry into the Deaf community, or for whatever reason immerse themselves in the Deaf world. They may be as fluent in ASL, cognizant of Deaf cultural beliefs and etiquette, familiar with Deaf folklore, and involved in the social life of the Deaf community as any Deaf person. They may be accepted, respected, well liked, included in the community "as if" they were Deaf, and they may even be referred to as "Deaf" in certain circumstances. Yet they are recognized as not *really* Deaf. As Padden and Humphries note in *Deaf in America,* "Hearing children of Deaf parents represent an ongoing contradiction in the culture: they display the knowledge of their parents—skill in the language and social conduct—but the culture finds subtle ways to give them an unusual and separate status." Cultural explanations by themselves are insufficient to explain Deaf identity.[4]

The cultural model also fails to adequately account for the stories Deaf people commonly tell of their first weeks at the residential school, of feeling that they had found their true home. Culture cannot explain that experience, for they are not yet "Deaf" when they arrive. Similarly, many young deaf people grow up in oral schools or in mainstream programs who do not encounter ASL or Deaf Culture until adulthood, yet as young adults (often as students at Gallaudet University) choose to learn ASL as best they can, to principally associate with Deaf people, and to identify themselves as culturally Deaf. This includes many people who were considered to be "oral successes" by their teachers and parents. Under a simple cultural model, this ought not to happen with such frequency. Children raised in the hearing world are culturally hearing, not Deaf, yet in large numbers choose to join the Deaf world. An explanation of why they make this choice must point beyond culture.

Moreover, how do we explain the strong connections that Deaf people often feel to other Deaf people from outside their own country, to people from very different and distant cultures? Deaf cultures, like hearing cultures, vary a great deal from country to country.[5] Carol Padden is currently studying the Bedouin deaf, who are fully integrated in a hearing community where everyone signs, and who consequently have not created a distinct Deaf Culture. Yet Padden sees her research as part of Deaf Studies and of interest to American Deaf people. Why should that be, if culture alone is what defines Deaf people and binds them together? Indeed, in spite of major cultural differences, Padden tells me that upon meeting the Bedouin deaf, she felt the same sense of commonality and connection that Deaf people typically feel upon meeting.[6] The cultural model needs a great deal of stretching to cover such phenomena. A more plausible and straightforward alternative is to posit that Deaf people are different from hearing people in ways other than cultural.

It has become standard practice in Deaf Studies to speak of the Deaf community as an ethnic group. While that term fits in many ways, in other ways it can be misleading. As Jeffrey Nash pointed out in 1987, "in conventional ethnic groups, members of the first generation have the ethnic mother tongue as native, and . . . second and third generations shift from the ethnic to the dominant language."[7] In other words, ethnic

groups in America typically assimilate during the second and third generations. Deaf people do not. Nor do Deaf people tend to marry outside the group, as do second- and third-generation children of ethnic groups. Furthermore, ethnicity is typically an identity shared within families, while deafness is typically not. Recent research estimates that only about 3 percent of Deaf people have two Deaf parents. Ethnicity, then, offers a misleading model for the childhood experiences of 97 percent of Deaf people (and of that 3 percent, a majority have hearing siblings, again an experience unlike that of most ethnic groups).[8]

When I wrote my book *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language,* I worked within the cultural model. One of the criticisms I encountered from historians who read my early drafts, however, was that I argued that deafness was a cultural construction while simultaneously contending that oralism was *necessarily* harmful to deaf people. They pointed out to me that if deafness was truly just a cultural construction, there were no grounds for taking the position that deaf people everywhere in all times *needed* signed language. In making that claim I was necessarily making a claim about the *nature* of deafness. In response to that criticism, I wrote the following in my introduction to the book:

> Deafness is . . . very much a cultural construction that changes over time. But it is also a physical reality. The hearing people who have traditionally made most of the decisions concerning the education of deaf children can spend entire careers contented within these constructions of deafness, unconstrained by physical reality, but deaf people cannot. When the cultural climate of the nineteenth century changed to make sign language objectionable, hearing people could simply say, "Away with sign language," and imagine that this could be accomplished. Deaf people could not, for they are both members of a species that by nature seeks optimal communication, and inhabitants of a sensory universe in which that end cannot be achieved by oral means alone.[9]

In the book's conclusion I added that being deaf "is more than a cultural construction. It means most fundamentally that one occupies a different sensory world from those who hear, and this has certain consequences that cannot be *constructed* away. This physical reality (upon which culture works, certainly, and with which culture intertwines and interacts) transcends culture."[10] I did not pursue the matter any further, however. Constrained by the cultural model, I simply did not know what to do with these ideas. Increasingly, I have become convinced that if the field of Deaf Studies is to progress, it must move beyond the culture model to talk about the body, about the significance of living in a different sensory world.

There is an understandable resistance among Deaf people and Deaf Studies scholars to focusing on the physical aspect of deafness. In the past, such a focus has meant defining deafness in terms of defect and deficiency. It has meant talking about what Deaf people have in common with other disabled people, which has seemed a dangerous path to start down, given that most people think of disability in terms of inability, absence, and loss. 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. They

explain that being Deaf is not a defect, that being Deaf offers no less rich and rewarding a life than being hearing, 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.

However, what most people have in mind when they think of disability is a medical model (a.k.a. the functional limitations or pathological model). According to this model, disability is simply a physical, mental, or sensory impairment. It resides solely or largely in the individual with the impairment. Prevention, cure, and rehabilitation are of primary importance. When Deaf people say that "disabled" does not describe them, it is generally this model that they reject.[11] It is precisely this model, however, that Disability Studies scholars (and disability rights activists) also reject. In recent decades they have advanced a social model that locates disability not in individual bodies but rather in social structures and practices that do not take account of normal human variation. Just as gender and race are not merely matters of bodily difference, so is disability not simply inherent in bodies but rather a way of interpreting human differences. People with particular physical differences from the majority are *disabled* by the prejudicial beliefs and actions of the majority. When buildings, technology, and media are designed for certain types of people but not others, when communication is carried out in ways accessible to certain types of people but not others, or when school curricula are designed for certain types of learning but not others, disability results. Disability, in short, is a product of oppression.[12]

In this, disabled people have followed a trajectory similar to other oppressed groups. It was once also generally accepted that the bodies of women and members of "inferior races" limited their capacity to participate in social and economic life. As Harlan Hahn has noted, "unlike other disadvantaged groups, citizens with disabilities have not yet fully succeeded in refuting the presumption that their subordinate status can be ascribed to an innate biological inferiority." They have made considerable progress in recent years, however. People with physical differences from the majority have increasingly moved away from the notion that they *have* a disability, or are persons *with* a disability, and instead refer to themselves as *disabled people* to indicate its centrality to their identity, and speak of "disablement" to refer to the social process of becoming disabled. Many people find it difficult to understand that anyone would willingly embrace the identity of "disabled person," since disability in our culture seems self-evidently a personally discrediting label. Just as most hearing people simplistically translate "deaf" into "cannot hear," so do most people equate *dis*abled with *un*able. By claiming disability as an identity, however, disabled people name the oppression under which they live, declare solidarity with others similarly oppressed, and set themselves in opposition to it.[13]

Our bodies matter because they shape how we experience, understand, and interact with the world, and because they affect how others view us. On both counts, the body is intensely relevant to Deaf people. The appropriate vocabulary is that of difference, however, not loss. Just as deafness brings into being new ways of using the other senses, so does any physical difference result in a new configuration of abilities. Merely

equating disability with impairment reduces a way of life, a complex relation to the environment, and a web of social relationships and cultural meanings to a simple and concrete absence. It fails utterly to account for the human experience of disability. Like Deaf people, disabled people experience disability in terms of social relations rather than as personal deficiency, and it becomes just one aspect of the world in which they live, in all its complexity.

This does not mean that disabled people experience no limitations, but rather that the experience of limitation is a universal one, not characteristic merely of a subset of humanity. Relative to most of the animal kingdom, after all, humans live in a flat and unvariegated scent world. Their vision is severely impaired by the standards of, say, a hawk, and their night vision is abysmal compared to an owl or a cat. They are deaf to frequencies heard well by dogs, bats, whales, and elephants. They are poor swimmers, slow runners, and incapable of flight absent assistive technology. The list of abilities that other creatures enjoy and that humans lack is long indeed, yet somehow the human species manages to limp along without nursing feelings of grief or loss. The reason we do not consider ourselves disabled is that the term is relative to notions of normality around which we structure our societies. Radio programs do not employ frequencies beyond normal human hearing, jobs do not demand the eyesight of an eagle, and schools do not require students to stand all day like horses without sitting. 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.

Culture

The common argument that Deaf people are a cultural and linguistic group and *therefore* are not disabled wrongly characterizes culture and disability as mutually exclusive. Saying that Deaf people share a culture says nothing about the usefulness or validity of speaking of Deaf people as disabled. 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 is it 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.

What do we mean when we say that people "have" a culture? If there are any words with fixed, definite, and unchanging meanings, this one is certainly not among them. Until fairly recently, "culture" referred to a quality acquired through education, an elevated and learned ability to discern the finer from the baser aspects of the world. It was acquired through *cultivation*. Only in the twentieth century did its current anthropological meaning become prevalent, and that meaning is still by no means standardized. Speaking of *a culture* is a shorthand way of saying that a defined group of people share certain distinctive beliefs, practices, and ways of interpreting the world that per-

sist across generations. It refers, in essence, to what a group of people typically think (as expressed in language) and what they typically do.

Some have resisted the term Deaf Culture, arguing that Deaf Americans partake in the larger American culture and therefore constitute a *sub*culture within it. The flaw in this reasoning is that it assumes the nation-state to be the natural level on which culture operates, and cultures on a smaller scale to be necessarily subordinate. The concept of culture, however, has no necessary affiliation with the nation-state. It would make equal sense to speak of "Western culture," to assume "the West" to be the level on which culture resides and national cultures as subcultures. Alternatively, one might situate "culture" on the level of region or ethnicity, and argue that modern nations are too diverse to claim a unitary and cohesive culture. The distinction between culture and subculture is an arbitrary one. We make the distinction as a matter of practical utility not of logical or natural necessity. "Culture" is variously used to describe national linguistic groups (even when these share languages with other, distinct national cultures), stateless linguistic groups, supranational and subnational groups with or without shared languages (including *movement cultures* when these involve significant, shared structures of thought). It has been used in these diverse ways because in each case *it has proved useful* in understanding the attributes of a given group. Describing the distinctive beliefs and practices of the American Deaf community in terms of culture has been tremendously productive in a variety of ways, both for Deaf people themselves and for the academic study of their community. It is a powerful idea and therefore has, in the pragmatic sense, truth value. While there is still resistance to the idea of Deaf Culture in some quarters, it now seems to be an idea that is here to stay.[14]

It may also turn out to be useful to speak of a disability culture. A number of disability activists and scholars think so and have been busy developing an argument for it in recent years. If it helps us to understand the experience of disability and the lives of disabled people—if it turns out, that is, to have truth value—then the idea will have staying power. If it does not, if it distorts or obscures more than it clarifies, then it will not. The evidence for such usefulness is not very strong yet, in my opinion, but it is still a relatively new idea and its proponents have not yet elaborated it to any great extent, so it is too early to judge. The idea of Deaf Culture, after all, took a couple of decades to work out and to begin to make sense to both scholars and Deaf people. And unlike Deaf Culture, which is understood to date in the United States from the nineteenth century, disability culture is usually understood as something that has emerged only in recent decades, in part as a movement culture.[15]

Whether or not the concept of disability culture turns out to have merit, the point here is that there is no inherent contradiction in identifying a group as both disabled and as a cultural group. The terms do not describe mutually exclusive states of being. "Disability" describes a particular kind of relationship between a majority and a minority, between socially constructed notions of normality and deviance. "Culture" describes a set of values and beliefs within a group. Saying that Deaf people share a culture says nothing about the usefulness or validity of speaking of Deaf people as disabled. It is not necessary to say that Deaf people are *either* a cultural group *or* disabled. It is entirely possible to be both.

Pragmatic Considerations

Considered as a purely practical matter, what good and what harm come from Deaf people aligning themselves with disabled people and the concept of disability? This is by no means a simple question. In the past, the emphasis of the disability rights movement on educational inclusion or mainstreaming has been a point of serious contention. Disability rights activists have increasingly come to understand and respect the Deaf position on this question, in addition to increasingly questioning the often ideologically rigid, one-size-fits-all approach of the early years of the movement. *Disability Watch,* the periodic assessment of the status of disabled people in the United States published by Disability Rights Advocates, pointed out that while inclusion has been good for most disabled people, it "is proving disastrous for deaf children." It went on to describe how "the Deaf community has vigorously opposed these ill-considered practices, but its cogent dissent has gone largely unheeded" by school authorities.[16] Of course, as with any coalition made up of groups with diverse interests and experiences, disagreements are unavoidable. Still, cooperation between Deaf and disability rights groups has accomplished much good, most notably the Americans with Disabilities Act. The constant refrain heard from the Deaf community that "we are not disabled," however, threatens to undermine the basis for that cooperation. Disabled and nondisabled people alike increasingly respond that if Deaf people really don't want to be considered disabled, then they ought not to claim the protections of that designation.

In any case, alignment with disabled people clearly holds more promise than one with ethnic groups. If there are differences among disabled groups, they pale in comparison with the distance between Deaf and other ethnic communities. Can we imagine the Chinese American community agitating in favor of Deaf teachers? What reason would hearing Spanish speakers have for supporting residential schools for deaf children? (After all, in California a majority of Hispanic-American voters recently joined other citizens in voting to end bilingual education.) In battling the resurgence of eugenics, are disabled people or Cuban Americans going to be more steadfast allies? Who have been powerful allies of Deaf people in the past, ethnic Americans or disabled Americans?

If the disability model tends to have a bias toward assimilation, contrary to the interests of the Deaf community, the ethnic model in the United States does as well, but without accommodations for physical differences from the majority. The rights and services that Deaf people demand are of the kind demanded by disabled people not ethnic groups. Interpreters, for example, are provided to linguistic minorities in the United States only in a limited number of unusual situations, such as court appearances and medical emergencies. Those who wish to attend college or take up a profession are expected to master and use the national language. College instructors and graduate students whose first language is not English must pass an exam demonstrating their ability to make themselves clearly understood in spoken English before they are permitted to teach. Deaf people, on the other hand, rightly demand subsidized interpreting services that allow them to participate in cultural, social, and economic life on an equal basis with hearing people. The demand for captioning and relay services is even less

compatible with the ethnic group model. To the extent that these services are provided, it is in the name of disability rights, not ethnic group rights, since no other minority requests, let alone asserts a right to, such services. The principle at work in the provision of these services is that it is wrong to construct, for example, a phone system that serves some people and excludes other, or to offer a college education that is accessible to some but not others, merely on the basis of physical, sensory, or mental differences. As far as I am aware, every useful law in the United States protecting Deaf rights has been based on this principle, rooted in the demand for disability rights rather than in protections for ethnic minorities. Furthermore, aside from the pragmatic considerations of political efficacy, the ethnic model fails conceptually even to explain the kinds of rights that Deaf people assert.

In the struggle to provide a decent education for deaf children, the cultural model also falls short, and in fact is counterproductive. Hearing parents of deaf children are rarely persuaded of the value of ASL by being told about Deaf Culture, and often resist the notion that their children ought to be part of a culture other than their own. In fact, they frequently express fears of "losing their children to the Deaf Culture." More persuasive arguments stress the importance of ensuring linguistic input via the eyes while children are still very young, to achieve their fullest social and intellectual development. That is, it focuses on the ways in which their children's sensory needs differ from those of hearing children.

The Deaf Culture model by itself has always posed a troublesome incongruity when used to discuss deaf children. When we speak of deaf adults who are not culturally Deaf, no one objects to referring to them as disabled. However, when we speak of mainstreamed deaf children in hearing families, we often speak of them as Deaf even when they have had no contact with Deaf Culture, in part because we think that they *ought* to be Deaf, and in part because they are likely to become Deaf at some point in the future. Some of them, however, will never be culturally Deaf, and it is clearly contradictory to speak of deaf children as Deaf, only to reclassify some of them as disabled when grown, when nothing substantive has changed other than their age. We are stuck with making this incoherent argument because, under the cultural minority model, there is no other logical way to assert their linguistic rights as children. To claim, however, that children who have no connection to or even knowledge of the Deaf community are culturally Deaf is unpersuasive to say the least. It is utterly unpersuasive to their hearing parents, who often view it as presumptuous as well as absurd, and it is intellectually implausible to scholars to suggest that Deaf people, unlike any others in the world, might somehow be born with a culture inherent within them.

An alternative that resolves the incongruity, as well as offering a more plausible line of argument in favor of early ASL for all deaf children, is to take seriously the truism that (in Padden and Humphries's words), "Deaf people are both Deaf and deaf."[17] That is, Deaf people are both a cultural minority *and* disabled. This allows us to say that a deaf child is physically different from hearing children, therefore has fundamentally different needs from hearing children, and therefore if denied access to effective bilingual education *is disabled by that denial.* It allows us to say, further, that both Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons are disabled by social practices designed to accommodate

only hearing people, and to demand arrangements that accommodate them as well as hearing people.

Indeed, those writing within the Deaf Culture model often do say that deaf children who are denied access to ASL and to the Deaf community by parents and schools are disabled by that denial.[18] This is precisely in line with the social model of disability. The Disability Studies model would go further, however, to argue that even Deaf children who attend bicultural/bilingual educational programs and are fully acculturated in the Deaf community *continue* to be disabled by discriminatory practices that extend beyond secondary school. It is disabling to be denied equal access to television, movies, theater, or civic and public events. It is disabling to be denied reasonable accommodations, in higher education or on the job, such as competent interpreting services. According to the social model of disability, both deaf and Deaf people are disabled not because they do not hear, but because society is structured and everyday business is conducted in ways that exclude them: mass media and public services are often inaccessible; education is generally inferior; information in public places comes over aural but not visual channels; prejudice, demeaning stereotypes, and discrimination are widespread; and in general the hearing majority assumes a hearing norm and doesn't accommodate those who deviate from it.

Thus when disability activists claim that Deaf people are in the same boat with them, they do *not* mean to suggest that Deaf people are afflicted with a defect that ought to be fixed or eliminated, or that they are not whole, or that something is wrong with them, as Deaf people often seem to assume. Rather, they mean that Deaf people have a sensory difference from the majority that requires a different way of life; that the majority hearing population often tries to obstruct or thwart that way of life, or at the least does not make reasonable accommodations for it; and that the hearing majority thereby disables Deaf people. It is understood that if Deaf people were to live entirely in a Deaf world they would not be disabled, just as it is understood that the same is true of many other disabled people. This way of understanding disability does not seem to contradict in any fundamental way how Deaf people already view themselves.

The cultural model also has had little practical relevance to the debate over cochlear implants. Even if all hearing people were to become convinced that Deaf people are "not disabled" and constituted a cultural minority, would that affect the implanting of deaf children? After all, minority cultures in the United States come and go without much fanfare. There used to be strong Italian American communities in many cities, for example, that have mostly disappeared. There were once thriving Scandinavian cultures across the rural upper Midwest and Polish American communities in the cities. Asian Americans and Jewish Americans are increasingly assimilating today. A marked and distinct ethnic identity usually persists only to the extent that majority prejudice prevails over the tendency toward assimilation, as has been the case for most African Americans. The charge of "ethnocide" sometimes raised in the case against cochlear implants is not a persuasive one in the United States, for the disappearance of minority cultures—whatever opinion one may hold about this—is not only commonplace but has often been held up as an ideal. Not only are Americans generally unwilling to offer bilingual education for the purpose of preserving ethnic cultures, opposition to

the persistence of minority cultures is one of the main arguments deployed against bilingual education, which is on the defensive and in decline across the country. If it is true that implants threaten Deaf Culture (which is a subject of debate within the Deaf community), hearing Americans seem unlikely to support the idea of preserving deafness in order to preserve Deaf Culture when they have shown no widespread concern for preserving other minority cultures.

Medicalization of difference is as much an issue for disabled people generally as it is for Deaf people. Disabled people are equally concerned about the attitudes that lead to excessive, risky, and often ineffective surgeries performed on children in valiant attempts to restore "normal function"—for example, to enable someone to walk about with difficulty, rather than modifying public spaces in ways to enable them to roll about with ease. The problem Deaf people face is not that they are not recognized as an ethnic group, but rather, as Alice Dreger has written, that in the modern West "the most prevalent myth is that an unusual anatomy must be considered a medical pathology." It is equally a problem for deaf and all disabled people that "most children with unusual anatomies are born to parents who do not share the unusual trait, and so the parents' reaction often involves fear, confusion, shame, guilt, and distress. . . . The parents often can't imagine living 'that' way."[19]

Like Deaf people, many disabled people see disability as central to their identity and have no desire whatsoever to join the nondisabled "other."[20] This is particularly true of those born disabled or disabled from an early age. Disabled people are in fact very similar to Deaf people in this way, and use similar language when they speak of disability as their norm, as something in which they have pride, as essential to their identity. The question is not so much whether one is Deaf, blind, or a wheelchair user, but rather whether that is an integral part of one's identity, which is in large part a question of time and life stage. People who grew up with an atypical body or set of senses tend to see themselves as "normal" and experience little or no desire to change. Those who experience a dramatic change in bodily or sensory configuration go through a period, some longer than others, of wishing they could return to their earlier norm, but in most cases this sense of inhabiting an abnormal body passes with time. As Susan Triano told a reporter at the 2004 International Disability Pride Parade in Chicago, "We're trying to unite all people with all different kinds of disabilities to send a message that disability is a natural and beautiful part of human diversity. We don't need to be cured. We don't need to be fixed. We are whole human beings just the way we are."[21]

Although I have long known that disabled people routinely express satisfaction with their identity and way of life, I was nevertheless surprised to learn recently that only once in history have conjoined twins expressed a desire to be separated. Of course, parents and surgeons routinely decide to surgically separate them in infancy, but when conjoined twins reach an age at which they can speak for themselves, they nearly always express satisfaction with their lives. Why was I surprised? Because I had imagined what it would be like to live such a life and concluded that it would be intolerable. That is the problem. Hearing people imagine what it must be like to be deaf, and envision a gray and lonely existence. Walking people imagine life as a wheelchair user, and see only limitation and constraint. Deaf people know that deafness is not deprivation, but imagine other disabilities much as hearing people do. Blindness looms especially large

in the Deaf imagination as the negation of their identity as visual people, and has been a felt presence in the Deaf community in the form of Usher Syndrome. John Lee Clark, however, writes that while Deaf people fear blindness and blind people fear deafness, they need not, for "we all share the same capacity for human experience. And that capacity can be filled in infinite ways, from a bank of small spigots to a fewer but larger ones. However the reliance on senses are distributed, we all hold equal access to living full lives."[22]

Resistance to technological normalization flies in the face of powerful social forces and is an uphill battle no matter what arguments are deployed. Nevertheless, the disability critique of the modern tendency to homogenize human experience, to regulate human appearance and behavior, and to lessen human variation is a broad and powerful argument. Claiming that implanting deaf children constitutes ethnocide is not, for the children who are implanted are neither culturally Deaf nor members of an ethnic group. As individuals, they possess no elements of a minority culture. What they do possess is a different sensory relationship to the world around them. It is the value of *that* difference that is at issue. If an effective counterargument is to be constructed, it is more likely to be based upon the good that comes from preserving sensory and physical diversity rather than upon ethnic identity.

Ethnicity

The desire among Deaf people to be defined only by cultural and not physical difference has striking parallels with the mid-twentieth-century campaign by European immigrants to be redefined as ethnic groups. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, what we now term "ethnic groups" were typically referred to as "races." It was common to speak of a multiracial Europe populated by the Irish race, the Italian race, the Jewish race, the Slavic race, and so on. The concept of race denoted *both* body and culture, inherited *and* environmentally influenced characteristics, nature *and* nurture, which were all seen as inextricably linked. A study of immigration in 1926, for example, identified fifty-six races of people employed in American industry. Among those described as distinct races were Poles, Slovaks, South Italians, North Italians, Magyars, Lithuanians, Croatians, French-Canadians, Hebrews, Spanish, and "native-born White Americans." The study described how the "bodily form" and "shape of the skull," as well as the temperament and personality, varied from race to race.[23]

Proponents of immigration restriction, such as Edward Ross, sociology professor at the University of Wisconsin, maintained that recent immigrants to the United States tended to be physically inferior: "South Europeans run to low stature," he wrote. "A gang of Italian[s] . . . filing along the street present, by their dwarfishness, a curious contrast to other people. The Portuguese, the Greeks, and the Syrians are, from our point of view, undersized. The Hebrew immigrants are very poor in physique . . . the polar opposite of our pioneer breed. . . . The physiognomy of certain groups unmistakably proclaims inferiority of type."[24] This is why restricting the immigration of these "inferior types" was so important to eugenicists at the time, because their "defects" were seen as inherent racial traits. Eugenicists stigmatized both disabled people and "inferior races" as prisoners of defective bodies, and sought to exclude immigrants who were "degenerate,"

whether due to racial characteristics or to individual disabilities. In effect, both racial and disabled minorities came under the purview of a medical model. From this medical model came increasing attacks on the liberties of disabled people and racial minorities, including widespread institutionalization, sterilization, and exclusion from American economic and social life.

A similar kind of medicalization of difference was prominent in the justification of slavery and, after slavery's demise, of other forms of racial oppression. For example, an article on the "diseases and physical peculiarities of the negro race" in the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* explained, "It is this defective hematosis, or atmospherization of the blood, conjoined with a deficiency of cerebral matter in the cranium, and an excess of nervous matter distributed to the organs of sensation and assimilation, that is the true cause of that debasement of mind, which has rendered the people of Africa unable to take care of themselves."[25] African Americans were assumed to become ill or disabled more easily than whites, especially under the stressful conditions of freedom. Diseases of blacks were generally attributed to "inferior organisms and constitutional weaknesses," which were claimed to be among "the most pronounced race characteristics of the American negro." Women's physical differences, as well, have been endlessly medicalized (to a lesser degree still are today). One of the important strategies of the opponents of women's suffrage was to attribute various disabilities to women, among them irrationality, uncontrolled emotionality with a tendency to hysteria, and constitutional weakness. The supposed tendency among "inferior races" to feeblemindedness, mental illness, deafness, blindness, and other disabilities has been repeatedly invoked in arguments for racial inequality and discriminatory immigration laws. Time and again, when categories of citizenship are in question, a medicalized notion of disability has been called upon to discredit and to stigmatize.[26]

European American minorities began arguing that they should be considered ethnic groups rather than races in the 1930s to escape the imputation of physical and biological inferiority. Ethnicity suggested that all European Americans were members of the "white race," and therefore culturally but not biologically different. The ethnicity model excluded African, Asian, and Native American minorities, who continued to be stigmatized by a medical model that associated them with disabled people: prisoners of defective bodies, degenerate by nature, and likely to pass on their defective characteristics to future generations. European American minorities, on the other hand, were so successful at shedding the notion of race and becoming "white ethnics" that most people soon forgot that they had ever been considered members of different races at all.[27]

The claim today that disabled people differ from the nondisabled by dint of physical difference, while Deaf people differ from the hearing only by culture, mirrors the division of ethnicity from race. Just as the decision of European Americans early in the twentieth century to identify themselves as ethnic groups rather than racial groups was in part a political decision, and just as the identity of "white person" is in part a political choice, "Deaf" and "disabled" are also, at least in part, political choices. These are constructions of history—always contested, never settled, and always open to question. There is nothing timeless or "natural" about them.

This is not to argue that the idea of ethnicity is disreputable, but rather that it is a

construct that arose under particular historical conditions and was used for particular purposes. Whatever the particular origins of the concept and its problematic relationship with the notion of race, ethnicity is a useful model because it provides a framework for exploring the ways in which Deaf Americans have maintained distinct community institutions and have passed down, over many generations, a common history, language, and culture. Nor is this to say that Deaf people should not be conceptualized as an ethnic group, or that Deaf Studies scholars cannot learn much from Ethnic Studies (not to mention Women's Studies, Race Studies, and Queer Studies). It is undeniable that the cultural/ethnic group model has been extraordinarily useful and beneficial in many ways to both Deaf Studies and the Deaf community. It is nevertheless useful to reconsider in light of its history what purposes the model is serving today, and whether an exclusive reliance on the cultural model serves ends that scholars and Deaf people wish to pursue.

Historically Created Identities

The statement that "Deaf people are not disabled" suggests that current definitions of Deaf and disabled are natural, timeless, and universal categories. These are not fixed definitions, however, but rather historically created and impermanent identities. Padden and Humphries put the matter more accurately when they wrote in *Deaf in America* that "'disabled' is a label that historically has not belonged to Deaf people," but still they left open the question of which historical period they meant.[28] My preliminary research suggests the possibility that the "Deaf people are not disabled" claim *may* be of fairly recent origin.

In the nineteenth century it seems to have been common to talk of Deaf people as disabled. Laurent Clerc, one of the founders of the American School for the Deaf, in an 1818 address, spoke of "the infirmities of the bodily organization, such as deafness, blindness, lameness, palsy, crookedness, ugliness." In 1835, John Burnet wrote of his deafness as one of the "long catalogue of infirmities which flesh is heir to." He went on to explain that,

> [Our] misfortune is not that [we] are deaf and dumb, but that *others* hear and speak. Were the established mode of communication . . . by a language addressed not to the ear, but to the eye, the present inferiority of the deaf would entirely vanish; but at the same time the mental and social conditions of the blind would be far more deplorable, and their education far more impracticable, than that of the deaf is now.[29]

This seems a perfect expression of the social model of disability, applied to deafness and blindness.

In 1855, John Jacob Flournoy argued that Deaf people should abandon the hearing world that oppressed them and establish their own state, and at the same time saw no contradiction in describing Deaf people as disabled. Responding to William Turner's statement that a Deaf man was as unsuited to serve in a legislature as a blind man was to lead an army, Flournoy wrote (in his wonderful phrasing): "The old cry about the

incapacity of men's minds from physical disabilities, I think it were time, now in this intelligent age, to *explode!*" He made his case by referring to great disabled military heroes and blind philosophers: "Have you ever heard how Muley Moloch had himself borne in a litter, when lamed by wounds, to the head of his legions . . . ? So much for a *lame* man. Then, as for a *blind* one. . . ." Flournoy described Deaf people as a distinct and oppressed community *and* as sharing a common oppression with other disabled people.[30]

Nor does it seem to have been very common for Deaf people to reject the association with disability (at least in print) through most of the twentieth century. In *Illusions of Equality,* Bob Buchanan describes two significant instances, during the 1908 battle over the hiring of deaf people for the Civil Service, when Deaf community leaders objected to an association with disability: George Dougherty wrote that being classed in Civil Service regulations with "the insane, the crippled, and criminals" might prejudice employers against them, and George Veditz warned, "Once let the government brand deafness as a disability that renders us ineligible for its service, and it will not be long before the prejudice will spread among the employers at large." Both of these instances, however, had to do specifically with concerns over employment discrimination rather than a general aversion to being thought of as disabled. The Veditz quotation is ambiguous in that he does not reject the idea that deafness is a disability, but specifically that deafness is *a disability that renders us ineligible for employment.* The term "disability" at the time was often used in this more specific sense to refer to a trait that disqualified a person for certain rights and privileges. Buchanan also documents occasions on which Deaf leaders decided against collaboration with disability groups, but while this *may* suggest a rejection of the concept of disability, it does not do so necessarily. The ethnic group model, after all, is not weakened by the fact that Deaf people do not typically collaborate with other ethnic groups.[31]

Susan Burch, in *Signs of Resistance,* suggests that Deaf people began to reject the association with disability in the early twentieth century. It is a plausible suggestion, but Burch provides only one significant source for the claim. An editorial in the *Empire State News,* supporting a proposal for a labor bureau for deaf people and responding to an argument that it ought to serve all disabled people, asserted that "the average deaf worker belongs in the classification of foreign-language groups rather than that of the physically handicapped." This would appear at first glance to be an endorsement of the cultural model and rejection of the disability model. However, the editorial then went on to explain that a worker's "deafness is sure to raise difficulties of communication which may hinder his effectiveness until he becomes accustomed to the routine of work in that particular place. Hence, some follow-up work would be necessary in a placement service for the deaf. This is an additional detail which the regular service cannot handle." That is, the editorial is focused entirely on the issue of *what deaf people need from a labor bureau,* not their identity. Deaf people have employment needs that are distinct from those of "other handicapped groups," the editorial continued, because "one has to have effective communication between the placement officer and the deaf applicant. No such difficulty exists in the case of the blind, the crippled, and other groups, for all of these possess in common with the director and his assistants the great blessing of

combined hearing and speech, which facilitate the interview." The point is the specific employment needs of deaf people, nothing broader. Moreover, the editorial twice refers to "*other* groups of handicapped people," which suggests no aversion to being thought of as one of those groups.[32]

In my (admittedly not exhaustive) research so far, I have found no unambiguous and explicit examples of Deaf people rejecting association with disability before the 1970s in the United States.[33] While it would not be surprising to find such examples, it does seem suggestive that I have come across no published examples so far, while I have found numerous examples of Deaf people who referred to themselves as disabled or handicapped. For example, in 1930, Albert Ballin, in *The Deaf Mute Howls,* referred to deafness as a "handicap," as did Thomas Ulmer, a Deaf contributor to the *American Annals of the Deaf,* in 1945. In 1941, Tom Anderson, then president of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), urged President Roosevelt to "give handicapped persons a break in working for the defense program," by which he clearly meant to include Deaf people. He was quoted in a *New York Times* opinion column by a disabled man writing in favor of greater employment opportunities for disabled people, and in 1942 the *Empire State News* approvingly reprinted that piece. The president of the California Association of the Deaf, Toivo Lindholm, in 1953 referred to Deaf people as handicapped. In 1970, NAD president Frederick Schreiber wrote of Deaf people having a "disability." In 1974, in his book *A Deaf Adult Speaks Out,* Leo Jacobs described Deaf people as a minority group and simultaneously as people who have a "handicap."[34]

Clearly more careful research than what I have done here is needed. The history of Deaf people's relationship with the concept of disability is no doubt far more complex than I am able to describe in this essay. However, if these preliminary findings are borne out, it is possible that the argument that Deaf people are not disabled came to prominence alongside the Deaf rights movement and the rise of the culture model in the 1970s and 1980s. If so, the claim that Deaf people have long rejected identification as disabled might be an example of an "invented tradition," a common phenomenon in all cultures but particularly those reacting to rapid change. Historians have become increasingly interested in recent years in the ways that societies seek to reinforce the legitimacy of their values by projecting their origins back in time and defending them as long-standing cultural traditions.[35]

The rejection of disability since the 1970s seems mainly intended as a refutation of the demeaning focus on deafness as defect. In their desire to avoid the focus on the ear to the exclusion of all other aspects of Deaf experience, and to emphasize the legitimacy of their culture, Deaf people increasingly denied that physical difference had any significance in the formation of Deaf identity. Just as early ASL studies downplayed the importance of fingerspelling, iconicity, and any other element that seemed to make signed languages less like "true languages" (that is, conforming to definitions and standards derived from the study of spoken language), so also did early Deaf Studies deny the importance of sensory difference in order to emphasize the cultural aspect of Deaf identity. Just as it was thought that a "true language" would not rely on iconicity or the spelling of borrowed words, a "true culture" could have nothing to do with physical difference. However, just as ASL scholars now have enough confidence to explore the

significant place of iconicity and fingerspelling in the language, so too has Deaf Studies begun pointing toward the significance of physical difference in defining the Deaf community.

Conclusion

Nothing I have written here should be construed as an argument against the cultural model. It has been and continues to be a powerful tool in Deaf Studies, as well as in the struggle for Deaf rights and community pride. Ethnicity is a crucial concept because it provides a framework for exploring the ways in which Deaf Americans have maintained distinct community institutions and have passed down, over many generations, a common history, language, and culture. As Ella Mae Lentz recently pointed out to me, it may also more closely reflect the way in which Deaf people experience their relationships with hearing people. When encountering a nonsigner, she maintained, a Deaf person does not think, "I cannot hear and therefore cannot communicate with this person," but rather, "Our languages are different and therefore we cannot communicate with each other." In this way, the Deaf individual's experience is that of a linguistic minority.

However, the social model of disability can account for much that the cultural model cannot. The disability model allows us to explore how sensory differences between hearing and deaf people shape their worlds, as well as how the concept of normality shapes both hearing people's attitudes toward Deaf people and the development of Deaf children's sense of identity. It provides an explanatory context for the medicalization of deafness, and a theoretical framework for the argument that Deaf people are not disabled by hearing impairment, but rather by the oppression of difference. It provides powerful arguments for ASL in Deaf education. It shows us that the response of hearing people to deafness is not unique but rather part of a larger response to disability. It makes sense of the fact that Veditz wrote *not* that Deaf people were people of sign language, but that they were people of the eye.

Moreover, the disability model should not pose a threat to Deaf people's sense of identity any more than does the ethnic model. After all, until fairly recently most Deaf people would have strongly objected to being identified with ethnicity. Once Deaf people in the 1970s and 1980s began to identify themselves as an ethnic group, they felt no less Deaf than they had before, and they felt no compulsion to merge their identities with Vietnamese Americans, Italian Americans, or other ethnic groups. Deaf Americans (or for that matter Chinese Americans) are not expected to feel a close affinity for Cuban Americans just because, for purposes of explaining their experiences as minorities, we describe both as ethnic groups. The same holds true for disability. Deaf people will doubtless always feel far more affinity for other Deaf people than for other disabled people (or for other ethnic groups). It is not a question about identity but rather about the need for a coherent category of analysis for scholars, for a unified, broad-based movement for effective activism, and for explanations that the general public, in particular the parents of deaf children, can find both plausible and persuasive.

Most groups who now identify themselves as disabled have done so only recently. Blind people in particular long resisted both the label and association with the larger

universe of disabled people. People with mental disabilities and those with physical disabilities have long had an uneasy relationship. Those with acquired disabilities, such as disabled war veterans, often have resisted association with people who have lifelong disabilities. The tendency of those with lesser stigmatized disabilities to distance themselves from those with more highly stigmatized disabilities is a common phenomenon. Throughout American history, disabled people have been more likely to identify themselves in terms of a specific group than as disabled.

Only recently has the identity of "disabled person" been widely embraced. This is in part a conscious political decision, in part the product of a new consciousness of shared experience, and in good part due to increasing awareness of the social model of disability. It was once common to hear wheelchair users say, "Just because I use a wheelchair doesn't mean you should treat me like I'm retarded." Today it is more common to hear something like, "Nobody, regardless of their disability, should be treated that way." Some disabled people are far more vulnerable to discrimination, institutionalization, and eugenic assault than others, but a tenet of disability solidarity is that those less threatened should not abandon the more vulnerable. Disabled people differ significantly from one another, but they share common experiences resisting the medicalization of their identity, coping with inferior "special" education, fighting for autonomy and self-determination—in short, they share a common experience of oppression and of struggle against it. Thus, sharing a common oppression, they have undertaken to forge a common liberation.

Indeed, one of the remarkable aspects of the pan–disability rights movement is its ability to bring together diverse groups of people into common action. It is a fractious coalition, riven by identity politics and conflicting agendas to be sure. Nevertheless, its very existence and dramatic growth is testament to a powerful idea—that the goal ought not to be for any one group to find liberation for itself, in effect merely reshuffling the deck, but rather to resist and disrupt the systematic translation of *difference* into structures of privilege and oppression.

Notes

1. American Deaf Culture has been described in a number of books and articles. See, for example, Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988); John V. Van Cleve and Barry A. Crouch, *A Place of Their Own: Creating the Deaf Community in America* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1989); Harlan Lane, Robert Hoffmeister, and Ben Bahan, *A Journey into the Deaf-World* (San Diego: DawnSignPress, 1996); Robert Buchanan, *Illusions of Equality: Deaf Americans in School and Factory, 1850–1950* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2002); Susan Burch, *Signs of Resistance: American Deaf Cultural History, 1900 to 1942* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

2. Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan, *Journey into the Deaf-World,* 111–16. Brice Alden, "Visualist Theory 101," *Tactile Mind,* Spring 2002, 8. Ben Bahan, "Notes from a 'Seeing Person,'" in *American Deaf Culture: An Anthology,* ed. Sherman Wilcox (Silver Spring, Md.: Linstock Press, 1989), 30, 31.

3. George Veditz, "President's Message," in *Proceedings of the Ninth Convention of the National*

Association of the Deaf and the Third World's Congress of the Deaf, 1910 (Philadelphia: Philocophus Press, 1912), 30.

4. Padden and Humphries, *Deaf in America,* 3. Bryan Eldredge has a wonderful discussion of the complicated place hearing people occupy in the Deaf community; see chapter 1 in "The Role of Discourse in the Formation and Maintenance of Deaf Identity and the Deaf-World" (PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Iowa, 2004). Some Deaf people, most notably World Federation of the Deaf president Markku Jokinen and the editors of *The Tactile Mind,* have argued recently for thinking in terms of "sign language users" rather than "Deaf persons," as this would emphasize culture and language rather than lack of hearing. See Markku Jokinen, "'The Sign Language Person': A Term to Describe Us and Our Future More Clearly?" in *Looking Forward: EUD in the Third Millennium—The Deaf Citizen in the 21st Century,* ed. Lorraine Leeson (Coleford: Douglas McLean, 2001), 50–63. Paddy Ladd, in his recent and important book *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2003), suggests that in the absence of oppressive relations Deaf people would welcome culturally Deaf hearing people as full members of the community. I would maintain that sensory differences matter, regardless of the cultural setting. Ladd, in another section of his book, suggests this point by arguing that "blindness, being a sensory impairment, might well involve certain psychological patterning which, when reinforced by time spent together, might add up to a phenomenon with some notable cultural features" (194). Human beings are cultural beings, and they are also physical beings. To deny one or the other, to say that our fates are entirely decided by our bodies, or conversely that we are all culture and that our bodies do not shape who we are, is equally wrong.

5. Arkady Belozovsky, for example, spoke at the 2004 Deaf Studies Today conference about cultural differences between Russian and American Deaf people, such as attitudes toward physical contact and ways of introducing people. Arkady Belozovsky, "Learning Foreign, Linguistically Related Sign Languages: What Are the Benefits to ASL/Deaf Studies Instructors" (paper presented at the Deaf Studies Today conference held at Utah Valley State College, April 12–14, 2004).

6. Carol Padden, "A New Language" (paper presented at the Deaf Studies Today conference held at Utah Valley State College, April 12–14, 2004). Joseph Murray suggested to me that Padden's experience of a sense of connection might also be explained by her *expectation* that Deaf people should feel such a connection with one another. This indeed suggests an alternative explanation in general for Deaf experiences of kinship across national lines; biological kin often feel a similar sense of connectedness and mutual responsibility in spite of cultural divides. Still, I would argue that the shared experience of sensory difference from the majority, and the knowledge that another's experiences of the world are in this fundamental way like one's own, would be likely in itself to produce a sense of commonality.

7. Jeffrey E. Nash, "Policy and Practice in the American Sign Language Community," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 68 (1987): 11. Nash also points to important similarities between Deaf and other ethnic groups.

8. Ross E. Mitchell and Michael A. Karchmer, "Chasing the Mythical Ten Percent: Parental Hearing Status of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in the United States," *Sign Language Studies* 4 (2004): 138–63.

9. Douglas Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 10.

10. Ibid., 160.

11. Ladd, in *Understanding Deaf Culture,* acknowledges the significance of the disability model, writing that Deaf people should be "seen as intrinsic 'dual-category members'—that is, that some of their issues might relate to issues of non-hearing whilst others relate to language and culture" (16). He notes that the concept of "access" has provided a rationale for important services to Deaf people such as interpreting services, text telephones, captioning, and the like (while it has also created problems, as in the debate over separate versus mainstreamed education). On the whole, however, he downplays deafness and focuses almost entirely on what he aptly terms "Deafhood."

The emphasis is understandable, given that he is trying to reach a public ignorant of Deaf Culture and that views Deaf people simply as people burdened with nonfunctioning ears. Nevertheless, it leads him to understate the importance of sensory difference in constructing the Deaf community and determining its membership (41–42, 74 n. 8) And while he gives a serviceable description of the social model of disability, he then goes on to equate recognition of "physical deafness" with "the medical concept," which is precisely the equation that the social model rejects (16, 166–69).

12. On the social model of disability, see Mike Oliver, *The Politics of Disablement* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 1990); J. Swain et al., eds., *Disabling Barriers—Enabling Environments* (London: Sage, 1993); Harlan Hahn, "Antidiscrimination Laws and Social Research on Disability: The Minority Group Perspective," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 14 (1996): 41–59; Tom Shakespeare and N. Watson, "Defending the Social Model," *Disability and Society* 12 (1997): 293–300; Len Barton and Mike Oliver, eds., *Disability Studies: Past Present and Future* (Leeds, UK: Disability Press, 1997); Mark Priestley, "Constructions and Creations: Idealism, Materialism and Disability Theory," *Disability and Society* 13 (1998): 75–94; Len Barton et al., eds., *Disability Studies Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002). For recent examples of disability studies in the humanities, see Paul K. Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003); Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); David T. Mitchell, and Sharon L. Snyder, eds., *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Lennard Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995); Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds., *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). For overviews of recent work in the field, see my essay "Bodies and Environments: The Cultural Construction of Disability," in *Employment, Disability and the Americans with Disabilities Act: Issues in Law, Public Policy and Research,* ed. Peter Blanck (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 387–411, and Catherine J. Kudlick, "Disability History: Why We Need Another 'Other,'" *American Historical Review* 108 (June 2003): 763–93.

13. Hahn, "Antidiscrimination Laws and Social Research on Disability," 43. Simi Linton defines disability as "a marker of identity" that has brought together a coalition of people stigmatized by physical, sensory, and mental differences from the majority, in *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998). Anna Mollow suggested to me that the social model assumes a false opposition between the medical and the social, and excludes disabling conditions that originate in progressive, chronic, or terminal illnesses such as AIDS, cancer, and diabetes. She argues that some disabilities are best understood as both social and medical. While I think that a conceptual distinction can be made between illness and disabilities associated with illness, Mollow's point may well indeed indicate a need for a more nuanced model of disability. However, since it does not directly affect the argument I present here, I have to plead the standard excuse that it is a question beyond the scope of this essay.

14. Lawrence Goodwyn's *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) is a prominent example of this use of "movement culture." Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture,* has a useful discussion of culture and subculture in which he posits language as a crucial element in distinguishing the two.

15. On disability culture, see Longmore, "The Second Phase: From Disability Rights to Disability Culture," in *Why I Burned My Book;* Sharon Barnartt, "Disability Culture or Disability Consciousness?" *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* 7, no. 2 (1996): 1–20; James I. Charlton, *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); Susan Crutchfield and Marcy Epstein, eds., *Points of Contact: Disability, Art, and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Kenny Fries, *Staring Back: The Disability Experience from the Inside Out* (New York: Plume, 1997).

16. Reprinted in Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book,* 26.

17. Padden and Humphries, *Deaf in America,* 3.

18. See for example, Harlan Lane, *The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992), and Jan Branson and Don Miller, *Damned for Their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2002).

19. Alice Dreger, *One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of Normal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 77, 55.

20. Joseph Shapiro, *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Random House, 1994), 14.

21. Jim Ritter, "650 Walk, Roll and Bike in City's First Disability Pride Parade," *Chicago Sun-Times,* July 19, 2004.

22. John Lee Clark, "On Sensory Unloss," http://www.johnleeclark.com/mainthing2.html#ci (site discontinued).

23. Joel M. Sipress, "Relearning Race: Teaching Race as a Cultural Construction," *History Teacher* 30 (February 1997): 179.

24. Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Old World and the New: The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People* (New York: Century, 1914), 285–90.

25. Samuel A. Cartwright, "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 7 (1851): 693.

26. George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 250–51. On the ways in which the concept of disability has been used to justify discriminatory practices against women and minority groups, see my essay, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in Longmore and Umansky, *New Disability History,* 33–57.

27. On the social construction of ethnicity and of "whiteness," see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Karen Brodkin, *How the Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Gender and White Supremacy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Sipress, "Relearning Race," 175–85.

28. Padden and Humphries, *Deaf in America,* 44.

29. Laurent Clerc, "Address to the Connecticut Legislature," and John Burnet, "What the Deaf and Dumb Are before Instruction," in *A Mighty Change: Deaf American Writing, 1817–1864,* ed. by Christopher Krentz (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2000), 17, 40.

30. John Jacob Flournoy, "Mr. Flournoy's Plan for a Deaf-Mute Commonwealth," *American Annals of the Deaf* (1858), reprinted in Krentz, *A Mighty Change,* 166.

31. Buchanan, *Illusions of Equality,* 42.

32. Burch, *Signs of Resistance,* 121. Burch cites two other issues of the *Empire State News,* but I could find nothing in them related to this question. The first briefly alludes to dissatisfaction with the work of the New York State Employment Service and endorses the idea of a deaf labor bureau. The other discusses concerns that the New York State Employment Service "claims to have 19 specially trained interviewers for the handicapped, but that none of these specially trained interviewers are equipped by experience or training to deal intelligently with the problems of the deaf." Again, the point is to address the particular needs of deaf people, not to make any conceptual distinctions between them and other "handicapped" persons.

33. A Deaf Frenchman, Henri Gaillard, did write in 1893 that, "Infirm we are not. In order to be infirm in the true sense of the word, it is necessary to be deprived of a limb, be bandy-legged, one-armed, crippled, blind or blind in one eye." *Proceedings of the World Congress of the Deaf and the Report of the Fourth Convention of the National Association of the Deaf* (Chicago, 1893), 176. This is the kind of unambiguous statement that has not yet been produced from research on the American Deaf community. The extent to which American Deaf people (or French Deaf, for that matter) agreed remains to be established. Thanks to Joe Murray for bringing Gaillard's statement to my attention.

34. Albert Ballin, *The Deaf Mute Howls* (1930; repr., Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press,

1998), 57. Thomas A. Ulmer, "A Review of the Little Paper Family for 1944–45," in *Deaf World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook,* ed. Lois Bragg (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 260. Anderson was quoted in Jay McMahon, "Rehabilitation Urged," *New York Times,* April 28, 1941, E6; reprinted in a regular column by Charles Joselow, "For Your Record," *Empire State News,* January–February 1942, 3; both cited in Buchanan, *Illusions of Equality,* 175 n. 10. Toivo Lindholm, "Place of the Adult Deaf in Society," in Bragg, *Deaf World,* 272. Frederick Schreiber, "What a Deaf Jewish Leader Expects," in ibid., 34. Leo M. Jacobs, *A Deaf Adult Speaks Out* (1974; repr., Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1989), 13, 23. For a more recent example, see Tom Willard's 1998 essay in which he wrote of his frustration with "the misconception that people with disabilities are not happy or whole until they have overcome their disability." Tom Willard, "What Exactly Am I Supposed to Overcome," in Bragg, *Deaf World,* 273.

35. See for example, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).