

## **Constructions of Deafness: Exploring Normalcy and Deviance within Specific Social Representations**

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Résumé de l'article

Les interactions entre les constructions de la surdité et celles des représentations sociales associées aux enfants sourds s'avèrent très compliquées et font actuellement l'objet de vives contestations. Cet article propose d'examiner les différentes constructions de la surdité et les façons par lesquelles elles ont été abordées et interprétées socio-historiquement à l'intérieur des paramètres de normalité et de déviance. Une telle analyse est susceptible d'offrir un aperçu des impacts que représente la formation des idéologies, des politiques et des significations de la surdité pour les personnes sourdes. Cette étude sera effectuée par le biais d'un examen socio-historique de l'éducation proposée aux sourds. Une attention particulière sera accordée aux « guerres de paradigmes » que se livrent actuellement certaines institutions de contrôle social, notamment les établissements d'enseignement privilégiant l'American Sign Language et ceux préférant la tradition orale, sur les notions de langue et de langage. L'étude de ces deux types d'institutions de contrôle social visera à découvrir certaines constructions de la surdité présentes au cœur des représentations sociales et des dynamiques sociétales, lesquelles sont susceptibles de façonner l'identité des enfants sourds, la reconnaissance des talents dits « naturels », l'identification des situations d'inégalité sociale et enfin, la mise au jour des différents types d'idéologies construites à l'intention des étudiants sourds. Une vision alternative de la réappropriation de la différence corporelle sera finalement abordée, laquelle fera état de stratégies positives pour minimiser les effets des mécanismes créateurs de stratification sociale, d'oppression, d'inégalités sociales et de divisions catégorielles parmi les personnes confrontées à la surdité.

## Constructions of Deafness : Exploring Normalcy and Deviance within Specific Social Representations

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### Abstract

The constructions of deafness and social representations of a deaf child are very complicated and deeply contested. This paper examines the constructions of deafness and how it has been socio-historically framed and re-framed within the parameters of normalcy and deviance. Such analysis may offer insight on the potential impact of shaping ideology, politics, and what it means to be deaf. This level of analysis is conducted via an examination of the socio-history of deaf education including discussions of the ongoing “paradigm wars” between certain social control institutions, mainly American Sign Language-based (or called English-based) and the oral-based educational institutions and its implications of language. Examining these two social control institutions will seek to uncover certain constructions within specific social representations and societal dynamics that may shape the deaf child’s identity, its version of “natural” gifts, social inequality, and ultimately the types of ideologies constructed toward deaf students. A possible alternative view of reappropriating of the corporeal differences of deafness is discussed including positive strategies to minimize reproduced social stratification, oppression, social inequality, and divisions when dealing with deafness.

**Keywords :** constructions of deafness, normalcy/deviance, deaf education, social inequality, sign language

### Résumé

Les interactions entre les constructions de la surdité et celles des représentations sociales associées aux enfants sourds s’avèrent très compliquées et font actuellement l’objet de vives contestations. Cet article propose d’examiner les différentes constructions de la surdité et les façons par lesquelles elles ont été abordées et interprétées socio-historiquement à l’intérieur des paramètres de normalité et de déviance. Une telle analyse est susceptible d’offrir un aperçu des impacts que représente la formation des idéologies, des politiques et des significations de la surdité pour les personnes sourdes. Cette étude sera effectuée par le biais d’un examen socio-historique de l’éducation proposée aux sourds. Une attention particulière sera accordée aux « guerres de paradigmes » que se livrent actuellement certaines institutions de contrôle social, notamment les établissements d’enseignement privilégiant l’*American Sign Language* et ceux préférant la tradition orale, sur les notions de langue et de langage. L’étude de ces deux types d’institutions de contrôle social visera à découvrir certaines constructions de la surdité présentes au cœur des représentations sociales et des dynamiques sociétales, lesquelles sont susceptibles de façonner l’identité des enfants sourds, la reconnaissance des talents dits « naturels », l’identification des situations d’inégalité sociale et enfin, la mise au jour des différents types d’idéologies construites à l’intention des étudiants sourds. Une vision alternative de la réappropriation de la différence corporelle sera finalement abordée, laquelle fera état de stratégies positives pour minimiser les effets des mécanismes créateurs de stratification sociale, d’oppression, d’inégalités sociales et de divisions catégorielles parmi les personnes confrontées à la surdité.

**Mots-clés :** constructions de la surdité, normalité/déviance, éducation des sourds, inégalité sociale, langage des signes

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## Introduction

**D**eaf children might be unconcerned with social representations, constructions, politics, and ideology, but they are developing members under the ideological state apparatuses embedded with specific histories and cultures that will assist in constructing and organizing their life and its meanings (Erting, 2003, p. 376; Althusser, 1970). Schools, as social control organizations, often determine the status of children, and whether they will be seen as normal and at the same time categorize others as disabling and/or deviant. In addition, there are “paradigm wars” between two social control institutions, mainly American Sign Language (ASL)-based and the oral-based educational institutions and its implications of language. ASL-based institutions using the bilingual-bicultural (Bi-Bi) approach “emphasizes the development of the natural sign language of a community as the first language, then teaches the majority language through reading” (Moores, 2010, p. 17). Oral-based educational institutions place spoken English as the primary choice of language pedagogy for deaf students. It is important to note that there are a portion of deaf students who are placed in public schools or what Deaf Education scholars refer as mainstreaming (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2006). However, this paper places its focus on the two critical and contrasting paradigms of deaf education : the ASL-based and the oral-based institutions that continue to construct and dominate certain representations of deaf students.

These two frameworks present “evidences” to make a case for the most normal avenues to a child’s education. For instance, views of normalcy are constructed, including whether the students are instilled with sign language or not. In turn, the constructions of what it means to be deaf have been understood recently “as an ideological system of normalization” (Horejes & Lauderdale, 2007, p. 20). As a result, this determination may have reproduced unintended social inequality by re-shifting social representations of deafness and sign language including its cultural recognition. Moreover, such

constructions shape the life reality of individuals by framing certain social representations and dynamics of deafness and identity. This paper has three parts :

- a theoretical examination on constructions of normalcy/deviance;
- an illustration of the socio-history of deafness in deaf education as a social control institution including an analysis on the constructions of deafness using theoretical ideas of normalcy/deviance;
- finding strategies to address the possible percussions of constructing deafness in a specific social representation which may have produced social inequality via social stratification. Studying the constructions of normalcy/deviance and how it contributes to the social representation(s) of deafness is a part of the ongoing discourse on justice, humanity, diversity, and deviance (Horejes & Lauderdale, 2007; Bakhtin, 1981; Mills, 1959).

## Constructions of Normalcy/Deviance

Historically, social control institutions have categorized individuals through various constructions and social representations in the name of race (the “one-drop rule” for African-Americans), ethnicity (the 1/16<sup>th</sup> rule for American Indians), sex (having certain physiological properties), and disability (“limitation of a major life activity”). Institutions of social control from other countries may categorize individuals via social constructions in the name of religion (Christianity, Judaism, & Islam in the Middle East and Catholic & Protestants in Ireland/Northern Ireland), location of origin (Hutu/Tutsi tribes in Rwanda), and social status (Confucian’s four divisions in China) to name a few. These social control processes and social representations impact the constructions of normalcy and deviance. The measurement of normalcy may also be attributed to physical, intellectual, emotional, economic, social, physiological, and societal influences as forms of social representations and societal dynamics (Davis, 1995).



Normalcy begins with the “ideal of a ‘well-mixed’ distribution of people within the social environment, a distribution that can always change” depending on the current power relations of that era (Waldschmidt, 2005, p. 195). This process permeates new moral boundaries of deviance and often times moves people to re-assigned boundaries of abnormality while others return to the center of society or the centered axis of normalcy. At the same time, moral boundaries of deviance are re-designated with newly constructed definitions of normalcy. Simultaneously, societies also construct the ideology of abnormalcy with specific sets of constraints (i.e. biology, physiology, intellectually, and so on). These boundaries are developed through careful documentation and ostensible examinations as valid casual inferences to reach toward (proclaimed) validity. Validity is then transmitted through these social control agencies and institutions. Via these institutions, the body or objective subject is situated as a strategic instrument to perpetuate the types of discourse via moral boundaries and their movements. These boundaries, then, become formalized through a documentation of reality whether it is done through medicalization or legalization of societal norms. In the end, the documentation of validity becomes a site of social control via social stratification as a strategy to construct the “order of things” in the name of ideology at that given time, but it is continually changing via paradigmatic shifts in our social consciousness (Marx & Engels in Bunge, 1986).

For example, Peter Conrad and Joseph Schneider examined how medical institutions, in the name of science, continually re-created deviance designations. In Conrad & Schneider’s book (1992), *Deviance and Medicalization : From Badness to Sickness*, they used several case examples including the changing definitions of alcoholism and homosexuality to examine changing moral boundaries and deviance. They pointed out the significance of “medical ideology [as] a type of social control that involves defining behavior... because of the social and ideological benefits accrued by conceptualizing it in medical terms” (Conrad & Schneider, 1992, p. 245). The medical profes-

sionals determined whether the patient was “dangerous,” or “sick” and how to provide “treatment” that served as “social control functions...including roles as information provider, gatekeeper, institutional agents...” (Conrad & Schneider, 1992, p. 244). This process allowed the medical professionals to re-define alcoholism and homosexuality as a disease, a societal condition, and/or a “natural” process. Specifically, during the 1960’s, the American Psychiatry Association (APA) considered homosexuality as a disease classified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) which psychologists relied on for mental diagnosis (Lauderdale, 2003). In the DSM III (1980), homosexuality was classified as Homosexual-Conglict Disorder replacing an older label-Sexual Orientation Disturbance (Conrad & Schneider, 1992, p. 208). By associating homosexuality with the term, “disorder,” these sociologists claim that the APA continues to perpetuate the current perspective of homosexuality far from the normalcy spectrum and the homosexuality label is still categorized in the current DSM IV despite APA’s stance that it is no longer a “disorder.” Presently, the APA includes the diagnosis of "Sexual Disorder Not Otherwise Specified" for someone with persistent and distress about their questionable sexual orientation.

Currently, the objectification and normalization of the regulated individual enables such institutions and their agents to become “specialists” (i.e. medical and legal social agents). “Specialists” play a shared role in the classification of these individuals that further shapes ideologies of normalcy. The power-relationship between the “normal” and the “deviant” becomes part of the hegemonic process supported by relevant institutions, agents, disciplines, vocabularies, and the types of discourses that arise from over-simplified dichotomies (Lauderdale & Amster, 2008). Hegemony is one type of social control that allows ideology to shape and form dominance on the “order of things” including what it means to be normal (Nader, 2002, p. 47). Annamarie Oliverio & Pat Lauderdale (2005, p. 157) explains that :

- [h]egemony is an order in which a certain way of life and thought dominates, in which one worldview permeates customs, politics and religion, especially their intellectual and moral connotations. In simple terms, hegemony involves all the processes and strategies which develop a society's (or the world's) 'common sense.'

The notion of normalcy is not examined as "good" or "bad" social control processes, but rather, these processes contribute to our ideology of normalcy and these ideas become "common sense" for certain apparatuses. The regulation of influence and authority via power and knowledge suggests that "this influence is expressed both in the concepts and institutional arrangement of the social structure" including normalcy (Feinberg & Soltis, 2004, p. 50). Thus, the "hegemony of normalcy" becomes a theoretical idea to examine the various social control processes embedded in the cultural production of the everyday world in critical historical moments (Davis, 1995, p. 49). For example, during medieval eras, if one had a physical "deformity," then one was considered deviant as a punishment from the Gods; however, if one had the same physical limitation in some parts of the country during that time, one was considered special in terms of being superior than the normal spectrum (See India's perception of individuals with multiple arms as a comparison to the god, Vishnu). J. Gwaltney (1970) accounts in *The Thrice Shy: Cultural Accommodation to Blindness and Other Disasters in a Mexican Community*, connotes that a Mexican village did not consider Blindness as a disability. Thus, the regulations of social stratification via constructions serve as a tool for social control institutions to shape the boundaries of normalcy and deviance within certain populations in order to maintain a particular hegemony. Once an individual is categorized in a specific population, they are assigned a defined set of rules and norms to maintain their current role. Simultaneously, other certain groups are immediately (re)categorized with specific social representations which (often unknowingly) reproduce deviance, stigma, and oppression. It is important to note that the construction of normalcy is shaped by hegemonic processes at

important historical moments (Ladd, 2003). This hegemonic process and historical moments includes the population of deaf people.

### **Socio-history of deaf schools as sites of social control & its constructions on deafness**

Hegemonic processes on deafness and disability are readily examined in several current social control institutions including schools as "sites of domination and contestation" (Margolis et al, 2001, p. 16). There has been an abundance of scholarly work written about "how education often reproduces social inequality for racial and linguistic minorities. However, relatively little have [sic] been written concerning how schools may do the same for those with disabilities" in special education (Hehir, 2005, p. 42).

The school environment can provide deaf children with a unique opportunity to obtain a valuable education and to establish a foundation in linguistics (Hall, 2002; Lane, 1999; Little & Houston, 2003; Sacks, 1989). Unfortunately, the "history of deaf students' poor academic achievement indicates a problem in the definition of appropriate academic and linguistic classroom environments for these students" (La Bue, 1995, p. 166; also see Swanson, 2007; Bowe, 2003). The quality of deaf education has exhibited low standards (Hoffmeister, 1996; Janesick & Moores, 1992; Lane, 1999; Lou, 1988) and currently, the academic performance of deaf children continues to lag behind hearing peers in language, cognition, and learning (Marschark & Spencer, 2010; Traxler, 2000; Marschark, Convertino, & Larock, 2006; English & Church, 1999). Marschark, Lang, & Albertini (2002, p. 157) indicate that :

- on average, 18-year old deaf students leaving high school have reached only a fourth to sixth grade level in reading skills. Only about 3 percent of those 18 year olds read at the same level as the average 18-year old reader, and more than 30 percent of deaf students leave school functionally illiterate.

Deaf scholar Frank Bowe (2003, p. 488) adds that :



- 25% of deaf and hard of hearing students each year are at risk of being identified as low functioning deaf as adults because they read at less than second-grade level...and 30% were eligible for colleges. But 70% of those who enrolled in two and four year colleges dropped out without receiving a degree.

These low average academic achievement levels “are not results of learning deficits inherently associated with deafness but of problems in the communication practices” within deaf educational settings (Johnson, Liddell, & Erting, 1989, p. 89-93). Thus, to further complicate the challenges in defining appropriate academic, linguistic, and cultural pedagogies for deaf children, there are “paradigm wars” among two dominant educational classification systems, 1) the oral classification system where the deaf child is fully integrated with other deaf students using the oral method, and 2) the ASL classification system where the deaf child is fully integrated with other deaf students using a combination of ASL and spoken/written English in the educational setting.

While there is a wealth of scholarship regarding deaf education, these two paradigms are emergent forces in the deaf community when discussing ways to advance the lives of deaf students in the realm of deaf education. These two paradigms are reinforced by an archaeology of archived data supporting both sides of the spectrum; they both have “evidences” with “valid” justifications to claim one paradigm more “effective” than the other which may have promoted a form of social inequality toward the other. Scholars in deaf education have taken different “professional visions” to examine deaf education and most of them have categorized their “professional visions” using these two opposing paradigms as a framework for analysis in their attempt to solidify ideology and what it means to be deaf and how they should be taught in the deaf educational institution. The various types of professional visions allow these paradigms to “organize knowledge, shape perception, and structure future action...” as a social control process (Goodwin, 2002, p. 307). These paradigms via profes-

sional vision are “linked to historical communities of researchers...assumed that social reality is objective, orderly, and rational” (Gabel & Peters, 2004, p. 587).

When a deaf child is born in America, current medical institutions determine that it is a biological fact that the child has loss in their sensorial senses (hearing). The current social representation of deafness is further complicated when their deafness becomes represented in the normal/deviant category in the name of ideology. A major representation/signifier of their place in normalcy in the culturally produced society is the ideology of language placement in the deaf child. The regulation and reappropriation of language pedagogy solidifies ideology of what it means to be deaf. While the notion of deafness has been around since the birth of civilization, it was not until the last 250 years that language pedagogy for the deaf became a site of social control, public debate, and social inequality (Moores, 2010). Regardless of sign language or spoken language as a language pedagogy, they are “organized in essentially the same way at all levels of linguistic structure” (Neidle, 2002, p. 92) and “the [ASL] acquisition is strikingly similar to the spoken language acquisition process in normally hearing children” (Coryell & Holcomb, 2007, p. 387). They both are recognized as official languages with its own linguistic rules, classifiers, and syntax as well as carrying the same potential of acquisition of a language. Although they may be perceived as the same linguistically, they are definitely perceived and signified differently. Spoken English has been considered the hegemonic language in America including for deaf children while sign language has not been welcomed in the same level as spoken English when it comes to determining language usage for the deaf in the name of ideology. Then, it becomes ideology via hegemony developed by certain dominant groups to “reproduce and legitimate their domination” including manipulating language as “natural” and “God-given” (van Dijk, 1997, p. 25). For the constructions of the oral school, to talk is human; for the constructions of ASL school, to sign is human.

The formalization of sign language is often attributed to the French priest, Abbe Charles Michel de l'Epee (1712-1789) whom has been dubbed as the father of deaf education. In 1760, he established the first school for the deaf in France, called the National Institution for Deaf-Mutes where the school grew from 68 pupils in 1783 to over 100 pupils by his death in 1789 (Lane & Grosjean, 1980, p. 122). The school of de l'Epee would later become the model for many schools including the first deaf school in America. The formalization of oralism and audiology started in the early 1800's, when Jean-Marc Itard, a French Physician, went on a crusade for the linguistic annihilation of sign language and gained immense support from various social control institutions. Itard, dubbed as the father of audiology, gave two presentations to the Society of the faculty of medicine in 1808 entitled "On the means of providing hearing to deaf-mutes" and "On the means of providing speech to deaf-mutes" emphasizing that :

- speaking is a prompt and necessary consequence of the functioning of hearing; that once a deaf-mute had been taught to hear, he must be aided and taught to listen to himself; that the development of speech will be the more prompt and more complete the less the subject is able to use manual sign language. (Itard in Lane & Grosjean, 1980, p. 137).

In that fateful speech, Itard was able to gain support that manual sign language did not complete the deaf individual as a whole, but rather, the development of speech will restore the fragmented subject into being a whole and finally normal.

The paradigm wars secured its place in deaf history in 1880 during the Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf in Milan, Italy where its members voted to ban sign language in all schools throughout the world (Gannon, 1981; Cleve & Couch, 1989). Subsequently, all deaf teachers were fired and replaced by hearing educators trained in the oral method. This social control event allowed oralism to dominate the deaf education pedagogy in America from 1880 to 1970's and this

timeframe has been considered by many deaf people in the community as the dark era in deaf history (Gannon, 1981). Despite to the abolishment of sign language in 1880, many members of the deaf community opposed the ideology established by hearing educators and emphasized the importance of sign language in education. One social movement, in the same year as a response to the results of the conference, was the establishment of the National Association for the Deaf (NAD) with the mission of preserving sign language. This association would contribute to the paradigm wars between oralism and sign language to determine the criterion of a normal and deviant deaf individual in deaf education.

The oral classification system focuses teaching deaf students how to rely on technological devices (i.e. hearing aids and/or cochlear implants) to learn how to speak; rejecting ASL as an academic and linguistic tool. Conversely, scholars who are in favor of the ASL-classification system, in turn, reject this oral classification system. There is not as much research promoting the oral classification system from these scholars, but rather from scholars and practitioners in the field of speech pathology (See American Journal of Audiology, American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, and Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research). From 1880 to about the 1970's, all deaf schools in America were conducted in the teachings of oralism by hearing educators and dismissed deaf teachers as educators (Janesick & Moores, 1992; Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Hearing teachers who taught oralism as a leading pedagogical role for deaf students increased while teachers who were deaf declined from 42.5% in 1870 to 14.5% in 1917 and then 12% in 1960 of the overall teaching profession (Lou, 1988). The deaf teachers for the deaf were excluded mainly because they obviously could not hear, but also because they "would not promote oralism" (Burch & Sutherland, 2006, p. 139). There are currently 48 oral schools, as of 2009, in the United States. Available to : <http://www.oraldeafed.org/>.

Sign language was re-introduced in the deaf educational debate after 1965 after a hearing linguistic professor, William Stokoe, published



the first American Sign Language dictionary. He gained worldwide support that ASL was indeed a language for the deaf; nonetheless, scholars and practitioners from the oral discipline continue (still to this day) to claim that their approach is the most effective pedagogy to ensure student achievement. It is these practitioners that feel oralism is the most effective way to prepare deaf students for a successful mainstreaming process especially into the realm of higher education (the transition from the oral classification to the mainstream usually starts between third to fifth grades) as a foundation to their “successful” future. To them, success is measured by an individual’s ability to speak and hear. Practitioners of this classification system advocate the mainstreaming system only after they have been “trained” through the oral classification system to equip the resources and capacity to prepare them for the mainstreaming classification system. Therefore, mainstreaming programs tend to be aligned more towards the philosophy of oral-based institutions because by “functioning in a hearing environment, deaf children would absorb the language of the larger community [spoken English]” (Moores, 1992, p. 15) and “often leads to an emphasis on oral communication” (Moores, 2010, p. 28). The goal for oralism is to prepare the deaf student for full assimilation to society via mainstreaming. The goal of the ASL classification differs; it is their aim for the deaf child to be culturally transmitted to society at the same time preserving their sign language.

For these scholars and de l’Epee, sign language has historically been defended as a “native” language for the deaf and any eradication of sign language is comparable to the colonialization of the deaf community via linguistic annihilation (Lane, 1999; Lane & Grosjean, 1980). Scholars have raised the concern that the current education of deaf children is assimilationist with the major goal of “hearizing” the deaf (Lucas, 1995, p. 124). Most scholars who focus their research upon the ASL paradigm claim that the mainstreaming system, formed in 1910 branching off from the oralist classification, is ineffective and is not a context or a solution designed to improve the academic achieve-

ment and linguistic opportunities of deaf students (Kluwin, Moores, & Gaustad, 1992; Ramsey, 1997;). For these scholars, deaf students that are mainstreamed in the hearing public school “fail to meet two of the criteria for membership in the adult deaf community : linguistic differentiation and attitudinal deafness” (Kluwin, Moores, & Gaustad, 1992, p 59;).

Scholars, including those who reject the mainstreaming and oral educational institutions as an ineffective pedagogy, have extensively focused on the ASL-placement classification system. They value the importance of ASL-placement in the deaf classroom and point to “evidences” (found in the long archaeology of ASL use in the deaf educational system) as a powerful mediator for deaf children’s learning (Ramsey, 1997; Padden & Humphries, 1988; Lane, 1995; Moores & Martin, 2006; Wilbur, 2000). These scholars are especially concerned that :

- [i]n America, there were 26 institutions for the education of deaf children in 1867, and ASL was the language of instruction in all; by 1907, there were 139 schools for deaf children, and ASL was allowed in none (Lane, 1999, p. 113).

Harlan Lane, who studied under B.F. Skinner, goes on to add that for the last twenty-five years, there is an educational assimilation, or rather dominance of oralism, mainstreaming, and then surgery (cochlear implants). This marks the long history of “medicalization” of the deaf community including how these medical “experts” continue to dominate deaf education in terms of linguistics, identity, and academic achievement “and continues to prove to be a failure decade after decade” (Lane, 1999, p. 129). Lane (1999, p. 81) goes on to document that :

- countless hours and a great deal of money are spent specifying these audiologic and psychometric differences, but they make little difference in what we do to or for the deaf people... there are no educational strategies that link up to various test outcomes.



Rather, these scholars argue for a departure of the medical paradigm and into a socio-cultural paradigm where deaf people are a part of a linguistic minority and defend the 1987 United Nations' position that the deaf and hard of hearing populations "are to be recognized to have their native and indigenous sign language accepted as their first and official language and as the medium of conversation and instruction" (Wrigley, 1996, p. xiv, in Barnartt & Scotch, 2002, p. 50).

These scholars sum their perspective on deaf education after decades of classroom teaching, heated debates at conferences, and publications by noting that :

- the field [deaf education] is ready to embrace the implications of these statements 1) ASL and English-based signing are here to stay and 2) there is more to good teaching than just the way a teacher communicates (Stewart, 2006. p. 207).

According to a recent 2003 statistic, there are currently 19 ASL-based schools (LaSasso, 2003). The ASL and English-based model has also been referred as the bilingual-bicultural (Bi-Bi) model and they contend that "there are close to 150 empirical studies carried out during the past 30 or so years that have reported a positive association between additive bilingualism and students' linguistic, cognitive, or academic growth" (Cummins 2001, p. 37). These scholars also defend that the "deaf community is the one language group that can never be totally assimilated and whose language can never be totally eradicated" (Lane, 1999, p.172). A major representation of their place in normalcy in the culturally produced society is the ideology of language placement in the deaf child. While the notion of deafness has been around since the birth of civilization, it was not until the last 250 years that language pedagogy for the deaf became a site of social control and public debate. Thus, pedagogy of language becomes a very important factor in these paradigm wars. As for the deaf, the oralist paradigm developed by Itard, continues to play a pivotal role in shaping deaf education, its language pedagogy, and to the rise of new professional organizations including cochlear

implant corporations as well as new forms of knowledge still to this day. These paradigm wars continually redefined social representations of deafness and in turn, they may have perpetuated and solidified ideological constructions against the other as "the enemy" which further promotes social inequality.

The evolution of technological devices for the ear also has provided diverse perspectives concerning what it means to be deaf and normal. The Stealth Secret Sound Amplifier (SSA) was invented by Kagan Unlimited, Inc in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century as an assistive listening device. The Stealth SSA was designed to be physically identical to the Bluetooth earphone designated for the hearing. However, it is not a phone, but rather a disguised hearing aid. It was developed to replace the hearing aids of the 20<sup>th</sup> century so that the individual with the "hearing loss" could mask his/her "disability" with the Stealth "Secret" Sound Amplifier and be perceived as normal like any other Bluetooth user. This device further reinforced the perspective that hearing aids are stigmatized products and according to their website, "[i]f mention of a conventional hearing aid makes you feel self-conscious, consider the first personal audio amplification device that combines an ergonomic design with a discreet, professional look" (Kagan Unlimited, 2009). Also, cochlear implants are becoming much more popular with more than 90% of the deaf children using cochlear implants. This change suggests that any student who wore hearing aids in the classroom has now become the minority and often cast as "different" than their "normal" deaf peers with the cochlear implant. As of 2009, there is a new device called the Soundbite hearing system that uses "bone conduction to transmit sound" in the mouths of these individuals; shifting away from the ear to the mouth and has been called the "greatest resonator yet produced" to arrive in the pursuit of ostensible normalcy (Bentler, 2009, p. 38).

As the archaeology of deaf deafness and deaf education indicates, the socio-history of deaf people reflects an ongoing struggle through social control agencies to define and re-define the deaf education as dominant ideology. For



the past 250 years, deaf students have been framed and re-framed with readily identified epistemological properties to culturally and socially construct who they are as a human in the name of normalcy. Social representations of deafness are social constructed knowledge constructed by these social control institutions; they construct a specific type of “corpus of knowledge” or “archaeology of knowledge” via social control processes. These institutions continue to present their “evidences” in constructing certain types of knowledge that serve to reinforce their specific ideologies. Thus, the literature review in this paper examines the ways of how and who defines these properties as types of knowledge including the importance of hegemony, the impact of social control institutions, and its processes (Marx & Engels in Bunge, 1999; Lauderdale & Inverarity, 2003, p. 15).

These processes serve to maintain and solidify hegemony; more importantly, it defines the historical place of deaf students in terms of normalcy and deviance (Horejjes & Lauderdale, 2007). Thus, the literature review reflects an archaeology of deafness including its “epistemic” space, the types of knowledge produced and reproduced, and the archival records of historical documents that slowly evolves into the types of examinations developed when discussing the socio-history of deafness.

Moral entrepreneurs and social movements within each ideological domain consider themselves as the defenders of preserving the successful ways of deaf education and to cast the other as the “enemy.” Role players in deaf education construct certain types of knowledge to craft what a “normal” deaf child ought to be and simultaneously, constructs specific parameters of a deaf child rooted in deviance (i.e. the use of sign language or placing the deaf child in mainstreaming programs). Unraveling the claims and related types of information constructed in these paradigms wars require another level of analysis (Lauderdale, McLaughlin, Oliverio, 1990). This includes an examination of two contesting ideologies and the ways they continue to shape the parameters of normalcy and deviance for the deaf.

What does it mean to be deaf? For some people, being deaf equates to a hearing loss that needs to be “fixed” while other people construct being deaf as normal and natural. These ideologies change with respect to time and place in a specific historical era. For example, there were villages in the Amazon of South America and Martha’s Vineyards in America in the Nineteenth century where most hearing members viewed their deaf counterparts as equal/normal and used sign language to communicate with them. In contrast, Europe in the Nineteenth century and America in the 1920’s viewed deafness as a defect and a type of deviant definition that needed to be “fixed” via audiological methods, including speaking and hearing rather than the use of sign language (Davis, 1995, p. 89). Language as a part of communication and educational pedagogy serves to “influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations” (Giroux & Simon, 1989, p. 239). Communication has been a “tool to regulate language as knowledge and as a form of stigma, prejudice as lacking a human characteristic” and an indicator of shaping culture for deaf children (Jones, 2002, p. 51-60).

Through these processes, deafness is ascribed in various degrees of normalcy that also construct its own degrees of deviance (Bauman & Murray, 2010). Throughout socio-history, the changing designations of deviance and normalcy have made an impact not only on individuals, but how these processes have contributed to the hegemony of that society. Studying theoretical ideas on constructions of deafness offers a layer of analysis toward the larger critical justice issues including emergent ideologies, the impact of identity formations (including stigmas) and everyday social constructions. Simultaneously, these theoretical ideas on constructions of deafness bring into light some possible strategies that may not have been realized or previously ignored before.

## Conclusion & Future Strategies



While it is important to “acknowledge the complex and contradictory histories” when discussing certain populations, the theoretical discourses in the paper strive to be reflective in order to discuss the importance of a diverse range of values and socio-histories (McRuer, 2006, p. 151-2). It is critical to examine these ideas when discussing the constructions of normalcy and deviance to gain a better understanding of the ways certain populations are being disenfranchised. The guise of normalcy may lead to dangerous constructions of deafness for deaf students. Such constructions and perceptions may reflect the reproduction of social stratification, privilege, and the roles of language pedagogy, culture in the classroom, and types of teacher knowledge (Becker, 1961). These systems of thought can become part of a hegemonic process that “has resulted in the neglect of diverse disabled cultures, which homogenize the identity of disability as a collective where values, heritage, and history are normalized” (Horejes & Lauderdale, 2007, p. 18).

The history of deafness and deaf education has a long and checkered past riddled by the “paradigm wars” when determining the best and most effective pedagogical approach to deaf education. Most of the research literature exclusively focuses on one classification with their own constructions of normalcy and deviance (typically rejecting the other classification). For example, sign language has often been viewed as either a positive or a negative contribution for deafness and deaf education with its own type of “evidence” and claims for justifying its position. Practitioners continue to defend their own ideologies on how to provide the most “effective” and appropriate educational strategies for the deaf. There is little or no cross-comparative analysis of these classification systems that might help explicate the research and dialogues towards a path of critical pedagogy (Luckner et al, 2005/6, p. 443-4). In addition, there is :

- no evidence that either sign language or spoken language provides greater opportunities for academic success among deaf children. In order to evaluate either of these claims, we next consider the promises of alternative

models for deaf children (Marshark & Spencer, 2010, p. 40).

Hands & Voices, an advocacy organization, using excerpts from *A Blueprint for Closing the Gap - Developing a Statewide System of Service Improvements for Students Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing*, in a report of the Colorado Department of Education, Deaf Education Reform Taskforce warns that :

- after 150+ years of special attention to deaf education, statistics continue to point to the long-standing and well documented problem of deaf and hard of hearing educational underachievement. Research data shows that change within the current educational system is necessary to improve outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children. Available to : <http://www.handsandvoices.org/>.

There is a need to implement a comparative literature base to offer a way to re-examine how language modalities, the role of the teachers, and the instructional pedagogies contribute to the social constructions of deaf students. The importance of exploring socially constructed deaf students is, in part, due to the experiences in the development of one’s identity and language acquisition especially in pre-schools (Nikolarazi & Hadjikakou, 2006; Vygotsky, 1997). Examining the “life” and the constructions of varying different educational schools as a social control institution is important, as crucial sites for this paper (Tobin, 1999, p. 114).

These two educational institutions as different ideological state apparatuses are able to “regulate” certain types of knowledge using their own claims and types of “evidence.” Determining which knowledge is important may have unintentionally constructed stigmatizing definitions in deaf educational practices by determining what is most “natural” and “privileged” (e.g. whether ASL or spoken English ought to be the most “natural” language or how culture in the classroom ought to be facilitated). I suggest that stratifications also reproduce divisive ideologies and social inequality in the construction of deafness, deaf education, and best practices. These divisive factors may have



forced a worldview and identity onto the deaf child, instead of providing choices that would be most advantageous to him or her. Highly divisive (and often problematic) constructions of normalcy and deviance suggest a cautionary note to role players in the educational social control institutions concerning what they feel is best for deaf students. A re-examination on deaf students' constructions through pedagogy of language, cultures in the classroom, and teacher knowledge may be a heuristic way to study some of the social constructions of normalcy and deviance in deafness.

Equally as important is to present examinations and discourses in the reflective symbolist tradition via performativity to elicit further constructive discourses to examine dialogues that may have not been possible in this historical moment. Performativity gives the reader the opportunity to acknowledge certain epistemological processes via constructions of normalcy and deviance as dynamic categories to possibly unravel discrimination and oppression within these processes (Butler, 2000). Thus, to uncover "hidden knowledge" constructed by certain ideological apparatuses, there needs to be discussions of social justice issues including possible sites of discrimination and oppression via power (Guinier, 2001). Equally as important is to recognize that these social justice issues vary across different types of deaf people (i.e. accessibility and impairment mean different things to different people) thus strengthening the importance of understanding different dimensions of normalcy and deviance (Beckett, 2006, p. 97).

Rather than establishing claims and theoretical ideas about certain "universal truths" as an objective, this discourse is a form of social practice, "which suggests the importance of understanding the practice of subjectivity" (Cooper & White, 2009, p. 169). This discourse includes recognizing the dynamics of epistemology as a situational and partial force in shaping types of knowledge and experiences. When analyzing epistemology via discourse as social practice, relevant data is viewed as situational and partial with the spirit of eliciting meanings and uncovering types of knowledge

that may be critical in understanding specific implications of normalcy and deviance in deaf education as a social control institution.

To depart from the parameters of normalcy when asking questions or constructing disability, deafness, or sign language, it may be possible to view deafness as human diversity as it was viewed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century European Enlightenment to find ways to "ameliorate discriminatory attitudes" that have evolved slowly over time regarding deafness and disability (Emens, 2008, p. 840). This paper inquires into an "ideology of normalcy from the rule and hegemony of normates, to a vision of the body as changeable, unperfectable ...." (Davis, 2002, p. 39). What one experience or pedagogy may work for one child may not work for another; this also includes determining which approach is more privileged because everybody's situation is different and ought not to be confined in the realm of what is normal and deviant. Research on these two deaf "cultures," including the formulation of their knowledge, is primarily conducted by "several disparate disciplines whose discourses rarely 'speak' to each other" (Ladd, 2003, p. 267). To discuss the current state of deaf education, I suggest both camps sit at the same table and discuss ways to work together for constructive collective inquiry, in order to elevate dialogues on some of the issues within deaf education. This would be one small step to discuss not just language pedagogy and curriculum choices, but also the economic, institutional, and social implications on deaf education and deafness as a future action.

To establish a dialogic process, I suggest acknowledging that both languages - sign language and spoken language - are not homogenous; more importantly, one does not supersede the other in terms of power and privilege (Meadow-Orlans, 2003, p. 44). I suggest that to make collaboration possible, these two educational institutions - both ASL and oral-based pedagogies - identify important goals and values that transcend the "us vs. them" ideology into a shared and critical ideology of diversity. This type of horizontal participation, or what

Paulo Freire calls participatory action research, would possibly :

- empower those without a voice or the power to change prevailing hegemonies. The silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the investigator but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world. In this context research becomes a means of moving them beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world (Freire, 2004[1992], p. 30-31).

The two different academic pedagogies, curriculums, and traditional knowledge could become embedded in transformative academic knowledge within the larger critical pedagogy of deafness and deaf education. Transformative academic knowledge could be defined as :

- the facts, concepts, paradigms, themes, and explanations that challenge mainstream academic knowledge and expand and substantially revise established canons, paradigms, theories, explanations, and research methods (Banks, 1993, p. 7).

It is this transformative knowledge that would provide a starting point for critical pedagogy for teachers and practitioners of deaf education to understand their contributions to the larger social constructions of deafness (Freire, 2004 [1992]; Smith, 1990). I join “scholars signaling the need for new directions...a more expansive, nuanced, and interdisciplinary approach that encompasses the many ways deaf people live today” (Fernandes & Myers, 2009, p. 1).

Necessary for constructive collective inquiry from both sides is to discuss the dialogic notion of oppressor/oppressed. By acknowledging these issues, these two camps would be able to :

- critically analyze their own situation; to critically analyze the levels in which they are also oppressed [and are the oppressor] because they live under various forms of social control and are discursively positioned in contradictory ways that blind them to their own situatedness in relations to power and privilege (Cummins, 2001, p. 236).

The idea of the body as changeable and unperfectable (or disability in our current socially-constructed world) is everywhere. Is a deaf person with hearing aids “more” deaf (i.e. disabled or deviant) than one with a cochlear implant? Does sign language hinder the deaf student from being able to learn dominant values of society (e.g. speaking and hearing) and be viewed as less than human? One way to examine these issues may lie within understanding the constructions of normalcy. The paper offers a way of examining realms of normalcy; to grasp history more fully, and expose its profound impacts not only on deafness and deaf education, but also on human values, thought, biographies, and histories (Mills, 1959).

As long as defining deafness by only using parameters of normalcy, it will continue to be a dominant part of the politics of deaf education, and there may be more deviance designations in bureaucratic organizations to contain, regulate, and (re)shape deafness with the “continuing neglect of diversity” (Horejes & Lauderdale, 2007, p. 21). The language of experts increases mystification and decreases the accessibility of public debate. Impairment does not cause disability; impairment causes social oppression by restricting activity (Linton, 2006, p. 171).

Diversity is one way to reconceptualize these natural phenomena as gifts rather than impairments. To discuss deafness, I suggest that one needs to discuss its culturally produced “impairments,” the language used, and the power structures behind curriculum choices and pedagogy. Diversity is one way to discuss deafness as a natural phenomenon; “deaf students are not disabled per se, but rather diverse” (Horejes & Lauderdale, 2007, p. 16).

Focusing on diversity may address the various needs of different communication choices for different deaf individuals from diverse families and communities. Instead of continuing a losing battle of which perception ought to be the most privileged mode of thought, the paper has come to the point where it is not the child that fails with a certain perception, but that the per-



ception that can fail the child. Instead of focusing on two narrow schools of thought, the paper suggests an exposure of diverse communication choices. One interdisciplinary diverse approach is bilingualism (See Marcia Moraes and Lourdes Diaz Soto's work on bilingual education in linguistic minority populations for comparison in Cummins, 2001). Bilingualism has become an emerging force not just for linguistic minority populations (i.e. English Language Learners-ELL's), but also within deaf education, and shows promise in a shared pedagogy (both ASL and spoken English), where both groups "can understand the social constraints that inhibit progress" (Cummins, 2001, p. 237). This may allow teachers to retreat from the academic canon or "cult of knowledge" and to rethink their role in these social control institutions and its linguistic implications (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 89). I suggest that Bilingualism is one way for the divisive schools of thought to respect the diversity of linguistic "cultures" produced by different groups in the shared production of "collective memories, knowledge, social relations, and values within historically constituted relations of power" while at the same time, preserving their unique cultures (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 50). Bilingualism is still new in Deaf Studies and needs more empirical research, but it offers some opportunities to enhance diversity and multiple pathways to shared pedagogy, including the combination of sign language, spoken English, and cochlear implant technology (Easterbrooks, 2002; Coryell & Holcomb, 2007).

This paper offers a way to reframe what it means to be deaf and to develop dialogue where "deaf people may be seen through a lens of human diversity... worth valuing as they are, without recourse to 'normalization'" (Bauman & Murray, 2010, p. 210). This summary and suggestions for future research are aimed at contributing to a constructive reflective dialogue that will produce long term outcomes not just for deaf students of future generations, but for a greater understanding of humankind and our connections to diversity throughout the world (Artiles, 2003; Brown, 1996).

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