



Perspectives  *on deafness*

INNOVATIONS IN DEAF STUDIES

The Role of Deaf Scholars

Edited by Annelies Kusters,
Maartje De Meulder, and Dai O'Brien

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Innovations in Deaf Studies

Perspectives on Deafness

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*To the pioneers in Deaf Studies who inspired and motivated us,
and to all emerging Deaf Studies scholars who wait to be inspired in
their turn.*

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Foreword

This book offers deaf voices that reflect deaf people's inquiry into their lived experiences. Each writer is interested in how deaf people understand, how they position themselves in their worlds, how they negotiate meaning, and how they connect themselves to others. It seems we have a hunger to know deaf people's hearts and minds more than ever before. The chapters in this book are food for both the heart and the mind.

We have many unresolved conflicts in our individual and collective lives: recognition of our unique needs, our language rights, our socioeconomic situations, and our schooling, to mention just some of them. The deaf scholars we hear from in this book do not look to non-deaf people to illuminate or improve how we live; they are taking the problems into their own hands. This is as it should be.

We hear from researchers who had much to say about the complexity of how deaf people live, but we also hear from some who describe and explain how complicated are the situations of deaf people throughout the world. More sharply focused research places the power in our own hands. We have the ability to promote understanding and light the way where the next step is not always easy or clear.

Listening carefully to each scholar in these chapters, we hear personal journeys both as individuals and as scholars. These chapters are about the humanity of deaf people and their concern that research and scholarship have not been as centered as they should be in a *deaf authority*. The academy where much of the formal knowledge about deaf people's lives has been produced has refracted the light to the outside rather than to the inside. The essays in this book converge on a single thought; they amount to a maturing from *assisting* in the examination of deaf people's lives to *authoring* them. However, even as we study ourselves, we realize we are not insiders in other deaf worlds.

A basic truth of cultural studies is that culture ceaselessly circulates through people and their worlds. It is in a state of constant construction. So, too, is the study of it. This book is a discussion about the state of Deaf Studies. As two researchers who have had long careers in cultural study, we say with a great deal of experience that there has been growth and change in our discipline and there will continue to be. This

is as it should be. Deaf people have succeeded, in ways we could not have conceived of a generation ago, in projecting ourselves into public culture and influencing the lives of others. We are moving into new spaces, not just geographically, but mentally, where describing the texture of our lives is a work in progress.

We have written elsewhere that the future of sign languages and “deaf culture” is not imprisoned and locked in the places and spaces of our past. As scholars who were there when sign languages started to be named, and cultures started to be described, we often are asked whether there is a future for sign languages and our ways of life. One prediction we often encounter is that as deaf schools vanish, sign languages will vanish with them. But we see a different outcome today: sign languages are now learned in more places and by more people than ever before. We also see how new rhetoric about deafness and deaf lives has positively influenced a younger generation of deaf people.

We are excited about the possibilities for Deaf Studies. Technology and social media are raising issues faster than we can write about them. Even as we try to understand the past and present, the future is already upon us. Our language and cultural heritages are challenged by the rapidity of cultural change. High tech accessibility is changing us, especially in communities where there used to be no connectivity to the wider world. YouTube is filled with the diversity of deaf people’s expressions of culture: poetry, blogging, dancing, acting, and teaching. There are more paths to being deaf than ever before. Increasingly, our sign languages are detaching and floating away from their roots. Once known almost exclusively to deaf people and their friends and relatives, our sign languages are being studied and learned by children and adults who are not deaf. What does it mean to become so public that we hardly recognize our roots? The discipline of Deaf Studies is how we can better understand the present.

There is a concern expressed in these chapters regarding the effect we as researchers have on the communities we study. And we question whether our research methods alter the landscapes that we visit, just by our having entered them. Only good can come from this kind of self-examination. It is an important contribution of these authors that they are self-aware, because, quite honestly, in the early days of research on a “culture” of deaf people, we were flying by the seat of our pants. There were few, if any, models. Now we see a multiplicity of models, each complementing the other. Several authors in this book raise moral and ethical arguments in these pages. You will find much to think about in regard to getting it right. Deaf people everywhere have a vested interest in *doing no harm*, with respect to medical treatment, child rearing, schooling, and research. This is a responsibility we take seriously.

We now have had over 40 years of introspection about our languages and cultures. This book represents that very rich heritage of language and cultural studies. It is very nice to have been there at the beginning, to have written for a different generation, and to be invited to read, in these pages, the thoughts of the next generation of deaf scholars. We appreciate the invitation.

Tom Humphries and Carol Padden
April 2016

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Innovations in Deaf Studies: Critically Mapping the Field

Annelies Kusters, Maartje De Meulder, and Dai O'Brien

What does it mean to do Deaf Studies and who gets to define the field? What would a truly deaf-led¹ Deaf Studies look like? What are the research practices of deaf scholars in Deaf Studies, and how do they relate to deaf research participants and communities? What innovations do deaf scholars deem necessary in the field of Deaf Studies? A desire to ask, and to attempt to answer, these questions was a prime motivator for us to start editing this volume and writing this introduction. We do not ask these questions just for the sake of asking them: Our common background at the (now defunct) Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS) at the University of Bristol taught us that “doing Deaf Studies” is an inherently political activity, because of the history of both the field and of deaf communities in general. This legacy of the CDS inspired us as we engaged in developing this long overdue volume.

The present volume foregrounds deaf ontologies, defined as “deaf ways of being,” and how the lived experience of being deaf is central not only to the research participants’ ontologies but also to researchers’ ontologies, positionalities, and theoretical framings. The authors of this volume also make a number of suggestions as to how new research, ideas, and methods have the potential to develop Deaf Studies in a way which meets the challenges of the present.

The imperative for exploring deaf scholars’ research practices in Deaf Studies is strengthened by a gradual increase in the number of Deaf Studies scholars who are deaf.² This development is important because the historical and current situation in the academic hierarchies in Deaf Studies and sign language departments is one in which hearing

¹ See page 14 for an explanation of d/D use in this introduction.

² In addition, there are increasing numbers of deaf academics in the humanities, social sciences (e.g., Zehnter 2014), and hard sciences whose work does not explicitly engage with deafness: There are thus more spaces opening up for deaf people to be able to research whatever they want—not merely to be experts in matters concerning deaf people, deaf communities, and sign languages.

academics outnumber deaf academics (O'Brien & Emery 2014). When reviewing Deaf Studies publications and professorial positions, most publications in high-impact volumes/journals and the majority of the higher (Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Full Professor) positions in Deaf Studies are held by hearing scholars. This discrepancy has to be situated historically: sign languages have been (and to a certain extent still are) oppressed in educational settings, and spoken languages are not optimally accessible for deaf people (even if advanced hearing technology is used). Language deprivation resulted in generations of deaf people having obtained lower levels of formal education overall in comparison to hearing peers (Conrad 1979, Parasnis 2012, Knoors & Marschark 2014). Due to improvements in educational attainment outcomes (e.g., sign bilingual educational policies in some countries and access to the national curriculum), a growing number of deaf scholars are conducting research in Deaf Studies, and for many of them, this research is informed by their own experience of being deaf.

In the process of developing this book, we produced an academic "deaf space in print," in which Deaf Studies is discussed: All chapters in this book are written by deaf scholars and each chapter has been reviewed by at least four deaf scholars. Furthermore, the editors discussed this introduction during a three-day think tank; a subsequent draft was circulated to all authors to invite their feedback and suggestions; and we received and incorporated a large amount of productive and critical feedback (although we emphasize that we bear final responsibility for any perspectives shared in this introduction). There is something "deaf" about the process, which goes beyond everyone involved being deaf: Part of thinking about methodology involves (re)examining how we approach academic collaboration or interaction.³ Thus, in the process of creating the book, we employed "deaf capital" (Hauser 2013), that is, we made productive use of a network of deaf peers.

Despite strategically and purposefully focusing on deaf scholars' work, we do not wish to downplay the importance of hearing scholars' contributions to the field of Deaf Studies. Our aim is to create a space for contributions from deaf researchers and to see what happens when deaf scholars enter into conversation. Indeed, particular themes and concerns come clearly to the foreground in this book. One of the recurring themes in the book is reflection on the way in which deaf researchers position themselves in their work, which is why our authors make use of concepts such as "positionality," "intersectionality," "reflexivity," and "reflexive meta-documentation" (Moges, Hou, Haualand, O'Brien & Kusters, this volume). Another theme that permeates the various chapters in this book is the investigation of collaborative and power

³ Thanks to Rebecca Sanchez for pointing out this connection.

relationships between deaf scholars and deaf research participants, and between deaf scholars and deaf community members and activists (De Meulder, O'Brien, O'Brien & Kusters, Kusters, Murray, this volume). In short, this book demonstrates that research frameworks and methodologies built around the ontologies of deaf people offer suggestions for new ways forward for the discipline as a whole.

Innovations in Deaf Studies are not only spurred by the growing engagement of deaf scholars with deaf ontologies and with methodological processes, but also by a number of new theoretical trends. Several authors have stated that Deaf Studies is a field that has developed slowly and needs an updated, stronger, and more coherent theoretical foundation (Ladd 2003, Turner 2007, CDS 2008, Marschark & Humphries 2009, Fernandes & Myers 2010, Myers & Fernandes 2010, Friedner, this volume). The conceptual apparatus of Deaf Studies often was not updated (as discussed later) in a way that kept pace with developments in related fields. Furthermore, although Deaf Studies has been inspired by other disciplines such as anthropology, geography, sociology, and political theory, it has not had much interaction with, made contributions to, or offered critiques of those other disciplines. As set out later in this chapter, to innovate the field, we need to interrogate the foundation of Deaf Studies critically (see Friedner, this volume), to work in a more interdisciplinary fashion, and to intervene in other disciplines (see Sanchez, this volume).

Some approaches to Deaf Studies, such as O'Brien's (this volume) and Marschark and Spencer's (2011), have defined the field broadly to include the study of anything linked to deaf people, including research in neuropsychology, theoretical sign linguistics, deaf education, language acquisition, and sign language interpretation. This volume focuses, however, on certain specific strands within the field of Deaf Studies, particularly concentrating in areas around deaf people's ontologies (deaf ways of being) and epistemologies (deaf ways of knowing), communities, networks, ideologies, literature, histories, religion, language practices, political practices, and aspirations. Our aim is to contribute to the expansion of those areas in the field of Deaf Studies that have been underdeveloped and underfunded, in contrast to, for example, theoretical sign linguistics, which is generally better developed and funded.

Within these underdeveloped areas of study, the founding concepts of Deaf Studies, namely Deaf culture and Deaf community (see Murray, this volume) (and note their capitalization of "Deaf") often are still treated as a monolithic and static theoretical apparatus. There is a need for innovations in the conceptual apparatus of Deaf Studies, not only because the discipline is maturing, but also because deaf worlds have changed considerably since the birth of the discipline in the 1970s. Examples of such changes are the decline of deaf schools,

the normalization of cochlear implants, the multiplication of pathways into deaf communities, increased virtual and transnational contact, a diversification of intersectional backgrounds, and a growing number of hearing people who learn and use sign language, to name but a few. To analyze what these processes mean for deaf people, there is a need to look beyond traditional concepts and frameworks and to break new ground.

In this introductory chapter, we first offer an overview of the field of Deaf Studies, and outline a number of theoretical trends. Central in this discussion is an exploration of investigated themes and a critical examination of the theoretical frameworks and concepts that have been used (such as Deaf culture and the d/D distinction). We identify a number of current trends in Deaf Studies, suggesting that they offer innovations to the field. Subsequently, we discuss the role of collaboration, dominance, and hegemony among deaf and hearing scholars, and among deaf scholars of various educational and national (privileged) backgrounds, and their research participants. Having thus established the theoretical, sociopolitical, and geographical contexts of the current state of the field of Deaf Studies, we then will introduce the main themes of the current volume and explicate the unifying threads that run through the following chapters.

THE INSTITUTIONAL BASIS OF DEAF STUDIES

Deaf Studies, as a multidisciplinary field of study, is conducted by scholars whose job, program, or institution title includes the words “Deaf Studies” *and* those who work in more “mainstream” programs or institutions and approach Deaf Studies not as a separate discipline but as a research focus within their respective disciplines (Fernandes & Myers 2010). Correspondingly, the authors in this book have varied backgrounds: Some of them (including the editors) studied and/or taught Deaf Studies as a separate subject, while others are doing Deaf Studies research while based in non-Deaf Studies institutions and disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, education, rehabilitation sciences, theology, linguistics, and disability studies. Importantly, Deaf Studies (in the narrower sense outlined in our introductory paragraph) is geospatially predominantly located in the Anglophone west, mostly the United States and United Kingdom, where English is used as the academic lingua franca.

Although a wide range of institutions offer bachelor modules (including in summer schools) or bachelor degrees in Deaf Studies (in the United Kingdom, United States, and beyond), master’s-level degrees in Deaf Studies are much rarer (e.g., Gallaudet University offers such a degree program). We (the editors) have studied Deaf Studies to the master’s level (between 2004 and 2007) in the Centre for Deaf Studies

(CDS) at the University of Bristol, and Kusters has a PhD in Deaf Studies from the same center. The CDS was a formerly well-known cultural and academic landmark but was closed down in 2013 due to funding cuts. Within this program, we were submerged in the field of Deaf Studies in a sign-bilingual environment wherein both deaf and hearing staff (including Paddy Ladd, Jim Kyle, Rachel Sutton-Spence, and other eminent Deaf Studies scholars), used British Sign Language. For us, it was an extremely nurturing place both personally and academically. Indeed, the CDS was the most important place in Europe for nurturing and practicing the development of the underrepresented areas in Deaf Studies mentioned earlier. The fact that the CDS does not exist anymore means that Deaf Studies as a field has lost a very important centralized and internationally recognized place of teaching, research, and exchange.

The MSc degree program in Bristol was (and the BA and MA degree programs in Gallaudet University are) important given that in most other scholarly contexts, Deaf Studies subjects are offered within the context of a (degree) program for sign language interpreters/teachers/researchers, educators, or audiologists (e.g., at HU Berlin, University of Hamburg, Herriot Watt University, Boston University). When looking at these programs' curricula and staffing, it appears that the underdeveloped areas of Deaf Studies mentioned earlier (e.g., the study of deaf people's everyday lives, and their communities) receive only minor attention and often are taught by experts in sign-language teaching or sign linguistics rather than by experts in other fields. Indeed, within the current neoliberal market-driven climate, Deaf Studies in the aforementioned sense is given only very little space, time, and funding to develop.

In addition to these institutes and programs, there are a few Deaf Studies-specific publications, journals, and conferences. Deaf Studies-specific journals include *Sign Language Studies*, *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, and *American Annals of the Deaf*. The second of these mostly publishes research that falls outside the scope of the field of Deaf Studies as we focus on it in this volume. Deaf Studies conferences are scarce in comparison to international conferences that focus on sign linguistics and deaf education, for example; and are found mostly in the United States rather than on the international level. For example, a series of Deaf Studies conferences were held in the United States in the 1990s, and biennial Deaf Studies Today conferences were organized in Utah between 2004 and 2014.

THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEAF STUDIES

Deaf Studies as an academic discipline emerged in the 1970s. The context of its emergence, more elaborately described in Murray (this

volume), originates in the birth of sign linguistics as an academic discipline in the 1950s and 1960s (Tervoort 1953, Stokoe 1960, Stokoe et al. 1965). These early sign linguists proved that sign languages were genuine full-fledged languages with complex structures, deserving academic scrutiny. American Sign Language, British Sign Language, and other sign languages (previously just known as “signing,” see Murray, this volume) became named as such and their parameters were explored. Crucial in the spirit of the age were the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, in which African Americans and later also Chicanos, people with disabilities, queer people, and women fought for equality (Bauman 2008a, Murray, this volume).

Within this broader academic and societal context, theory building on (and legitimization of the existence of) the American deaf community, and its culture, began (Padden 1980). Woodward (1975) suggested writing Deaf with capital D when referring to sociocultural aspects of deafness, analogous with national/ethnic group identities such as “Italians.” These perspectives challenged the medical-pathological view that deaf/disabled people are “broken” and should be “cured.” Concepts such as Deaf culture, Deaf pride, and Deaf identity were coined and explored. Padden (1980:92–93) defined Deaf culture as: a “set of learned behaviors of a group of people who have their own language, values, rules for behavior, and tradition, (...) Members of the Deaf culture behave as Deaf people do, use the language of Deaf people, and share the beliefs of Deaf people toward themselves and other people who are not Deaf.” Later on, theory on biculturalism and cultural hybridity emerged, which meant that deaf people were said to be part of both deaf and hearing cultures, of minority and majority cultures (Padden 1998, Ladd 2003).

Important publications written by both deaf and hearing scholars in this period described and explored “the Deaf community,” its history and culture, initially mostly in the United States and the United Kingdom (although a large number of brief accounts from all over the world were included in Erting et al. 1994). Seminal works published between 1980 and 2000 are Higgins (1980), Padden (1980), Baker and Battison (1981), Kannapell (1982), Kyle and Allsop (1982), Lane (1984b), Bienvenu and Columnos (1986, 1989), Van Cleve and Baker-Schenk (1987), Padden and Humphries (1988), Johnson and Erting (1989), Schein (1989), Wilcox (1989), Brien (1991), Carmel and Monaghan (1991), Gregory (1991), Taylor and Bishop (1991), Ladd (1992), Van Cleve and Crouch (1992), Fischer and Lane (1993), Erting et al. (1994), Cohen (1995), Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan (1996), Wrigley (1996), and the Deaf Studies Conference Proceedings (Washington DC, College of Continuing Education).

Murray (this volume) maps out how community activists interacting with academics jointly created the discipline of Deaf Studies in the United States, interactions that were particularly important in the work of the Linguistics Research Laboratory in Gallaudet University in the 1970s (Maher 1996). The Centre for Deaf Studies in Bristol was formally established in 1986 (but Deaf Studies research at the University of Bristol already had started in 1978); and initially also had a strong foundation within the local Bristol deaf community, by organizing certificate courses for the local deaf community and regular research dissemination events. The first decades of Deaf Studies thus featured a strong relationship among deaf communities, deaf people in academia, and hearing people in academia (also see Turner 2007).

Early Deaf Studies thus focused on overturning the dominant medical model in society, the educational system, and academia, including at Gallaudet University, where the medical-pathological perspective on deaf people was dominant (Murray, this volume, Turner 2007). The “culturo-linguistic model,” proposed by Ladd (2003), is the perspective on deaf communities as collectivities, minority language communities with their own cultures. This model challenges the individual medical-pathological model and supplements the “social model” of disability; the latter posits that society disables people, that society has to adapt to accommodate a range of abilities, and that society also is focused on individuals rather than communities or groups (Oliver 1990). The culturo-linguistic model (Ladd 2003) and the related ethnic group-perspective on deaf people (Eckert 2010, Lane 2005, Lane et al. 2011) often are used to distinguish (the study of) deaf people and disabled people.

A focus on addressing oppression was central to the overturning of dominant views in this period. Some authors identified parallels with other oppressed groups such as First Nations and some African peoples (Lane 1992, Ladd 2003). To address hegemonies, power imbalances, and inequalities between passive, dominated, oppressed deaf subjects and hearing colonizers/oppressors (mostly pastors, educators, and administrators), scholars coined or used concepts such as audism, colonialism, phonocentrism, hegemony, and paternalism (Bauman 2004, Humphries 1975, Lane 1992, Ladd 2003, Wrigley 1996). Closely connected with this identifying and challenging of oppression is the theme of decolonization, liberation, and empowerment (Jankowski 1997, Ladd 2003). Central to many discussions of deaf liberation are the Deaf President Now protest at Gallaudet University in 1988 (Christiansen & Barnartt 1995), Ladd’s (2003) discussion of “the Deaf Resurgence” in the United Kingdom, and his Deafhood concept, all of which aimed to challenge and overcome the oppressions experienced by deaf people.

THE CONCEPT OF DEAF CULTURE

The foundational concept of Deaf Studies is thus very much based upon a (monolithic/essentialist) dichotomy between “Deaf world/Deaf culture” and (an often hostile, discriminatory, and inaccessible) “hearing world” (Murray 2007). The article “How is Deaf Culture?” by Turner (1994) and the responses in *Sign Language Studies* (volumes 83–85, 1994), mark the surfacing of discourses that have become increasingly central to Deaf Studies during the past two decades. Turner (1994) criticized the fact that the understanding of “Deaf culture” hitherto had been dominated by Padden’s (1980) “static” account of Deaf culture. The latter constituted a checklist with identifiable characteristics and emphasized unity and homogeneity, thus suggesting a unitary (and one-sided) view of “the” American deaf community. Turner argued in favor of an anti-essentialist, fluid, dynamic, and processual view of deaf culture rather than a static one that lists “Deaf features” and describes Deaf communities as having well-defined boundaries (such as comprising only fluently signing white deaf people). He argues for understanding Deaf culture as a verb (in which dominances are reproduced) rather than consolidating representations of dominant deaf groups.

The set of responses in *Sign Language Studies* displayed a number of perspectives, both in agreement and disagreement with Turner. Ladd (1994, 2003) for example, while on a par with Turner in recognizing hybridity and complexity in deaf cultures and communities, nonetheless defended and consolidated the “Deaf culture” concept (and engaged with its critics in the process of doing so). Ladd (2003) argued the need for *strategic essentialism* after a long period of oralism, stating that deaf communities and researchers should be allowed to use essentialist notions, as a necessary first step in reframing and understanding Deaf communities and cultures after a century of oralism in education (Ladd 2003).

After 2005, the concepts of Deaf culture/community/identity and the d/D distinction were questioned or critically explored by an increased number of Deaf Studies scholars (such as Baynton 2008, Leigh 2009, De Clerck 2010, Kusters & De Meulder 2013, Kusters 2015, Friedner 2015, Sanchez 2015, Friedner, this volume). In response to Turner (1994), Johnston (1994:138) argued that the Deaf culture concept “may already be doing far more work than it was ever intended to do.” Indeed, “Deaf culture” has been used as an umbrella term to include embodied behavior such as waving or causing vibrations, the arts, technology, accessibility issues, and checklists of deaf “values” or “habits.”

Today we see an increasing tendency to use more specific terms for these various elements of “deaf culture,” rather than treating “deaf culture” as an overarching concept, even though there are authors, such as Mindess (2006) and Holcomb (2013), who perpetuate this perspective

along with overviews of Deaf cultural traits and rules. Indeed, while Deaf culture could refer to the arts, other concepts such as deaf ontologies (this volume), deaf epistemologies (Paul & Moores 2012), Deaf Gain (Bauman & Murray 2014), Deafnicity (Eckert 2010), deaf sociality (Friedner 2014, Kusters 2015), and deaf space (Mathews 2007, Gulliver 2009, Bauman 2014, Kusters 2015) are all terms that are used in different contexts to refer to different aspects of deaf experiences and lives. In addition, some scholars suggested that the way forward for Deaf Studies' maturation, was to let go of deaf "identity politics" (Davis 2008), the "Deaf culture" concept (Baynton 2008), and the concepts of phonocentrism and colonialism (Myers & Fernandes 2010).

DEAF ONTOLOGIES AND EPISTEMOLOGIES

A second problem with the foundational terminology in Deaf Studies, such as "Deaf culture," "Deaf community," and "Deaf identity," is that such concepts have become *top-down concepts*, leading to "frozen" ways of thinking and structuring descriptions and analyses of deaf lives (Friedner, this volume). Because the foundation of Deaf Studies has, indeed, been largely "reactive" and driven by a social justice agenda (Turner 2007, De Clerck 2010), Humphries (2008:41) stated that Deaf Studies scholars "need to achieve a balance between the rhetoric of talking culture that too often seeks to 'prove' something and talking culture that is about the circulation and acceleration of culture." Humphries (2008) suggested that the way forward was to focus on deaf ontologies and epistemologies. We interpret this as a focus on "the whole picture"—both oppression/inequalities and positive experiences.

Although an exploration of deaf ontologies also was central to the first decades of Deaf Studies scholarship (Murray, this volume), later scholarship makes the need to create bottom-up accounts of deaf ontologies and epistemologies more explicit, and regards them as *embodied* ones. Indeed, central in deaf ontologies are corporeality and embodied subjectivity, which means that our bodies influence our experiences and thoughts. We could speak of a sensory turn, by which we mean the renewed focus in deaf epistemologies and ontologies on the role of the visual (Bahan 2008, Baynton 2008, Hauser et al. 2010, O'Brien & Kusters, this volume) and tactile senses (Napoli 2014, Edwards 2015, Friedner & Helmreich 2012) (and also in architecture: see Bauman 2014). Neuropsychological research corroborates this focus on the senses (Capek et al. 2013, Cardin et al. 2013, Emmorey 2002, Sacks 1989). This sensory turn is crucial, because in much of early Deaf Studies scholarship a focus on the (broken) body was associated with the medical perspective and thus was to be avoided. It was exactly this early scholarship, however, (which established the foundations of the field as

not being about “deafness”) that allowed this return to the body from secure foundations.

An important example of a deaf ontological theory is Ladd’s (2003) Deafhood concept, a teleological open-ended essentialist concept centring on visual ontologies, deaf sameness, and liberation. It is essentialist because it states that deaf people are visual beings who should sign; liberating because it makes deaf people aware of, and helps them to cope with, detrimental effects of oppression; teleological because the ultimate aim is to become a signing deaf person who socializes with other deaf people; and open-ended because signing deaf people can develop in multiple ways. The concept resonated with many deaf people around the world, including many outside of academic contexts. It was discussed and explored in local deaf communities and applied in myriad ways (Kusters & De Meulder 2013).

Deaf epistemologies (Ladd 2003, De Clerck 2010, Paul & Moores 2012) are based on deaf ontologies. In response to Turner during the aforementioned debate in *Sign Language Studies*, Bahan (1994) pointed out that “Deaf culture” is an academic term, contrasting it with the signed concepts DEAF WORLD and DEAF WAY, and argued that it is important to investigate concepts used on the ground (further discussed in Murray, this volume; see Ladd 2003 for a similar argument). Another bottom-up investigation of deaf epistemologies is the exploration of the meaning of the widely used phrase “DEAF-SAME” in a variety of contexts, including international ones (Friedner & Kusters 2015). Friedner (2016) argues that valuing and checking for *understanding* together with other deaf people is a core feature of deaf ontologies and epistemologies. Authors in Bauman and Murray’s (2014) edited volume on Deaf Gain argue that deaf epistemologies contribute to human diversity. Sanchez (2015, this volume) employs what she terms “deaf insight” to interpret mainstream (i.e., non-deaf related) texts such as Charlie Chaplin’s work.

We argue that focusing on deaf epistemologies and ontologies is important because it acknowledges deaf people’s ways of being without “locking” their experiences in top-down, essentializing, imposed concepts and theories. Indeed, such a focus on bottom-up ways of creating knowledge in Deaf Studies can liberate us from constraining academic concepts and theories (see, for example, Lewis 2007), in addition to allowing us to experiment with new concepts such as “deaf sociality,” as mentioned earlier.

DIVERSITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Apart from the static theoretical apparatus of Deaf Studies, Deaf Studies scholars also have identified a second problem within the early Deaf Studies canon; although the cornerstones of the discipline have been

and still are essential for its maturation, they exclude people, reduce rights, and create marginalized communities through oppressive and rigid definitions of deaf peoples' relationships with one another and with hearing people. For example, Fernandes and Myers (2010:22) state that Deaf Studies "scholars are engaged in perpetuating a maladaptive myth rather than studying the reality of a complex group," and argue in favor of an "inclusive Deaf Studies" studying a wide variety of deaf people and (sign) language use, including people with different racial, ethnic, and language backgrounds, as well as different preferences with regard to use of amplification and signed/spoken language. The initial (unpublished⁴) resistance against Fernandes and Myers' (2010) piece was perhaps caused by the aforementioned fact that many scholars feel that forms of strategic essentialism (Ladd 2003) and strong promotion of sign language use (Bauman 2008b) are still needed in the young field of Deaf Studies.

In any case, particularly from the 1990s onward, we see an increasing focus on diverse deaf lives in Deaf Studies publications. *Open Your Eyes* (Bauman 2008), which emerged from a Deaf Studies think tank held at Gallaudet University in 2002, amplifies marginalized voices and considers how ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, family, and nationality shape the experience of being deaf. Other works that have addressed diversity within deaf communities are works on deafblind people (Clark 2014, Edwards 2015), deafdisabled people (Ruiz et al. 2015), CODAs (children of deaf adults) (Preston 1994, Bishop & Hicks 2009), deaf women (Brueggemann & Burch 2006, Fries 2013), class (Carmel 1997, Ladd 2003, Padden & Humphries 2005, De Meulder, this volume), deaf queer (Luczak 1993, 2007, Bienvenu 2008, Moges, this volume), deaf black/African Americans as minority (Dunn 1998, 2008, James & Woll 2004, Clark 2010, Stapleton 2014), deaf Latina/Latinos as minority (García-Fernandez 2014), deaf Asians as minority (Ahmad, Atkin & Jones 2002), deaf First Nations (Paris & Wood 2002), and so on. Such accounts are being increasingly, albeit slowly, incorporated into or discussed in mainstream Deaf Studies. In addition, scholars who are themselves members of such underrepresented groups are bringing their work into the spotlight (see Moges, this volume).

Paralleling this increasing diversity in Deaf Studies accounts, is a broader geographical coverage in edited volumes published after 2000 (although note that Erting et al., based on the *Deaf Way* [1989], was published in 1994), such as in *The Deaf Way II Reader* (Goodstein 2006), *Many Ways to Be Deaf* (Monaghan et al. 2003), *Deaf around the World* (Napoli & Mathur 2011), and Cooper and Rashid's (2015) edited volume on deaf

⁴ An important example of deaf discourses not finding their way into print; see further in the chapter.

people and signed languages in sub-Saharan Africa. Monographs also have been published, most of them focusing on deaf people in Africa and Asia; for example, China (Callaway 2000), Thailand (Reilly & Reilly 2005), Japan (Nakamura 2006), South Africa (Morgan 2012), Zimbabwe (VanGilder 2012), India (Friedner 2015), Ghana (Kusters 2015), Nepal (Hoffmann-Dilloway 2016), Việt Nam (Cooper in press) and Uganda (Lutalo-Kiingi & De Clerck forthcoming). There has been an increased interest in deaf lives in shared signing communities, too, which are (mostly rural) communities with a high rate of hereditary deafness (Nonaka 2004, 2014, Kisch 2007, 2008, Marsaja 2008, Kusters 2010a, 2015, MacDougall 2012).

Significantly, an increasing number of Deaf Studies contributions are written by scholars, such as anthropologists and international development scholars, doing research *in the global South*, and their works no longer exist in the margin but rather in the center of social and cultural Deaf Studies. (See Friedner, this volume, for a description and analysis of Deaf Studies work based in the global South.) It is important to mention, though, that almost all these works are written by scholars coming from, or based in, the global North. Moriarty Harrelson (this volume) discusses what this means in terms of ownership, representation, and power.

This emerging body of work in the global South often has combined local fieldwork with a focus on international interactions among deaf people. Other authors have focused explicitly on these interactions. Breivik et al. (2002), Breivik (2005), and Murray (2007) set up the foundations for the study of deaf transnationalism. Their research is based mostly on international conferences and sports events. The edited volume *It's a Small World* (Friedner & Kusters 2015) assembles a number of articles exploring how deaf people meeting each other in a wide variety of international contexts (such as camps, missions, research, and tourism), experience sameness and difference; including a focus on interactions between deaf people from the global North and the global South. This volume is one of the first to explicitly explore intersectionality within deaf worlds.

The theoretical and analytical lens of intersectionality helps us understand the importance and meaning of variables such as nationality, gender, ethnicity, religion, migration status, educational background, disability, and class in deaf–deaf interactions and in deaf signers' everyday interactions with hearing people. Crenshaw (1989) coined the concept of intersectionality in order to draw attention to multiple inequalities experienced by working-class black women in the United States. Intersectionality scholars have focused mostly on a gender–race–class triumvirate, arguing that people are doubly or triply oppressed because of patriarchy, racism, and classism (Crenshaw 2002). More dimensions have been added recently, including sexual

orientation, religion, age, and (dis)ability. A number of Deaf Studies scholars have focused on intersectionality (whether or not they employed the term) including Foster and Kinuthia (2003), Leigh (2009), Friedner and Kusters (2015), Ruiz et al. (2015), and, of course, the authors who worked on the aforementioned intersections (such as deaf and blind or deaf and part of an ethnic minority).

We think that for Deaf Studies, the definition of intersectionality as posited by Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013:795, our emphasis) is helpful: “what makes an analysis intersectional (...) is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of *sameness and difference and its relation to power*. This framing—conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always *permeated* by other categories, *fluid and changing*, always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power—emphasizes what intersectionality *does* rather than what intersectionality *is*.” This definition includes *both* the traditional focus on power, privilege, inequality, and oppression and attention to how intersections produce opportunities and/or empowerment.

An intersectional analysis examines how identities change one another’s meaning and impact. For example, deaf and migrant, deaf and blind, or deaf and researcher cannot be seen as additive or mutually constitutive, but rather as *mutually shaped*: Each identity is transformed by engaging with the others (Walby et al. 2012). Identities also can be “subordinate in some times and places and more dominant in others” (Anthias 2012:106–107). Deaf people negotiating multiple intersections might be privileged in some situations and disadvantaged in others. We believe that it is crucial that Deaf Studies scholars pay attention to diversity and intersectionality, not as separate strands of study, but as central to the core of the field, and to its methodology (see discussion later in this chapter). In order to do this, it may be time to move beyond the slippery language of identity, which as an analytical concept can “mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity)” (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:1).

THE d/D DISTINCTION

Related to the recognition of increasing diversity in deaf worlds, a number of researchers are moving away from the practice of using the term “Deaf” for signing deaf people and “deaf” for non-signing deaf people, instead preferring to use only “deaf”. We think that there are multiple problems with the capitalization of “deaf”, because “small d” (deaf) has come to mean “deaf people who do not sign and who affirm medicalized deafness and wear hearing aids” rather than just biologically deaf (as in not being able to hear). The d/Deaf distinction creates or perpetuates a *dichotomy* between deaf and Deaf people (even when trying to be

inclusive by writing “d/Deaf”), and it has caused practices and experiences of exclusion. This dichotomy is, in fact, an *oversimplification* of what is an increasingly complex set of identities and language practices, and the multiple positionalities/multimodal language use shown is impossible to represent with a simplified binary.

These problems also are noted by Woodward, who originally used the d/D distinction in 1975 (Woodward 1975) and who points out that many Deaf Studies scholars, including Padden and Humphries in their influential work (1988), have been mis-citing him (Woodward & Horejes 2016). Woodward and Horejes (2016) state that “a rigid taxonomy of deaf/Deaf is dangerous, colonizing, ethnocentric, and reinforces tautological and spiral debates with no positive constructions to the understanding of what it means to be deaf/Deaf. It starts with the misunderstanding of the origins of deaf/Deaf and why this distinction was originally made.” They point out that the distinction originally was made to emphasize that there is a sociocultural experience of being deaf, and that “deaf” was not meant to be connected to the “medical model” (which was Padden & Humphries’ [1988] interpretation), being “oral,” or as existing in opposition to “Deaf”: Indeed, people could be Deaf and deaf at the same time. Woodward and Horejes (2016) deplore that “The notion of d/D has become an ideological battlefield that further creates rigid and static notions of what being deaf means.”

Furthermore, we feel using “Deaf” is anachronistic when writing about deaf history and ethnocentric when applying it outside the Anglo-Saxon western context. As explained earlier, the use of “Deaf” was initiated in the early years of Deaf Studies, within a certain political and academic landscape that has changed and evolved considerably since then. Capitalizing groups and nationalities (such as “Italian”) is customary in the English language; but the capital “D” makes little sense in many other languages. It is also paternalistic, obscuring, and imposing: the capitalized “Deaf” is often used to describe the self-affirmation and pride of a group. But a deaf person who signs is not necessarily thinking actively about these issues. We think it is potentially problematic for scholars (both deaf and hearing) to “label” deaf people as Deaf, if these deaf people do not label themselves as such.

There have been other suggestions for writing conventions, none of which has really gained ground: *D/deaf* (Eckert 2010), *DeaF* (McIlroy & Storbeck 2010), *DEAF* (Gulliver 2009), and *DDBDDHH* (Ruiz et al. 2015). In a research context, we believe that complex labels are not helpful or transparent and that a single inclusive term might be more beneficial. Senghas (2016) suggests not using terms/capitalizations that need to be seen in print, given that they are hard to use during spoken or signed discussion. Other concepts that have been used are those of Sign Language Peoples (SLPs) (Ladd, Batterbury & Gulliver 2007) and the Finnish term *viittomakielinen* (sign language person) (Jokinen 2001); but

these are political and identity concepts respectively, rather than writing conventions, and there is discussion about whether and how these concepts include hearing people who sign.

If we hold that the d/Deaf dichotomy should cease being used within the community at large and within academic publications, we need to find a more inclusive term with more expansive possibilities. Is the way forward to use “Deaf” for every deaf person, or is it to use “deaf” for everyone (cf. most chapters in this book)? Many authors have used “deaf” for individuals and “Deaf” for sociocultural entities like “Deaf community” and/or established theoretical concepts, such as “Deaf culture” (e.g., Haualand 2012). In this case (which we for the most part have adopted in this introduction), “deaf” does not mean “oral/medical” but rather biologically/corporally deaf. We regard this term as the basis to which several layers can be added, such as “signers” (e.g., “deaf signers”). Note that the term “deaf signers” does not say anything about being able to use spoken language in addition to sign language or about variations in proficiency. Other categories or layers that could be attached to “deaf” are: use of speech, CI (cochlear implant), “Africans,” “people of color” (as in DPOC: deaf people of color), “queer,” “blind” (as in deafblind), “disabled” (as in deafdisabled) and so on. Thus, in this book, we define “deaf” as a term describing all kinds of deaf persons, including those who are hard of hearing. Yet, we want to emphasize that we acknowledge that there are benefits and values connected to capitalizing “Deaf”, and concurrently, several authors in this book have opted for this even after considering the aforementioned arguments (Moges, this volume, Mazique, this volume).

CURRENT THEORETICAL ISSUES AND TRENDS IN DEAF STUDIES

Later in this chapter, we outline a number of current theoretical trends in Deaf Studies. This is a nonexhaustive list: We also note an interest in deaf education (Ladd & Gonçalves 2012, O’Connell & Deegan 2014, Kusters, this volume, O’Connell, this volume, Ladd forthcoming), interest in Deaf and Disability Studies (Friedner, Moges, this volume, Sanchez 2015), and in art (Kochhar-Lindgren 2006, Schétrit 2016), for example. We also see a number of trends running through these different themes: increasing internationalization and attention to intersectionality.

Deaf Spaces and Networks

The study of deaf embodiment, as well as deaf ontologies, epistemologies, and histories is explicitly *spatialized* in the field of Deaf Geographies; that is, increasing attention is given to the spatial forms of social activities, social phenomena, and material things or locations (Gulliver & Kitzel 2016). The concept of “deaf space” emerged in the

2000s, around the time that a spatial turn was initialized in the social sciences in general, and several authors started to use the concept largely independently of one another (Heap 2003, Gulliver 2005, O'Brien 2005, Mathews 2007, Murray 2007, Valentine & Skelton 2008). Closely related to "deaf space" is the concept of "networks" (see, for example, Heap 2003, Kusters 2017). After these initial works, several scholars, mostly with backgrounds in architecture, geography, and anthropology, have picked up on "deaf space" and/or "deaf geographies" and used/expanded them in their theories on historical geographies (Gulliver 2009, Kitzel 2014, Shaw 2015), architecture (Malzkuhn 2007, Sangalang 2012, Bauman 2014, Edwards & Harold 2014), urban and rural geographies (Kusters 2010b, 2015, 2017), international deaf spaces (Friedner & Kusters 2015), and mobilities (İlkbaşıran 2015, Kusters 2017).

Languageing and Language Ideologies

Current Deaf Studies research marks an increasing focus on everyday language use and language ideologies. Outside Deaf Studies, in the current sociolinguistics of diversity, scholars explore multimodality, multilingualism, and translanguaging (combining features of various languages in order to make oneself understood; see García & Wei 2014) in spoken languages. These scholars explore how visual-kinetic-spatial elements (e.g., gesture) are part of spoken languages. Similarly, fingerspelling and mouthing are part of most sign languages; and people often rapidly switch between language modalities (signing, writing, speech) when making themselves understood to (deaf or hearing) people who do not share the same first language. Indeed, today there is less need to defend sign languages as *languages*—this is now an established fact in Deaf Studies, although not in all other academic disciplines and not at a policy level.

The establishment of sign languages as languages (at least within Deaf Studies) allows scholars to explore more freely how everyday languageing works. This is not limited to national sign languages, but includes gesture (Kusters forthcoming), International Sign (Napier & Rosenstock 2015), and regional/local sign languages (Nyst 2012). An increasing number of scholars (both sign linguists and Deaf Studies scholars) explore languageing strategies in which various resources are selected and mixed, such as in deaf education (Swanwick 2015), customer interactions (Hoffmann-Dilloway 2016, Kusters forthcoming), villages (Nyst 2012, Green 2014a), within deaf communities (Palfreyman forthcoming), deaf international contacts (Green 2015, Zeshan 2015), and interpreting situations (Haualand et al. 2016, Napier 2016), in both the global North and in the global South.

We also see a growing interest in language ideologies (although the relationships between language ideologies and language practices are under-researched). Recent accounts on language ideologies

include Schmalting (2003), Hoffmann-Dilloway (2011), Reagan (2011), Hill (2012), Green (2014a, 2014b), Kusters (2014), Safar (2014), Cooper (2015), Cooper and Nguyễn (2015), İlkbaşıran (2015), Krausneker (2015), Moges (2015a), Van Herreweghe et al. (2015), and Hou (this volume). Many of these works explore language ideologies not just of sign languages versus spoken languages but also of hierarchies of sign languages, again in both the global North and the global South.

Given the current climate of many hearing parents and deaf children being advised against using sign language (Humphries et al. 2012), we strongly believe that a distinction should be made between *studying* language practices and *promoting* them. We believe that although the study can include deaf people's fluid and hybrid language practices as they are, the promotion of language practices needs to focus on multilingualism and sign language rights rather than on the interrelationships among various modalities.

Citizenship and Rights

Increasing attention is being paid to deaf communities' political practices and aspirations. This knowledge and theory building happens in several domains. One is the recognition of sign languages. Previously, attention merely went to the need for this recognition and included overviews of which countries had recognition laws (Krausneker 2000, 2009, Timmermans 2005, Reagan 2006). Current scholarship marks an increasing number of researchers investigating deaf communities' aspirations for sign language recognition and how the communities work with their governments to achieve these goals, the outcomes and implementation of recognition legislation, and the disparity between deaf communities' expectations and governments' intentions during the drafting of legislation (McKee 2011, Quer 2012, De Meulder 2015, 2016, McKee & Manning 2015, Murray 2015, De Meulder & Murray in press).

Other researchers have investigated sign language policies from an equality perspective or compared (outcomes of) various pieces of sign language legislation (Conama 2010, Reffell & McKee 2009). Another strand of research to receive increasing attention, is that of (differentiated) citizenship and group rights, in which deaf communities seek to accommodate their particular group's needs and practices (Emery 2006, 2009, Cooper & Rashid 2015, De Meulder & Murray in press, Mazique, this volume). Although deaf communities generally do not resist their inclusion in society, they want to decide on the terms and conditions for this inclusion, and achieve it without the loss of their identities. This also has been termed "difference-aware equality," "substantive equality" (Conama 2013) or "co-equality" (Murray 2007). It requires a renegotiation of the social contract for deaf communities, namely, a process of renegotiation in policy arenas in order to reflect adequately

deaf peoples' experience as citizens (Emery 2006). The claim for group rights also has been taken up in a more direct academic critique and reflection on policies and legislation, such as the discourse used by the World Federation of the Deaf and by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (De Meulder 2014, Kusters et al. 2015).

Value and Deaf Gain

The common belief that deafness limits a person in many ways is challenged by the perspective that deaf people contribute to wider society and human diversity. These perspectives are consolidated in the concept "Deaf Gain" (Bauman & Murray 2014). Deaf people contribute to human diversity in a myriad of ways: biodiversity (visucentrism), linguistic and cultural diversity (sign languages), design and architecture, and so on. In the same line, Friedner (2013, 2015) contends that in India, deafness actually becomes a source of (ambivalent) value for deaf people as they interact with nongovernmental organizations, with employers in the global information technology sector, and with the state, when these stakeholders embrace deafness as a source of productive labor and a way of making themselves look good to others. Cooper (2015) narrates how tourism agencies catering to the needs of deaf tourists are set up; thus making a profit out of providing signed guides. Such contributions make clear that the Deaf Gain concept is a double-edged sword, and can place deaf people in disadvantaged positions (also see Sanchez, this volume, for a criticism of only focusing on "the positive"). Friedner (2013, 2015), for example, points out that an uncritical focus on Deaf Gain can cover up class issues and the unhappiness and oppression of workers by seeing deaf workers as ideal and idealized diverse neoliberal "workers with disability," performing "productivity" and "contributing to society" while not making claims or engaging in contentious politics.

Deaf Futures and Sustainable Development

Last but not least, current Deaf Studies research demonstrates a growing concern regarding deaf communities' future existence, with research on the impact and ethics of genetic evolutions (Blankmeyer Burke 2011, Bryan & Emery 2014, Emery & Ladd forthcoming, Mazique, this volume), the future vitality of sign languages (Bickford et al. 2014, McKee & Vale 2014, De Meulder 2016, De Meulder & Murray in press), deaf communities' sustainable development (Cooper & Rashid 2015, De Clerck & Paul 2015, Lutalo-Kiingi & De Clerck 2015, VanGilder 2012), and a beginning of attempts to shape Deaf Legal Theory (Bryan & Emery 2014).

It could be argued that these forward-looking research projects are taking advantage of the security offered by previous work in Deaf

Studies, which established the viability of sign languages as languages in their own right, and of deaf communities as sociolinguistic groups. In this sense, newer research in Deaf Studies is building on the foundations laid by those who came before.

STRENGTHENING THE DISCIPLINE OF DEAF STUDIES

Although Deaf Studies certainly has been a *multidisciplinary* field, we believe that it has not been *interdisciplinary*. Indeed, Deaf Studies has been inspired by, and has borrowed and built on theories from other fields, but only seldom has made interventions into other fields. Ladd (2003) and Bechter (2008) already emphasized that Deaf Studies research can impact other disciplines, but we believe that only now are we effectively and increasingly making those contributions rather than only talking about them (Sanchez 2015, this volume). One of the obstacles to this has been that Deaf Studies' theoretical apparatus has not been as intensively updated as those of other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. Awareness of, and participation in, current theoretical debates in other disciplines is crucial to making interventions in them.

Today, the contributions of scholars doing Deaf Studies are becoming more visible as they increasingly are published in mainstream journals and by mainstream presses. Perhaps this is one of the strengths of having a growing number of people focusing on Deaf Studies while having had training in other fields. Because publishing in international peer-reviewed journals (in addition to grant writing) is one of the most demanding and competitive academic activities, this is a significant achievement of scholars in the field. "Infiltrating the academy" in this way also means that we are claiming a space of authority as insiders and experts and thus creating conditions for change via research and teaching.⁵

In mainstream fields, for example, all theorizing is deeply grounded in (the assumption of) the use of spoken languages. By engaging with these fields, Deaf Studies not only questions compliance with hegemonic audiocentric and audist structures and authoritative voices but also includes and affirms the embodied "poiesis" ("making") (Calhoun et al. 2013) of deaf people by studying steadily complexifying communicative events and structures. Deaf Studies also can offer insights into wider research on sociality, social formations, ethics, spatiality, language policy and language planning, politics, and literature (Sanchez, this volume), to name but a few areas of potential contribution. These developments (i.e., engaging with, and contributing to, broader current

⁵ Thanks to Joseph Murray for this insight.

debates) also mean that getting research funding will become more achievable, particularly in Europe, for example, where research is driven by the need for funding grants to a greater extent than it is in the United States.

Importantly, we believe that making these interventions and building these bridges can only be successful if the discipline has a stronger foundation as a field. Indeed, Deaf Studies does not consist of a unified, coherent, cohesive package (Turner 2007, CDS 2008). Turner (2007:11) states that “a carefully-textured, dovetailing program of scholarship was a luxury the field could not afford,” because of external push-and-pull factors, such as availability of funding and certain governmental initiatives. The recent demise of *Deaf Worlds—International Journal of Deaf Studies*, along with the lack of specialized conferences, also has a deleterious effect on the future development and consolidation of the field. The Deaf Studies Today conferences in Utah were American rather than international and have been discontinued, and the International Deaf Academics and Researchers conference series is organized for deaf scholars working in all fields, rather than with a specific focus on Deaf Studies. A regularly scheduled international Deaf Studies conference would enable the field to be consistently deepened, expanded, and innovated.

HEARING HEGEMONY IN DEAF STUDIES

Having established a brief history of the field as well as several new trends, the remainder of this introduction will focus on the position of deaf and hearing scholars in Deaf Studies. In other words, we consider the question: “Who is doing Deaf Studies?” Several ground-breaking works in Deaf Studies were published by deaf scholars: Padden and Humphries’ (1988) and Ladd’s (2003) classics are by far the most cited in Deaf Studies, and many authors in *Open Your Eyes* (Bauman 2008) are deaf, too. They are exceptions, however, because most other authors and editors of Deaf Studies publications are hearing.

A particular traditional pattern in Deaf Studies is that deaf scholars were (and many still are) employed as assistants in the planning and conduct of research: They acted as language models, research assistants, and cultural guides (Baker-Schenk & Kyle 1990) rather than as lead researchers. (See Murray, this volume, however, for an extensive review of the role of deaf scholars in early Deaf Studies in the United States.) These deaf researchers often served as important bridges between deaf communities and hearing researchers who lacked a previous knowledge of sign language and of deaf cultural behaviors or expectations (Jones & Pullen 1992). Many deaf researchers have felt exploited because they did not receive adequate credit for or ownership of their work (Singleton et al. 2012, 2014). Deaf researchers or

research assistants were often the only deaf persons on their research team (though there were exceptions, such as at Gallaudet University; see Murray, this volume), and their input and opinions were thus not monitored by other deaf people (Baker-Schenk & Kyle 1990, Ladd 2002). Therefore, the deaf researcher's "cultural representativeness" was sometimes called into question (Young & Ackerman 2001).

In their position as a bridge, deaf research assistants also had to explain/justify the project to their communities and participants, sometimes without having full knowledge/understanding of its theoretical frame, and they risked being regarded as betraying deaf communities in their association with hearing researchers (Baker-Schenk & Kyle 1990). Indeed, because of negative experiences with hearing professionals in deaf education and in other contexts, hearing researchers often were regarded with suspicion or mistrust, just as some of the deaf people who worked with them were regarded (Ladd 2003; De Meulder, this volume).

It must be acknowledged that hearing researchers have taken different positions. Baker-Schenk and Kyle (1990), both hearing themselves, classified hearing scholars in Deaf Studies, demonstrating their awareness of positionalities of, and differences among, hearing scholars. These included different rates of involvement with deaf researchers and issues in deaf communities, different levels of signing proficiency, different motivations for doing Deaf Studies, different positive and negative experiences in doing research on or with deaf people, differences in involvement in advocacy efforts, and different attitudes toward deaf researchers and deaf communities. Similarly, and focusing on hearing professionals in general, Hoffmeister and Harvey (1996) identify a number of ways in which these professionals became interested in working with deaf people; such as having deaf parents, having met a deaf person, having become fascinated by sign language, wanting to improve the quality of life of deaf people, and/or being convinced that deaf people need help, guidance, or religious salvation. Hoffmeister and Harvey also identify a number of different relational postures (which can combine, alternate and/or conflict in the same individual); such as being freedom fighters; blaming deaf people for their problems; idealizing deaf people (and feeling betrayed afterward); experiencing deep distress over deaf people's problems; or wanting to immerse themselves totally in deaf communities. They argue that hearing professionals have to work out their reasons for working with deaf people; and that "Deaf and hearing professionals must co-create a mechanism for exercising a shifting balance of power" (94).

Although such classifications and enumerations can be regarded as essentialist, awareness of the existence of these diverse experiences and attitudes helps us to avoid, for example, defining hearing academics in Deaf Studies as a monolithic "oppressor." However, Baker-Schenk and

Kyle's and Hoffmeister and Harvey's work are exceptions. As Sutton-Spence and West (2011:422) note, there is "almost no debate about the tricky epistemological and ontological ground navigated by hearing people who work in Deaf Studies." They continue that "[t]he problem of Hearingness remains the elephant in the room" and that "[a] productive, (de)constructive exploration of the place of Hearing people within Deaf Studies has yet to occur" (425). Turner (2007:12) wonders: "have we at all effectively uncovered the power relations and machinations of interest groups at work within our field? Too often, I suspect, the ways in which any one group may take advantage of its social position in relation to another pass without comment because it is considered politically unacceptable or inexpedient to make an issue of what is known and seen, but can't be admitted."

For a productive exploration of deaf-hearing relationships in academia, discussion cannot be reduced to a set of methodological, technical issues or attitudes of researchers, but has to be positioned within broader sociocultural patterns and power relations (Jones & Pullen 1992). O'Brien and Emery (2014) point out that this broader sociopolitical context was not discussed in Sutton-Spence and West's article (in contrast to Young & Ackerman's [2001], for example). O'Brien and Emery (2014:29) urge hearing academics within Deaf Studies to look at the big picture and write, "While the numbers of Deaf academics are increasing, their influence, cultural or otherwise, over the fields in which they work remains miniscule." They continue: "it is vital that hearing academics face up to the context within which Deaf Studies operates; that is, a sociocultural-political society in which d/Deaf people do not enjoy equality" (also see Ladd 2002).

In an attempt to face up to this context, Napier and Leeson (2016) state they want to acknowledge this "elephant in the room" up front at the beginning of their book, discussing several aspects in relation to their position as hearing researchers. They identify themselves "as 'Deaf (hearing)'; that is, as hearing people we align ourselves with deaf people and their values based on our long involvement in the community, and we bring that subjectivity to our writing" (6). They acknowledge that despite this long involvement and their strong philosophy of collaboration, they are not deaf and are allies of "the deaf community" and guests in it. They recognize the power they have as hearing people in the community and the historical backdrop of hearing researchers dominating the field of Deaf Studies. They acknowledge they have "hearing privilege," although they say this does not always entail a negative position, and that this privilege can be accepted and used positively "to broker engagement and educate inside and outside the community" (11).

While acknowledging and discussing their position honestly and openly, Napier and Leeson (2016) also in some way place themselves

outside the debate, by stating that “neither of us see ourselves as positioned only in Deaf Studies” (9). They see their work within a broader context of applied linguistics and intercultural communication, “and the languages that we work with happen to include sign languages” (9). This volume demonstrates that virtually no so-called Deaf Studies research is positioned solely in Deaf Studies and that in most cases it increasingly entails interdisciplinary research. Drawing parallels with Black Studies, Napier and Leeson (2016) further state that “the key difference, however, is that white people cannot become black but hearing people can learn to sign. Thus our focus is on *sign language use*, not *deafness*” (9). This comparison with black people does not work because it is comparing apples (skin color) with pears (language use), and the separation of sign language use from deafness does not take the aforementioned “big picture” (of power and hegemony in Deaf Studies and sign language research) (Ladd 2002) into account. The comparison also is reminiscent of Young and Temple’s (2014) pointing at parallels between Deaf people and women/feminism: “There may be people who find it difficult to swallow the idea that two hearing women have written a book about research with d/Deaf people. Is this because we are hearing or women? Or is it both?” (187). They go on to argue that women *also* experience discrimination and oppression in academic structures, an argument that is similarly unhelpful.

In our eyes, the question is not whether particular (fluently signing) hearing researchers *can* or *cannot* do research in Deaf Studies, indeed many hearing researchers have done high quality research within Deaf Studies. We believe that hearing researchers do not need to defend their doing Deaf Studies work per se, but it’s vital that they think and write about their positionalities. The above mentioned hearing researchers’ discussions of positionality are an important first step. An increasing number of hearing scholars within Deaf Studies (in the broad sense, including sign language research and interpreting research) do work on a par with deaf scholars and contribute towards enhancing deaf scholars’ careers, challenging the existing patterns of hearing hegemony.

We believe, though, that increasing numbers of deaf scholars holding PhDs and/or being in positions of lead researcher (rather than assistants or coordinators), and thus having risen in academic hierarchies, already should have contributed to a more extensive extent to redressing the aforementioned sociopolitical/hierarchical imbalances. In the past few years, a trend seems to have developed for high-profile presses to publish *handbooks* and *textbooks* on sign language (and to a lesser extent, Deaf Studies) theory and methodology—again, by hearing authors or editors working without deaf coauthors or coeditors. This is problematic since textbooks and handbooks carry a lot of authority and are often used for teaching and referencing. Examples include Marschark and Spencer (2003,

2011, 2016), Brentari (2010), Pfau, Steinbach, and Woll (2012), Young and Temple (2014), Orfanidou, Woll, and Morgan (2015), Napier and Leeson (2016), Baker, van den Bogaerde, Pfau, and Schermer (2016)—contrasting with Gertz and Boudreault (2016) and Bakken Jepsen, De Clerck, Lutalo-Kiingi, and McGregor (2015) where all or some of the editors are deaf. Redressing the balance will happen only if the number of deaf (co-)editors and (co-)authors of textbooks and handbooks increases. This volume is an important step in that direction. Another example is that as of 2016, the editorial board of the Gallaudet University Press journal *Sociolinguistics in Deaf Communities* is headed by a deaf scholar (Dr. Jordan Fenlon), and the four new scholars who were subsequently added to the editorial board are all deaf. We also believe that the growing number of deaf scholars will further influence the course that Deaf Studies is taking. For example, we hope that the future will lead to more methodologies designed/adapted for and by deaf people; sustainable relationships with deaf communities; and research themes that are close to deaf people's everyday life experiences and concerns, indeed, to deaf ontologies. Authors in this volume demonstrate several examples, which are summarized here.

DEAF SCHOLARS IN DEAF STUDIES

Deaf Studies scholars who are deaf have increasingly explained and explored the links among ontologies, research practice, and positionality, and between research practice and relationships with deaf communities. Thus the role of deaf scholars is being (re)defined. In such explorations, a number of themes, concerns, and positive and negative observations were consistently present. Before commencing to summarize them here, it is important to recognize that deaf scholars usually have literacy and educational privileges as compared to most other deaf people, and that these are fundamental assets for advancing in academia. It also appears that many deaf scholars have been mainstreamed for all or most of their education (which is the case for almost all the authors of this book). This is unsurprising given that in the United States and Europe, many deaf children have been mainstreamed since the 1970s/1980s.

In addition, we observe that deaf scholars who pursue academic careers often have been privileged according to majority society perspectives, such as having more/better hearing (without or with technology such as cochlear implants) and/or being able to use/understand spoken language. Some also have had the advantage of being surrounded by deaf/signing family members. With many deaf scholars we observe a strong will to "survive (in) the system." As such, most deaf scholars of the current generation are not representative of wider deaf

communities, do not necessarily identify with the “classic native deaf” model, and generally have very different backgrounds from the first generation of deaf scholars in Deaf Studies, as discussed in Murray’s and De Meulder’s chapters. The effects of (lacking) the aforementioned resources are poorly understood, or are debated and dismissed, as, for example, by Fernandez and Myers (2010). Indeed, this background calls into question what it means to produce deaf ontologies in a way that potentially could expand or rupture the native deaf narratives of the 1980s and 1990s (De Meulder, this volume).⁶

It is thus important to be aware of and transparent about the aforementioned privileges and resources, and it is equally important to be aware of intersectionality not only in research (as discussed earlier) but also in researcher positionality. In this book, for example, there is diversity with regard to authors’ gender and sexual orientation, hearing status (including both deaf and hard-of-hearing people), being deafblind or deafdisabled, use of hearing technology, ethnicity/nationality, and location of research projects. Diverse life experiences and diverse forms of embodiment shape our perspectives, thus having authors of under-represented backgrounds seemed crucial.

We encountered problems, however, in finding authors from these underrepresented groups. For example, we would have liked to see more diversity with regard to authors’ national background or residence, given that all authors included here are based in the global North, more particularly in the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Belgium, and Norway. Some deaf scholars from the global South study/work in Deaf Studies in the global North but very few conduct research in the global South, and very few pursue an academic career. Although there are a number of deaf scholars originating in the global South who are working as sign linguists, activists/lobbyists, or leading intervention-based work, we looked, in vain, for deaf people in the global South who worked in the underrepresented field of social, cultural, literary, and political Deaf Studies *and* could write for the book, in English. Indeed, there are a number of Deaf Studies scholars in, for example, Brazil, who do work in these areas of Deaf Studies, but who publish in Portuguese. Being unable to offer financial aid for translating their work to English, we could not include their contributions. This is all the more an indication that Deaf Studies, in the sense of the study of deaf ontologies and epistemologies is a very Western and English-dominated discipline (also see Friedner, this volume). We are well aware that deaf scholars in other scholarly traditions will have developed different interests and we do not claim that our accounts necessarily reflect broader perspectives of deaf communities or deaf scholars globally.

⁶ Thanks to Joseph Murray and Paddy Ladd for pointing this out.

Because there is enormous diversity among deaf scholars, we want to emphasize that it is not our purpose to essentialize their experiences in the sections that follow. Some experiences could prove recognizable to hearing scholars in Deaf Studies, too, and some experiences could prove recognizable to some, but not to other deaf scholars. Rather, we aim to pay attention to “the big picture” (Ladd 2002) and to explore which issues deaf scholars encounter. In the first ever methodology textbook in Deaf Studies, Young and Temple (2014) defined methodology as not just about methods but about position, performance, identity, and associated epistemology; but they did not venture into implications for method or design from a deaf ontological perspective. Both of the authors are hearing, and one has, by her own admission, had little or no contact with deaf communities. There is a wealth of literature in other fields (such as Disability Studies, anthropology and sociology) on positionality, reflexivity, and the position of underrepresented researchers (such as migrants, women, people of color, or people with disabilities), and many of us have been inspired by texts from these fields (see, for example, De Meulder 2007, Hauland, this volume). Although discussing these works is outside of the scope of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge their influence on our work.⁷

Thus, what we want to do in the section that follows, is point out some experiences of deaf scholars in Deaf Studies, their positionality, and their methodologies. Most of these experiences are related to ethnographic research, because ethnography implies personal contact between researchers and research participants, which has caused reflections on positionality.

DEAF SCHOLARS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Generally, deaf scholars are more likely to get access to deaf ontologies and epistemologies in the communities they investigate compared with hearing scholars: Deaf people often open up more easily to a deaf researcher (Sutherland & Rogers 2014, Moges 2015b). Within international contexts, deaf ethnographers often are invited by deaf research participants to take part in, and thus gain insight into, the lives of research participants (Dikyuva et al. 2012, Kusters 2012, Boland et al. 2015, Hauland, this volume, Hou, this volume; and see Moriarty-Harrelson, this volume, for a longer discussion). In this context, deaf researchers also often make use of networks in the global deaf community to connect with research participants in other countries (Boland et al. 2015, Dikyuva et al. 2012). Deaf scholars also have reported that

⁷ Thanks to Hilde Hauland for pointing this out.

they acquired access to marginalized or underrepresented *hearing* peoples' experiences, such as in Hauschildt's (2010) research on CODAs and Zehnter's (2014) research on homeless people in New York. Similarly, Sanchez (this volume) powerfully demonstrates how what she terms "deaf insight" (insights based on deaf epistemology) brings particular perspectives into literature that are not related to deaf people in the first place.

Connected with the previous point, deaf scholars often have the necessary linguistic capital (O'Brien & Emery 2014) through which to make these connections with other deaf people. They often have or acquire a better understanding/knowledge of national/regional/local sign languages and variants, as well as International Sign, used by research participants. These sign languages/variants might be known or unknown in advance of the research: Indeed, deaf scholars often quickly learn new sign languages or variants (Breivik et al. 2002, Dikyuva et al. 2012), although they also have made use of local interpreters who knew more than one sign language, such as ASL and another national sign language (Wilson & Winiarczyk 2014). Generally, deaf scholars are better able to suit specific communication needs, to interpret subtle body language (Sutherland & Rogers 2014), and to have insight in the meaning of particular idioms or concepts in sign languages (Young & Ackerman 2001). They also are more likely to have or attain access to discourses in informal deaf gatherings, which is very important because recording interviews (with or without an interpreter) is a much more formal activity that (ideally) is often complemented with participant observation.

Deaf scholars also are likely to understand certain experiences from the inside out (Sutherland & Rogers 2014) (even when they have enjoyed more privileges in comparison to their research participants), because they have had the same (or similar) experiences as their participants. Examples include being deaf signers, being the only deaf signer in their family, barriers and oppression in public places, lack of communication with family and colleagues, being offered wheelchairs in airports, and being provided menus in Braille. Indeed, Sutton-Spence and West (2011:423) observe that hearing scholars in Deaf Studies "can go up to the fence and look through, but we cannot cross." This could equally apply, however, to the current generation of often mainstreamed deaf scholars, who may not be able to understand fully or appreciate the ontologies following from a deaf-school background, often the background of people who are considered to be more traditional or core members of deaf communities.

Deaf scholars often experience emotional and personal involvement and personal curiosity in the communities where they do research, even in communities where they had no previous involvement (Dikyuva et al. 2012). Kusters (this volume) explains that she feels responsible for doing research into deaf pedagogies with the ultimate aim of