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Sustaining Voice Through Leadership: How Do Deaf Leaders Sustain Voice in Challenging Dominant Systems

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SUSTAINING VOICE THROUGH LEADERSHIP: HOW DO DEAF LEADERS SUSTAIN
VOICE IN CHALLENGING DOMINANT SYSTEMS

DARLENE GONCZ ZANGARA

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program
of Antioch University
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled:

**SUSTAINING VOICE THROUGH LEADERSHIP:
HOW DO DEAF LEADERS SUSTAIN VOICE IN CHALLENGING DOMINANT SYSTEMS**

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Abstract

The vehicle in communicating cultural identity, recognition, and justice is voice. Reclaiming or sustaining one's voice is to stand up for what one believes in, or to preserve one's identity and place in society. The deaf individual or any other marginalized individual is expected to proceed through a series of deliberations to determine favorable actions that will be persuasive, with the goal of embracing the voice of the marginalized. The deaf individual's voice or meaningful intentions will need to be effectively interpreted into mainstream American society's language and paradigms. This requires one to reconstruct the meanings and mediate the facts and historical stories through his/her cultural lens into a language that mainstream American society is accustomed to hearing and experiencing. This is a daunting challenge and a burden for those who do not mediate multiple cultures and languages effectively. The methodology for this research will be descriptive phenomenology. This phenomenological research will focus on lived experience and elicit rich, deep descriptions. The focus of these lived experiences will be uncovered through dialogues with deaf leaders. The aim is to uncover deeper meanings surrounding the leadership relationship between the deaf leader and the dominant system. Themes will be identified and descriptions will capture the essence of the interviews. The focal question for the phenomenological research is: How do deaf leaders sustain voice in challenging dominant culture/systems? The sub-questions are: 1) Are there specific leadership qualities that are unique among deaf leaders leading in challenging dominant culture/system? 2) Are deaf leaders challenged with traditional leadership in relation to their cultural lens, myopic views, or systemic thinking of the dominant culture/system to their own cultural lens? 3) How do deaf leaders position themselves to sustain voice and effect change?

The document concludes with implications for leadership and change. An electronic version of this dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center www.ohiolink.edu/etd.

Author's Note

The word *voice* represents a unit of expression including standing up for oneself, defending a position and asserting one's rights. However, deaf community views the word *voice* as a representation of the dominant culture and the English language. Voice also represents a vocal sound, speech, and utterance. While, the deaf community utilizes their hands to *vocalize* oneself, the word does not fit in the American Sign Language vocabulary. Since, the word *voice* is not readily translated into American Sign Language. The American Sign Language translation for *voice* produces multiple, descriptive sign phrases to capture the meaning. American Sign Language does not have an equitable sign to represent *voice*. For the purpose of this study, the word *voice* will be finger spelled v-o-i-c-e. The word *voice* will not be signed or elaborated for the Participants. The signed descriptions of *voice* will be left up to the deaf Participants and captured on video. At the time of the research, the author is unable to find an appropriate word that would satisfy both cultures, Deaf and American mainstreamed society and both languages, American Sign Language and English.

A description of terms can be found in Appendix A. This will provide the readers with definitions of terms used in the Deaf community and deafness related jargon.

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Chapter I: Introduction

I have witnessed and listened to deaf leaders' stories of their leadership experiences, change situations, and quests for voice. A common thread in their stories is the constant traversing, adapting, and positioning within their macro and micro experiences in advocacy, leading, and sustaining voice in intricate and multifaceted dominant systems. Leaders like me are constantly seeking resources, models, and an understanding to produce optimal outcomes. Capturing the essence of the deaf leaders' trials and tribulations offers these opportunities.

Newman (2006) wrote a treasured narrative history of the life and times of the presidents of the National Association of the Deaf. The historical accounts of deaf culture and struggles that the presidents endured in sustaining voice were captured in the stories. Newman stated,

presidents of NAD brought leadership to a peak of dedication and personified volunteerism at a high level in terms of wielding a great influence on the rights and progress of deaf people. These are the leaders who withstood the slings and arrows that come from holding office, and who stepped down with sweet memories of their vision, (realized or not) their determination and a gratifying sense of accomplishment. They have, indeed, left their *footprints on the sands of time*. (pp.6-7)

In spite of these enduring footprints, the deaf community has battled with stereotypes, oppression, and discrimination since the era of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers.

Aristotle, whose works influenced many people through the Middle Ages, observed that “of all of the senses, hearing contributes the most to intelligence and knowledge—by accident, since sound is contingently the vehicle of thought” (Lane, 1984, pp.91-92). The earliest documented narratives of deaf leadership and sustaining voice began with Robert P. McGregor, the first National Association of the Deaf president. McGregor, a native Ohioan, was an astute and dynamic speaker, prolific writer, and dedicated servant leader. McGregor's leadership surfaced when he was dismayed at the ardent attempts of educators to pigeonhole deaf children to one method of communication—the oral method where signs were not allowed to be used.

McGregor, who was a deaf teacher at the time, was in the “forefront espousing the resentment of deaf people to the systematic propaganda, intolerant and frequently untruthful ...to deceive people in favor of oralism” (Newman, 2006, p. 12) (refer to Appendix A for definition of terms). The Milan Edict in 1880 proclaimed that speech and lip reading were the only way to educate deaf children. This elicited the passion and anger in McGregor as well as many deaf Americans. A convention of many deaf Americans and leaders gathered in Cincinnati, Ohio, to establish the National Association of the Deaf (NAD). Their first tasks were to elect Robert McGregor as the first NAD president and to draft a proclamation to support manual language as the tool to educate deaf children. The convention closed with this statement. “Long live! —Long live the emancipation of the deaf” (Newman, 2006, p. 12)! The year 1880 was probably the turning point in deaf history that defined deaf leadership and the resolute lifetime journey in advocacy and sustaining voice of the deaf community.

Another poignant event that significantly threatened the deaf community was Alexander Graham Bell’s question about whether intermarriage between deaf people should be permitted. Bell was an influential scientist who invented the telephone. In “Memoir upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race,” a paper presented before the American Academy of Sciences in New Haven, Connecticut (Newman, 2006), he explained that it was possible to modify breeds of animals through careful selection process. He claimed that this method could be duplicated to modify the varieties of the human race. This was distressing because Bell was propagating a form of eugenics by careful selection of parents to improve the human race. Bell wanted to stop deaf people from marrying deaf people to prevent deaf offspring. Dr. Bell stated that he would do away with all day and residential schools because he believed that herding all deaf children under one roof was cruel. He claimed that the socializing environment of the

schools would encourage lifetime bonds and encourage intermarriage. Sadly, this misguided information encouraged doctors to perform sterilization procedures on many children born deaf. With power, money, and influence, Bell was definitely a man to be feared among the deaf community (Newman, 2006). Ironically, 90-96% of deaf individuals have hearing parents.

In *War Against the Weak* (2003), investigative journalist Edwin Black and his team of fifty researchers uncovered the pseudoscientific early-20th century American movement known as eugenics. This movement included evidence of the failed and successful attempts of eradicating deafness in America and in Germany. In 1911, the American Breeders Association formed a research committee in Palmer, Massachusetts, and adopted a resolution to study and report on the best practical means for cutting off the defective germ plasm of the American population. They carefully debated the problem of cutting off the supply of defectives and plotted a campaign to purge the blood of American people of any handicapping and deteriorating influences.

Black (2003) stated the following:

Ten groups were eventually identified as “socially unfit” and targeted for elimination. First, the feebleminded; second, the pauper class; third, the inebriate class or alcoholics; fourth, criminals of all descriptions including petty criminals and those jailed for nonpayment of fines; fifth, epileptics; sixth, the insane; seventh, the constitutionally weak class; eighth, those predisposed to specific diseases; ninth, the deformed; tenth, those with defective sense organs, that is, the deaf, blind and mute. In this last category, there was no indication of how severe the defect need be to qualify; no distinction made between blurry vision or bad hearing and outright blindness or deafness. (p. 58)

It did not take Germany long to implement its eugenic vision. The first law was decreed July 14, 1933: Reich Statute Part I, No. 86, the Law of the Prevention of Defective Progeny. It was a mass compulsory sterilization law.... Nine categories of defective were identified for sterilization. At top of list were the feeble minded, followed by schizophrenia, manic depression, Huntington’s chorea, epilepsy, hereditary body deformities, deafness, and, of course, hereditary blindness (p. 299)

With continuous threats to eradicate the deaf culture, American Sign Language, and the voice of the deaf community; George Veditz, the 7th National Association of the Deaf president, made a beautiful, compelling, and powerful speech that was captured on film during the silent movies era with the goal of preserving American Sign Language. This historical film is preserved and utilized as an educational leadership tool and evidence of turbulent times in America. There were many other events that took place in our history that created fervent advocacy efforts; for example, deaf citizens were not allowed to compete with hearing people for federal government careers during the early 1900s; deaf people's ability to speak continued to be highly valued in the hearing world; deaf citizens were banned from purchasing car insurance; deaf school children were made to sit on their hands or had their hands tied behind their backs or placed in brown paper bags to prevent signing; countless examples of employment discrimination; and combating peddlers and impostors, along with many other significant issues (Jankowski, 1997; Lane, 1984, 1999; Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; Newman, 2006). Given the ramifications of historical discrimination still visible in the current marginalization of deaf people, there is a clear need for deaf leadership to challenge these injustices and to voice their own stance. This study is about deaf leadership.

Newman (2006) beautifully summarizes the noble act of deaf leadership as removing the "yoke of paternalism" (p.337). There will always be a need for a voice for deaf people and to continue the advocacy work and breaking the "chains of limitations" (Newman, 2006, p. 338). Voice is the vehicle used to communicate cultural integrity, position, and justice. Reclaiming or sustaining one's voice is to stand up for what one believes in, or to preserve one's identity and place in society. The deaf leader proceeds through a series of deliberations to determine transformative actions that will be persuasive, with the goal of embracing the voice of the deaf

community or the non-dominant community. The deaf individual's voice or meaningful intentions will need to be effectively mediated within the dominant system or mainstream American society's paradigms. The deaf leader strategically reconstructs the meanings and mediates the facts and historical stories through his/her cultural lens into meaning that makes sense for the mainstream American society and/or dominant system.

The potency of a deaf leader's voice is deliberated through the eloquence and eclecticism of her leadership skills and strategic positioning in the dominant system. The art of deaf leadership requires effectively mediating two languages, American Sign Language and English; and two cultures, the deaf community and mainstream American society. The deaf leader traverses the continuum of leadership models and change practices with the skills of a creative choreographer. The skilled choreographer produces fluid engagements, mediation of information, and action steps to produce strategic outcomes. Some engagements would suggest calculated, spontaneous decisions based on triggers, intuitions followed with transient assessments, or an inventory of resources to determine likelihood of success for the outcome. As the deaf leader sustains her voice, she will be consistently propelled in assorted scenarios where she needs to protect and continue to sustain her voice. Deaf leaders will experience unique linguistic and cultural challenges that set them apart from the dominant culture again and again. Pack-Brown and Williams (2003) define the dominant culture having "dominance in various forms, such as race and ethnicity, gender, socio economic status, and sexual orientation" with "values, world views and life experiences" (p. 83). The individuals from the deaf community are not perceived as equal members of their mainstream dominant culture. Even though the deaf leader works hard to mainstream within the dominant culture and sustains her voice, the cultural and linguistic clashes create a hierarchical dominance by the dominant culture—mainstream

America. The deaf leader's prerequisite to effective leadership and sustaining voice is to "understand those values in order to predict the typical attitudes of other Americans" (Hirsch, 1988, p. 24). The challenges presented by mainstream American society are pervasive. The deaf leader leads through trials and tribulations, as well as relying on personal mastery. The demands require the effective leader to adapt her style to the situations.

Hirschman (1970) states: "Voice is political action par excellence" (p.16). Voice is a way to liberate the plentiful yet dormant and repressed energies of the oppressed people. Voice is a function of informing the community, organization, or system of its failings or inequalities (Hirschman, 1970). Harlan Lane's (1999) book, *The mask of benevolence: Disabling the deaf community*, compiles a narrative of historical data, interviews, and myriad examples of how American society disables the deaf community with their audist beliefs and paternalistic attitudes. Lane asserts that the "more the deaf person internalizes the identity of hearing impaired proffered by the audist establishment, the more he lends himself to the designs" (p. 89).

Lane goes on to explain

once the audist is unmasked for the deaf person, dependence is no longer tolerable. The dependent's inferior standing seems a gross injustice. There is a clear standard of justice: The treatment providers afford each other. The former dependent now insists on that treatment – equality. The slave returns the look of the master. In this moment a man is born. (p.98)

This is a victorious analogy for reclaiming or sustaining voice. Emerton (1996) eloquently stated, "Social change is not always progress. Progress implies that things have improved. It is a value judgment. Social change means that there has been a fundamental alteration in the patterns of the culture, social structure, and social behavior over time. Things are different than they were before" (pp.142-143). For better or worse, things have changed for deaf people in the United States over the last 20 years. We still deal with many oppressive situations and discrimination;

however, the deaf community can communicate in American Sign Language in public without fear of being chastised and ridiculed; the deaf community does not need to fear potential laws that prohibit marriage between two deaf individuals because society believes these marriages would lead to the birth of more deaf children. They do not need to fear laws that would mandate sterilization (Lane, 1984; Jankowski, 1997). With advancing technology, there are minimal safeguards established to protect access and design considerations. Today, technology and the professionalization of sign language interpreting services can afford the deaf individuals' access to communication and the ability to contend alongside members of the American mainstream society. The deaf community can look back and sigh with relief regarding their achievements; however, there is still great work to accomplish if the deaf community wants to promote equality and a place at the table.

Burns (1978) stated, "the ultimate test of practical leadership is the realization of intended, real change that meets people's enduring needs" (p. 461). Deaf leaders bear the burden of acknowledging the deaf community's lack of skill in the world of activism and the process of sustaining voice and system change activities. This suggests that leaders who experience a tremendous sense of social and political isolation will feel completely powerlessness at times. As a result, this fuels their lack of interest and breeds apathy.

The confidence of leadership comes from the very process and values of adaptive work. The confidence of innovative democratic leadership exudes from a certainty that expressing human bonds and the responsibility that we have for each other embody the highest human moral values. (Couto, 2002, p. 199)

Situating the Researcher

From a perspective based on a 20-year career in leadership, I worked as a deaf leader, manager, and a direct services provider in the non-profit sector in the areas of provision of direct services, promoting accessibility and advocating rights for deaf and hard of hearing individuals

which had encouraged the development of an adaptive style, enduring insight, and maturing intuition. My intuition as a deaf leader, manager, and professional comes from years of adapting and practicing techniques that produce optimal outcomes; however, my work as well as my colleagues' work has produced many questions over the years. I am certain that many deaf leaders are left to wonder how to capitalize on solutions for the following questions. Questions such as "What do I need to do to position myself in this situation?" "What are my challenges and barriers at this time with the current system; what strengths do I possess to use as leverage?" "Is this a good time to educate about the voice of the deaf community or do I aggressively advocate for their rights?" "Are they ready to open the door a crack?" "Is that a door opening? What are my strategies?" "How do I effectively voice and sustain my position with the dominant system?" The questions continue to course endlessly. Deaf leaders know that each situation is unique, and each situation is typically choreographed purposefully to promote the voice and position of the deaf community. A deaf leader cannot help but build personal resources and fine-tune them as she experiences the interdependences time again and again. As a deaf colleague, I repeatedly see frustrated leaders who failed to make the transition or maximize their relational experiences and yet, I have also seen many leaders who sustained their voice effortlessly. More questions developed, "Why did she not recognize the looming challenges of a resistant dominant culture?" "Was there a cultural or a linguistic disconnect?" "Does it make a difference if one person has intelligible speech?" "How does the use of an interpreter factor in perceived authority in her voice?" "What did she do to overcome this challenge?" The questions will continue, thus a desire to pursue a greater understanding of how a deaf leader sustains voice and positions herself becomes very important. As a researcher, understanding the precise

phenomenon of the leadership relations between the deaf leader and the dominant system becomes a burning question.

Gap in the Literature

In search of empirical research specifically related to deaf leadership and sustaining voice, I found that the number of available published research documents is extremely limited. Specifically, there is a tremendous gap in the literature and a very small number of research studies available by researchers who were deaf themselves. I started to research recognizable deaf leaders who have earned doctoral degrees. I was surprised to find very few published works in this area.

The literature review is an assimilation of empirical studies, articles, and books to prepare a phenomenological research study to explore this untapped area of the leadership relation between the deaf leader and the dominant system—particularly how deaf leaders sustain voice. Relying on empirical studies, academic knowledge, and past interviews, there are tremendous gaps in literature that should have provided us with ample information and resources regarding deaf leadership and sustaining voice. Research is a critical component in strengthening and positioning voice among the deaf and hard of hearing. Data, information, and evidence in published works are ammunition for the deaf leaders in a battle to survive and thrive to the fullest extent of their human potential. I believe that conducting research and publishing their work should be religiously promoted among the deaf/hearing professionals serving the deaf and hard of hearing individuals; however, I also believe that many of our deaf leaders admirably chose to work in the frontlines of providing services and advocating for our rights. This research provided an opportunity for these leaders to “tell their story.”

Purpose of the Study

Leadership relations between the deaf leader and the dominant system pose many potential and obvious challenges. It compels the deaf leader to be perilously responsible and astutely aware of the intricacies of this relationship. The purpose of this research was to learn and understand through a phenomenological lens how deaf leaders sustain voice and position themselves in the dominant systems to advocate for progress in the deaf community. There appears to be a very fine line between owning the voice/sustaining authority and being a passive participant in the dominant culture. Exploration of the relational dynamics between a deaf leader and the dominant system is very intriguing but also very important to the field of deaf leadership. There are many thoughts and propositions on how and when a deaf leader positions herself. Today, rapidly changing technology, dynamic communications, and life-changing political decisions pose tremendous challenges for the deaf leader. The key to sustaining an even playing field is arming oneself with leadership and voice ammunition. The important work of a deaf leader sustaining voice will continue for generations to come.

Research Questions

The focus of this study is stories of the “lived experiences” of my participants, which are revealed through dialogues with deaf leaders. I intend to uncover deeper meaning about their experiences. My formal research question is: How do deaf leaders sustain voice and position in challenging dominant cultural/systems? The sub-questions are as follows:

1. Are there leadership qualities that are unique among deaf leaders who lead in challenging dominant cultural/systems?
2. Are deaf leaders challenged with traditional leadership, myopic views or systemic thinking of the dominant cultural/system in relation to their own cultural lens?

3. How do deaf leaders position themselves to sustain voice and create change?

Theoretical Implications

This research has examined two theoretical implications. The first was to scrutinize the characteristics of deaf leadership that contribute to sustaining voice within the dominant systems. Deaf leadership appears to embrace a unique set of standards or characteristics that will further advance or thwart a deaf leader's ability to sustain voice and position the self. My academic studies and literature reviews, the findings suggested recurring themes that addressed deaf leadership characteristics and contributions to sustaining voice within the dominant systems (Balk, 1997; Bateman, 1999; Baynton, 2005; Knudsen, 2001; Singleton, 1994; Smith, 2005; Thoryk, 1998). The themes are characterized into two broad frameworks. The external and internal frameworks of a deaf leader provide the premises to begin the meaning making that serves as a background for defining deaf leadership and how deaf leaders sustain voice; however, these frameworks have not been substantiated as a whole in any empirical research or studies. This information will provide an overview of potential themes for the phenomenological study, yet I will continue to bracket this information throughout the study. The external framework of a deaf leader is identified as consisting of five areas:

- 1) Adaptive/other leadership models: This characteristic describes the deaf leader's overall leadership style. Based on situations and rapidly changing circumstances, the leader is pushed to adapt and position herself continuously to compete and maintain the playing field. As situations arise, with the time factors and urgent matters, she has to reinvent herself spontaneously time and time again to protect and preserve the integrity of the deaf culture, rights of the deaf community, and sustain voice. This characteristic is what the recipients of her leadership see day to day.

- 2) Writing and English skills: Exemplary writing and English skills are considered assets to bridge the two cultures and two languages effortlessly. These skills are the gateway to the dominant culture, American mainstream society. Such skills should be strategically utilized as a tool or leverage to gain access and acceptance among members of the dominant culture.
- 3) Hearing and speech status: This is a highly sensitive area. It is the basis of confidence and an identity deal breaker. Research shows that having residual hearing and/or comprehensible speech creates opinions and discussions. It can and should be utilized as a strategic tactic. Having residual hearing and/or comprehensible speech does not define a leader or a deaf person. This is not a marker for status among the deaf community. Unfortunately, how a deaf individual with residual hearing and/or comprehensible speech utilizes their abilities will reveal her sense of identity and how she ascribes to the principles of deaf culture. More importantly is how this particular leader communicates her sense of identity and her moral obligation, as well as her beliefs, to the dominant culture. Having residual hearing and/or comprehensible speech may be used as tools to further the mission or agenda of the deaf community as well as having a strong sense of identity and pride.
- 4) Use of interpreters: The deaf leader maintains knowledge and skills in utilizing interpreters effectively and strategically. Positioning strategies encompass a multitude of skills that an interpreter and the deaf leader utilize as tools with the goal of maintaining the deaf leader's voice and presence. Ideally, the deaf leader works with the interpreter as a team or has a working relationship to achieve objectives. Realistically, there are many situations where the deaf leader will employ various interpreters. She will have to

think *off the cuff*, assess the situation immediately, provide directions to the interpreter without hesitation and maximize the success of the interpreting circumstances when possible.

- 5) Positioning and leading: The deaf leader develops knowledge, skills, and tactics to position herself to gain or sustain authority, position, and voice. She is constantly assessing the situation—the environment, the players, and the implicit and/or explicit issues. To effectively position herself, she has strong dominant culture and systems intelligence as well as the ability to modulate between two cultures and two languages seamlessly.

The internal framework of a deaf leader is identified as consisting of five areas:

- 1) Cultural identity: The cultural identity of a deaf individual is someone who ascribes and lives faithfully by the rules of deaf culture. Her cultural roots are deeply connected to the deaf community. The cultural identity defines the deaf leader and is a big factor in her effectiveness as a leader. The deaf leader is also proficient in American Sign Language and is a model for the deaf community.
- 2) Communication: An effective communicator is a hallmark of any successful leader. Communication involves the interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs. Communication is also a two-way process that involves an exchange and progression of thoughts, feelings, or ideas towards a mutual goal. The goal is to understand what has transpired between the two individuals. The deaf leader would not only master the communication of information but would master a style of delivery of this information. The deaf leader would accrue skills in adapting the language, context,

expression, and explication to meet the diverse communication needs and language skills of deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

- 3) Experiences: Experiences provide growth and knowledge for the deaf leader. Personal development and experiences from her personal journey provide the personal capacity to lead. Life's experiences and the leader's response to them are essential to how her leadership is formed and the kind of leader she will become. Experiences shape the leader. The deaf leader has a repertoire of experiences that she has gained from her life in the deaf community, leadership capacities, life experiences, and injustices. Bennis (2003) states, "Until you make your life your own, you're walking in borrowed clothes. Leaders, whatever their field, are made up as much of their experiences as their skills, like everyone else. Unlike everyone else, they use their experiences rather than being used by it" (p. 62).
- 4) Education: The educational experiences of a deaf leader contribute to her leadership success. Educational experience contributes to her identity, scope of knowledge, coping strategies, social and emotional intelligence, integration of cultural integrity, communication, and much more. Educational experiences from a residential school setting to a mainstream setting provide information about the individual. Aspects of her upbringing, schooling, activities, and post-secondary education provide insights on her personal mastery and identity. These experiences shape her passion, ambition, insights, intuition, knowledge and skills, which will in turn shape her leadership potential.
- 5) Cultural integrity and moral obligation: Cultural integrity and moral obligation represent a strong belief that we are responsible for our constituents and the accompanying battles, particularly when a battle strikes a cultural group that we are leading or threatens the

cultural integrity of the leader and her culture. Cultural integrity is where one cannot help but feel personal. It is questioning the core of selfhood and everything one stands for.

The second relevant theoretical implication is the process of sustaining voice and positioning. Understanding the facilitation and dynamics of sustaining voice and the positioning process is critical for producing optimal outcomes. Throughout the years of oppression and discrimination, we can attribute social change events to various deaf leaders, individuals, and supporters. Bateman (1996) quotes from the works of Vernon and Estes “historically, the success or failure of any minority group has rested primarily upon whether or not successful leaders arise from among the minority itself” (p.3). Bateman conducted a study in 1990 with deaf leaders that resulted in several themes emerging from his study regarding their perceptions of what barriers have impeded deaf people from engaging in the political process and/or taking action to create change. These themes were: 1) lack of understanding of political activism and the political process; 2) a sense of social and political isolation; 3) dependency, powerlessness, and lack of interest; and 4) complacency and resistance to change. Bateman’s study suggests that standing up for oneself is not an innate skill or practice. It requires much training, support, and proficiency (Bateman, 1996). Bateman goes on to explain that deaf leaders compared the political struggles of their community to the non-deaf Hispanic community. They shared a common trait—English is their second language. This causes detrimental communication barriers. The research was conducted to analyze the two communities— the deaf community and the Hispanic community. Not only did they experience language barriers; but each of the communities also felt that the political system was not responsive to their needs. This lack of response creates a sense of political disenfranchisement and lack of interest in politics as well as

a lack of interest to engage in change activities. Bateman's study claimed that both of the communities are being oppressed by the dominant culture. The outcome of the study asserts that there is a great need for more role models and leaders in these two communities to set examples of how to become more politically involved and how to sustain their voices for advocating needed services.

Before one can understand the complexities of deaf leadership and sustaining voice, one must understand the dominant system. Jankowski (1997) explains that the rhetoric of the dominant group defines everyday life, construction of reality of their world, sense of self, identities, and relationships to people and society. This provides the justification framework for their day-to-day actions that keeps subordinates in line and maintains the status quo. The rhetoric of the dominant group produces conformity and is the basis for power. A disconnect between the dominant culture and the deaf community presents real barriers and challenges for change. Deviating from the dominant cultural norms is just simply not endorsed positively. Because there is desire for public order and governance, one norm of the dominant culture has exhibited great difficulty embracing intercultural communication. "Communication style in a steep hierarchical society serves to reinforce or create hierarchical differences between persons" (Novinger, 2001, p. 33). The parity lies in the ability to fit in the hierarchical society and be recognized as a conforming member of that dominant culture; however, social justice and equality via communication is challenged whenever there is a disparity of power or status between two cultures. When you mix in language, communication, and cultural barriers, there are definite disparities between the dominant culture, the American mainstream society and the deaf community. The deaf community is ranked low in the hierarchical structure (Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1999; Padden & Humphries, 2005).

A common phenomenon that afflicts non-dominant groups or individuals is stigmatization. Stigmatization is an act of discrediting an individual or a group. Stigma occurs when one discredits by focusing on particular characteristics that are not considered the norm. To gain a dominant status, one will over generalize or stereotype a failing or unacceptable norm of an individual, a tendency that often transfers into other areas. The individual from the dominant culture focuses on the deviant traits to negatively characterize an individual who is not a member of the norm. The goal is to scrutinize or size up the individual so that he or she will “trip up” or make a mistake. The purpose of a stigma is to weaken the non-dominant group or member status.

These theoretical assumptions were based on historical artifacts, oral histories, unpublished empirical interviews, and observations; however, the criteria for evaluation of the phenomenological study anticipated a need for scrutinizing cross-referenced data. This dissertation provided an opportunity to conduct a study to produce an expansive, descriptive story to uncover new areas and knowledge not yet been explored or discussed in the literature.

Summary of Chapters

This chapter presents the rationale for the study and describes the gaps in the literature with respect to studies seeking an understanding of how deaf leaders sustain voice in dominant systems. Chapter 2 critically reviews literature in two areas: leadership and voice. Additionally, a general literature review related to leadership and marginalized communities are presented. Chapter 3 explains how the qualitative method was used in this study to reveal how select leaders sustain voice and position in dominant systems. In Chapter 4, I present the findings in English text and partially in American Sign Language. In Chapter 5, I provide interpretations of the findings based on themes from the phenomenological data and relevant dimensions from the

literature. In Chapter 6, I provide a discussion of the implications for leadership and change, recommendations for further research, and a reflection on my own experience as a researcher in this study.

Chapter II: Literature Review

When I reviewed the literature on deaf leadership and voice as well as the literature on marginalization and advocacy leaders, it became apparent that there was a serious gap. I could not find a thorough or compelling body of scholarship in my area of interest, “deaf leadership and sustaining voice in dominant systems.” I will divide this chapter into three sections: leadership and how it pertains to deaf leaders, the practice of sustaining voice and advocacy in general, and assimilating deaf leadership and sustaining voice in dominant systems. Though there is a plethora of categories placed in front of the term “leadership,” I chose five types of leadership—servant, transformational, adaptive, situational, and modulating—based on what appears to be most germane to my topic. The three sections will provide encompassing perspectives of intertwining the deaf leaders’ macro and micro experience with the act of advocating and sustaining voice within intricate and multifaceted traditional systems.

The concept that describes this phenomenon is “traversing the continuum of leadership models.” *Webster’s New World Dictionary* (1991) defines traversing as “to pass, move or extend over, across or through; cross. To go back and forth over or along; cross and recross” (p. 1423). Rost (1991) studied the definitions of leadership and notes that the word leader appeared in the English language as early as the 1300s; it stems from the root *leden* meaning to make go or to show the way. Traversing is a very nomadic, purposeful, and outcome-oriented activity. The engagement of a leadership model produces outcomes either overtly significant or subtly significant. Regardless of credibility in terms of knowledge claims about the model’s efficacy, it produces an outcome to fulfill a purpose. Rost summarizes the definition of leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p.102). Rost continues to explain that influence, relationship, change, and

mutuality are essential elements for leadership. Burns (1978) gives this definition of leadership: “as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations” (p. 19). These elements support the necessary mobility and fluidity of leadership.

It is not uncommon to participate in informal dialogues among deaf colleagues to exchange tricks of the trade, recommend borrowings of leadership models, and share natural lessons learned. The deaf leader articulates that the potency lies in the eloquence and eclecticism of their skills of influence, building relationships, developing mutuality, and effecting change as well as strategic positioning in the dominant culture. The dominant culture is described as the consisting of American mainstream society, which is reflected in the dominance of white people’s beliefs, norms, values, and practices (Pack-Brown & Williams, 2003). Traversing the continuum of leadership models and change practices can be described as a constantly choreographed fluidity of engagements to produce specific outcomes. Some engagements would suggest reflexive decisions based on triggers; intuitions followed with transient assessments, or an inventory of resources to determine likelihood of success for the outcome. As a marginalized leader in an advocacy role, one is consistently propelled into various advocacy efforts that range from subtle changes to manipulative adaptive changes, or presented with opportunities to seize advantageous arrangements for positioning transformative changes.

Leadership and the Deaf Leader

“Leaders come in every size, shape and disposition—short, tall, neat, sloppy, young, old, male, and female” (Bennis, 2003, p. 31). The basic ingredients of leaders are guiding vision

skills, passion, integrity, curiosity and daring (Bennis, 2003). Based on empirical studies, informal dialogues, and observations, there is a consensus among deaf leaders that an important additional ingredient for a deaf leader would be advocacy skills. A deaf leader would strive to integrate all of the basic ingredients as Bennis (2003) illustrated and without fail almost always serves as an advocate as well. It is a prescribed role with numerous unspoken expectations. The deaf leader protects and promotes the rights of the deaf community. The deaf leader seems to personify the heart of a servant leader. Greenleaf (2002) describes the servant leader as a servant first. The deaf leader and advocate may encompass many of Greenleaf's servant leadership characteristics, for example, they are driven by inspirations and guides with clear direction. The deaf leader listens to followers, expresses empathy, communicates artfully, is insightful, accepting, senses the unknowable, and foresees the unforeseen. It seems to be an ideal image or a generalization for many deaf leaders. Greenleaf (2002) states that "leaders must have more of an armor of confidence in facing the unknown—more than those who accept their leadership" (p.41). Confidence plays a fundamental role in advocacy and leadership. There are effective deaf leaders and not so effective deaf leaders; however, what they do appear to have in common is the passion to advocate for social justice as a means of achieving better lives and equality for the deaf community.

There are varied, encompassing, and broad descriptions of essential characteristics or standards for deaf leaders in the literature. Baynton (2005) designed a qualitative phenomenological study for her dissertation titled, *Individual perceptions, organizational dynamics, and career mobility of deaf women in academe leadership positions*. The findings included eight themes: a) leaders' ability to effectively communicate through written or oral forms is paramount; b) leaders need to have successful personal and professional experience in

situational leadership methods and practices; c) early career counseling is crucial for deaf women to advance in leadership positions; d) human resources leaders should reevaluate job descriptions and requirements regarding auditory requirements; e) role models are engendered from within their families; f) hearing people are not the sole change agents for the deaf; g) deaf women's experiences in post-secondary education organizational leadership is one of non-equitable career progression, and h) deaf women are considered a risk and/or a liability to organizations (p.v).

This also aligns with Stone's dissertation study (1997), *Perceptions of leadership behavior of deaf and hearing administrators by staff of selected residential programs for deaf students*, which utilized the descriptive-correlational survey. This approach was used to determine if school leadership characteristics differ from the expressed perceptions of staff members among leadership behavior of school administrators and hearing status of participants. Based on her findings, Stone developed several recommendations. She suggested investigating the impacts of leadership behaviors upon leadership perceptions, development of training related to behavior, and adaptability redesign of research and/or modification of instruments to include cultural, minority and communication issues, further studies regarding hearing status, cultural and communication, and investigations of adaptability of administrators. A third dissertation study by Smith (2005), *Deaf of deaf: The ascribed leaders of the American deaf community. A case study* provided insight on deaf leadership. The qualitative case study examined and described how leaders are selected. The findings indicated that eight themes emerged from the study. Themes emerging from the data collected from respondents were having fluency in ASL; having positive self-esteem; being a servant to the deaf community; relating well to the deaf community; being involved in the deaf community; communicating with all language levels; having a deaf heritage; and attending a residential deaf school. The study also uncovered the leaders' four

themes: positive and supportive family environment, early exposure to ASL, a desire to shape the future, and community ownership with the deaf community. Since deaf leaders borrow from a broad set of models in their practice, I will look at transformational, adaptive, and modulating leadership models.

Transformational Leadership

“Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (Burns, 1978, p. 2). Transformational leadership literature shares similar definitions but there is no exact science in the definition or the act of transforming. Transformational leadership does not quite fit in a box wrapped neatly for presentation nor is it prescriptive in nature. Transformational leadership is complex and dynamic. It is also mobile, fluid, and continuous in disposition. Transformational leadership has intuitive appeal (Northouse, 2004). Deaf leaders often gauge the pulse of the individuals and the system to understand the pending conflict or potential outcome and utilize that knowledge to reach a reasonable consensus. This is probably why many deaf leaders engage in the principles of transformational leadership. Ultimately, the goal is to transform—o make a change that will benefit both the leader and the follower.

Burns (2003) continues to explain that transforming leaders define the values that embrace the principles of the people. These values are often the inspiration and guiding elements for the transforming leader in her quest to pursue and seek change. The term transformational leader is synonymous with change agent. Change agents are good visionary role models, empowering followers to embrace higher moral standards and providing some meaning for the change (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978, 2003; Couto, 2007; Heifetz, 1994; Northouse, 2004; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). Transformational leadership studies emerged from the work of MacGregor Burns and later from Bass, Bennis, Devanna, Riggio, and Tichy. They

note that transformational leadership goes beyond the notion of social exchange between leader and follower. Ultimately, transformational leadership upholds the principle that the goal of the leader will transcend her self-interests and work toward the common good of the followers. In a recent publication of *Reflections on leadership*, edited by Couto (2007), contributors offer conversational texts by various authors regarding the groundbreaking study on leadership written by MacGregor Burns in 1978. Couto (2007) maintains that “Burns was determined to understand and to impart understanding about leadership in order to improve democratic practice and to promote social justice and equality” (p.2) through transformational work.

In *Leadership: Theory and practice* (2004), Northouse provides a concise description of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms individuals. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals, and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them. It is a process that often incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership (p. 169).

The current literature suggests that transformational leadership is a broad-based perspective that consists of many components and dimensions of the leadership process. Transformational leadership empowers followers and cultivates change. The goal of transformational leaders is to raise consciousness in various individuals and coax them to transcend their own self-interests into mutual goals that benefit others. Transformational leadership is a process that involves planning and foresight. Transformational leaders tend to have highly developed moral values and a strong sense of identity. The leaders assimilate charisma, competence, and articulated ideals. The leader engages in shaping meanings and

interprets the change for the followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2004; Burns, 1978, 2003; Tichy & Devanna, 1986).

Transformational leadership is relational. Northouse (2004) explains that relational analysis or transactional analysis is a popular psychodynamic model coined by Berne. The concept of transformational leadership in regard to the relational model closely deals with relating to three ego states labeled as parent, adult, and child. This model obviously relates to family roles. Every one of us has all of the three ego states. Each of the ego states has different outcomes in how we relate to one another. The family roles often transfer to other relationships outside the family roles. The leader may be either nurturing or critical in a parental sense when dealing with a subordinate or the transference can be from the adult ego state. The more mature the leader, as well as the subordinate, the more likely the relationship can change. The best relationships are when both participants function in the adult ego state; however, if the subordinate “acts” like a child, the leader may respond like a parent. An effective “leader will make every effort to operate out of the adult ego state in an effort to cathect adult responses from subordinates” (Northouse, 2004, p. 246). This implies that the leader and subordinate would be able to do reality testing, analyze the situation accurately, determine action steps, and guide the relationship participants through decisions, as well as integrate characteristics of the parent and child ego states to create balance in the relationship. Burns (1978) describes leadership as a process and relationship between the leader and followers. He states that leadership is the reciprocal process of mobilizing to realize goals shared with both leaders and followers. The goals of a leader and follower have to be mutual. Transformational leadership not only meets the needs of followers, but also elevates them to a higher level of moral functioning and principled levels of judgment (p. 455). Burns utilizes the example of Mohandas Gandhi, claiming that he

elevated the morality of self and followers. He was able to connect with the followers at various levels of morality and increase the moral impact. Gandhi was able to ask for sacrifices from followers in midst of their struggles with social justice.

Burns identifies with Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, and asserts that people begin with the need for survival and security. "When those basic needs are fulfilled, we concern ourselves with 'higher' needs like affection, belonging, the common good, and serving others" (Heifetz, 1994, p.21). Burns (1978) states the "original sources of leadership and followership lie in vast pools of human wants and in the transformation of wants into needs, social aspirations, collective expectations, and political demands" (p.61). Transformational leadership is viewed not solely as a model, but rather a broad set of generalizations of what is normative with leaders who are transforming. There are no specific rules or guidelines as to how a leader would behave or conduct to achieve transformation. Northouse (2004) supports the notion that transformational leadership emphasizes "ideals, inspiration, innovations, and individual concerns.

Transformational leadership requires that the leaders be aware of how their own behavior relates to the needs of their subordinates and the changing dynamics within their organization" (p. 188). Couto (2007) asserts that "Transforming leadership remains a more likely possibility for innovative leadership that can bring ordinary and ignored stories of marginalized groups into the mainstream of social discourse about values" (p. 172). An effective deaf leader will need to assimilate the goals of the dominant culture and the goals of the deaf community with an effective appeal to change. With the knowledge of the dominant culture's norms and values as well as their embedded institutional cultural values, the deaf leader attempts to strategically influence people and systems in order to convert the values of the dominant culture into the values of the deaf community. Methodically, this would adjust the dominant cultural

perspectives regarding their obligatory and collective needs to do common good for the marginalized community. Through relational and transformational work, the deaf leader amalgamates voice and position of the marginalized group within the dominant cultural framework.

Adaptive Leadership

Leading in a dominant culture with embedded and imbalanced belief systems and a world of turbulent changes intertwined with injustice requires a leader who acts and thinks quickly on her feet. To manage change, or mobilize people toward justice and clarification of conflicts in values, adaptive work is necessary. In Heifetz's (1994) book, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, he provides an explanation of adaptive work with authority and without authority. There are leaders that lead with authority and leaders that lead without authority. Authority is correlated with a leader's position within the community, office, or political standing. Heifetz (1994) defines authority as "conferred power to perform a service" (p. 57). The deaf leader often does not have the authority, which could be viewed as an advantage. This deaf leader could exercise adaptive work without constraints; however, having authority could afford the deaf leader tools to mobilize people to do work. Either way, depending on the situation, having the authority or not will impede or help the process of adaptive work. It is the art of traversing to maximize the outcomes. Heifetz (1994) describes adaptive leadership as involving leaders who take on challenges for which there are no simple, painless solutions. We are faced with

many problems such as uncompetitive industry, drug abuse, poverty, poor public education, environmental hazards and many others. Making progress on these problems demands not just someone who provides answers on high, but changes in our attitudes, behavior, and values. To meet challenges such as these, we need a different idea of leadership and a new social contract that promotes our adaptive capacities, rather than inappropriate expectations of authority. (p. 2)

The heart of adaptive leadership is mobilizing people to tackle tough problems. Heifetz (1994) uses four criteria to develop a definition of leadership that takes values into account. The four criteria include: it must resemble current cultural assumptions; should be practical; points to socially useful activities, and offer a broad definition of social usefulness. Heifetz (1994) refers to Burns who suggests that “socially useful goals not only have to meet the needs of the followers, they also should elevate followers to a higher moral level” (p. 21). Usefulness is also defined as viewing leadership in terms of adaptive work.

Adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior. The exposure and orchestration of conflict – internal contradictions- within individuals and constituencies provide the leverage for mobilizing people to learn new ways (Heifetz, 1994, p. 22).

Authority and influence are primary aspects in doing adaptive work but they also have constraints. Addressing complex problems requires constantly evolving values and getting the work done. Adaptive work brings equilibrium to disequilibrium. The concept of adaptive work resembles a biological evolution. An example of this biological evolution is evident in a flower. The flower of specific species changes due to an introduction of new genetic information. This particular species of flower normally thrives in a specific environment. When environments change, it causes the flower to change. The flower’s biological design adapts to that changed environment. The flower did not disappear; it changed. The change could be the color, shape, size, or texture. It changed to survive. To survive the disequilibrium and to find its way to equilibrium requires one to adapt to changes; however, some are unable to adapt for various reasons. They may avoid the change, resist the conflict, or even deny the problem. The leader

needs to become aware if the avoidance is unconscious or masked. Reality testing is a strategic mechanism to grasp the issue fully. This is a perfect analogy for the adaptive leader who works diligently to adapt with two different cultures and communities.

Adaptive work with authority and no authority has different impacts, strengths, and challenges. Authority relationships resemble the dominance and deference relationships of our primate ancestors. Heifetz (1994) defines authority as conferred power to perform a service. First, authority can be given and taken away. Second, authority is conferred as part of an exchange. What this also means is that failure to the terms of exchange can mean the loss of one's authority and given to someone else who promises to fulfill the agreement. In the context of distress, this obviously can create a great deal of stress and eminent transferability of effectiveness depending on the heat of the moment from the current leader with authority.

Flower (1995) quotes Heifetz in his article, "People can learn a great deal about how to deploy whatever skills they do have in different contexts. People can learn a great deal about how to use those skills appropriately" (p. 9). A leader is required to build on her existing talents to maximize her leadership. The adaptive leader analyzes the situation to determine whether the problems are viewed as adaptive challenges or technical problems. The two are very distinct. Adaptive challenges can be ambiguous because they require changing minds and hearts. Someone who cares and is passionate about the issue often champions challenges. Such a leader also may be conflicted because she does not have authority to impose change. With technical problems, on the other hand, problems can be defined clearly and the leader can determine which solutions exist to "fix" the problem. The ability to resolve those problems can also be questioned. In addition, it becomes a greater problem when a leader is inaccessible to provide solutions for the technical problems; however, these kinds of problems are typical and can be

managed and referred to a leader with the authority. Deaf leaders may have a position of authority but their authority may be challenged by the dominant society due to the deaf leaders' deafness. The idea of authority, then is, ambiguous, one that is both present and contested at the same time.

Mobilizing adaptive work as leaders without authority consists of choreographing and directing learning processes of the followers. "Progress often demands new ideas and innovation. As well, it often demands changes in people's attitudes and behaviors. Adaptive work consists of the process of discovering and making those changes" (Heifetz, 1994, p. 187). Heifetz (1994) suggests Martin Luther King, Mohandas Gandhi, and Margaret Sanger as examples of the intricate adaptive work and benefits of leading without authorities. There are advantages to leading without authority. Heifetz (1994) outlines three reasons. First, the lack of authority provides an arena for the leader to deviate from the norms of authoritative decision-making. Leaders without authority can raise questions that disturb, rather than providing pacifying answers. Second, leaders without authority can focus hard on a single issue. These leaders do not have to worry about satisfying multiple expectations of multiple constituencies and providing holding environments for everybody. Third, the leader without authority is often closer to the detailed experiences of some of the stakeholders and their situation; however, with the realization that the leader without authority may lose the larger perspective, she has the "fine grain of people's hopes, pains, values, habits, and history. One has frontline information" (Heifetz, 1994, p. 188). Mobilizing the stakeholders require careful planning and direction. Heifetz (1994) stresses four questions: Who are the primary stakeholders? How will they need to change their ways? What expectations do they have on the leader's authority? How could the leader reshape that expectation to provide her the latitude to take action? Addressing the

questions and careful planning maximize the adaptive change outcomes and minimize the stress of leadership and scars from the efforts to bring about adaptive change.

Adaptive leadership bears some dangers and potential failures. These failures are often interpreted as pain and loss. The pains of change or lack of change deserve respect. Heifetz (1994) asserts:

Leadership demands respect for people's basic need for direction, protection, and order in time of distress. Leadership requires compassion for the distress of adaptive change, both because compassion is its own virtue, and because it can improve one's sense of timing. Knowing how hard to push and when to let up are central to leadership. (p. 241)

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) discuss essential leadership strategies for leading adaptive change process. The authors identified six strategies: 1) get on the balcony; 2) think politically; 3) orchestrate the process; 4) manage your hungers; and 5) anchor yourself.

Heifetz (1994) states the importance of getting on the balcony as achieving the bird's eye perspective of the whole situation. This requires one to remove herself from the present adaptive challenge, in her mind, to gain a clearer view of reality as well as a perspective of the bigger picture by distancing herself from the situation. If the leader does not do this, there is great potential for her to misperceive the situation and establish a misguided decision about whether or how to intervene.

Thinking politically, identified as Heifetz's (1994) second strategy requires a series of activities to maximize results. It is essential to have skills in dealing with people or partners who are with the leader on the issue. In addition, skills in managing those who are in opposition to the leader are essential. Finally, critical work of the adaptive leader is mobilizing those individuals who are uncommitted but cautious. These are the individuals who the adaptive leader is trying to help embrace the adaptive change.

The third strategy is orchestrating the conflict. The challenge for the adaptive leader is generating adaptive change with the understanding that she needs to work with individuals' "differences, passions, and conflicts in a way that diminishes their destructive potential and constructively harnesses their energy" (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004, p. 101). The strategies for accomplishing this is creating a holding environment for the adaptive work; controlling intensity of the conflict; setting the pace and providing a vision of the future. This holding environment provides the opportunity for the adaptive leader to assess the conflict and strategize her next steps.

The fourth strategy is managing your hungers. In the midst of leading through adaptive challenges, it is easy to become enmeshed in the cause or get entangled emotionally with the situation. Adaptive leaders need to practice caution when they are caught up in the heat of the moment of leading. This can challenge the leader intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. It is quite easy for the leaders to forget that they also have human frailties. They are not physically and emotionally indestructible; however, the adaptive leaders often learn the hard way regarding their hungers. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) explain that the hunger for power is human. Everyone wants some measure of power and control in their lives, their work, and even with their adaptive challenges. What the authors stress is the importance of remembering that their need and mastery can turn into a form of vulnerability. The other form of hunger is affirmation and importance. Human nature has taught us that we want to feel that we matter in life and matter to others. Leaders need to be cautious about being too grandiose. Intimacy is another form of hunger. The authors explain that every individual needs to be "held or touched" by others emotionally and physically. This can increase the adaptive leader's tendency to experience loneliness or become susceptible to rejection. The question becomes how effectively

this adaptive leader can handle such pain. Intimacy, vulnerability, and grandiosity can become great pitfalls and cause adaptive change failures. To prevent these failures, the adaptive leader needs anchors to keep her grounded and safe.

The last strategy presented by Heifetz and Linsky (2002) is anchoring oneself. The authors explain that it is “easy to confuse yourself with the roles you take on in your organization and community. The world colludes in the confusion by reinforcing your professional persona. Colleagues, subordinates, and bosses treat you as if the role you play is the essence of you, the real you” (pp. 181-182). A strategy to employ is keeping confidants and not confusing them with allies. Allies and confidants have distinct roles. Allies are folks who share the same values and actions and operate within a boundary. Adaptive leaders should not treat allies as confidants. Confidants, on the other hand, are people who provide the adaptive leader with a place where she can say everything and anything that’s in her heart and mind without pre-planning. Confidants can be safe listeners to thoughts and emotions when they are disorganized. Therefore a confiding in a confidant can avoid repercussions. This opportunity allows the adaptive leader to organize the thoughts and emotions in a more coherent way. Confidants are also the individuals who will tell the adaptive leader what she does not want to hear or cannot hear from anyone else. The adaptive leader will experience frustration and pain from the work. The job of the confidant is to support the leader through the process and tend the battle wounds along the way. Seeking sanctuary with the confidant is critical to the need for anchoring and sustenance. A sanctuary has its purpose as well. It is a place for reflection and renewal.

Modulating Leadership

As a reader, you will not find explicit literature on modulating leadership. In an attempt to collaborate with literature reviews and the stances of deaf leaders in advocacy situations,

modulating describes the precise management of unbalanced interdependences and relational events. *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1991) describes modulating as follows: "to regulate, adjust, or adapt to the proper degree. To vary the pitch, intensity to a lower degree. Radio to vary the amplitude, frequency, or phase of an oscillation, as a carrier wave with some signal" (p. 872). This definition lends a description of a leader who adjusts or adapts within oscillating relationships, energy and situations. Modulating leadership is when the modulating leader is presented with challenges in which "tolerances for inconsistency and dissonance where differences are not resolved but managed in a dynamic, ever-changing balance" (Connerly & Pedersen, 2005, p. 30). Connerly and Pedersen (2005) assert that "Success is achieved indirectly as a by-product of harmonious two-directional balance rather than directly through a more simplistic one-directional alternative" (p.30). The goal of restoration of value balance offers the opportunity for social change as a continuous and not episodic process. It takes place independently because of failed attempts to control that change. It is sometimes difficult for the people in the dominant culture to realize the privileges that come with their membership. They often assume that everyone is on the same playing field from the perspective of advantage. The privilege is deeply embedded in the cultural landscape of the United States. Many individuals socialize in a racist society, even though they have not chosen to be racist or prejudiced. It is a responsibility to be aware of this phenomenon. The heightening of this awareness is often the act of a modulating leader. This is a natural stepping-stone to adaptive work or transforming leadership. "Developing multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills should be seen as a professional obligation as well as an opportunity for a leader" (Connerly & Pedersen, 2005, p. 41).

Being aware of your own identity is a critical component for effective leadership. “Developing a multicultural awareness of your identity means observing yourself, finding patterns in complex data, challenging faulty inferences, and being guided by individual others’ cultural contexts” (Connerly & Pedersen, 2005, p. 57). The members of the dominant culture must experience the stages of identity development and cultural awareness. Most dominant culture members are unaware of the issues of identity. Secondly, they are engaged in an awakening to the impact of racism in a transitional encounter or dissonant stage. Thirdly, there is identification with one’s own ethnic group and finally there is an internalization and integration of both cultures (Connerly & Pedersen, 2005). Racial identity models developed by Cross (1991) and Helms (2005) (as cited in Connerly & Pedersen, 2005) help to explain how one understands racial identity. Each model has stages in which one evolves to reach a clear understanding of his or her racial identity. It is interesting to note a mutual stage, Immersion/Emersion. The Immersion/Emersion stage has a correlation with the modulating leader’s role and responsibility. This stage addresses the individual’s misinformation and misconceptions and how they are replaced with accurate information. A modulating leader plays an integral role with this stage. The leader who is well aware of the misconceptions and misinformation takes the time and effort conscientiously to replace the inaccurate information with accurate information. This act can be done through being available and accessible in a non-threatening environment with no expectations from the leader. The leader will capitalize “teachable moments” to remove the misconceptions about the marginalized community. The modulating leader will teach within the constraints of the event, environment, and situation. The modulating leader also allows the margin of errors and misguidance with flexibility. The goal of the modulating leader is to create a safe environment and to reinforce harmony.

The modulating and adaptive leader has multiple intelligences and is emotionally attuned. Gardner (1995, 2004, 2006) and Goleman (1995) provide us with remarkable breakthroughs regarding multiple intelligences and emotional intelligences. Their work can provide the leader with an awareness of the value of different types of intelligences. Knowing that people differ in their intelligences, recognizing and understanding how they view themselves as a source of knowledge, is very informational and revealing as leaders. Goleman (1995) draws on the work of psychologists Gardner, Salovey, and Sternberg in the area of emotional intelligence. He presents a wider view of intelligence in terms of what it takes to lead a successful life. Goleman (1995) expands the works of these notable psychologists into six main domains: emotional self-awareness; managing emotions; harnessing emotions productively; empathy; reading emotions; and handling relationships. He states:

The underlying basis for our level of ability is, no doubt, neural, but as we will see, the brain is remarkably plastic, constantly learning. Lapses in emotional skills can be remedied: to a great extent of each of these domain represents a body of habit and response that, with right effort, can be improved on. (p. 44)

Goleman (1995) explains the six domains in depth. Emotional self-awareness is the keystone of emotional intelligence. Emotional self-awareness is recognizing a feeling as it happens. He explains: the “ability to monitor feelings from moment to moment is crucial to psychological insight and self-understanding” (p.43). A person with this ability is better able to navigate her life’s decisions. The second domain is managing emotions. Self-awareness offers opportunities to build on the ability to manage feelings appropriately. The person will be able to soothe herself when feeling depressed or shake off the anxiety. This person exhibits the ability to be resilient with a range of emotions. The third domain is harnessing emotions effectively or motivating oneself. The person has built capacity to practice self-control for immediate gratification or coping with impulsiveness. The person is able to sustain a harmonious flow state. The fourth

domain is empathy: reading emotions. This is the fundamental people skill—being able to read other people’s emotions. The person is attuned to the subtle and overt signals that communicate what other people want or need. The last domain is handling relationships. This skill analyzes the leader’s social competence proficiencies. This includes the leader’s popularity, leadership and interpersonal effectiveness.

Goleman (1995) claims that emotionally intelligent people tend to practice assertion, to express feelings directly, and to feel positive about themselves. They adapt to stress well and maintain social poise. They are also comfortable enough to be spontaneous and open to experiences. They would rarely experience anxiety or guilt or become trapped in rumination. This is just a snapshot of an effective modulating and emotionally intelligent leader.

A modulating leader can employ various teaching methods to provide opportunities for the follower to hold, absorb, digest, process, and integrate new and small information and knowledge. A developed awareness of cultural identity and impacts of dominant culture whether slow or fast is the gateway to change. This may seem be a very nominal act of a modulating leader but is a giant step to progress. Effective deaf leaders are particularly apt at modulating with the dynamics and flow of information.

One way to teach followers is stimulating a conflict to produce opportunities for collaboration and engagement. A conflict can be viewed as strategic and personal. It can draw attention and create a place to construct a response. This conflict can raise a single issue or multiple issues that will require involvement and cooperation from individuals. Couto (2002) provides a descriptive example of a successful conflict in his interview with Jackie Reed. Jackie Reed stated, “I respond to the fear that they may have about the situation by being non-threatening. So rather than being confrontational, handling it well means that I have heard them

and I respond to the factors that perpetuate or drive the conflict. There's a much better relationship that's formed when people have worked through a conflict" (p.91). Conflicts serve the purpose of helping people engage in dialogues to practice their decision-making skills—to agree or disagree. The conflicts and dialogues are the foundations for building collaborative, respectful relationships. Conflict brings opportunities to clarify values.

Conflict is energy. A modulating leader facilitates energy that is present in the relationships between people and situations. The energy may be highly active and mobile, or it can be sluggish. It is dynamic, adaptive, and creative (Wheatley, 1999). Regardless of its apparent nature or expression, energy is a key component in equilibrium and disequilibrium. Energy can create havoc within a situation and people tend to seek out balance within relationship or situation. A skilled modulating leader can choose to harness the energy to create equilibrium or continue to be a participative member in a chaotic situation. This decision would be strategic in accord with specific goals and outcomes. The modulating leader is cautious in constricting freedom and inhibiting change (Wheatley, 1999). Discomforting imbalances drive individuals or groups to work toward dialogues and collaborations.

A modulating leader will be faced with the challenge of regulating distress by modulating the provocation. "Monitoring the levels of distress, any leader has to find indicators for knowing both when to promote an unripe issue and whether the stress generated by an intervention falls within the productive range for that social system at that time" (Heifetz, 1994, pp. 207-208). It is critical that the modulating leader exhibit a skill in reading the barometer of issues, ripeness, and systemic stress. The modulating leader also assesses the vulnerability of the attention drawn to an issue. She needs to be particularly aware of her resources in deflecting or obtaining the heat of the issues as well as determining strategic steps. First, the modulating

leader's goal is to be visible. She must be an active participant in dialogues around the issue and determine how to use this situation. Heifetz (1994) highlights a quote by Martin Luther King, Jr. during the reformer's struggle for justice that resulted in 9,000 black people registering to vote in just six months:

That's what America is all about—freedom to breathe, freedom from fear. That was fundamental. King often said, 'The vote is not the ball game, but it gets you inside the ballpark.' That's where we were at the end of 1965. We had gotten in the ballpark. Now we had to learn to play the game. (p.231)

Webster's New World Dictionary (1991) defines equilibrium as “a state of balance or equality between opposing forces. A state of balance or adjustment of conflicting desires, interests” (p. 459). Wheatley (1999) affirms that

equilibrium is neither the goal nor the fate of living systems, simply because as open systems they partner with their environment. These systems are called 'open' because they have the ability to export energy from the environment and to export entropy. They don't sit quietly by as their energy dissipates. They don't seek equilibrium. It is quite the opposite. To stay viable, open systems maintain a state of non-equilibrium, keeping themselves off balance so that the system can change and grow. (p. 78)

The modulating leader can allow the ideas and the energy flow. Sometimes the energy may take its form but then it may dissipate. The ideas and energy will take new forms depending on the environment and the people. With informed harnessing and mindful presence along with the energy, new changes will emerge. In summation, the modulating leadership's framework borrows concepts from multicultural awareness of one's own identity and the dominant culture, multiple intelligences, conflict management, and creating equilibrium.

Voice and Advocacy

Advocacy is defined by Cohen, de la Vega, & Watson (2001) as “the pursuit of influencing outcomes—including public-policy and resource-allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions—that directly affect people's lives” (p.7).

Cohen et al. (2001) goes on to explain that this definition can be construed as limiting.

Advocacy has no bounds. He believes that the society should hear from a plurality of interests – economic, ethnic, occupational, geographical, ideological, and more. Unfortunately, many decisions are made without the input of others’ voices and issues. Mondros and Wilson (1994) suggest the term, empowerment to describe the “psychological state—a sense of competence, control and entitlement—that allows one to pursue concrete activities aimed at becoming powerful” (p. 5). There is a clear distinction between power and one who feels powerful. Empowered individuals with resources, rank, and status, have control and influence; however, when the individual feels and experiences a sense of disempowerment, he or she experiences a loss of control and loss of voice. Empowered advocates and leaders will seek opportunities to generate power to effect change.

The advocate and leader will determine actions or steps based on various factors. The factors include what is the political landscape? Is the issue macro or micro? Is the issue an obvious human right or right not yet recognized? The advocate/leader develops considerations surrounding factors such as resisting and challenging status quo, raising critical inequality issues, placing issues and policy demands within policy-making systems, mobilizing support from others, initiating action, proposing solutions, creating space, engaging stakeholders, and developing knowledge (Cohen et al., 2001). Importantly, the advocate/leader must understand the effects and advantages of power. Power is the ability to “create whatever effect is desired (change or status quo), especially in the face of opposition” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 11). In *Advocacy for Social Justice: a Global Action and Reflection Guide*, Cohen identifies 12 lessons for social movement advocacy. The first lesson is to draw from one’s own sources of power to create change. This lesson suggests that change is transformative in nature and the advocate

should be highly aware that there is always unequal power between the advocate and decision maker. It is crucial to understand power dynamics.

Kahn (1970) recommends that knowing the power structure is critical for developing effective leadership strategies. The advocate will make the contacts and develop a relationship with the decision maker. He maintains this communication to learn of the decision maker's strengths and weaknesses. Kahn states "Know your enemy" as a good rule for the advocates during times of conflicts (p.8). The advocate is typically the person who is intuitively and systematically aware of the conflicts between the decision maker and the community. The advocate can use her relationship to neutralize the potential hostility and stress of the situation between the community and the decision maker. To ensure this is an effective strategy, the advocate will occasionally visit with the decision maker in a friendly manner. The goal of this strategy is to channel potential aggression toward the advocate and not toward the community (Kahn, 1970).

Mondros and Wilson (1994) include that the advocate must also "analyze what is wrong with others' thinking and behaviors – why things occur in society" (p.15). They explain that anger is often involved as the leader/advocate rejects the dominant ideology. They feel the deep unfairness and find the injustice unacceptable. This rejection process requires the advocate to re-define and re-position herself in these power differences and situations and anticipate the responses from the dominant society.

Cohen et al. (2001) explains that the second lesson is that people must be prepared to face immediate threats and risks that come from social change. In some instances, advocates' lives, families, jobs or positions may be jeopardized or at risk as result of their advocacy work. It is

vital to carefully assess the potential dangers, to help the individuals prepare for the risks, and to protect them as much as possible.

The third lesson suggests that people-centered advocacy has powerful results. Bridging the voices of the ordinary people and the officials/system are fundamental steps to overcoming the gaps and disparities. The role of advocates is to help define the issues, to create the goals, to identify the commonalities, to work with the people to accomplish their goals, to build their confidence and voices, and to learn by doing. The power is in ordinary people's voice, for they are the ones who know what they want and need (Cohen et al., 2001). Translating and guiding the people's wants and needs into a message or story that is clearly understood by the listeners and decision makers is a vital task for the advocate.

The fourth lesson affirms that advocates must understand the cycles of change to find points of intervention. The cycle of changes include problem-solving cycle, issue life cycle, and organizational life cycle. Understanding the group's current strengths and current stage will help to determine which roles to play, consider which skills need to be developed, and formulate a plan of action (Cohen et al., 2001). Kahn (1970) suggested that one of the advocate's most important responsibilities within the community is to train the people. The goal for the training is to provide the community with the skills and knowledge that the advocate has herself, so they can assume the role of the advocate when she leaves. Kahn suggests developing "leadership qualities which will make them effective in broadening and consolidating the power of the poor within their community" (p. 39).

The fifth lesson is to build public support. Advocates must engage in public argument. Social advocacy's greatest challenge is bringing the unconvinced to a specific point of view through public argument. The goal is to persuade for support. Lesson six involves creating free

spaces for engaging in public argument and building public judgment. This opportunity provides a space for people to share experiences, raise issues, engage people who are different, learn to collaborate, create ideas, and develop demands on the systems for change (Cohen et al., 2001). The Ohio Mental Health and Deafness Summit (The Summit) was an example of free space. The Summit provides an opportunity and an arena to voice issues and to address the disparities of the existing system for the deaf consumers of mental health services. The Summit utilized a team of providers, consultants, and consumers of mental health services. An experienced facilitator led the dialogues. The format was carefully developed to maximize depth and breadth of issues. The space brought specific persons, scholars, and decision makers together in a room with undivided attention to address the issues that were brought forth by a group of concerned advocates (Zangara, 2009).

In lesson seven, advocates must engage in policy-making systems. After a mobilization of pressure is exerted on the system that needs to change, it is critical to be involved in policy analysis and influence (Cohen et al., 2001). As a result of the Summit, the work of the advocates with the decision makers has just begun with analyzing current policies, historical data, stories of disparities within the mental health system and planning for new changes (Zangara, 2009).

In lesson eight, stories provide a tremendous source of power—to both the narrator and those listening. Stories play a critical role in helping to make connections, understanding the issues, inspiring hope, creating a new culture of listening and learning, and enabling advocates to reflect on the experiences. In addition to Cohen et al.'s work, Gardner (2004) describes stories as narratives that describe events that unfold over time: “At a minimum, stories consist of a main character or protagonist, ongoing activities aimed toward a goal, a crisis, and a resolution, or at least an attempt at a resolution” (p. 19). Gardner (1995) also explains how the leader makes a

significant impact on the audience with the particular story that she relates or embodies. She must be acutely aware of how it is perceived by the audience. The leader presents a dynamic perspective to their followers or audience. Together, the audience embarks on a journey with the leader. They pursue goals, interact with obstacles, and overcome resistances. The story becomes embodied within the audience—they are able to identify and become part of the story. The key to effective leadership is effective communication of a story. Stories raise the important issues and provide an avenue for communicating messages.

Cohen et al. (2001) describes lesson nine as a type of innovation that is born in innovative, learning organizations. The advocate is a role model. It is crucial that the advocate does not mimic the opposing behaviors from the system. The advocate will model a more appropriate behavior or thought that stimulates positive responses. The advocate creates an environment where it is safe to express ideas, learn from mistakes, and ask hard questions. Senge (2006) explains that learning organizations include: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. He asserts that these learning areas are to be developed as an ensemble. The leader accepts that the core of real learning is getting to the “heart of what it means to be human” (Senge, 2006, p. 13). The learning organization is continually expanding its capacity to create its future. The learning organization and the transformational system -thinking leader facilitate a synergy of the six disciplines.

The building blocks for systemic thinking leaders are reinforcing feedback, balancing feedback, and delays. Senge (2006) offers descriptions of the three building blocks. He states that reinforcing or amplifying feedback is the key process to growth. While balancing feedback, or stabilizing, will “put the brakes on” and control the acceleration of the growth. In addition, the feedback will also experience delays. This is described as interruptions to the processes or

flow of actions. These interruptions will have either positive or negative consequences. Senge reiterates that systems have minds of their own. The leader will need to be incessantly aware of the systems, the patterns of change and its interrelationships in order to “re-create and be part of the generative process of life” (p.13).

Lesson ten examines how effective leadership is a critical part of strengthening movements for the long term. Three leadership components were identified as: style, roles, and responsibilities. Each of the three components stresses the importance of recognizing and understanding the complexity behind the characteristics. Recognizing the strengths and challenges of the leadership components will enhance the outcomes of the advocate’s leadership potential. In reflecting Cohen et al.'s lesson ten, Mondros and Wilson (1994) assert that the ideal characteristics include change vision attributes, technical skills, and interactional skills. Change vision attributes include how the advocate views the world in political terms, goals for change, and their philosophy about power. This includes their personal characteristics of persistence and dedication in the pursuit of change. Mondros and Wilson (1994) explain that technical skills require the advocate to have the ability to “analyze issues, opponents and power structures; a competency in the development and implementation of strategy and tactics; a proficiency in the assessment of the status of instrumental goal achievement; and an expertise in public relations tasks and communications with the media” (p. 19). In addition, the advocate has the ability to mobilize an effective group; maintain task groups; have competency in fundraising and organizational management. The third component is interactional skills. This is also referred to as expressive skills, which include the ability to respond with empathy, facilitating communication, and developing potential leaders. The advocate empowers the individuals to gain power (Mondros & Wilson, 1994).

In lesson eleven, effective social movements work effectively by well-rounded teams of storytellers, organizers, and experts working together. It is fundamental to recognize that no 'one' advocate or leader has all the talents required to lead an advocacy effort. Teams are built to complement each member's strengths, talents, contributions, and knowledge. This team endorses opportunities for well-rounded effective social change. The team encompasses the healthy attitude, variety of skills, and breadth of knowledge (Cohen et al., 2001). Mondros and Wilson (1994) illustrate four types of achievements to which social action group's aim: effecting influential change; developing leadership; developing the organization's capacity and resources; and augmenting public awareness in relations of the organization and issues. With growing, healthy and functional membership, power grows. The connection between active membership, victory, and power is critical to the success of the social action.

Finally, Cohen et al., (2001) twelfth and last lesson claims that it is easier to destroy a movement than to build one. Advocacy requires many positive and healthy qualities such as innovation, hope, stamina, drive, grit, and commitment. It is relatively easy to sustain the winning moments. But when an effort suffers a setback, the leader is faced with a great challenge. She needs to ensure that she has mobilized a strong and cohesive group to motivate and reenergize the purpose of the effort. A strong group will buffer the members from both external and internal tensions. Mondros and Wilson (1994) explain that maintaining and deepening member participation is a critical task for the advocate/leader. The issues that the leader must consider are planning for the necessity of sustained involvement, addressing attrition and longevity, enhancing member retention, defining the leadership, and strengthening group identity and cohesion. Conflicts also arise during the effort. The advocate/leader must monitor and control the conflicts accordingly. The energy should be aimed at the targets and opponents,

not inward at their team. The twelve lessons are clear indicators of the extent of responsibilities for the advocate/leader.

Situational Leadership

The deaf leader leads through trials and tribulations as well as through strategic or natural leading occurrences. The leader may also lead according to the demands of different situations. These demands require an effective leader to adapt her style to the situations. Situational leadership requires the leader to provide direction and support to the subordinates within a situation. With an assumption that the subordinates' skills or motivation will vary over time, this will require the leader to adapt to the changing needs whether it is directive or supportive (Northouse, 2004). Northouse (2004) explains that the situational leader may provide

directive behaviors to assist the group members in goal accomplishment through giving directions, establishing goals and methods of evaluation, setting timelines, defining roles, and showing how the goals are to be achieved. Directive behaviors clarify, often with one-way communication, what is to be done, how it is to be done and who is responsible for doing it. Supportive behaviors help group members feel comfortable about themselves, their co-workers, and the situation. Supportive behaviors involve two-way communication and responses that show social and emotional support to others. (p. 89)

Northouse (2004) stressed that situational leadership is composed of directive and supportive dimensions, which are applied accordingly to the situation. Essentially, the leader matches her style to the competence and commitment of the subordinates. The effective leader is able to recognize and adapt to meet the subordinates' needs. Northouse continues to describe situational leadership as encompassing four distinct styles: delegating, supporting, coaching, and directing. These styles used in situational leadership afford the leader the opportunity to be practical, flexible, credible, and prescriptive in nature. This approach recognizes that there are unique needs and unique situations that require adaptability on the part of the leader.

The situational approach embodies traversing. The approach is constructed around the idea that team members move forward and backward along the developmental continuum. The effective leader must be able to identify and adapt her leadership style to match the team members' positions and competencies (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 2006). Northouse continues to explain that situational or contingency leading is practical, intuitively sensible, and applicable in various settings. Additionally, it emphasizes the leader's flexibility and realization that she cannot lead using a single style. The leader recognizes that she "changes her own style based on the task requirements and the subordinates' needs—even in the middle of a project" (Northouse, 2004, p. 93).

The deaf leader traverses the continuum of leadership models and strategic change practice with the goal of maximizing influence and change opportunities. The deaf leader bases her decision and strategy on her ability to influence, assessing the quality of the relationship and mutuality, and the positioning for change. An effective deaf leader will seek and seize opportunities for effecting change while engaging in a fast-paced, competitive mainstream American society. The deaf leader may choose to embody a leadership model and/or change strategy to effect change.

Assimilating Voice and Deaf Leadership

Like other marginalized groups, Deaf people have often found that their opinions are neither valued nor encouraged in decisions affecting their welfare. As a result, the tendency of many Deaf people has been to stay out of the public sphere, even when their own fates are being debated. However, some Deaf people have not been willing to grant the dominant society permission to dominate them. (Jankowski, 1997, p. 7)

For the purposes of this study, the deaf leader is described as a person with a significant hearing loss that immediately is viewed as a challenge and obstacle among the dominant, non-deaf community. The deaf leader may be construed as a passionate advocate; however, a typical

deaf leader is living the life of a deaf individual 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Advocacy for most deaf leaders is not simply a “nine-to-six” job—being deaf encompasses one’s entire life. The act of marginalization and advocacy is an incessant practice. Clearly, deaf leaders are usually set aside from the traditional leaders and the dominant culture. The notable difference between the two is that the non-deaf leader has the opportunity to be vocally articulate, maintains a strong voice and; asserts a sense of dominance and privilege (Jankowski, 1997; Pack-Brown & Williams, 2003). A deaf leader experiences unique challenges that are difficult to imagine by members of the dominant culture. Pack-Brown and Williams (2003) define the dominant culture as having “dominance in various forms, such as race and ethnicity, gender, socio economic status, and sexual orientation” with “values, world views and life experiences” (p. 83). Individuals from the deaf community are not perceived as equal members of their dominant culture. Even though the deaf community works hard to mainstream themselves within the dominant culture, the cultural and linguistic clashes create a hierarchical dominance by the dominant culture—mainstream America. The deaf leaders’ prerequisite to effective leadership is to “understand those values in order to predict the typical attitudes of other Americans” (Hirsch, 1988, p. 24). The linguistic, cultural, and disability challenges are pervasive. “Institutional and cultural oppression permeates almost every aspect of the social climate in which we live. It is obvious, for example, in the preponderance of negative and stereotypical media portrayals of racial minorities, women and sexual minorities. It is also embedded in our language” (Pack-Brown & Williams, 2003, p. 162). Perceptions of deaf people among members of the dominant culture and norms within that culture thus present challenges and barriers to change.

To understand the unique challenges faced by deaf leaders, one must understand the linguistic, cultural, and disability challenges that are embodied in the individual and the

community. A disconnect between the American mainstream society (the dominant culture) and the deaf community creates obstacles for change. Culture is normative. “All human behavior is Participant to normative social control and each bit of behavior becomes an element in a code. This normative structure is what gives the human behavior its communicative power” (Novinger, 2001, pp. 16-17). Jankowski quotes Fiske

“Inherent in any dominant culture or organized entity is a philosophy or set of beliefs that serves as the dominant ideology. Through rhetoric, which brings the dominant ideology into everyday life, people construct their reality of the work, their sense of themselves, their identities, and their relationships to other people and to society.” (Fiske as cited in Jankowski, 1997, p. 3)

This creates great disequilibrium between the normative structure of the deaf community and the normative structure of the American mainstreamed society. This disequilibrium is better described as a disparity between the two.

Novinger (2001) describes culture in three distinct concepts that range from simple to the complex.

Culture is just “the way we do things around here.” Culture is the set of norms by which things are run—or simply “are.”

Culture is the logic that gives order to the world.

Culture refers to “knowledge, experience, meanings, beliefs, values, attitudes, religions, concepts of self, the universe and self-universe, relationships, hierarchies of status, role expectations, spatial relations, and time concepts” accumulated by a large group of people over generations through individual and group effort. “Culture manifests itself both in patterns of language and thought, and in forms of activity and behavior.” Culture filters communication. (p. 14)

Deviating from the dominant cultural norms is typically not regarded positively because of a general desire for public order and governance in social and institutional interactions. The norms perpetuated by American mainstream society thus exhibit pose significant barriers to efforts that embrace intercultural communication. “Communication style in a steep hierarchical

society services to reinforce or create hierarchical differences between persons” (Novinger, 2001, p.33). The equity lies in the ability to fit into the hierarchical society and be recognized as an equal conforming member of that dominant culture; however, social justice and equality via communication are challenged whenever there is a discrepancy in power or status between two cultures. Add in the language barriers and communication disability differences and there is a clear imparity between the normal hearing American mainstream society and the deaf community. The deaf community is ranked low in the hierarchical structure (Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1999; Padden & Humphries, 2005). “Language shapes, as well as illustrates, social reality. A group’s language transmits its ideology, consciously and unconsciously” (Jankowski, 1997, p. 3). Blount (2005) states: “distinctive cultural identity presumes distinctive and very often contrasting, cultural belief. When those identities and beliefs harden, as they always do, into social and political positions, we have entered the realm of ideology” (p. 8). Essed (1996) gives an illustration of a phenomenon that is also witnessed in the deaf community.

Indirect discrimination is equal treatment in equal circumstances but under unequal social conditions. This form of discrimination usually occurs when one group, whites, are the norm group for whom institutional rules are formulated, which are then applied to everybody else, including different ethnic groups. (p. 11)

Until the marginalized community is able to conform to the norms and expectations of the American mainstreamed society, the marginalized individual remains with a status indicated low in the hierarchical structure.

Based on mutual life experiences among the deaf community and notable authors, the deaf community will experience typical negative responses from the members and systems of the dominant culture or the American mainstream society in regards to their “differences.” The deaf community has laid claim to the four “D’s” experiences. This refers to disability, dysfunction,

deviant, and deficient with a profound emphasis on paternalism and pathological perspectives. The dominant culture is conditioned to perceive the deaf Community or deaf individual as someone who has a lack of ability, not functional in the sense of normal hearing and thinking, deviant from the norms of the dominant culture, and has a defect in the sense of not being whole or normal. These perceptions are heavily personified in paternalistic and pathological approaches to dealing with the deaf people (Lane, 1999; Shapiro, 1994; Wrigley, 1996;). “Like other marginalized groups, Deaf people have often found their opinions are neither valued nor encouraged in decisions affecting their welfare” (Jankowski, 1997, p.70). In other words, the dominant culture strives to fix the defect and transform the deaf individual into a non-deaf person as if there is something terribly wrong with the deaf individual. This also means abandoning the language, culture, and identity and adopting the dominant culture’s perceived right to decide how the deaf individuals should learn, work, and live their lives. Jankowski (1997) states

the rhetoric of the dominant group frames justification for day-to-day action, thus enforcing norms that keep subordinates in line and maintain the status quo. The rhetorical process that produces this conformity to norms is so pervasive because it is so often overlooked as a basis for the power of the dominant group. (p.3)

Where is the parity to the rights of the deaf community? How is it ethical to impose conformity? These are acts of compelling marginalization. “Deafness is more than a color in the pastiche of social differences. It is also a marker of oppression and marginalization in very real lives” (Wrigley, 1996, p. 268).

Marginalization and oppression among the deaf community is recognized as audism. Audism is a fairly novel term for most normal hearing Americans. The definition of Audism is found in an unpublished essay by Tom Humphries as, “the notion that one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or behave in the manner of the one who hears” (n.d., p.1). Audism is a

complex concept and in many ways similar to the kinds of philosophies and practices that legitimate the phenomenon and definition of racism. Essed (1991) states that racism is a result of complex and integrated influences. These influences include macro components, structural-cultural dynamics, and micro components which are inequalities perpetuating the system. The outcomes of racism are oppression, repression, and legitimating. A notable author, Dirksen L. Baumen, closely examines Humphries' definition of audism and its pervasive effect among the deaf community. Baumen (2004), a professor at the renowned Gallaudet University, teaches the Dynamics of Oppression course. He analyzes common manifestations within the definition:

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

The history of audism can be traced historically back as far as the writings of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle through the works of Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes up to the present. In responding to the question, "What makes us human?" Aristotle answered "language." In *When the Mind Hears, A History of the Deaf* (1984), Lane quotes Aristotle as an example of early attitudes related to audism, "All that a man has ever thought, wanted, done, or will do, depends on the movement of a breath of air, for if this divine breath has not inspired us, and floated like a charm on our lips, we would all still be running wild in the forests" (p.77). Lane continues to claim that this thinking suggested that deaf children and wild children were an embarrassment for this definition of man, since the deaf were thought to have no language and feral children were invariably mute. Aristotle, whose works influenced many people through the Middle Ages and up to the modern era, wrote that "of all of the senses, hearing contributes

the most to intelligence and knowledge- by accident, since sound is contingently the vehicle of thought” (Lane, 1984, pp. 91-92). Jankowski (1997) notes in her research those perceptions of deaf people as mentally deficient dates to 355 B.C. Unfortunately, these statements paved the way for the dominant culture’s perceptions of how a deaf person should live. The fates of the deaf individuals were ceaselessly owned and sealed in the hands of the non-deaf society. Challenging the fates required deaf leaders to traverse and seize opportunities within the changing systems.

Traversing in challenging and changing systems requires one to be aware of the multitude of systems occurring at the same time. Each system has its own degrees of complexity, fragility, and unpredictability. The changing systems can be macro and/or micro. The changing systems have complex contingencies and interdependence of various systems. They are all interconnected to some degree and connected to the leader. Vaill (1996) uses the concept of permanent white water to describe this complex, turbulent changing environment in which we all try to navigate. Permanent white water is used to describe as condition that are full of surprises and complex issues that produce novel problems, present features that are messy and ill structured, often are sometimes costly; and can raise the problem of reoccurrence. Vaill explains that there are three central areas in recognizing that “today’s complex, interdependent, and unstable systems require continual imaginative and creative initiatives and responses by those living and working in them—and especially by those leading and managing them” (p. 5).

Vaill (1996) asserts that the three central areas to leading and traversing in a changing system include:

Our continual imaginative and creative initiatives and responses to systems are continual learning. We need to carefully consider what we take from continual learning in order to live productively and comfortably in our changing system.

We need to determine if we are prepared to engage in continual learning and how do we go about it. (p.5)

Vaill (1996) describes three leaderly learning choices. The first choice is technical knowledge. The leader continues to learn the technical facts of the organization's activities, keeping current with the facts to communicate the purpose and work effectively. The second choice is purposeful knowledge. The leader is integrated with the process of continual work with establishing clear purpose, broad directions, and specific goals. The purposeful leader maintains clarity, consensus, and commitment to the mission of the organization or people. The third choice is relational knowledge. The relational leader interprets the purpose and technical facts into realities that are meaningful to the decision makers or people. This leader has ability to project sensitivity, proficiency in teamwork, and leadership capabilities. This leader conducts herself in a healthy manner that includes positive spirituality, honesty, and specific psychological attributes. The knowledge as stated affords the skills and resources to navigate the permanent white water. The leader integrates the leader learning strategies and management of learning organizations for optimal outcomes.

Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith (1994) provide a comparable perspective of learning organizations. They assert that there are three key guiding ideas: 1) the primacy of the whole, 2) the community nature of self, and 3) the generative power of language. The primacy of the whole suggests that the world is interrelated. The parts are not considered independent of the whole. An example is looking at living systems. Senge et al. uses an example of a cow in the book. Parts do not identify the cow, but rather as a whole with intrinsic and complex system of bones, body parts, circulatory system, digestive system, nervous system, and respiratory system that are all interrelated to each other. It is viewed as a whole. It would be the same for a mechanical system like an airplane. Senge et al maintains that we need to see the primacy of

whole as patterns of interactions. The community nature of the self challenges the individual to see the interrelatedness in her own self. We are all connected in various ways. It is consistent in the systemic view of life. The third guiding idea is the generative power of language. In general, language defines meaning. Language affords the opportunity to describe our independent realities and to interpret our experiences. These guiding ideas give the leaders and organizations passion, direction, and purpose. They give meaning to the perspectives of the learning leader and learning organization.

A traversing process has chaos and stable lulls. Traversing is ever changing. Heifetz (1994) claims, "Every living system seeks equilibrium. They respond to stress by working to regain balance" (p. 28). Heifetz continues to explain that the concept of adaptation is to understand biological evolution. We change as result of various societal and environmental pressures. Sometimes evolution has no purpose but survival is our way of measuring success. Interestingly, people often do fail to adapt for various reasons. It could be how the threat is perceived; the distress and/or required changes it demands. This could lead one to either avoid or take action (Heifetz, 1994).

Tichy and Devanna (1986) share three key reasons for cultural resistance or failure to adapt to change. The first reason is "cultural filters resulting in selective perception. The organization's culture may highlight certain values, making it difficult for members to conceive of other ways of doing things. The organization's culture defines how things will be. An innovation proposed by an outsider or deviant is often challenged" (p.80). The second reason is regression to the good old days. Organization or individuals feel secure when returning to the past. Giving up old ways of doing something is very difficult (Tichy & Devanna, 1986). The third reason is "lack of climate for change. Organizations and individuals vary in their

conduciveness to change. Cultures that require a great deal of conformity often lack much receptivity to change” (Tichy & Devanna, 1986, p. 81).

Affirming an earlier chapter regarding transformational leadership, Tichy and Devanna (1986) provide strategies for transformational leaders to create change within organizations. There are three strategies to include in transforming work. First, the leaders must have a clear agenda. They will have a list of things they need to accomplish to transform the organization. The agenda becomes the organizational anchor. The second strategy is to employ the “No Easy Answers Norm.” The transformational leader needs to find ways to channel the support and enthusiasm for change while at the same time remind them that there are no easy answers for complex and dynamic changing issues facing the organization. Lastly, avoiding the over-advocacy trap is critical for the leader. It is very tempting to advocate for a change by overselling the concept to be accepted. This is a trap. The critical success to promote a more balanced view of what can be accomplished is to realize that there is no panacea. Couto (2002) states that leadership can “transforms the common processes of leadership – change, conflict and collaboration” (p.208).

Creating a culture of inclusion is a radical concept and requires a radical change. We live in permanent white water in dealing with today’s businesses, marketplaces, politics, and society. The most important factor in creating change effort in the culture is to position oneself, the organization, and the leaders to support the imminent change. The leaders must position themselves to lead change. The stake in the change must be communicated effectively to the constituents. The passion, commitment, and energy invested will guide the individuals to embrace the vision for change. The leaders seek leverage in existing skills, talents, and diversity to promote this change with a way of life model to institute a new culture within an organization.

There are six levels of development. The first level is developing individual awareness. The goal of this level is to help individuals from the dominant culture become more aware and better understand people from other cultures and groups.

The second level involves implementing various diversity and inclusion programs and activities in the organization. Once awareness has been established, work needs to be done to maintain the awareness. Implementing programs such as mentoring, support networks, and recruitment. The third level is combining programs and activities into an initiative. This suggests that the diversity-related programs are not an after-thought or given a piecemeal attention. This forces an evaluation of the interrelationship: high performance, leveraging diversity, and a culture of inclusion. This creates a force in strategizing and planning and in moving toward new competencies for a new culture and work environment. The fourth level involves linking and aligning the initiatives into the strategic work of the organization. This requires the organization to assimilate new competencies into all of the organization's outcomes, leadership, and initiatives. The final and fifth level is a way of doing business. The organization should synergize all of the competencies, leverage the diversity, and promote inclusion into the new change. It is also pertinent that an organization continues to acquire, practice, and use the competencies to enhance the overall organization's culture, performance and success. As simple as the six levels sound, each level requires in-depth work to achieve its outcome with tedious and laborious attention as well as a strong voice of conviction toward this goal within the leader (Hogan-Garcia, 1999). "Innovative leadership is distinguished by its stress on change to enact familiar but neglected values of greater inclusiveness and communal bonds" (Couto, 2002, p. 13).

The ultimate growth and development of every human being requires willingness to seek new challenges and to reflect honestly on the successes and failures of the situation or change (Kotter, 1996). The deaf leader can help their deaf constituents achieve a change of behavior through helping them recognize the problem, embrace the emotions connected to the problem, and utilize the motivation to change or reinforce the change (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). The transformation process recognizes the need for change. Realizing that organizations or people tend to be comfortable with the status quo and to resist change, the transforming leaders have a huge responsibility to show the way (Northouse, 2004). Transforming leaders will “engage creatively, in a fashion that recognizes, and responds to, the material wants of potential followers and their psychological wants for self-determination and self-development” (Burns, 2003, p. 183).

A deaf leader traverses the continuum of leadership models in unusual ways. Traversing reiterates the skill of achieving or maintaining influence to bring about change within an individual or a system. The influence or change is wide-ranging from initiating a ripple effect attitudinal shift to a momentous system change including oneself. Mediating two or more cultures requires practice and finesse from the leader. In *Reveille for Radicals*, Alinsky (1946) eloquently states the all-encompassing responsibility of a leader and advocate in his poignant passage.

We must devote everything we have to working with our people; not only to find the solution, but also in order to insure that there will be a solution. The chance to work with the people means the opportunity for the fulfillment of the vision of man. It is the opportunity of a life for mankind of peace, happiness, security, dignity and purpose. An opportunity to create a world where life will be so precious, worthwhile and meaningful that men will not kill other men, will not exploit other men, either economically, politically, or socially; where values will be social and not selfish; where man will not be judged as Christian or non-Christian, as black, yellow, or white, as materially rich or poor, but will be judged as a man. A world in which man's practices will catch up with his ethical

teachings and where he will live the full consistent life of practicing what he preaches. A world where man is actually treated and regarded as being created in God's own image, where "all men are created equal." That is the opportunity. Dare we fail? (pp. 65-66)

Deaf leaders sustaining voice and eloquent traversing through leadership comes with a tremendous responsibility. This responsibility is an opportunity – the privilege for effecting change and creating a better world for all deaf people. Freire (1970) states,

The correct method for revolutionary leadership to employ in the task of liberation is, therefore, not libertarian propaganda. Nor can the leadership merely implant in the oppressed a belief in freedom. The correct method lies in dialogue. The conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation is not a gift bestowed by the revolutionary leadership but the result of their own conscientizacao. (p. 54)

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study is to examine and understand the lived experiences of deaf leaders and how they sustain voice and position in dominant systems. This study used a phenomenological design to elicit rich, deep descriptions of lived experiences from a group of outstanding leaders who are deaf through dialogues. The aim of the study was to uncover a depth of meanings surrounding the leadership interdependence between deaf leaders and the dominant system. Themes are identified and descriptions captured the essence of the life worlds of my participants as they pertain to my research questions and purpose. Themes and descriptions are based on series of interviews. The research question is: How do deaf leaders sustain voice in challenging dominant culture/systems? The multiple interview process involved a process of elaboration and elimination to reveal one or two interviewees who could most thoroughly capture essences of their phenomenon. This design coined by Kenny (2007) is referred to as an “inverted pyramid” design. The purpose is to re-interview participants who may be able to offer more depth in our dialogues.

Interviews were conducted in American Sign Language (ASL) and recorded on video. The content of the American Sign Language interviews were transcribed into written English. As a media enhanced study, the concluding descriptions are created in English text and in American Sign Language. As a researcher, I aimed to capture the essence of the experience of effective leaders who are deaf, particularly their life worlds of deaf leadership and to provide a descriptive interpretation of this experience.

Rationale for Research Methodology and Method

The rationale for this methodology allowed the participants to describe their worldviews of leadership and sustaining voice in their language, American Sign Language. American Sign Language does not have an English equivalent. Thus, I would not be able to represent my findings accurately without media enhancement, which will present the direct findings in American Sign Language. My goal was to capture the fullness and depth of the stories of my participants. As a bilingual and bicultural researcher, I aimed to capture these stories without compromising the expressions or meanings of my participants.

Phenomenology, the study of consciousness and its objects (phenomena), is a way of knowing, which employs enriched and embodied awareness. Phenomenology directs us to the fullness of experience rather than a remote or pro forma accumulation of information and facts. The creative capacity is enhanced by the opening of vision resulting from immersion in the subject matter rather than limiting the researcher to the traditional mode of observations of data gathering at a discrete distance. (Bentz & Rehorick, 2008, p. 3)

Phenomenology reveals the meaning of lived experience within the everyday life world.

Thomas Schwandt (2001) explains: “Phenomenology is a complex, multifaceted philosophy that defies simple characterization because it does not represent a single, unified philosophical standpoint” (p.191). Schwandt adds: “Phenomenology researchers reject scientific realism and the accompanying view that the empirical sciences have a privileged position in identifying and explaining features of a mind-independent world” (p.191). Phenomenology researchers insist on meticulous descriptions of ordinary conscious experience of everyday life, hence, the life world. The descriptions of things that depict the essential structures of consciousness as one experiences them are things that we experience. These include the perceptions of believing, remembering, deciding, feeling, judging, evaluating, and bodily

actions. Phenomenology can embrace all experience if it is perceived by the participants and researcher (Schwandt, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2007).

Van Manen (1990) explains that it is vital to be cognizant of what phenomenological human science is not and what it does not do. He describes four critical points. First point, “phenomenology is not an empirical analytic science” (p.20). Life experiences do not fit into statistical analyses or rigid scientific representations. Lifeworlds are organic, fluid, and produced by people, things, ideas, and personal consciousness. Van Manen states his second point: “Phenomenology is not mere speculative inquiry in the sense of unworldly reflection” (p.22). The phenomenological study with the leaders who are deaf will include carefully choreographed probing questions, analytical processing strategies for the interview requiring a complete state of presence; skills in identifying subtle cues and openings for deeper meanings; and exemplary relational skills for deep disclosure. It requires accomplished personal mastery, consciousness of individual biases and weathered insightfulness about the meaning of life. He continues with this third point, “Phenomenology is neither mere particularity, nor sheer universality” (p.23). Every interviewee has his or her own story. The story has its own meanings, experiences and interpretations. Commonalities between stories can be interpreted. It is not possible to have identical life experiences, emotions, and implications. But each story may exhibit recurring thematic particularities or similarities that may lead to meanings. Finally, Van Manen explains his fourth point, “Phenomenology does not problem solve” (p.23). Phenomenological questions are meaning questions. Phenomenology is not therapy; however, there are similar qualities of catharsis when one is projecting anecdotes through series of meaningful questions. Through a process of reconciling meaningful questions while elucidating

her story, between the researcher and the interviewees, a sense of awareness, new understandings, and new meanings are often revealed.

Schwandt (2001) explains: “phenomenological descriptions of such things are possible only by turning from things to their meaning, from what is to the nature of what is. This turning away can be accomplished by a certain phenomenological reduction or epoch” (p.191-192). This necessitates a technique called bracketing or suspending personal experiences or everyday assumptions of the independent perceptions. This approach constitutes a classical form of phenomenology originating in Edmund Husserl’s (1965) conceptualization of the methodology. The first step for data interpretation is integrating the phenomenological reduction process. The phenomenologist/researcher sets aside, or brackets, all preconceived notions about the phenomenon at hand to the greatest extent possible. He learns to recognize the multitude of assumptions, filters, and conceptual frameworks that structure from our perceptions and experiences (Bentz & Rehorick, 2008). This process allows the phenomenologist to maintain integrity in the interview and to be more fully present as well as understand the experience from the interviewee’s own point of view, motivations, and actions. Interpretations can thus often be “colored” by the researcher’s experiences with lived experiences or previous knowledge that she had regarding the participant matter.

In conducting phenomenological studies, lived experience is a critical component to reveal the essential elements of the core experience so that one can discover depth or consciousness. Phenomenology refers to the study of the essence of consciousness. Max Van Manen (1990) asserts that phenomenology seeks to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence. The effect of the text is a process of reflexive re-living and reflective appropriation of something meaningful. This impression leaves the reader effectively animated

in his or her own lived experience. Van Manen characterizes lived experience as “breathing.” Thus, a lived experience is fundamental to defining the meaning of the experience. The ultimate goal of the researcher is to compress the meanings of the experience to their essential structure. Creswell (1998) explains that the researcher will use the textural description to expose *what* happened and the structural meanings to expose *how* the phenomenon was experienced. The components of the description will expose the essence of the experience.

Research Design and Procedures

Kenny (2007) coined a research design that involves a tiered interview process called “the inverted pyramid.” The first six participants were interviewed on videotape at a minimum of one hour each. After the participants’ interviews were analyzed, the second round of interviews was conducted with two participants. The final interview was conducted with a participant that showed great promise for depth and discovery of essence. The interviews were captured on video in American Sign Language and transcribed in English. During the interview process and transcriptions, the researcher continuously made notes of any brackets to consider.

Participants and Criteria for Selection

The selection was participative and based on collaborative review and recommendations from a dissertation committee member, a retired professor/reputable national leader who is deaf, and the researcher herself. The criteria for selection of the leaders were based on their: 1) past or current work experience with dominant culture and systems; 2) their leadership contributions to the deaf community; 3) their availability for multiple interviews; 4) their openness toward video interviews as well as their willingness to be candid; and, 5) maintaining diversity, i.e., people of color, age, speech/hearing status, education, type of work, and gender.

Data Collection Procedures

To minimize distractions and eliminate potential disruptions to the flow of thoughts and comments, no interpreters were present or utilized. As tempting it was to have an interpreter to provide an audible voice interpretation to the experiences to save time for translations, I purposefully chose not to encourage the participation of a third party member in the interview or influence the spontaneous interpretation. Translations are themselves interpretive processes. And the participation of an interpreter would add yet another layer of interpretation to the process—one that is not guided by the research agenda. I inquired about the presence of a video camera and explained the purpose of the video camera. The purpose of the video camera was to capture the intricacies of the message, the nuances and complexities of the language, display of emotions, and thought process in their expression in sign language.

Prior to the interviews, as a researcher/interviewer, I took extra care and time to establish rapport. When rapport was established and the purpose clarified, I started with the questions. The questions for the interviews addressed: “How do deaf leaders sustain Voice and position in challenging dominant culture/systems?” The sub-questions were as follows:

1. Are there leadership characteristics that are unique among deaf leaders leading in challenging dominant culture/systems?
2. Are deaf leaders challenged with traditional leadership in relations to myopic views or systemic thinking of the dominant culture/system to their own cultural lens?
3. How do deaf leaders position her selves to sustain voice and effect change?

Interpretation of the Findings

I noted every significant statement that is related to the topic. These statements can represent horizons of discovery. Identifying “horizons” in phenomenological inquiry is very

important (Bontekoe, 2000). And every horizon has equal value. Also, my intention is to put the situation at a distance to better view it through enabling as opposed to disabling prejudgment or bias. It is important to look for all possible meanings and perspectives. The phenomenological technique of “imaginative variation” helped me to identify various frames of reference and divergent perspectives (Bentz & Rehorick, 2008; Creswell, 2007). Bentz and Rehorick (2008) explain: “The purpose of imaginative variation is to shift our attention away from facts and measurable entities towards meanings and essences” (p. 14). We aim to push the boundaries and to extend the cloak of the thing in question. But it is critical to use disciplined imagination to go beyond the boundaries of ordinary and observed life experiences that we typically take for granted and to uncover what is necessary and essential (Bentz & Rehorick, 2008). The focus of my disciplined imagination considered what the themes mean juxtaposed with my experience as a practitioner and relevant dimensions of the literature.

At the conclusion of the interviews, I reviewed the video for content and any potential follow-up questions for clarification. The next daunting task was the translation process. I translated the American Sign Language videos into audio. The audios were transcribed into English texts. After this process was completed, I reviewed the text and videos to check for accuracy and discrepancies. Since the messages were translated; they were reviewed repeatedly and meticulously. Finding the right translation with the correct English vocabulary requires proficiency and mastery in languages, as well as monitoring and bracketing any of my personal experiences that may influence word choice. Finally, educated guesswork and “intuition” were utilized to create accurate transcriptions. In American Sign Language, conveying and interpreting the spirit of the message requires one to observe and read the entire body—the face, arms, hands, and upper torso. The body’s movement, use of space, timing, facial expression, and

most of all eye contact plays fundamental role in conveying particular meanings. After the transcriptions were completed, they were shared with the interviewees for approval and/or clarifications. This process was carefully separated from the stage of analysis and interpretation.

I learned in my pilot study for this project that there will be challenges, especially with the translation process. While a deaf leader's life world is captured on video in American Sign Language and the content transcribed into English text, creating a synonymous replication from one language to another posed challenges. The complexity of transcriptions comes into play with careful attention to details that could alter the "consciousness of the message" or maintain the fact that there is no exact equivalence in converting the American Sign Language full experiences and meanings into the English text. The intent, emotion, experience, and perception of the meanings do not translate interchangeably. Interpretations can vary, for it is an art not a science. The choice of the English vocabulary, description of emotions, and comprehending context can vary from person to person on the receiving end. The English text never equates to the complexities of American Sign Language. It is not unusual to find an English word with no exact equivalence with an ASL vocabulary sign. At best, we can identify a word that closely resembles the meaning. The compromise is to capture the essence of the message from an enabling as opposed to a disabling perspective. During the process of translation, the researcher/interviewer utilized a neutral reviewer to determine the accuracy of occasional ambiguous messages captured in the English text. The neutral reviewer's dominant language is English and trained in American Sign Language; and the researcher's dominant language is in American Sign Language and trained in English. A discussion of consensus for the translation maintained unbiased influences and accuracy. The final English transcripts were shared with the participants for accuracy and were then analyzed for themes and an American Sign Language

version was developed to convey the leader's lifeworld. This dissertation study captured the deaf leaders' lifeworld and interpreted into both English text and American Sign Language.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

The participants reviewed and signed an informed consent prior to the interviews. Due to the sensitive nature of the intended research, the participants are informed about the goals and process of the interviews. The anonymity of their identity and identifying information are protected through pseudo-names. The participants had an opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy and anonymity.

Significance of the Study

The study provided a deeper meaning and understanding surrounding the leadership relationship between a deaf leader and dominant system. The study examined the lived experiences of deaf leaders and how they sustain voice and position in dominant systems. This study used a phenomenological design to focus on lived experience and elicit rich and deep descriptions from a group of effective leaders who are deaf. The aim was to uncover deeper meanings surrounding the leadership relationship between the deaf leader and the dominant system. The responses gathered and themes identified from the study are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter IV: Findings of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how lived experiences and perspectives contributed to the relational experiences between the dominant system and deaf leaders. This chapter addresses the research questions identified in Chapter 1 and the methodology defined in Chapter 3. The findings of the interviews are presented in this chapter. The chapter concludes with brief summary.

The study explored the phenomenological experiences of deaf leaders to gain insight into their relational experiences with the dominant system and how they sustained voice. The study consisted of nine interviews with six participants, all conducted in American Sign Language (ASL) and recorded on video. The content of the ASL interviews was transcribed into written English. The author/researcher experienced variables that impacted the integrity of interpreting the deaf leaders' lifeworld from ASL to English. The concluding multi-media descriptions were created in English text and in American Sign Language. The utilization of the multi-media process is to capture the essence of their phenomenon, their life world of deaf leadership, and imitate a descriptive interpretation of the experiences.

Sampling Procedure

The study included six participants, three males and three females. Of the six participants, one was black. They were all currently recognized as national leader figures. Two worked for nationally recognized non-profit deaf organizations, two worked for the federal government, one managed his own private company and one was a higher education administrator. Each of the participants had over 20 plus years of leadership experience. Two of the six participants were born deaf and raised in a deaf family with ASL as their primary language. Two of the six participants stated that they were not born deaf and acquired deafness

at a young age. Four of the six participants were raised in a hearing family with the English language. Two of the six participants consider them having strong speech ability and can converse with the dominant system with cautious and choreographed effort; however, all required the use of American Sign Language interpreters. The participants all have advanced degrees; one participant has a bachelors' degree; two participants have master's degrees and three participants have doctoral degrees. The age of participants ranged from 45 to 65 years. The interviews were conducted at the participants' preferred sites. The researcher/interviewer conducted nine separate interviews, each lasting from one hour and ten minutes to one hour and forty minutes. Two of six participants were interviewed the second time and a final interview was conducted with one participant for the third time. This interviewing process reflected the tiered method. The interviews were captured on videotape due to the exclusive use of American Sign Language as the participants' primary language to communicate their lived experiences. The interview was conducted entirely in American Sign Language. To minimize distractions and to eliminate potential disruptions to the flow of their thoughts and comments, no interpreters were present or utilized. As tempting it was to have an interpreter to provide an audible voice interpretation to the experiences to save time for translations, I decided not to use an interpreter to avoid any potential interference from involvement of a third party member in the interview that might influence spontaneous interpretations. The researcher/interviewer did ask participants how they felt about the presence of a video camera. The participants were quite comfortable with a camera and were unaware of its presence the majority of the time. The video camera captured most of the intricacies of the message, the nuances and complexities of the language, displays of emotions, and thought process in participants' expressions in sign language. The process produced information that was rich and valuable.

The interviews were based on semi-structured questions provided with a brief background and a general framework for discussion. During the initial stage of the interviews, the researcher/interviewer took extra care and time to establish rapport and to provide a brief overview of the study. When rapport was established and the purpose clarified, we proceeded with the four questions. Their responses provided me with interrelated prompts and explorative openings to peel away like the layers of an onion to get to the essence of her experiences. The interviews were fluid, engaging, and visual. The videos contained messages that were entirely visual with no auditory supports. At the conclusion of the interviews, I reviewed the videos for content and any potential follow-up questions for clarification. The next daunting task was the translation process. It was a long monotonous process. Because the researcher/interviewer translated the messages, it was also carefully reviewed repeatedly. The process was very cumbersome, tedious, and frustrating. Finding the right translation with the correct English vocabulary requires proficiency and mastery in both languages, as well as monitoring and bracketing personal bias and experiences that may influence word choice and finally, utilizing “educated guesswork and intuition” to create accurate transcriptions. In American Sign Language, conveying and interpreting the spirit of the message requires one to observe and read the entire body – the face, arms, hands, and upper torso. The body’s movement, use of space, timing, facial expression, and most of all eye contact plays fundamental role in conveying particular meanings. After the transcriptions were completed, it was shared with the participants for approval and/or clarifications. This process was carefully separated from the stage of analysis and interpretation. This entire translation process alone took approximately 144 hours.

Initially, the researcher/interviewer created audio recordings of the interviews to support efficiency for transcription services. She employed two transcribers to transcribe the audio

recordings into English texts; however, the productions of the first two transcriptions were not met with satisfaction in terms of semantics and context accuracy. The audio transcripts had apparently created an additional layer of interpretation that weakened the written English translation. The final written English translations did not provide a symmetrical meaning to the ASL data.

While the participants' lifeworlds were captured on video in American Sign Language and the content was transcribed into English text, creating a synonymous replication from one language to another posed tremendous challenges. The complexity of transcriptions comes into play with careful attention to details that could alter the “consciousness of the message” or maintain the fact that there is no exact equivalence in converting the American Sign Language full experiences and meanings into the English text. Some occasions, the intent, emotion, experience and perception of the meanings do not translate interchangeably. Interpretations can vary, for it is an art not a science. The choice of the English vocabulary, description of emotions and comprehending context can vary from person to person on the receiving end. The English text could never equate the complexities of American Sign Language. It is not unusual to find an English word with no exact equivalence with an ASL vocabulary sign. At best, we can identify a word that closely resembles the meaning. The compromise was to capture the essence of the message with an unbiased authority. During the process of translation, the researcher/interviewer sought out a neutral reviewer to determine the accuracy of an occasional ambiguous message captured in the English text. A discussion of consensus for the translation was required to maintain unbiased influences and accuracy. This was also a time-consuming task.

As a result, the researcher/interviewer decided to redo the interpretation/translation. The audio interpretations were obliterated. The transcriptions of the ASL interviews were based on viewing the videos frame by frame to create an interpretation from ASL to written English translation. This eliminated the additional layer of interpretation. The final written English translations produced satisfactory interpretations for the purpose of producing a textural description for this study. As a multi-media process, the descriptions also included ASL video clips. It is believed that it is best to preserve and convey the lifeworld of the participants' back into American Sign Language. This project attempted to capture the participants' lifeworlds as interpreted into both English text and American Sign Language.

Research Questions

The following research questions formed the foundational underpinnings of this phenomenological study. The questions for the interviews addressed: “How do deaf leaders sustain voice and position in challenging dominant culture/systems?” The sub-questions were as follows:

1. Are there leadership qualities that are unique among deaf leaders leading in challenging dominant culture/systems?
2. Are deaf leaders challenged with traditional leadership in relations to their cultural lens because of potential myopic views or systemic thinking of the dominant culture/system?
3. How do deaf leaders position themselves to sustain voice and effect change?

After unweaving the complexities of the participants' lived experiences, the interviews uncovered a number of themes surrounding their perspectives on deaf leadership. Each of the accounts and perspectives were based on their own personal experiences as a leader. The principle instrument for data gathering for the study was the open-ended interview questions

followed by probing questions to further delve into the participants' experiences. The transcriptions were categorized and analyzed. Approximately fourteen hours of recorded video material, 32 hours of audio interpretation, 144 hours of interpreting/transcribing and 112 pages of single-spaced transcribed English texts were reduced to categories and sub-categories. The responses were categorized to identify underlying meaning in particular areas. The interview responses were categorized into the four areas (Figure 1) that created the overarching themes for this study.



Figure 1

The interviews captured the deep, lived experiences of the deaf leaders' relational phenomenon with the dominant system. The meanings that were grouped into the four areas: unique qualities of deaf leaders; cultural challenges that the deaf leaders encounter; positioning strategies that deaf leaders utilize; and deaf leaders' experiences in sustaining voice. The interviews captured rich stories and descriptions of the phenomenon. For each of the four areas, the responses were further categorized into sub-categories (Figure 2). The following sub-categories were identified as:

<u>Qualities</u>	<u>Cultural</u>
Q1 Value/Belief System	C1 Managing Auditory-Based Environment
Q2 Continuous Learning	C2 Cultural Integrity
Q3 Positive Attitude	C3 Social Responsibility
Q4 Forgiving	C4 Public Identity
Q5 Innate & Learned Leadership	C5 Recognizing Oppression
Q6 Written & Spoken English Skills	C6 Dominance of Principles & Beliefs
Q7 Resilience	C7 Dual Culture Integration
Q8 Intuitive	C8 Communication Clash
Q9 Managing Multiple Information	C9 Physical and Mental Fatigue
<u>Positioning</u>	<u>Voice</u>
P1 Assertive & Purposeful Leading	V1 Empowered Articulation
P2 Maximizing Interpreters	V2 Nurture Relationships/Connections
P3 Physical Proximity	V3 Credibility
P4 Content Knowledge	V4 Owning Processes
P5 Speech Ability	V5 Solution-Oriented
P6 Improvisation Skills	V6 Bridging Communications
P7 Navigating Languages	V7 Experiences
P8 Internal Gauge	V8 Managing Peripheral Challenges

Figure 2

Unique Qualities

The first area is unique qualities. The interview questions explore the leadership characteristics that are unique among deaf leaders leading in challenging dominant culture or system. The interviews uncovered assorted characteristics or qualities that present as consensual qualities among leaders who are deaf that are critical components to deaf leadership. Nine subcategories were identified from the interviews.

Value/Belief System (Q1)—This subcategory was a frequent theme in the interviews. The participants credit their upbringing for instilling their sound value and belief system. The value/belief system acts as a personal guide with their leadership decisions. They also include the importance of role models and mentors in their lives. A

recurring exploration surrounds the concept that earning hard-earned rights and working toward value-added outcomes were critical leadership experiences. The following participant responses reflect this theme:

I grew up in a deaf family. My parents instilled in me the value of helping others. In the 1950s- 960s, we had issues with homeless deaf people on the street. My father would often invite them into our homes to sleep. I was exposed to this. At that time, the state hospitals had a special ward for deaf people. They did not necessarily have mental health issue; they simply did not have a job. They were taken in the wards; however, the services were inadequate. I had seen this growing up and I developed a social conscious to make sure their basic needs are met... water, food, and shelter. Deaf people may not have sufficient tools to gain independence. I incorporated this social conscious; a feeling of wanting people to obtain the support to live functioning lives. If we just lived our lives not helping others, then you are not a leader.

For me, I would say my own value system is important. This person would need to have integrity. They have to believe in what they do. Some of the best people that I work with in the government are what I call “true believers.” They really believe they are serving the public. Their heart, mind and spirit are based on the foundation of working hard and providing a service. They want to provide “value” to whatever we do or provide. That perspective of value-added and commitment to their work is important. Those are the people who I work best with because they are likely to follow through, will respond, and will work with me. I will work with them. It establishes a bond for trust. We have established a value to work together to achieve mutual results that will benefit the public. Whoever, the public is. What we can do here to enhance the quality of lives is

valuable. That characteristic rooted in value is important—It is integrity, working hard, and having clear boundaries.

A woman, my grandmother, influenced me. She was very civic minded. Her involvement was religious and she gave me a sense of social responsibility. I have never lost the sense of civic engagement. Ironically, she died on my 12th birthday. At a very young age, she taught me the whole concept of civic engagement. It is the importance of helping your fellow neighbors and friends... both men and women. It is important to help people who are less fortunate than her. We live by this quote, “to do unto others as you want others to do unto you.” I grew up with immigrant work ethics. All of those things influenced who I am.

Truthfully, being the representative of the principles and beliefs that I represent. To show who I am.

I have experienced that as a teacher. I was a deaf teacher at a school for the deaf. I normally didn't have conflict with the hearing teachers. But there was one incident when the representatives from the Board of Education came to visit my classroom. I was told not to use sign language by the principal. Regardless, I decided to sign. I normally sign, talk, and write on the board. When the representatives from the Board of Education left, I received a letter commending my work as a teacher. The principal who told me not to sign was embarrassed. Obviously, the representatives of the Board of Education were impressed with my teaching. This is an example of clash of values. How was I going to teach? I teach 9th-grade science. Some of my students are low verbal and some are high verbal. I utilize all methods of signing, talking, and writing to teach. When the representatives of the Board of Education came to observe me, I did not change how I normally teach. I am very engaged with my students and I use a lot of

interactive methods. That is my teaching method. I am not going to be a hypocrite and speak only. That is an ineffective method. With these types of situations, I will stand up for myself.

I worked more than 30 years... close to 40 years. First, I had a great role model. I had teachers and mentors. The people in high-ranking positions, who recommended me, encouraged me to join groups or apply. I acted on their encouragement and I was successful. I obtained many of my positions through the support of my mentors. They were very helpful in letting me know about opportunities. They believed in me. I was willing to try. But the point is, if you are encouraged to do something and you accept the challenge. You have to be able to do it.

As an individual, you have a lot to offer. However, to offer, you need a belief system. First, I believe deaf people can do anything. That belief has always driven me. I also learned early in life from my father that the world or community is not always ready for someone who is different. I was a small boy playing baseball for a little league group. I was one of the best players. This was in the 1960s. The coach found out I was deaf. He put me aside. The coach wanted to talk with my father but discovered he was deaf as well. My father was prepared with his paper and pencil to communicate. I remembered this very vividly because I could read very well. The paper said, "This deaf mute child cannot play baseball." I cried. My father told me to ignore the coach. He simply stated, "Hearing people are not ready for you." I didn't understand that at the time. But as time passed, I learned more and more about what my father had endured. He experienced discriminations, was denied promotions because he couldn't use the phone and many other reasons. I witnessed this. Two things I learned, life was just not fair and you have to work extra hard if you want to succeed. You have to work harder than hearing people. Knowing that is what my father taught me, this kindled my motivation. I have adopted that attitude. So life

is not fair? Move on. Another important issue is where you work. You have to believe in where you work.

It really starts from how you are brought up. I was brought up in a very normal environment. I had both hearing parents. I was expected to succeed.

It means that my disability does not stop me from moving ahead. Fearless! You can do it! Daring! But the keys are your personality and charisma. You need to attract people and make them want to work with you.

Continuous Learning (Q2)—This particular subcategory proposes that deaf leaders have a satiation for learning that is continuous. Not only do they realize the quest for learning, but also that it is a necessary for maintaining their role as a leader and functioning as an equal counterpart in the dominant system. The following participant responses reveal aspects of Continuous Learning in the lives of deaf leaders:

It is continuous learning, developing expertise and content knowledge. It is presenting an appearance that we are here to serve you. I think that is important for me, it is what works for me.

This experience tells me I need to develop the content knowledge and to learn quickly. I need knowledge to understand the legalese and to integrate the new information in order to challenge the different professional opinions and judgments about how the law should be interpreted and implemented. I could lose the argument but I hope this will not happen. Because of this particular law, there will be consequences for the school for the deaf. The consequences are critical. The fact that my colleagues recognize my credibility, they will listen to me.

You need to know your skills. Develop your knowledge and skills. Be open to training and learning. It is both, the content and the ability to learn. You need the potential to be trained.

As I was engaged in this business, I learned a great deal about computers. I learned how to use the computers, how to install parts, how to connect the floppy and hard drives. I learned this on my own. I did not have any formal training. I learned through reading and experiencing. I asked many questions.

Positive Attitude (Q3)—simply remaining positive regardless of the challenges that the deaf leaders experience. This subcategory constitutes an optimistic and constructive way of thinking, behaving, and feeling about oneself. The following participant narratives reflect Positive Attitude:

Speaking specifically about our deaf leaders in our community, you need to have ability to filter information between factual, fictional, or perceptions. You may just have to leave it as is. You cannot take it personally. You need to move on. Be strong. Be self-analytical. It is also being able to handle perceptions from many people that are possibly right and possibly wrong. Leadership is lonely at the top. The qualities are having a positive attitude, forgiving, thinking quickly on your feet, and multi-tasking.

Yes, that is why when I speak among young deaf individuals, I remind them to be leaders in their current groups or organizations. Take on leadership roles and engage in leadership training. Develop your self-esteem; everyone has experienced good and bad things about themselves. I have bad and good habits. You need to be aware of what that is and develop on the good things about yourself. If you are skilled in dancing, then practice dancing. If you are good at writing or reading, then practice your hand in poetry. Develop your strong points.

Then again, the information allows me to be aware of my blind spots. I try to pay attention to myself. I will not stop learning or truly understand myself 100% as a leader. Knowing my voice means I know my motivations, my challenges, find ways to overcome the challenges, utilize variety of approaches, and accept that things will change.

I am struggling for the right words; people say I hate to fail. I don't like to fail. Failure is your best teacher. Mistakes are your best teacher. How do I translate into something so that people will understand? Perhaps I can say, "Robert, you are human. You have many ideas. You try to see things from different perspectives." I understand that life is not fair. Ultimately, if I have lemons, I will make lemonade. That is what I do.

Her father quoted many years ago, "If you make nothing, it is zero. If you make fifty cents, it is better than zero. More will come." Sure enough, he was right. I will have to choose to live with the decisions. They follow us and they will see how easy it is to work with us. We gain respect. After some time, we can revisit on the decisions that were made and educate them. They will be supportive of changes and modifications. They have done that in the past. The important things to promote are communication, cooperation, and being open minded. Use your charisma and your personality strengths. All of that comes into play.

Forgiving (Q4)—Forgiving is synonymous to being somewhat tolerant and pardoning. Participants explored the importance of forgiving ignorance and oppressive incidents. It is also the importance of moving on as a deaf leader; however, there was a fine line between forgiving intended impressions and non-intended impressions.

Like Jesus said, "Father, they did not know what they were doing. Please forgive them." That attitudes and situations... they didn't know any better. So you have to be forgiving. That is the Christian background in me. You cannot dwell on the negatives. Though, on the other hand,

I do find myself shying away from those people who represent the patterns, the repetitive cycles of victimization. I will dissociate myself from those situations. It is not worth my time; however, if they change their behavior and realized the wrongs, I will forgive them.

There was one situation that we had together at a university meeting. We were seated among the executives and Matthew was talking about a very specific issue. He took "credit" for the analysis of this issue. I was watching and knowing this was incorrect. I waited for an opportunity and made my interjection. I state, "Matthew, remember that I (listed everything I had done) regarding this issue." Basically what I did was expanded on the issue. Matthew looked at me very sheepishly. He had realized what he had done. He was embarrassed. Nothing was said but the group knew. I decided you take something of mine; I have to take it back. Because I did this work, I did the research and analyzed the findings. We have discussed this and we will tell the group. I put our relationship back to mutual credence. I was not going to remain at a lesser subsidiary role after his spiel. Fortunately, I knew him well enough where I could do this positive way for him, the group and myself. It was critical to show the group that I remained as the lead; Matthew was part of the team.

You have to be strategic. You have to think ahead. If this is not possible, you have to improvise. To make do with the situation you have on hand. What if I had to cancel a meeting because there was no interpreter present? I do recall a past experience where there was no interpreter. Arrangements were made but for some reason the interpreters were not present. I had to stand up and say I am sorry that I cannot participate. I am excluded from this meeting and you are excluding my community from participating. At that time it was a disability group. They apologized profusely. Someone took notes and filled me in afterwards but it was not the

same. I was not able to be part of the decision making process. They have effectively excluded me. (You felt apologetic?) No I was mad! I was pissed off. It should have never happened. Often, I have to remind people to do advance planning. Unfortunately, we have to think about those situations. It is not automatic for them.

I wanted to live. People don't always understand that. I do blow a fuse when I have to but I normally don't. I don't have the need to take credit. I let them take it. I am willing to let people make mistakes. Because I believe once they fall hard, they won't make the same mistake again. Sometimes I may appear uninvolved. That's typically the opposite. I am very involved. I prefer to think and work from a distance. To be the top dog, I guess you need a certain degree of ego. Maybe that is not who I am. I am not sure. This is who I am.

I stated, "You have it in your pocket? If I hadn't approached you, I would have never seen that \$100. I cannot trust you. So long!" One time was enough. I had to be very cautious. It was difficult. It was difficult to find employees that you can trust and to have confidence in them. I don't know if they would do that to other businesses but I know that since I cannot hear. I learned how to protect our vulnerabilities and being taken advantaged.

Innate and Learned Leadership (Q5)—The participants provided many examples of how leadership skills are innate and learned. A recurring theme with this particular subcategory purports that you need innate abilities as a potential leader to be open to leadership lessons and applications. The innate and learned opportunities are interconnected and nurture the development of the deaf leader.

Leadership is both innate and learned. If you have innate abilities and learning is acquired, you can lead; however, if you have the innate skills but and no structured training, it is hard to integrate the two and become an effective leader. You have to have a series of life

experiences with an innate ability to lead. If you don't have that innate ability, you would not be able to be open to the opportunities presented to you. You are born with it... people has it and some people don't.

Learned. (So you are basically saying that anyone can learn?) Yes, I do. When I was a college student, I was extremely shy. I did not socialize at all. I went to a 25th Reunion a couple of years ago. The alumni looked at me and stated, "You don't belong here." I am serious. I had to show them my badge with my picture. They looked at me and recalled my face. They were stunned it was I. I said, "Yea, that's me!" What I do now... I have learned. The social skills, the political skills, the relational skills, and etc.; I have learned on the job. I learned along the way to be assertive and how to do in way that people can accept me. I learned how to read people and know what I don't know. There are many unspoken and unwritten rules and information is exchanged all the time. I need to know how to figure that out and how to use the information.

Based on my experience, men are very black and white in their thinking; however I do see younger generations are more open. I am speaking of traditional male who relies on predictable resources. The younger generations are not that way. I guess I see more blended leadership with men and women today. The older deaf male and deaf female leadership appears to be much more predictable for me. Their leadership styles and how they handle situations are more predictable. Looking at all the past presidents of the organization, I recall working with one particular president. I encouraged him to consider pushing for a position on the access board. He was a republican and the board had republican ties. I explained the process of what he would need to do, for example, getting congressional letters of support and from leaders from disability groups. These materials needed to be prepared and submitted to the Office of the President at the White House. He stated, "Okay. You do the work for me." My response was,

“What?” I explained to this president. I do not know who your congressional friends are. I do not know who your friends are in the disability community. I cannot solicit them for you. They have to be people who support you and who knows you. You will have to elaborate on your interest and your abilities with them yourself. He simply responded, “you could make those things happen for me?” I refused. It means he can't do it. He was very angry with me. It represented of a very different time. He didn't have the savvy skills needed to serve on this kind of board nor did he have the political knowledge. I found that very interesting. I see differences in leaders from today and the past. It seems the younger generations are more of risk takers and willing to try new things.

I am trying not to think condescendingly but when I am in a position to be a leader. I try not to do all the work as a leader alone. Letting your followers do the work for you, help them to help you accomplish the tasks. It is helping others help you look good. You delegate the responsibilities. You don't need to be burdened with the tasks alone. They do the work; you can get credit. In my trainings, I have learned there are four different styles of leadership. This applies with the deaf community as well... there are no differences; however, if you are talking about a deaf leader that represents the big “D” deaf or the small “d” like myself. I was born hearing and became deaf at a later age. Regardless of the labels, I simply call myself deaf. The only difference is if the deaf leader may be brainwashed to believe this is the only way to lead and therefore he is better. Other deaf leaders are more humbled and recognize it is no different for deaf leaders and hearing leaders. I feel very fortunate myself. I have had the opportunity to interact with the hearing community and interact with the deaf community. I have the best of both worlds. That is my perspective.

Last but not the least, I will procrastinate things that I don't enjoy. It is very dangerous. As a deaf leader, I cannot do that. People expect more from me. It is like President Obama, if he cannot solve America's problem, the people becomes angry. If it were Bush, the response would not be as critical. There are different levels of standards and we are measured differently. I resent this; however, reality is if you resent this and don't like it, you will need to get out of it.

So, to answer your question about voice, a deaf leader needs to know how to present himself in a business sense. You cannot rely on your uniqueness as a deaf person or the fact that you need additional supports for communications. There is no favoritism. Regardless of the supports, you still need to be able to present yourself and compete with everyone else. You are no different than anyone else. The name of the game is what can you offer that is unique and unlike anyone else. What we have done all along is to offer what others do not. I do take advantage of my deafness and I do take advantage of knowing what it is like being disabled. That is my edge. I have the depth and understanding of what is it to be deaf and disabled. The others may not. They may have the superficial understanding. We cater to people who are already in the field or experiencing the barriers. That's the difference. I don't say, "I am deaf." That could create a negative connotation. We introduce ourselves and show our product. They know I am deaf or will realize that later. It becomes that they like what they see and what is presented.

Don't get me wrong. If the person has all of the other essential ingredients, he can override the writing skills. That can be fixed. You can bring in someone to work with him. A manager is only successful if you have the right people behind him. Micromanagement is not good. You find someone to fill in the gaps and he becomes your right hand man. You can write the content and your writer can edit the work. There's nothing wrong with that. However, if you don't have all the other essential ingredients, it is not worth investing in that person.

Written and Spoken English Skills (Q6)—Exemplary written and spoken English skills are considered assets to bridge the cultures and two languages effortlessly. These skills are considered gateways to the dominant culture, American mainstream society. The participants support having significant written and spoken English skills in order to provide deaf leaders with the means to effectively mediate the languages and cultures.

There are two different forms of English, written and spoken. With the spoken English, you need to be literate. This will allow you to read hearing people's thoughts, intentions, behaviors, and facial expressions. The written English is critical as well. I find that many leaders who are deaf have challenges in spoken English. A good example of this, my deaf colleague became so focused as to why there was no podium. She failed to observe two other hearing individuals' facial affect and response. Their comment was, "Well... I think we can manage." I saw their petulant facial expression. I did not like it. Immediately, I assured that I would locate the podium myself. They appeared relieved. My colleague was oblivious and I told her, "We will resolve it ourselves." What do you call that process? I know that many deaf individuals have not mastered that skill. Another good example would my deaf employer. He often asks me, "How do you know that?" I explained that I could see it in their facial expression. He missed the visual cues. I think the reason is because he was so focused on the interpreter and it created a tunnel vision to make meaning of the content. He failed to capture the nuances and the inflections in the message. Written and spoken English are equally important. For deaf leaders, you need to have both. To be astutely proficient in writing, I don't think it is necessary. However, I would believe having ninth to 12th grade-writing skills would be sufficient. To be below that would be difficult. It would be a struggle.

My English language skills have always been good. Since, I got into the federal government, it has dramatically improved. I am still learning and growing from the work I do. I continue to criticize my work. I make changes to my papers, the punctuations, the vocabulary, and the actual writing. I thought I had excellent English skills, but I believe it is even better now. I am being asked to review other peoples' work, documents, and provide editing feedback. So, yes, having English skills is very important. Without this ability or skill, I would not be able to do my job effectively.

A required quality in leadership? Yes. If you want to work with the dominant culture, you need to know their language. Especially, where there is a lot of more direct communication. You won't always have access to interpreters. It would be nice to have an avatar. But that is not a reality today. There is shortage of interpreters everywhere. Improvisation is a required skill. Use whatever tools you have to make communication happen and get ahead. In Washington, DC, it is a highly political climate and you must have a command of the English language.

Most definitely. Understanding the English language is crucial. I believe my abilities to read and write came from the deaf school and hearing people. As a student, the language was shown to me through sign language to develop the concepts. When a book was given to me, I could read and understand. Growing up, my father would come home with new comic books for me. People were surprised when I mentioned comic books. I would, at first, be intrigued with the picture stories. Then I realized when my father brought home a comic book that I had already gotten, I decided to read the words. I was enthralled with combining the words and the action-filled illustrations. I fell in love with reading. Reading is the fundamental of developing your language.

The first interview was a TTY interview. He asked me, "Are you deaf." I replied, "Yes." It was agreed to meet in person. I asked why he inquired if I was deaf or not. He shared that he had interviewed another deaf person but was concerned about his English language skills. He couldn't understand him. I realized the dilemma and educated him about the difference between ASL and English. I reinforced it had nothing to do with his ability or intelligence.

Communication was a critical tool for this job. I got the job.

In your field, I am sure you have people who work with federal regulators. You would need someone who can write and understand the federal language. On the other hand, to work with the community, you need relational skills, communication skills and charisma to interact with the people. Writing is important but not critical for community work. In that case, you can easily bring on someone to edit your work. There are different kinds of views regarding writing.

Resilience (Q7)—This subcategory implies that the individual has the ability to recoil or bounce back from adversity or challenges. The responses provided an array of experiences that demonstrate resilience.

It is resilience and perseverance. Our community is very small and insular. Many people are not forgiving. You have to get beyond that.

Deaf leaders.... Resilience. It is the ability to be flexible in diverse situations.

I also learned that a leader must recognize his own frailties. Once you acknowledge your weaknesses, you will bring in the best people to make things happen. Perhaps I can say, "John, you are human. You have many ideas. You try to see things from different perspectives. It is okay to trip. As long as you trip something that has a forward motion towards making a difference. You will be alright. But if you trip yourself into a bottomless pit, then that will be a nightmare." I do think sometimes the worst of myself. So, when that happens. I will sometimes snap out of it.

However it is my resilience that will help me through it. I am a survivor of sexual abuse, a survivor of cancer, a survivor of political motivated terminations and a survivor of multiple reorganizations. I understand that life is not fair. Ultimately, if I have lemons, I will make lemonade. That is what I do.

We had a family business. It was a relatively good size business. There were three sons. My father designated my brother, the second born son, to assume the business. But he also stated that he wanted me a part of the business. Prior to my father's death, I was not aware of a discussion between my father and brother. After my father died, my brother decided to tell me about the discussion. He explained, "I need to tell you what dad wanted and what my decision was. Dad wanted you in the business but I decided against it because you can't hear. You are deaf and I am concerned that you would not be able to communicate with the workers." My chest just dropped to the floor. I was devastated. From that point on, I was determined to establish my own business. My mother pleaded with me, "You are not going to be able to do it. How are you going to handle the phones... talk with people." I told her, "I can do it and I will do it." Over the years, they have witnessed the growth of my business. There were times where I was certainly very frustrated and was ready to close shop. But I had the determination and perseverance. I am here. I know my brother sees me and knows that I made it. He knows he made a big mistake. He has admitted that I had the charisma that my brothers didn't. I can forgive, but I can't forget. I have moved on and learned from that. That is what made me determined. I was not going to give up. It is true that for many deaf leaders. To succeed, they have the determination.

Intuitive (Q8)—The interviews uncovered stories about deaf leader intuition and insightfulness related to deaf leadership and the relational phenomenon with the dominant system.

I realized that it is a skill to evaluate the situation and impose change to your advantage. I am not sure what you call that skill or process. It is more of a “gut” feeling and decide how to be effective. I see this happen so often in our deaf community.

Dealing with the stress of cultural differences, communication, gender, role expectations, and assumptions played a role. It was a wonderful experience. My attorney stated that in all of his 20 years of real estate experience, this was the worst experience. I told him the only reason we succeeded was his advice and support along the way. We were also guided by our instincts. They could have walked away and we could have walked away. But we chose to follow our instincts and made it work.

The landlord who rented us the space asked us if this was our first time in business. I replied, “Yes.” He encouraged me to read the lease carefully. The lease was written in the leaser’s favor. I read it carefully and understood that if my business fails, I would not be able to break the lease. I would be stuck with the lease for at least couple of years. I agonized over the decision. I was determined that I would make a success of my business. I believed we would do fine.

Over the years, the market has changed. Businesses that thrived on volumes were popping up everywhere. Businesses like Egghead, Software City, CompUSA, and others. I couldn’t compete with them. Their prices were very low. I contacted the distributor and asked how I compete with their prices. The distributor stated, “You have a problem.” These businesses have chain of stores everywhere and they buy inventory by the trainloads. We are talking hundred

thousands of these items. Of course, volume. I started to recollect when I first learned about volume. I came home and told my wife, "We are changing our business."

Managing Multiple Information (Q9)—A consensus among the participants is the ability to manage multiple information. This involves multitasking and juggling sets of information that have direct impacts on how one toes the line with the dominant system.

With leaders who are deaf, if he chooses education, he will need to be skilled in all areas such as fundraising, legal, and many other areas. He is forced to juggle the areas to effectively lead. While the hearing person can simply choose one area, it is harder for the leaders who are deaf to sustain because he needs to spread himself out. Do you understand what I mean? That creates I wonder if I would be more effective. I know I can and will if I won a mayorship in a town. The town where I live has 1,600 residents. My husband asked me, "Why don't you try for a mayor position?" I would love that kind of exciting opportunity. The passion is there. In the back of my mind, I was thinking of strategies on how to resolve communication barriers and make myself accessible for others. How I would utilize an interpreter. I would need to find someone who believes passionately in my cause to become a mayor. I would appoint individuals and in my mind planning the events. Why not, I can do that; however, to do that, I must dissociate myself with my deaf world. It would be critical to focus and serve the people I am designated to serve. The humanity of this new world, I would no longer be insular. I could do that but something is pulling me back to the deaf community. Is it because my voice has not been heard? I don't look back and wonder. I know that if I had the right tools, I could be more effective.

It appears like I am put into a corner for the specific deafness related focuses but because I make sure I perform various functions for my program. This is different from other

specialized areas. I work with the attorneys. I work with the laws and interpretations of new changes. I also conduct performance measurements. We have a system that I utilize. I am directly involved with the budget process. This process includes auditing, monitoring funds, and reviewing budget information. My direct involvement in all of these issues and areas allows that breadth of knowledge. I like that. It means I am working with teams that involve individuals from various institutions that I work with. The functions of writing grants, interpreting government protocols, and overseeing the funding for various institutions are part of my responsibilities. Those skills are transferable. I will be able to do other work. Fortunately, I enjoy my programs. It has great meaning for me. This is one of the main reasons I remain at my position. It offers me opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills. I have the opportunities to work with my team members, my employer, and appointed political representatives to demonstrate not only knowledge in deafness but other governmental function and skill areas as well. I will research, audit for legal compliance, setting up the measurements, gathering data, ensuring money is spent appropriately, establishing the budget, and many different processes that is happening. I am involved in the processes. I am the point person and I make all of that happen for the institutions. If something were to happen to me tomorrow, they would have a very difficult time finding my replacement; however, on the positive note, I bring a lot to the table. I have multiple skills.

My knowledge of my work carries me. The experience as a project officer is the same for all of us. I became promoted based on my experience as project manager. But we each have specific projects. We started off with three projects several years ago and now I have thirty projects. Some may have 10 and others perhaps 36 or 40 projects. With my projects, I must have

the knowledge for all of them. If they ask me about my projects, I will give a response. My supervisor has to be aware that I understand my work.

Cultural

The second area is cultural challenges. The interview questions explore the deaf leaders' cultural challenges when leading in dominant culture or system. The interviews uncovered assorted characteristics those are present as consensual experiences with dominant culture or system. Nine subcategories were identified from the interviews:

Managing Auditory-Based Environment (C1)—An auditory-based environment entails any and all messages, communications, and information that are conveyed through auditory means. A person will acquire the information by “hearing” to participate or assume space in the environment. This is a constant battle for deaf leaders to maintain par with their hearing counterparts.

First of all, auditory-based environment... people hear everything is a huge part of this dilemma. Secondly, they are not visual oriented. They are completely oblivious to what they are doing. They are completely unaware and would say, “Did I do that?” You have to accept those two points like in that situation that I described earlier. These hearing representatives were involved in this work for many years... it is egos. Many other situations are different; often it's due to being in auditory environments. A leader like myself should always have an interpreter by my side. Many times people say that hard of hearing people have an easier time to have a place within community. This may be due to fact they don't need an interpreter. I noticed that I was most effective when I had a designated interpreter. This interpreter will become my ears and tell me everything she hears. Based on that decision, I became more effective.

I want to be able to do my job well. That is my own personal motivation. It is important to see myself doing the job well and effectively. Presenting the effectiveness to my team, they will recognize this. I am very conscious of the process and I work alongside with my team. I work to earn their respect and they earn my respect for their work as well. The respect needs to be mutual. During our team discussions, when a situation arises that I am missing components of information. The team members will clarify and expand that information. We are at the point where it is an automatic and a natural process. This phenomenon provides me access that I normally would not have in other contexts. Email correspondences and video calls provide additional information. I am also practical that these forms of communication do not take place of the dynamics of informal dialogues that occur in the hallways or break rooms. I simply do not have access to that.

I think often time we overlook the social cues because we didn't know or hear them. We don't pick up things auditory. That is why I am very observant. I look for the social cues. I am looking for appropriate social cues and how to interact.

Most definitely! It is very fast. The deaf participants are still "listening" to one piece of conversation and it's already on to the next topic. There is a lot of overlapping of conversations with hearing people. It is very hard for a deaf person to interject a comment effectively. If there is a situation where I know I have to actively participate in the meeting. I prepare the interpreter. I will tell her what I plan to present on or when to interject. I will maximize the attention from the participants. It's interesting. I am trying to think of more examples of butting heads. Perhaps I am able to manipulate the situations most of the time. That is where I make sure access takes place.

Because he knows I have something good to say and have a valuable opinion on a participant matter. He also knows that other people will dominate the discussion. You know how meetings are sometimes. You have six people and perhaps three of them will dominate the conversation and the pace is quick. My supervisor is noticing that. He had heard me at another meeting and was impressed.

I learned early in my career that my greatest disadvantage is keeping up with the current communications that are happening around me. The incidental communications, the phone conversations and the hallway dialogues occur routinely. I have tried to overcome this dilemma by having informal conversations with the employees and others. But I have found that people will tell you what they think their boss wants to hear—specifically what is going on, especially in the dominant communities. My second attempt to make these changes is to select team members that I could rely on being upfront and honest about the dialogues. I wanted them to share what they hear. It worked in some cases but not in others. No one is able to judge if I want to know this particular information. Only I can make that determination. I have learned to appreciate and notice small things that present themselves as clues to the dynamics. For example, in meetings, I take notice in behaviors and responses. I will probe and ask questions to learn what I need to know.

Cultural conflicts involve language miscommunication. Sometimes, you have hearing people who will say, “I heard something.” I find myself probing more to find out the meaning. When a hearing person “hears,” it can be an interpretation. I would not be able to challenge this information. It is not the lack of trust. It is where my ability to judge this information is. Since I cannot hear the information “firsthand,” how I manage the information. Many people think this is an insult. If I could hear what you hear, I could come to my own conclusions. I have

an obligation to examine the information. For a lack of a better word, that is your weak point as a deaf leader.

Many times over the years, we have caught our employees taking advantage of our deafness. They would conduct a cash transaction and pocketed the cash. They also have communicated to customers on the phone that they were owners of the business. They have made references that my wife or I were just employees. When I was not around, they also managed to encourage customers to work with them after hours for their own benefit. These are some examples. I was told by our customers that this was happening. Basically, letting me know that my employees stated that they ran the business and I don't. My customers knew this was not right and knew it was hurting my business. I approached my employees and tried to find out what was happening.

Cultural Integrity (C2)—This subcategory describes individuals who choose to abide by their own cultural beliefs and norms to maintain the integrity of their identity and cultural values.

Anyway, FCC made compelling remarks about two situations that made me realize how the message was conveyed, including the blind community's presentations. Their comments were very strong as well. They proclaimed all of their successes and how this bill impacted the lives of blind persons. They mentioned the deaf individuals vaguely but stressed the blind individuals' needs and gratitude. As the congressman was making his remarks, he explained a story about water contamination in the state of Massachusetts. They warned people not to drink the water. As a result, they had crawl captioning, "do not drink the water." People were informed but there was no audio to the captioning. The blind woman and her sight dog drank the water. The audience was impacted by his story. I kept waiting for the punch line regarding the deaf community. As a result of the presenters thus far, where was the deaf voice? There was none! I

was sitting next to the CEO of deaf organization. I asked her what to do. I decided to revamp my speech. I was informed that I was to introduce Senator Harkin. I decided not to and chose to use my six minutes to tell the audience what deaf and hard of hearing communities did to make this law a success. We were the ones who carried the ball. We worked hard on that bill. We spent a great deal of resources. I stood up at the podium and made my remarks.

We are equal to them. I just felt this constant battle to make sure we are recognized as an equal. That is the one area that I noticed with many of deaf leaders, we don't know how to troubleshoot or make best of a situation and problem solve a conflict so that it does not distract from the main issue or focus. Bring the main focus back to the forefront. The secondary issues prevent us from being successful and pushing our message. So, back to the podium, I quickly made changes to my speech. I decided I needed to captivate the two hundred audience members and about fifty of them were deaf. Being the last speaker, I presented well over my time quota. I figured, "What the heck! The other speakers took advantage of their time on the podium to bring attention to their own agenda." I was perhaps six minutes over my allotted time. I explained how the deaf community in America had rallied to support this effort. There were mass emails, blogs, vlogs and video messages sent to congressmen. I asked if they remembered that the bill was "sitting" and becoming a stalemate. After some nods of the heads, I recounted the events and the dates where we decided to revive the bill through meetings with legislators on Capitol Hill. I reminded them the power of social media in our efforts. The legislators were ambushed with correspondences from deaf and hard of hearing all over America. As a result, that evening, six congressmen signed on which led many more others to support the bill. The chair decided we needed to re-establish the committee. I profoundly thanked all the people who were involved and making this a success. By this time, the deaf and hard of hearing audience members gave a

rousing visual applause. The hearing audience members were astounded with the energy in the room. I don't know if the blind community truly appreciated the visual impact of the applauds? Hopefully, they heard the sounds. I also shared that I really hope I can benefit from this landmark bill and not wait until I was 100 years old to enjoy the access to all means. The audience laughed and shouted out comments, "I want it tomorrow!" The point was I got my message across. After the program, many hearing people approached me and commented on the presentation.

Challenges...when I first started this job about six years ago. It was right before the protest at Gallaudet. I immediately was faced with a challenge. My employer questioned me, "what is happening over there?" While I had my own personal response to the protest, I also understood my employer's perplexity. Keeping in mind that my employer is hearing, a male, and a veteran. Here, I am this short, deaf woman. We have not yet developed a working relationship built on trust. He did not trust me. In fact it took three years for him to trust me. When I was inquired about the protest, I knew I have not gained his respect or trust. I realized I did not want to "air the dirty laundry." I decided to filter the information. I provided him a superficial explanation. I did not give him an in-depth explanation and the underlying issues of the protest. Honestly, was I able to interpret what was going on over at Gallaudet? Probably not, I thought was it was pretty ugly from an outside perspective. So I felt torn regarding this situation. I chose to mediate and interpret the information to my employers and to the others. I was viewed as a representative of Gallaudet. They asked me many questions. I was not comfortable answering the questions. Because I graduated from Gallaudet and have a personal connection, I wanted to ensure that I was neutral. My employer asked me to be involved. My role is to be involved and at the same time stay neutral. It was an awful experience.

Not being afraid to speak for their own community. Remind them of their cultural and linguistic aspects of our community. When people do things where they forget or assume things about the deaf community, I would immediately put a stop and remind them of who we are.

Is it definitely a cultural conflict? I feel I am not accurately representing what I say I represent. This is typical in my community. But I am faced with limitations and what do I do? I have to get things done. I will never present without an interpreter. Never. In very small situations like the earlier story and I am stuck. I will do what I need to do.

It is important to stay true to our culture—our identity and our position. There are times where you have to be flexible. When I arrived to the coalition, there was so much anger directed at that deaf person. They did not want to have anything to do with him.

Social Responsibility (C3)—A sense of responsibility or social conscious to serve and protect their constituents and the accompanying challenges.

I recalled their overwhelming sense of social conscious or responsibility. I am not sure how you define this. But such a sense of burden that if we don't succeed, many generations of children will be lost. The feeling is overwhelming. It hits me hard. You can feel the weight in the room. At a later time, the superintendent contacted me again. He asked if I was truly committed with resources to support an introduction of a bill related to the IDEA Reauthorization Act.

However, this time... the team members are all deaf! It will be an interesting process to see how this will pan out. Typically with telecommunications advocacy, it is made up of mostly hearing people. Education is a predominantly deaf-led process. This group is completely fired up. The passion to do the right thing. Many leaders that I see have that passion and social conscious. Regardless if they are burnt out, the deaf leaders still have that spark when an issue close to their hearts is brought up. They will advocate passionately. That passion. That is the

way to sustain and carry the voice. No matter how small, the voice is symbolic of collective voices into a large voice.

A woman, my grandmother, influenced me. She was very civic minded. Her involvement was religious and she gave me a sense of social responsibility. Civic engagement and I never lost that sense. Ironically, she died on my twelfth birthday. She taught me the whole concept of civic engagement as a very young age. The importance of helping your fellow neighbors and friends both men and women. It is important to help people who are less fortunate than herself. To do unto others as you want others to do unto you. I grew up with immigrant work ethics. All of those things influenced who I am.

Public Identity (C4)—An identity that is presented and/or visible to the public and among peers.

One situation I recalled very well. I was in a group setting with many participants related to the telecommunications industry. There was one deaf corporate representative and apparently he has an inability to modulate his voice. He was unable to speak well. I was sitting with my arms folded across the table. The hearing people were all seated around me and an interpreter was sitting across from me. The gentleman made a point of not making eye contact with the interpreter. As he was talking, I could feel his voice. I looked up at the interpreter and signed very discreetly, “can he talk?” The interpreter kept signing and negating a response to me with her eyes and head. I observed the hearing participants struggling to comprehend his verbal comments and grimacing at his voice. I immediately stopped the meeting and asked the deaf corporate representative to meet me outside. I excused myself and pulled the person aside. I informed him of my observations and politely shared that the acoustics in the room was not favorable for him. I can actually feel his voice on the table. I asked if he would refrain from

using his voice and sign instead. He responded with a firm no and that he needed to talk. I decided to cancel the meeting. This deaf corporate representative was a contractor for me. I hired him. I have the control over this situation. He was very surprised that I made this decision. I explained that I was not about to allow him to ruin my relationship with the participants. I never hired him again. That was a long time ago. This was an experience I had to deal with. Deaf leaders who utilize their speech ability, I have no problem with that. As long as it is used correctly.

My public identity is important. It may present my vulnerabilities to the deaf community. People don't know who I am... I love to hunt, I love to ride, and I love to do things. If I share too much of this somehow they will use it to drag me down to their level of belief system of what leadership is about or should do.

But I am resistant to share that information. I choose not to expose myself. I will not share my frailties. For instances, my health issues... I will not share that information. Whether it is in the workplace or my board. I will not because they will become concerned and distracted. Will ask how I was doing? It would distract from our major goals.

You are almost "always" in the public eye now. Compared with today, you can't hide anything now. It is harder. Deaf leaders who are having affairs. Today, if you do that kind of thing. People will know it. I think it is easier to hide those kinds of things in the past. I also notice those who are good communicators tend to get ahead more than others.

Not to make me sound good. To make me sound professional.

Recognizing Oppression (C5)—A leader will recognize both forms of oppression—intentional and non-intentional oppressive behaviors, statements, and attitudes.

The hearing individuals represented their deaf CEOs. These people worked together for more than four years. Their process of deliberations did not include deaf people. It was very difficult for the organizations' deaf CEOs to gain access to their information. It got to the point where we need to replace the representatives to put a “deaf face” in the forefront of the effort. We tried to do this because in any case where the advocacy is about deaf people, being represented by a hearing person opens to loss of nuances and cultural sensitivity. We had to fight for that representation.

If the leader fails to recognize how to do this, then the fault lies on the leader. It is our responsibility to recognize the oppressiveness and bring attention to the issue. For the same reasons where a hearing person works in a deaf organization, the assumption that we have the “same norms, behaviors, and values.” When I address this dilemma with my hearing counterparts, there is denial. Then it becomes an issue where we label the hearing co-workers as “hearing attitude” (sign hearing on forehead). The real issue in my opinion is we have yet to educate the hearing counterparts that we are “truly marginalized and truly disenfranchised.” You have to understand how this positions the deaf leaders; however, no one really has the time to educate the hearing people. They need a “101” course in how to work with deaf leaders.

I never felt oppressed by hearing people. It is the deaf people who oppress me. I am sure you can appreciate my comments and I don't say it lightly. I thought hearing people did oppress me but I realize it is their ignorance. Once I educate the hearing people, they will change; however deaf people refuse to change. I feel that is oppression. I just don't comprehend why they can't let go and fly with it.

I separate two types of discrimination. The first one is intentional. This has no regards for the other individual. I have seen some people behave that way. But most of the time, it is not

intentional or to harm someone. It is their internal bias. The responses from each of the discrimination type are different. The first one is to achieve power through any means. You would need to pay attention to the approach. Non-intentional is very different. The approach is more modeling. "Your assumptions of what I have to offer are inaccurate. This is not correct. I have the following (list) to offer." The key is doing it in a way that is not offensive to them. I am not trying to intimidate or "shove him down." My goal is to bring both of us back to mutual credence. (ASL interpretation includes open hands bringing two parties to perpendicular position representing equality. ASL interpretation for intimidation includes an open hand oppressing the "one" person. A very deliberate one way act of force).I feel very successful with my approach.

I hate to say this... deaf schools by itself for many years is a place for oppression. They learn oppressive leadership. The issues of seniority and whether or not it is right or wrong at the time, they believe it is the best decision. If the experiences are wrong, you should be able to move on. Mainstream schools today are not going to get any better. Many children are marginalized. They are experiencing oppression and they will in turn become oppressors. We are dealing with a future problem. That is our biggest problem.

Dominance of Principles and Beliefs (C6)—A set of dominant culture principles and beliefs that are imposed upon the marginalized community or individuals as the general norm.

Society's perceptions that deaf schools are not valuable options. The superintendents in this meeting obviously felt that schools for the deaf is one the strongest viable options. The influence of systems that changes... again it is the auditory-based influences. The influences in pushing decisions based on auditory and not supporting visual means for education. These two

different approaches conflict. We need to figure out how to ensure the visual means for education has a place in our community.

Not being afraid to speak for their own community. Remind them of their cultural and linguistic aspects of our community. When people do things where they forget or assume things about the deaf community, I would immediately put a stop and remind them of who we are.

Our biggest conflict today is we say that we are a communication disability rather a hearing disability. This is why we do not belong in the disability community and claim that we are fine; however, this is a conflict. We collect disability funding and benefits. We claim rights for interpreting services. Are we deluding ourselves to this fact? Many leaders feed into these issues. I question the integrity of this issue.

Everyone understands civil rights. People understand human rights. If you want to fight the department of human services that every child will receive a cochlear implant. You know there are groups who are trying to get this to happen. But we have been too focused on what is irrelevant. We are fighting everything else. We need to see the future, and approach it differently. For example, medical ethics, forcing children to be implanted. This is a medical ethic concern. Screening genetic defects is an ethical concern. Hitler had his way then. Those are the things that are relevant to our future should be discussed. Unfortunately, we do too much screaming about "cultural" issues and people just don't get it. We scream about traditions. If we continue to hash on traditions, we will not be where we are now.

Dual Culture Integration (C7)—Actions or behaviors that suggest integration of more than one culture. The leader will facilitate behaviors, norms, and values that respect both cultures.

This was one of the rare moments I did not feel I had to accommodate the dominant system. It was an amazing feeling. I was their equal. Whereas, you have to realize that a lot of these types of situations depend on the interpreter.

The committee was made up of eight representatives including me from different disability representatives. We were working on a strategic plan. We took turn commenting on the strategic plan. When it came to my turn, they asked me what my goal was for USOC for the next six years. I stated that I wanted to be on the USOC Board of Directors. They laughed at me. I saw this as an opportunity to advocate for equal funding. Years later, they all voted me in. It was important that I advocate for their interests as well as mine. We have a common agenda; however, they know if there was an opportunity to advocate for the deaf athletes, I will. After working with me for four years, they knew I had their best interests. The community is like any other community. The black community. The Jewish community. They all have their own needs, wants, and you need to find that common ground. The first time when they accused me of thinking of my own culture, I had to remind them that we are indeed disabled. I have a communication disability. But physically and mentally, we are able-bodied. Using their language and terms, the only difference is you can hear and I can't. I expanded my explanations regarding all the barriers that we face.

When I wanted his attention, I would tap on his arm. He completely overreacted to that act. It took a while to register what had happened and was uncomfortable. I have shared with my colleagues that if they wanted my attention from behind, they can tap my shoulder or arm. This guy could not fathom this concept. He would not touch me. He would go out of his way to be in my vision line. He did this to avoid any touch. I have a very limited peripheral vision. It was funny sometimes but a little excessive. Just give me a tap. He refused. There was this unwritten

rule that you just don't touch. Well, I touched him to get his attention. As a result, he overreacted. I had to pointblank told him that I knew I was not supposed to touch him. I will try not to do that with him; however, it is a habit. In the deaf community, touching or tapping is our way of getting someone's attention. The gentleman acknowledged this and still uncomfortable. I have reduced the frequency in tapping him for his attention. I saw him at a conference last week and there were a couple of instances that I needed to get his attention. I tapped him.

It is important to stay true to our culture, our identity, and our position. There are times where you have to be flexible.

For a deaf leader, a critical skill is cultural negotiation. It is critical to understand deaf culture and being able to translate to the hearing culture and vice versa. I have a story related to this skill. It was a discussion about bilingualism. The hearing woman was a terrific person. I liked her a lot. However her comments would include multiple "buts" with a list of issues. The other person in the meeting was a deaf leader. He interpreted her "buts" as if she was "against" the deaf community's issue. He felt she was being "all or nothing" about the conflict. I observed this dynamic. Realizing that the deaf gentleman grew up in the school for the deaf, was instilled with strong cultural ties to the deaf culture and a leader. I interjected and clarified the discussion. The hearing woman do support the issue but she has a list of questions. Typically a deaf leader will emphasize, "I ENDORSE it but I have questions." With the hearing woman, it was interwoven in her "buts" questions. I signed to clarify, "you basically support it BUT you have questions." She agreed. Cultural conflicts involve language miscommunication.

Don't limit yourself into one area. You may become stuck. Speaking for myself, I have a business background and the knowledge of how to work with people in both cultures. My flaw is I feel I don't have strong enough roots in ASL. I have a stronger foundation in English. I find

myself code switching when I communicate with different cultures. I may misunderstand the essence sometimes. I realize I am not at fault and do the best I can.

Communication Clash (C8)—A non-synonymous communication that involves two or more different languages and cultural values.

The only reason I responded so quickly was because the interpreter was able to capture the essence of the message to me. I asked the interpreter after the meeting how she interpreted that particular message in English. She stated, “Why are you using that tone with me.” The cabinet secretary immediately jumped up and created a physical diversion between us. He probably thought we were ready to fight. The remaining members in the meeting realized I was able to capture their underlying behaviors and vocal innuendos. The dynamics changed instantly. I felt I was an equal peer in this team. Without the skills of the interpreter, I would have never caught the vocal innuendos or the deadpanned facial expressions. If the interpreter had not interpreted this critical information, I would have completely missed the cues.

There is a wonderful example. Nine months ago, there were two groups from two deaf institutions. We had a very important meeting with the commissioner and other officials from the government. I was invited to sit in on the meeting. I came into the room before others had entered. While the two groups were waiting, there were about eight individuals present. They were all male and deaf. We proceeded to do the “deaf hugs.” After about the fourth and fifth individuals, I started laughing. I am laughing at the “deaf hugs” and they got the humor. They knew why I was laughing. It was a definite clash—men, woman, deaf hug, and federal government conduct. They all laughed with me and thank god the other hearing individuals had not yet arrived. If they were in the room, they would have never understood that. After we made our rounds of “deaf hugs,” the commissioner and the officials entered the room. We chuckled

and recognized it was a cultural clash. A definite clash! The federal do not “hug.” They shake hands. They are much more formal. To think about a male and female hug, this is not acceptable in their culture. This was hilarious.

By talking at their level. An open dialogue is important. Demand that you are respected. It can be tough when you are the only one and surrounded by the other members of a different culture. Quite often, it involves having your work speak for itself. Nowadays, that is not enough. It used to be where your work could speak for you. We are crossing disciplines. It used to be hierarchical in our communications. Today, communication is coming from all directions in a matrix format with boundaries that are crossed through. You have to become a master to do that and be able to get ahead.

Physical and Mental Fatigue (C9)–The deaf leader expends a great deal of energy navigating and mediating between two cultures and two languages. The physical and mental tolls increase with frequency as a deaf leader manages auditory information and dominant cultures values.

I would evaluate the situation and saw a huge screen in front of us. I would not choose to move the interpreters since the screen is viewable. Why create unnecessary work? I will conserve my energy for something else more important.

During a conference session, a physician participant used the term “handicapped.” A fellow participant expressed her concern and was angry. Another parent participant pulled her aside and said, “Don’t get mad about that. He doesn’t know what he is talking about.” It was a realization that it was a waste of time and energy. Instead, talk and educate him. That is how you sustain voice.

It requires more energy. You may be exhausted or burnt out. I didn't realize for a long time the impact that ongoing scrutiny of paying attention and learning takes a toll. About seven or eight years ago, I sat down with a deaf blind person. She had mentioned she could only work thirty hours a week. I asked why she didn't work a 40-hour week. She looked at I am always working so hard to access what is happening in my office. I am worn out after 30 hours. It is all I can handle physically. I thought to myself, "Oh!" We work so hard to make sure we pick up on all the information to do our jobs. People just "pick up" (auditory). To pick up information requires a great deal of energy. What that means is you can do a lot but takes more doing the same thing. What do I do with that? I basically just accept and recognize my own limitations. I cannot work more than 50 hours a week. Many people can work 60...70... 80 hours a week. I don't have the physical ability to do that. Fifty hours is my maximum.

I am so used to it. I look forward to the day where the deaf leader does not have to spend the time or energy thinking about those things. Being respected for who they are. Now I am finding more and more that when they make the arrangements for the interpreters, I don't have the option of not showing up. I am the only deaf and must show up. If I don't, I must send someone else in my place. They are not willing to make interpreter arrangements unless they know for sure the deaf person will show up. They are sensitive too... they don't want to waste their money.

Positioning

The third area consists of responses that indicate positioning strategies or tactics. The interview questions explore the deaf leaders' positioning experiences when leading in dominant culture or system. The dialogues about positioning interrelate to how they sustain voice. Eight subcategories were identified from the interviews:

Assertive and Purposeful Leading (P1) – The deaf leader actively leads towards a specific outcome.

I have been doing this all my life. Accommodating and fitting in with the situation is a given task; for example, my board may not all be on the same page. Some may be very experienced and others are very novice in serving on the board. I need to make a process work to ensure they are all involved and have a positive experience.

I have to position myself to observe and determine if there are established relations or dynamics. If I was leading the meeting, I will be very purposeful and directive in my leadership. I will instruct where people and interpreters will be seated. If I am not leading the meeting, I will remove myself from this situation. That depends on the situation. Now, for deaf groups, I don't find myself needing to position. I don't work as hard to figure how to position myself. I have a natural ability to gain their attention. By nature, I am charismatic. People do pay attention to me when I sign.

I don't have any one situation but periodic situations where I learned to immediately recognize this situation. When it does arise, I immediately separate myself from the situation. I tell myself it is not about me, rather what is happening around me. I try to analyze and figure how to respond. I will then appropriately stand up for myself. I don't believe they have intentions of ignoring me. It is not intentional. It is overlooking their own internal bias. They don't even realize they are doing this. I don't respond with anger, I respond with assertiveness. When I have something to say, I have something to say. I don't say a lot, most often cases I am quiet. When I do feel I have something to offer, I will say it.

I often have to deal with people who prefer to talk with a hearing person or representative of my organization rather than talking with me. I don't allow this to happen. The buck stops with me not my staff member.

In my current position, I am purposeful when I talk with a number of faculty members. Their comments provide me a range of information to help me understand the positions of various people and clues to the communications that are circulating in the dominant communities.

I contacted the department and asked numerous questions about the pending proposal. I requested the pre-proposal conference list of participants. I contacted each of the companies that attended. Finally, I connected with a company with an intention to apply. I explained who I was and how we can support their proposal. We established a meeting and I brought my employee with me. The outcome of the meeting was decided my employee would write the proposal. This was a major breakthrough and potential a ten-year contract. We wrote the content and solicited the help from a technical writer. We submitted the proposal. It was accepted!

Maximizing Interpreters (P2)–The strategic maximizing of the potential and effective use of interpreting services for a positive communication and leadership outcome.

With the hearing community, I will bring an interpreter with me. I know the topic, purpose, creating a clear message, and will be an efficient meeting. I am trying to remember a recent situation... I have had many. My doctor appointment is an example. I will always bring a list of questions and review them one by one. We will proceed into the office. I position myself where I will always maintain eye contact with my doctor. I will always sit directly across from my doctor. I will explain to the interpreter to let me know of every environmental sound in the area including telephone ringing, the noise from the vent, people chattering, as well as the

doctor's tone of voice and mood. That also includes if he is coughing, sick or cheery. I want to know everything. The interpreter will abide my wishes. I want to be able to respond appropriately and say, "Are you okay?" I want to relate to that person. I find this to be more effective. Particularly if a hearing person has never met a deaf person. He will at first keep looking at the interpreter. I will educate him on how to use an interpreter. Once that is settled, we will connect on a different and effective level. Now with mixed group, it is a completely different scenario. Sometimes, I notice interpreters may subconsciously have a loyalty to one deaf person and shift their attention to him. Typically with a person they are most comfortable with.

I have been told that I have a knack of reading people well and knowing when to join in conversations with hearing people. You do not have to raise your hand to participate. You don't have the same rules with the hearing people. You work with the interpreter to create a strategy for when and how you will participate. The interpreter will provide the avenue when you can "insert" your comments. The participants would have no choice but direct their attention to you. You have to adapt to their norms and behaviors. Otherwise, you will be completely left out.

With all of the languages, each has its own information. You will have to work with the interpreters and often they do not understand any of it. With this dilemma, I request the interpreters to interpret verbatim in English for me. I will then need to translate and figure out what the interpreter is not catching.

Other assumptions that the interpreters will just solve the issues. No, that is not true. People are diverse. Diversity has different needs. Some will use an interpreter; others use CART and even some use different methods of communication. You need to be aware of different needs.

I often remind the phrase the disability group uses, “one size does not fit all.” This is true for the deaf community.

The profession has evolved for the interpreters. For example, in the past, an interpreter would interpret for me in ASL. I would politely ask the interpreter to interpret in English. The interpreter would respond that most deaf people sign ASL. I responded back firmly, “not me.” The interpreter is disrespectful. I would inform the agency not to send that interpreter to me again. With past trainings, interpreters are led to believe ASL is the only language. No, this is not the case for everyone. I am not easily intimidated. Some deaf people are not aware and do not stand up for themselves. I am very observant in that regards.

I agree. The problem that we see when bringing an interpreter, the person is talking to the interpreter and not to me. Some interpreters will direct the communication back to the deaf person. But it should come from the deaf person not the interpreter. Sometimes the interpreter speaks up for the deaf person. I don't agree and see this happen often. I would put a stop to that immediately. Is it because they are not certified or not fully trained? I am not sure but there are instances of that happening. The person who brings the interpreter should communicate with them first in regards to expectations.

Physical Proximity (P3)–The deaf leader will analyze and proximate placements of interpreters and/or capitalize incidental and environmental support for individuals to maximize communication and leadership outcome.

One deaf person did argue with me before. He said, “You need to raise your hand and be polite.” I replied if you do it the way you think you should do it.... Meaning doing it the deaf culture way. The train is gone! (Deaf idiom. You are three... four ideas gone. They are so far ahead. What are you going to do? He pondered and asked me how do you do it? I said,

“Practice. Watch the interpreters and the participants.” I position myself in a room where I can visually see everyone. The interpreter would sit opposite of me so I can see who is speaking. The interpreter will point to the individual who is speaking. I am also focused on the body language of the participants. If I am too focused on the interpreter and my view is blocked, I would have missed a great deal of information. The deaf individual was surprised. I encouraged him to sit with me and see for himself. He was amazed at the simple act of positioning and was able to see everything. By the way, I read a book on body language. That helps a great deal to understand the variations of body language. I have used this knowledge over the years. In addition, my interpreter will add information about their “voice.” I will know if it’s flat, angry, escalated, bored, and etc. I will need that information because their faces don’t match their voices. I don’t call it “accommodating.” I call it making my job easier.

I make sure I have eye contact and making sure she is placed right in the group. If she is placed inappropriately or over to the side of the room, I lose that connection with the individuals. I consider myself a very effective communicator and I like to have eye contact with the person. This will help the content of dialogue where I can strategize information. For the same reason, the person I am talking with can strategize information with me.

I need to know who the power players are. I will decide where I will sit to create my position. If they are sitting in a particular area, I will not distance myself in the room. I will try to sit close. So I am able to use my communication to gain attention. Often, they watch the interpreter. I am invisible. I need to be in front of them, so they can see who is talking. I place myself in their sight line.

I will also decide on how the interpreters will be positioned in the room. I want to ensure that I have direct eye contact with the hearing person and still be able to view my interpreter.

Content Knowledge (P4)–The deaf leader will develop content knowledge regarding specialized areas related to their work or leadership experience.

In the hearing world, I notice that hearing people will choose a mission or a focus in their aspiration or career; for example, I want to become a preacher or lawyer. They tend to find an area within that focus. A lawyer with specialty in family law. They would be content. With leaders who are deaf, if he chooses education, he will need to be skilled in all areas. Such as fundraising, legal, and many other areas. He is forced to juggle the areas to effectively lead. While the hearing person can simply choose one area. It is harder for the leaders who are deaf to sustain because he needs to spread himself out.

Again, it is learning the content areas. An example of this is reflected in this experience. A new educational law was passed recently. Since the passage of the law, I am involved in monitoring the adherence of the law with the schools for the deaf. We monitor the implementation of the law. I work with attorneys and two other individuals who are experts and have the content knowledge in this particular area. The content area is new for me. But I am learning. When we had completed the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation, the attorney had her own opinion. I should say she had her own professional judgment. She stated that the school was not following the law with specific examples. I looked at her and stated, yes they are. This was the first time I had challenged the attorney. I stated, yes they are. We have other content experts that are cautious with disagreeing with the professional judgments. We are cautious in determining the content of the law or to interpret the law. Typically, I will use the term best practice. When I work with these individuals, I try not to contradict their statements or knowledge. It is my responsibility to examine the law and help them understand how it impacts the schools for the deaf. I will state, you are correct in what the law says but it is my

professional judgment that there are interpretational issues. Working with best practices in schools for the deaf, it can be viewed differently. I will challenge on those points. If it means disagreeing with the position paper and offering other perspectives, I will provide that perspectives. We will submit the judgments to the appointed official who will make the final decision.

This experience tells me I need to develop the content knowledge and to learn quickly. I need knowledge to understand the legalese and to integrate the new information in order to challenge the different professional opinions and judgments about how the law should be interpreted and implemented.

I make sure I am familiarized with the participant areas. I am able to participate in the deliberations. As questions come up, I am able to respond appropriately and intelligently. If I am not sure of the content, I ask to clarify. Most of the times, I am typically very engaged and aware of what is going on.

If people limit themselves to the deaf culture only and a time comes when their current job is not doing well. It is very difficult to transition out into a new position in the business world. It is very difficult if you are limited to that culture. They have no experience in the world of business or experience in communicating with the hearing world.

Speech Ability (P5)—Speech ability implies that his/her speech is intelligible to the general dominant system. The leader may choose to utilize the ability as leverage to mediating communications.

I was in a group setting with many participants related to the telecommunications industry. There was one deaf corporate representative and apparently he has the inability to modulate his voice. He was unable to speak well. I was sitting with my arms folded across the

table. The hearing people were all seated around me and an interpreter was sitting across from me. The gentleman made a point of not making eye contact with the interpreter. As he was talking, I could feel his voice. I looked up at the interpreter and signed very discreetly, "Can he talk?" The interpreter kept signing and negating a response to me with her eyes and head. I observed the hearing participants struggling to comprehend his verbal comments and grimacing at his voice. I immediately stopped the meeting and asked the deaf corporate representative to meet me outside. I excused myself and pulled the person aside. I informed him of my observations and politely shared that the acoustics in the room were not favorable for him. I can actually feel his voice on the table. I asked if he would refrain from using his voice and sign instead. He responded with a firm no and that he needed to talk. I decided to cancel the meeting. This deaf corporate representative was a contractor for me. I hired him. I have the control over this situation. He was very surprised that I made this decision. I explained that I was not about to allow him to ruin my relationship with the participants. I never hired him again. That was a long time ago. This was an experience I had to deal with. Deaf leaders who utilize their speech ability, I have no problem with that. As long as it is used correctly. Another situation that I had developed great appreciation. This person could speak very well but chose not to. In this particular situation, he did not want to be perceived wrong. He preferred to sign and I appreciated that. So, again, it depends on the situation.

I requested an interpreter but found there was no interpreter scheduled. I was frustrated. I could use my voice but my voice does not carry across a room in a group setting. My voice does not carry well and I have a very "deaf" voice. I had to improvise and make best of the situation. I tried to figure out what to do. I developed a strategy with one friend who would alert me of my opportunity to express my thoughts. I would relay my information to the friend and she

would assist with communicating the information. We were friends so it helped when we had a mutual communication style and she knew me well. At least I was able to participate. It worked out and it was in a disability specific meeting. I was the only deaf person in the group. It was a very interesting experience for myself. I often wondered what if it was another deaf person. How will that person deal with that situation particularly if that deaf person does not vocalize? Maybe they will write back and forth. The captioning services at that time were remote. You couldn't touch the computer. Deaf leaders working with hearing colleagues will have to improvise if accommodations do not work out the way they are supposed to.

If it is a small group and we are familiar with each other, I will use my speech. If it is a large group with unfamiliar people, I will start using my speech and then turn it over to the interpreters. This way the participants will gain full benefit of my information. I want them to know exactly what I am saying. I also expect the interpreters to articulate exactly what I am saying. (How do you know if they are doing a good job?) I watch closely. Often, I will see the interpreters struggle or not match my comments. I will repeat the information. If this continues to be a struggle, then I will assume the voicing myself.

It (speech ability) is definitely a big "plus." You may be able to get by but it is a big plus. It is a fact of life. I don't know where I would be if I didn't have the speech ability. How far would I have gone? I don't know.

Improvisation Skills (P6)—The deaf leader utilizes opportunities and abilities to improvise a challenging situation into a positive outcomes; i.e., communication, positioning, and voice.

If I have no control over who will interpret for me in a group setting, I would find myself using the captioning service. In large group settings, I will defer to watching the captioning.

With the changes with the interpreters, it is very difficult on your eyes. You have just gotten used to one interpreter and figured out the processing. Then the interpreter switches. Your eyes and mind have to work all over again to process the interpreter. The cycle continues because the interpreter will switch regularly. I have found over the years, it was easier for me to rely on captioning. I can observe the speaker and read the captions. Because we are accustomed to reading the captions on television, it is a natural transition.

For a long time, I had an interpreter for my interactions with my boss. However, the interpreter didn't show up at 7:30 a.m. on Friday mornings. This was an optimal time for my boss and me to engage. So we gave up on the interpreter and we did it ourselves. He has learned how to talk with me. I will use lip reading, we write back and forth, he will show me documents and provide context for our meetings. He was the one who requests the interpreters. This took a few years to reach the point where he and I are empowered in our communication.

Deaf leaders working with hearing colleagues will have to improvise if accommodations do not work out the way they are supposed to. (Does it put you in a disadvantage?) I tried not to let it. I have to choose to improvise and make sure I get my message across in any given situation. Because if I am quiet, what is the point of my being there? Participate! Be involved. Later, they did come up to me and express their appreciation for my participation.

There is shortage of interpreters everywhere. Improvisation is a required skill. Use whatever tools you have to make communication happen and get ahead.

Navigating Languages (P7)-A deaf leaders navigates between two or more languages to maintain full participation in the system.

They have this ability to navigate back and forth between the two cultures seamlessly. I noticed that leaders who understand how to live in the hearing world seem very successful.

Not only do I have to interpret and translate the content; I have to be able to speak appropriately and understand the information. With experience, I am getting better. But in the beginning, it was quite difficult. I work with attorneys and I work with interpreters. It is difficult if some information is lost or misinterpreted. I will try to figure out what they are saying. As result, I have learned to say, "I think you meant this." Or I will rephrase it. Often times, then they will respond back with a yes, no, or add whatever helps the interpretation. Most of the time, it is a yes. It is exactly that! It baffles me when it was not stated that way in the first place. It makes my job more difficult. It seems that my ability to clarify what was said is a skill. My colleagues depend on this. It is a very interesting process. Language versatility is a big challenge for me. It will continue to be a challenge.

What is deaf language? ASL is not part of the governmental system and it is not part of the federal system. I was a former teacher. My favorite participant area is literature. I love to read literature. I also taught science and math. When I taught literature, I would recall my favorite professor at Gallaudet. He often preached, "Make literature the choice for life." I was intrigued. I realized you needed learn to read and write. When I joined the government, I had to learn to read and write the language. Being able to read the legislation, it seems like a different language. It is still English. You have to understand that. I do a great deal of writing and create many power points. My writing has to include legal components. I have also provided many editing supports. You must know the English language and the grammar.

Internal Gauge (P8)—An internal gauge refers to an intuitive process to capture the subtleties, social cues, dynamics, and emergent issues that may interfere or create opportunities for sustaining voice.

Get them out of the way. I like the quote, "Follow the leader or get out of the way."

Really... get out of the way. They have no business being in the process. Because this hurts our voice. Our collective message. If I was not the last speaker or perhaps placed somewhere in the middle of the program, the impression left with the congressmen, senators, staffers, key officials, commissioners, departments, policymakers and many other people, they needed to hear the story. I hope they heard that the deaf and hard of hearing community is a force to be reckoned with. Supposed I didn't have that opportunity, my voice would have been lost. The opportunity would have been lost. I am certain there were many lost opportunities. I was observant enough to capture that opportunity. I have had conversations with our CEO regarding the oppressive behaviors from the dominant community. I realized that it is a skill to evaluate the situation and impose change to your advantage. I am not sure what you call that skill or process. It more of a "gut" feeling and decide how to be effective. I see this happen so often in our deaf community.

Oh yes! When I recognize a situation that I have no control over, I withdraw myself. I am not going to fool with that kind of oppression.

It was just a visual moment to take in. The men are obviously taller than I am. I am tiny. Just everything about that. Some situations, I don't do the deaf hug. You basically have to gauge when you can do that and it depends on who is present and the situation. If I have my hearing colleagues with me, I typically shake hands. They will do the same with me as well. They are sometimes unsure of what I will do. I have learned to approach and shake hands. Especially with men from dominant cultures. When people shake hands with my colleagues, they will shake hands with me as well. I will work with deaf and hearing men as well as deaf and hearing women.

I am constantly observing my surroundings. I watch people in the room carefully. I don't always fixate on the interpreter. I need to be aware of my environment. I watch facial expressions and body language. I observe the interactions between people.

I was asked to apply to become a dean at another university. I decided to apply without informing them I was deaf. I completed the application, submitted it and became one of the three finalists. When they found out I was deaf, they cancelled the posting. They informed me that they had decided to suspend the position. It would be reopened the following year or two. I was one of the three finalists! The state law states if you do not want to hire any of the finalists, you must suspend the position for one to two years. I knew it had something to do with my deafness. I don't know who the other candidates are but the inside people of the university stated I was ranked at the top. If I sued and when to court, I probably will never know the truth.

Voice

The fourth area is sustaining voice. The interviews explore the deaf leaders' efforts to sustain their voice within the dominant culture or system. The interviews uncovered their journeys, trials, and tribulations. Eight subcategories emerged from the dialogues.

Empowered Articulation (V1)–The deaf leader develops a message that is empowered and purposefully articulated.

It was a remarkable effort to ensure democracy. It was an effective way to ensure voice was heard by Washington, DC folks. Their voice was powerful all the way to DC. In our community, I don't see anything like that. So as a leader, it is very difficult. The Olympic group was very collective in terms of their thinking and consensus. Our community is collective; however, it is not stressed or maximized.

Just say it... just sign it. Feeling empowered. My voice represents my inner soul, my spirit, and my inner thoughts. No one can interpret my behaviors, my thoughts, and my feelings. Voice is total freedom. It is freedom to express my thoughts, my ideas, and influence. The power lies in how I influence. If you can influence people, that is expressing your thoughts and ideas. It is changing the world. Some people feel it is beautiful to convey your thoughts and feelings... expressing yourself.

I think the meaning has multiple layers. The obvious one is being able to speak. But voice is being "heard," whatever that means. I do have a voice, I can speak but it is being heard.

Speak out! In our world, it is not the phrase or idiom that we use. We sign, "speak from hand." It's a hard concept and is an ASL concept. I think it all boils down to representing accurately your views, beliefs, your wants, and desires to another person. It involves bridging the concepts. It does not mean dumping the perspectives onto the person but rather to create dialogues.

One individual in our group wanted to discuss about the selection of three individuals to represent the cochlear implant. I was not opposed to a presentation on cochlear implants but to select those specific individuals to represent our organization by individuals who have vested interest. I disagreed. It was not a good idea. I felt I had to speak up on that issue. That is one example. Another case, which happens often, hearing people, will speak about issues where I think I have more authority or information; I will speak up on the issues. Voice to me means to speak up. If they are already "speaking up" on the issues that I fully agree, I don't see a need for me to repeat what has been said. If something was said differently and I feel I have something to contribute. I will speak up.

Voice means an energy that pushes my drive and philosophy. Voice for people can be interference. For me, it is in the form of communication more than anything else. The English language is not very clear unlike German or Latin. I know German and Latin languages well. My first language was not English. My first languages were ASL and Yiddish. Yiddish is a form of Hebrew and German. It is a very specific language with specific phrases. When you use the English language, you must understand the subtleties that are based on sounds. The sounds influence the meaning of the words. That is a form of voice. An interpreter cannot accurately convey that message. Because of this challenge, I have gone the extra mile to analyze the messages. I know my own voice but I need to understand the other person's voice. The passion, the motivation and information attached to the message.

Nurture Relationships/Connections (V2)–The importance of nurturing relationships and cultivating connections to gain support and allies to bridge worlds.

I have to quantify the two points. I would need to describe the challenges of a deaf person. I would provide information about my life as a deaf person and the communication tools that I employ, skills to function in the hearing world, and other sets of characteristics. Now I am able to maximize my resources, then I look at how I sustain. This would require me to look at how I build relationships with individuals and communities. If I do not nurture the development of relationships, for example, with a politician. The politicians change year after year. You need to maintain good relationships and the politician in turn will direct his successors to you as the expert in deafness. The politicians will continue to work with me and that is how I sustain my voice. The deaf leader needs to cultivate the relationship in the community over a period of time. When a relationship is evident, people will allow you to sustain voice. Some people, of course,

will not have the same level of understanding of how to deal with deaf people. If they feel comfortable based on the relationship, they will ask you.

That kind of human touch...a connection. That is how you sustain voice. How do you teach that to deaf leaders?

And again, the voice is learning how to manipulate and create the connections.

Ongoing dialogues. Listening to them. Engage in the discussion. If I were to work with the other organizations and try to build the bridge. The first thing I want to do is to know them. I want to know their perspectives and seek common grounds. Assuring they have a voice too. Bulldozing does not accomplish anything. It severs relationships and interests as well as creating resentments. I believe voice has a great deal to do with building relationships and maintaining open dialogues. Exchanging ideas and opportunities working towards commonalities.

On the other hand, to work with the community, you need relational skills, communication skills and charisma to interact with the people.

Credibility (V3)—A demonstration of skills, knowledge base, and confidence that warrants acceptance and respect from individuals.

You must at all times have credibility. I have my own secrets that I do not share with the deaf community. I do not party wildly. I will not have affairs. All those issues that will create setbacks in policy development or community work. I have a tremendous social conscious. Part of me feels that when I finish my tasks a deaf leader, I will resume back to my normal self. For many years, I have been trained to be a public figure. One colleague stated to me, “You know how to change hats and maintain right from wrong.” To be credible, you have to know your boundaries. Expanding on that issue... the theories of leadership styles. I strongly believe that I have to engage in all leadership styles to maintain your credibility. For example, situational...

autocratic—there are times where you have to in order to make difficult decisions...

dictatorship—sometime it may be required. Because the community is so small that you have to garner participation and utilize consensus-building strategies. In my lifetime, I have used all of them. I have not used only one. It seems impossible. It largely depends on the situation.

My way of doing that is earning credibility first. I do a very good job at that. I work to do my job well. I develop knowledge for the content. I determine what I need to learn. I will follow through with building my content and knowledge base to earn the trust, the faith, and the credibility with my peers. Once I have done that, then I can be more outspoken.

Yes, I do have the expectations for myself because I want to establish that credibility. For a deaf individual, it takes a little bit longer to establish that credibility. But it will happen. I would create that influence in the thinking and the thought process by being more involved. They expect me to be there, they expect me to deliberate and they expect me to bring the perspectives they haven't thought about or considered.

Owning Processes (V4)—Remaining acutely aware as a deaf and owning the dynamic process in the leadership environment.

This is as long as I was president. Their process of deliberations did not include deaf people. It was very difficult for the deaf CEO to gain access to their information. It got to the point where we need to replace the representatives to put a “deaf face: in the forefront of the effort. We tried to do this because in any case where the advocacy is about deaf people. Being represented by a hearing person opens to loss of nuances and cultural sensitivity. We had to fight for that representation.

They prevented anyone deaf including their CEOs and any deaf leaders to really be in the forefront to communicate the issues. I am certain if one of us presented, we would have made a

dramatic impact. I think it is also our fault for allowing that to happen. I told the CEO we couldn't blame the hearing representatives for not knowing how to include us. It is true that some of our hearing counterparts do not know how to stand behind us and support the deaf leaders. The deaf leaders allow it to happen, it is our fault as well. We have not developed skills to say, I should be in the forefront and have you support me from behind the scenes. To ask for mentoring and support at the same time. But it appeared that the egos were in the way. I simply think if this is the case, ask them to step aside. Don't count on them to be part of our process. I think that is one challenge for deaf leaders and how to deal with this dilemma.

I informed them in advance that I developed a script for the event. I placed everyone in his or her position. I informed the interpreter that I would give the two interpreters the script. The interpreter kept coming back to me worried about the scripts. I told her I would inform the interpreters. She insisted that she needed to know the details. I told her no and that I have it all under control. I developed an alliance with the two interpreters. This was important because I wanted to be 100% in control of the program.

However, if it is my responsibility in working with the institutions and working with the related issues, I do make every effort to be a part of it. I don't have to work as hard as before since I have already situated the team. They already understand how I work with a team and are supportive when we add new members. The team is established; it becomes easier with each new task. I am still very cognizant about the team dynamics. I am very cognizant about how to work with them, and I always prepare for the meetings. When I don't know an answer, I am not afraid to say I don't know... tell me...what do you think? Let's discuss this further, what do I need? What do I need to learn? What are the words that you recommend? What do these words mean?

What do we need to learn here? We will reconvene, after we learned the study, gather more information and identify solutions. We can contribute to our team.

I tried to address the pros and cons of how a consultant can help and how they can be a hindrance. I provided them the dimensionality of the issues they are bringing to the table. The dynamics of the group were made up of mostly men and a mixture of hearing and deaf members. Everyone was signing. I could tell there was one woman who was being oppressed from a gender perspective. Her perspectives and opinions were being dismissed. I was taken by the scene. When I touched on the topic of hindrance, I explained that when you hire a consultant you have to pay for their learning curve. Was the board prepared to pay for that? The board president was not too happy when I made the comment. I believe to get anything done or accomplished, you need to look at all angles. You cannot make an impulsive decision without thinking.

Knowing my voice means I know my motivations, my challenges, find ways to overcome the challenges, utilize a variety of approaches, and accept that things will change.

I was determined to bring the deaf customers satisfaction with video within a year. I explained I would need to test and solve the technical and security issues. But I am confident that I can accomplish my task. The department was very pleased with the outcome of the meeting and informed the superiors. We are still progressing with the changes. Unfortunately, we had to make other changes with our staffing and terminated another staff member.

Solution-Oriented (V5)—Focusing on seeking solutions for challenges and/or conflicts.

I would evaluate the situation and saw a huge screen in front of us. I would not choose to move the interpreters since the screen is viewable. Why create unnecessary work? I will conserve my energy for something else more important. Again, it depends on the situation. I will

always make a point... my rule of thumb, find out who are the interpreters are before entering the situation. Always.

I have always felt you don't always make enemies. Sometimes, you may have to take a stand and that may create enemies. But the same time, try to find solutions. That was my philosophy. If we continue to demand interpreters at all times, we will be required to help pay for those costs "too." Not everyone shares the accommodation costs. A majority of them were people who did not need the services, the resistance was so high.

There are times where you have to be flexible. When I arrived to the coalition, there was so much anger directed at that deaf person. They did not want to have anything to do with him. They assumed I was exactly like him. I had to educate them... he is right about the interpreter. But we have options. I realize I cannot afford to shell out dollars for interpreters. They cannot afford to pay as well. Let's find a solution. I could use the chat room and perhaps that deaf man did not like it because he is not comfortable with the use of the English language. But it so happens we were the only two deaf individuals. If the situation was different and had a large number of deaf individuals, we would drop the tasks and find money to cover interpreting costs. So again, it depends on the situation, the players involved, the politics, and I wanted to create connections. This created more visibility for my organization among the disability community. To be respected by the communities. When issues arise, they bring it to my attention. Slowly, we were able to build and create opportunities for other deaf individuals.

Bridging Communications (V6)—All forms of direct and indirect communications are mediated and supported by the deaf leader's knowledge of languages and cultures.

I have a communication disability. But physically, mentally...we are able-bodied. Using their language and terms, the only difference is you can hear and I can't. I expanded on all the

barriers that we face. Blind people are detached from things. Deaf people are detached from communication. I had to make sure I directed the statement to blind people. I asked the president for the blind group, "Are you disabled?" They agreed affirmatively. I explained that we have our own identity that is connected to our language, ASL. They absorbed this information positively. After that, I was well received and we worked on common goals. That is how I sustained voice.

We all learn the information. We also process this learning when we come together in a meeting. It is obvious that they have already been talking about these issues all along somewhere else. When we sit down as a team, they will discuss something about a particular issue. It is clear that I had not heard or processed this information. I would say, "I am not following." They realize, "Oh, we haven't talked with you about this yet. Let us catch you up to speed about our prior discussions related to this issue." Once that is clarified, we can move on. When I see this happening, I know there's some kind of exchange of information happening. This could be interpreted, that deaf people don't have the same level of knowledge or expertise. But because I have worked with them, all along, and they have seen me pick up these issues quickly, and have access to the information. They know subconsciously that it is not that she is not doing her job, or that she is less intelligent, it is that she didn't know and did not have access to our hallway discussions. Once they have access to that information, they seem know. Perhaps they know subconsciously. They realize that it is not because she is not doing her job, or she is not intelligent, or it is because she does not know. After the group had an opportunity to explain what was transpired and caught up to speed with their previous dialogues, we are able to move on. On a cognitive level, do they know? I am not sure. But I am certainly aware

and I accept that as part of the process of being a deaf person in an all-hearing environment. Often times, we will be trailing behind and it will take time.

I would explain in ways they would understand; for example, engagement with various people.”Engaging with people of color share the same principles. Engaging with people who are deaf or hard of hearing have principles. Our needs are these... our values include... our contributions are such.... This is what we need and this is how you can help meet us halfway.”

You must know how to communicate with the hearing world. If you don’t, you will not advance. That’s being daring and fearless. We have had this discussion in the past and my colleagues agree that we are basically on our own.

Experiences (V7)–Life and leadership lessons that contribute to the maturity and knowledge for a deaf leader to effectively lead.

I feel it is related to the education experience of the deaf community. They don’t have enough exposure or the life experiences that allows them to be effective leaders. They just have not experienced what the dominant culture experienced. It really doesn’t matter if they are hearing or deaf.

If you don’t have enough life experiences or exposure to different situations. You cannot be an effective leader. You cannot.

My turning point was I joined a hearing swimming team. My parents encouraged me to go swimming and I watched the teams swim. I would watch and wished I could join. I took swimming lessons and advanced through the ranks. I passed all my swimming classes. While I was waiting, I watch the team practice. I noticed one girl swam fast. One time there was free swimming, everyone was playing. I swam and beat the girl. The coach was watching. He came over to talk with me. The swimming coach realized I was deaf and somehow contacted my

mother. My mother called him. My mother told me that the coach wanted to see me the next day. I arrived and swam the laps for the coach. I was part of the team and I had tournaments on the weekends. I was put on the relay team. I had to learn everything by watching. Looking back, that was my entrance into the hearing world and learned how to get along with hearing people. I learned how to interact with them. My teammates learned the basic signs. Prior to that experience, I always felt that hearing people were better than deaf people.

I guess voice is what it means to be a deaf person in the hearing workplace. What experiences we have that they don't have. What knowledge we think we should have that others may not have. Being able to bring that to work. At the same time, for me, I struggle and am very cautious about not making it a "personal story." Because when you look at other professionals working in the field, it is not personal. There is a definite difference in cultural values. Typically in the deaf community, you are introduced to tell a story. For example, where I am from and what school I graduated from and so on... That their "credentials" for their status; however, working with professionals who are hearing, their stories are related to their PhDs and expertise and experience but no personal stories. You may find out later but they don't announce or use their "cultural" ties until later. The cultural values are different. For me, sometimes I am expected to tell my story but it is in a way diminishing my credibility among the dominant system. I have to consciously choose what to share. They already know I am deaf and they know that is what I bring. I have a voice here but the same time I am not going to allow them to use "that" against me. I am not going to tell you my personal story. I am going to tell you my credentials related to my work, experience, degree, and what I know in terms of content knowledge. I keep that separate from my personal stories. I allow them to see that and see me.

They will conclude that I am deaf and not just that, she brings the following (list) to the table. So I guess, that is voice.

Yes, that is why when I speak among young deaf individuals, I remind them to be leaders in their current groups or organizations. Take on leadership roles and engage in leadership training. Develop your self-esteem; everyone has experienced good and bad things about themselves. I have bad and good habits. You need to be aware of what that is and develop on the good things about yourself. If you are skilled in dancing, practice dancing. If you are good at writing or reading, practice your hand in poetry. Develop your strong points.

I bring with me who I am. I am a product of a West Virginia coal-mining town. In West Virginia, we speak Black English. But I don't bring that to work. When I go back to visit West Virginia, I will speak that way. I will sign professionally in English in a professional setting. It is true that when I am with my deaf friends, I will sign ASL. I will bring into line with whom I am talking with. It encompasses all of who I am.

The old concept of seniority still exists with deaf leaders today. Older leaders will insist on "experiences" and tell you to wait for your turn. That includes my own experiences, I am told "Wait, you will be the next leader." Back in my mind, I think, "Whatever. Thank you. It is a nice compliment but...." I believe my time is now. If it is not, then I move on. This is a conscious choice.

I do take advantage of my deafness and I do take advantage of knowing what it is like being disabled. That is my edge. I have the depth and understanding of what is it to be deaf and disabled. The others may not. They may have the superficial understanding. We cater to people who are already in the field or experiencing the barriers. That's the difference. I don't say, "I am deaf." That could create a negative connotation. We introduce ourselves and show our

product. They know I am deaf or will realize that later. It becomes that they like what they see and what is presented. I know that with many other deaf individuals who cannot speak, they bring their own interpreters. There's nothing wrong with that, it is how they present themselves with their interpreters. I have seen situations where they would bring their interpreters and realized some interpreters are not effective. This could create miscommunication and misinformation. I have seen it happen and find it difficult to interject in these meetings. The interpreter was not doing her job right; it was not my position to criticize the interpreter.

Managing Peripheral Challenges (V8)—Challenges that are secondary to cultural and linguistic challenges. Challenges may include peers from one's own cultural group, gender, age, politics, history, and other areas.

I am not surprised that in many states where funding was cut or programs dismantled it is due to deaf people's work directly and/or indirectly. Deaf people don't realize they dig their own graves. That is very frustrating for deaf leaders. That alone is probably the most frustrating oppressive behavior they experience. "How do I get up and continue my work?"

We are all working to develop our skills. Whether you are deaf or hearing. Male and female. black and white. We are all skilled in our own rights. If you look at the upper management, stereotypically it is white male dominated workforce. It is not consistent or equal. With promotion opportunities, you would need the skills. There are other contributing factors that could prohibit you from achieving promotion.

Hearing male leaders are typically more tolerated with the changes in status with men and women's leadership roles. Hearing male leaders typically have had more experience with the interactions with the various leadership. They are more willing to respond equitably. I have had more positive experiences working with the hearing males. It is a general statement. I don't

mean all of them are positive. Whatever the hearing males thinks inside and their bias, they know I am in a position of responsibility and authority. It is a serious situation. I am taken seriously. They give me the respect and will do business with me; however, with deaf males, it is more complicated and typically they have less experience working with women leaders. It appears to be more difficult for them to see me as a peer and do business with me. I had one experience where a deaf male leader refused to work with me. He refused to even look at me or discuss with me, he would look away and focus on my hearing colleague. He would only chat with me socially but refused to do any business with me. I had to learn how to manage that.

Seriously, being a woman and deaf. There is that constant battle to gain equity. It is very tough. I had to ignore the act, not to allow it to challenge my self-esteem or encourage the flight sensation. I am not going to disappear. I am here.

Summary

Chapter 4 selected various examples of direct narrations in response to the questions and development of subcategories, which provide the data for discussion in Chapter 5. After unweaving the complexities of the participants' lived experiences, the interviews uncovered a number of sub-category themes surrounding their perspectives on deaf leadership. The chapter restated the purpose of the research, research questions, sampling, and data analysis.

The findings identified nine subcategories under Qualities; nine subcategories under Cultural; eight subcategories under Positioning; and eight subcategories under Voice. The direct narratives from the participants, which are included in the chapter, supported each of the significant subcategory findings. The four questions framed the main areas for the phenomenological study. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings, the conclusions and limitations of the study, and recommendations for further action and research.

Chapter V: Discussion, Crisis of Representation, Conclusions, and Limitations

The descriptive phenomenological study provided deeper meaning and understanding surrounding the leadership relationship between a deaf leader and the dominant system. The study examined the lived experiences of deaf leaders and how they sustain voice and position in dominant systems. This study utilized a descriptive phenomenological design to focus on lived experience and to elicit rich and deep descriptions from a group of effective leaders who are deaf. The aim was to uncover deeper meanings surrounding the leadership relationship between the deaf leader and the dominant system. The responses gathered and themes identified were presented in Chapter 4. This chapter discusses the findings of the phenomenological interviews as they relate to the research questions and the theoretical implications as described in Chapter 1.

For decades, qualitative research has emphasized the hallmarks of eliciting rich cultural data through traditional protocols. This particular study may demonstrate some potential challenges. The challenges are illuminated by the culture and language usage of the discourse as well as the representation of a marginalized group. Marginalized groups are posed with threats of “being interpreted thus creating a shadow of their representation or their voice.” *Crisis of Representation*, a term coined by Marcus and Fischer (1986) explains that a crisis arises from the uncertainty about adequate means of describing social reality. “The atmosphere was one of uncertainty about the nature of major trends of change and the ability of existing social theories to grasp it holistically” (p. 447). Marcus and Fischer accentuate that the task is not to escape from the suspicious and critical nature of the ironic writing style but to embrace and collaborate with other approaches for producing realist descriptions of society. As the researcher of this study, I am confident with the accurate views and knowledge presented in this paper. The crisis of representation overlaps with phenomenology in that the goal of both the concept of crisis of

representation and the methodological approach of phenomenology is to give privilege to direct human experience and direct voice.

The intent of this dissertation study supports the utilization of a descriptive phenomenology methodology that is free from the overlay of theoretical interpretations or dominating grand narratives. Even the crisis of representation could be perceived as a dominating grand narrative since its inception in the mid-1980s. So I mention this aspect rather delicately to emphasize the direct relationship between this concept and descriptive phenomenology. I rigorously adhered to the protocols of descriptive phenomenology throughout the study. Since the crisis of representation does arise, it is essential to shed light on the terms used in this dissertation. The terms “interpreter and interpretation” are used synonymously in the dominant system. First, interpreter is an individual whose primary role is to facilitate communication between one individual to another by mediating the different languages and cultures. While the role stresses the facilitation of communication, it is likely that the interpreter's interpretation will reflect her dominant cultural experiences and values. Her dominant culture and experiences are a reflection of her own world. Interpretation lends the same sense of obligation. Guardedly, these terms do not “equate voice nor do they recognize influence of dominance” issues. The role of a sign language interpreter and the definition of interpretative language represent information that resembles some other information. Interpretation holds a risk of not accurately representing the experience of deaf persons and their world. Rich and meaningful descriptions may elude interpreters when they are not interpreted accurately.

Many academics support the norms of objectivity. Subjectivity is challenged and scrutinized. Since subjectivity plays a major role in phenomenological studies, it will continue to

be challenged by many. In fact, subjectivity will be anticipated and is expected in a phenomenological study. Truth is an intersubjective phenomenon in and of itself and comes from the researcher's engagement with the participant's world. The researcher approaches with an open attitude and strives to see the world freshly. As a researcher, the knowledge and privilege of using a qualitative method will continue to be criticized and personalized. The essential three-step components for a sound phenomenological study are 1) phenomenological reduction (bracketing of researcher's world); 2) description; and 3) search for essences. Subjectivity finds its place when the researcher enters the world of her participants having bracketed her own prejudgments as much as humanly possible.

Traditional qualitative research also elucidates the role of the researcher and her relationship with the participants. The tradition of research often requires the researchers to maintain a level of social and/or aesthetic distance and at the same time develop a relationship that allows deep, rich cultural data to emerge. This relationship between researcher and participant seems contradictory; however, the concept of "relationship" is key. A phenomenological approach will ultimately take readers into the lifeworlds of participants through a path created by the researcher. Working with a marginalized individual or community requires a level of trust, communication congruence and cultural connection, particularly when the deaf community is usually unforgiving or "closed" to those who do not represent their community. Returning to the problem of "representation," it is essential that the participants and/or members of the deaf community feel that they are represented accurately and fairly.

This dissertation study may appear untidy, experimental, and driven by the need to communicate the lived experiences that have all along been private and non-scientific. The interpretation of findings may be challenged. And, in fact, it is a tenet of any qualitative research

that findings will probably have multiple possible interpretations. It is a realization that research and writing methods will rely on how the researcher represents the deaf leaders' social world.

The writing supports the four areas of representation. First, the trustworthiness of this research is critical. The questions are strong and clear; the approach of the study was cautiously planned and structured; the analysis was performed with multiple cross-referencing strategies; and the authenticity of data is evidenced in the videos and transcription process. The descriptions are vivid and precise. The second area of representation suggests that the findings support a substantive contribution to research. The rich, deep phenomenological experiences provided the readers, deaf leaders, and non-deaf leaders with an understanding of the relationship between the deaf leaders and the dominant society. The third area of representation is the reflexivity of the discourse. The researcher sustained an open attitude and was continuously engaged in the essence of the discourse. The fourth and final area of representation is reality is expressed accurately in the writings. In this case, both in the writings and mini-video clips of descriptions were accurately expressed.

Initially, this study also examined two theoretical implications. The first theoretical implication was to scrutinize the characteristics of deaf leadership that contribute to sustaining voice within the dominant systems. The themes were characterized in two broad frameworks. The external and internal frameworks, emerging from participant comments of deaf leaders provided the premises to begin the meaning making that serves as a background for defining deaf leadership and how deaf leaders sustain voice; however, these frameworks were not substantiated as a whole in any empirical research or studies in the literature that I have reviewed. As a result of assimilating various literatures, this information provided an overview of potential themes for the phenomenological study. The external framework of a deaf leader

identified six areas: Adaptive/Other Leadership Models; Writing and English Skills; Hearing and Speech Status; Use of Interpreters; and Positioning and Leading. The internal framework of a deaf leader identified six areas: Cultural Identity; Communication; Experiences; Education; Cultural Integrity; and Moral Obligation. The second relevant theoretical implication is the process of sustaining voice and positioning. The importance of understanding the facilitation and dynamics of sustaining voice and the positioning process is critical for producing optimal outcomes. The study uncovered deeper phenomenon and explored in detail surrounding their experiences as deaf leaders. The findings surpassed the initial theoretical implications. The study found that the participants shared many similar experiences and processes that impacted their journeys in sustaining voice in dominant cultures. Each of the participants' stories was unique and presented as powerful lessons in deaf leadership.

Discussion of Findings

The interviews captured the deep, lived experiences of the deaf leaders' relational phenomenon with the dominant system. The questions morphed into dialogues with probing questions to expand their meanings of their lived experiences. The meanings were grouped into four thematic areas: unique qualities of deaf leaders; cultural challenges that the deaf leaders encounter; positioning strategies that deaf leaders utilize; and deaf leaders' experiences in sustaining voice. The interviews captured rich stories and descriptions of the phenomenon. For each of the four areas, the responses were further categorized into 34 sub-categories.

Unique Qualities

The first thematic area addressed the unique qualities of deaf leaders. The qualities or characteristics were repeatedly referred to in the interviews. The qualities were explored to direct our focus on characteristics that were unique among deaf leaders. The interviews revealed a

number of characteristics that you would typically find among leaders who were not deaf; however, the dialogues probed further in how the qualities contribute their ability to lead in dominant systems. The specific identified qualities enhanced the ability for the deaf leader to sustain her voice. The participants spent time exploring qualities that were important for embracing a unique set of standards that would further their capacity to sustain their voice in dominant cultures. The themes related to the topic of unique qualities recognized nine subcategories. The subcategories are as follows: Value/Belief System; Continuous Learning; Positive Attitude; Forgiving; Innate and Learned Leadership; Written and Spoken English Skills; Resilience; Intuitive; and Managing Multiple Information.

The subcategories were developed among the participants who shared similar themes and personalized experiences. The first is Value/Belief System. The participants credit their upbringing that instilled their sound value and belief system. The value/belief system acts as a personal guide with their leadership decisions. They also included the importance of role models and mentors in their lives. A recurring exploration surrounds the concept that earning hard-earned rights and working toward value-added outcomes were critical leadership experiences.

The second subcategory is Continuous Learning. This subcategory proposes that deaf leaders have a satiation for learning that is continuous. Not only did they realize the quest for learning, they also acknowledged that it is necessary to maintain their role as a leader and to be an equal counterpart in the dominant system. Being on par or ahead of the game requires a breadth of knowledge, specialized skills, and learning power along with their ability to sustain their position and voice.

The third subcategory is Positive Attitude. This subcategory is stated with a view to simply remaining positive regardless of the challenges that the deaf leaders experience. It is an

optimistic and constructive way of thinking, behaving, and feeling about him or herself. The participants' stories offer many instances of disappointments, battles, and ignorance. The efforts and work can be taxing to deaf leaders' thoughts, behaviors, and feelings; however, they also balance it with positive outcomes and rewarding accomplishments.

The fourth subcategory is Forgiving. Forgiving is synonymous to being somewhat tolerant and pardoning. The participants explored the importance of forgiving ignorance and oppressive incidents and the importance of moving on or going forward regardless of a conflict or unresolved issue; however, there was a fine line between forgiving intended impressions and non-intended impressions. This particular area was a sensitive topic for some of the participants. Their experiences have taught them that harboring disappointments will only increase the conflicting relationships and prevent solution-focused opportunities.

The fifth subcategory is Innate and Learned Leadership. The participants provided many examples of how leadership skills are innate and learned. A recurring theme with this particular subcategory purports that you need innate abilities as a potential leader to be open to leadership lessons and applications. The innate and learned opportunities are interconnected and nurture the development of the deaf leader.

The sixth subcategory is Written and Spoken English Skills. Exemplary skills in writing and spoken English are considered assets to bridge the cultures and two languages effortlessly. These skills are considered gateway to the dominant culture, i.e., American mainstream society. The participants' agree that having significant written and spoken English skills provides deaf leaders with the means to effectively mediate languages and cultures. The participants also discussed the importance of mastering both languages and cultures as leverage.

The seventh subcategory is Resilience. This subcategory implies that the individual has the ability to recoil or bounce back from adversity or challenges. The participants' responses provided an array of experiences that demonstrate resilience as an essential quality to cope and respond to redundant adversity; and yet remain optimistic and positive.

The eighth subcategory is Intuitive. The interviews uncovered stories about the deaf leaders' intuition and insightfulness related to deaf leadership and the relational phenomenon with the dominant system. The deaf leaders' gut feelings or intuitions are cultivated by experiences and recognizing dynamics in situations. The ability to capture this information provides opportunities to strategize and determine plan of action with the goal of strengthening their position or sustaining voice.

The ninth and final subcategory related to unique qualities is Managing Multiple Information. There was a general consensus among the participants regarding the importance of the ability to manage multiple information based on their experiences. The recurring stories suggest that the ability to multi-task and juggle sets of information has direct impact on how one toes the line with the dominant culture. Often the participants explain the importance of staying on top of things. If it means learning, communicating, doing, and strategizing for optimal outcomes in both the deaf community and dominant systems, the deaf leader will maximize the potential of multiple information simultaneously.

Cultural

The second thematic area addressed the cultural component of the deaf leaders' encounters within their leadership experiences. The cultural component of their leadership was explored to understand how their cultural experiences impact their relationships with the dominant culture. The relationships are scrutinized from the lenses of their cultural experiences. The themes related

to the topic of cultural were recognized under nine subcategories. The subcategories are as follows: Managing Auditory-Based Environment, Cultural Identity; Social Responsibility; Public Identity; Recognizing Oppression; Dominance of Principles and Beliefs; Dual Cultural Integration; Communication Clash; and Physical and Mental Fatigue.

The first subcategory under the topic of cultural is Managing Auditory-Based Environment. An auditory-based environment encompasses any and all messages, communication and information that are conveyed through auditory means. A person acquires the information by “hearing” to participate or assume space in the dominant environment. This is a constant effort for deaf leaders to maintain par with their hearing counterparts. The pace of the auditory exchange of information is much quicker than the visual exchange of information. Reliance on visual information will also result in a loss of any incidental, informal, and unstructured information that is typically produced auditory.

The second subcategory is Cultural Integrity. Cultural Integrity represents an individual who chooses to abide by her cultural beliefs and norms to maintain the integrity of her identity and cultural values. In this case, the deaf leader ascribes to the principles and values of the deaf community. She also recognizes the historical impacts, cultural and linguistic dynamics, and challenges of marginalization and stigmatization phenomenon of the deaf community. The deaf leader's goal is to sustain cultural integrity via voice to maintain a sense of parity.

The third subcategory is social responsibility. A sense of responsibility or social conscious to serve and protect their constituents and the accompanying challenges facing the deaf community. The deaf leader exhibits a strong moral obligation to be responsible and to use whatever tools she possesses. Particularly when a challenge confronts the integrity of the leader and her culture. For many of the participants' stories, their sense of responsibility stemmed from

early development of civic responsibility of their parents' value systems. For others, it was personal. As they stated, it was the right thing to do as a leader.

The fourth subcategory is Public Identity—an identity that is portrayed and/or prescribed to the public and among peers. A deaf leader is continuously under rigid scrutiny from the deaf community as well as the dominant culture. The deaf community is small, insular and typically unforgiving. It lends opportunities to the members of the deaf community to exercise complex standards and expectations of deaf leaders. The deaf leaders make a conscious choice about how to minimize the impacts of the standards and expectations of the deaf community and present themselves as credible leaders.

The fifth subcategory is Recognizing Oppression. A deaf leader typically recognizes both forms of oppression. Oppression can be intentional or non-intentional. Oppression is portrayed through behaviors, statements, and attitudes. The goal of this particular oppression is to promote the marginalization and/or disenfranchisement of the deaf community or deaf leaders. Oppression is a powerful phenomenon that is habitually experienced either consciously and subconsciously to create power and dominance. It is also shaped by the cultural values and positioning of the dominant culture or individual. Ignorance is a tremendous factor in oppression as well.

The sixth sub-category is Dominance of Principles and Beliefs. It is a set of dominant culture principles and beliefs that are imposed upon the marginalized community or individuals as the general norm. The general norm also includes communication and behaviors that conflict with the deaf community or deaf leaders' ability to participate or function with parity in the dominant culture. This puts the deaf community or deaf leaders at a steady disadvantage.

The seventh subcategory is Dual Culture Integration—The deaf leaders' actions or behaviors that suggest the integration of the deaf community's culture and the dominant culture. The deaf leaders will facilitate and mediate behaviors, norms, and values that respect both cultures by integrating cultural and linguistic factors. The deaf leaders recognize the dominant culture's norms, linguistic practices, and cultural values. This information is acknowledged and mediated alongside with the leaders' own cultural composition.

The eighth subcategory is communication clash. Communication clash is a non-synonymous communication that involves two or more different languages and cultural values that do not amalgamate. The dominant culture's language represented by spoken and written English and the behavioral norms labeled as American mainstream culture preside over the majority of communications. The American mainstream culture's foundation of communication is based on aural processing. Their communication values necessitate speaking and hearing; however, the deaf community's communication values rely on visual processing. The primary language of the deaf community is American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is a visual-gestural language that is recognized as a language with its own syntax, grammar and unique non-manual features including facial expressions and body language. The deaf community will never be able to share the aural processing values with the dominant culture.

The ninth and final subcategory under the topic of cultural is Physical and Mental Fatigue. The deaf leader expends a great deal of energy navigating and mediating between two cultures and two languages. As the deaf leaders' frequencies increase in terms of managing auditory information and dominant cultures values, their physical and mental energy tolls increase. It is a very personal experience when describing the fatigue associated with sustaining voice. The acts

of leadership require a range of energy depending on the type of situations and the personal leadership experiences.

Positioning

The third thematic area addressed the positioning strategies, tactics, and dynamics that the deaf leaders utilize or are aware of in their leadership experiences. The positioning of their leadership was explored to learn about the strategies and tactics of positioning as well as how it interrelates with the dominant culture. The themes related to the topic of positioning recognized nine subcategories. The subcategories are as follows: Assertive and Purposeful Leading; Maximizing Interpreters; Physical Proximity; Content Knowledge; Speech Ability; Improvisation Skills; Navigating Languages; and Internal Gauge.

The first subcategory under the topic of positioning is Assertive and Purposeful Leading. The deaf leader actively leads a group, individual, or situation toward a specific outcome that integrates both cultures and respects the linguistic differences and sustains voice. The ultimate goal is to gain recognition of parity and consensual respect. The leadership is assertive and purposeful. This is achieved through communication and strategic positioning.

The second subcategory is Maximizing Interpreters. The deaf leaders strategically maximize the potential and effective use of interpreting services for a positive communication and leadership outcome. Regardless of the level of skills or qualifications of the interpreter, the deaf leader goes beyond the scope and expectations to maximize their experience with the delivery of interpreting services. The deaf leader orchestrates a strategy to position herself to maintain control of communications and information received. Ideally, the deaf leaders work with the interpreters as a team to achieve objectives.

The third subcategory is Physical Proximity. The deaf leader analyzes the approximate placements of interpreters and/or capitalizes on incidental and environmental support from individuals to maximize communication and leadership outcome. This involves multiple considerations. Considerations include the anticipation with the layout of the room; placements of various individuals, anticipations of potential communication dynamics of the group, pre-planning and creating rules for communication.

The fourth subcategory is Content Knowledge. The deaf leader develops content knowledge regarding specialized areas related to their work or leadership experience. The purpose of developing and expanding content knowledge is to ensure and provide the leverage to sustain mutual authority in relationships with the dominant culture. A typical value in the American mainstream culture, “knowledge is power.” This value is often promoted among leaders. The deaf leader capitalizes content knowledge as leverage for expertise and credibility.

The fifth sub-category is Speech Ability. The deaf leader who utilizes speech implies that her speech is comprehensible to the general dominant system. The leader may choose to utilize her speech as a strategic leverage for mediating particular situations that require direct communications. The participants' stories clearly describe that having speech ability can either support or hinder the leadership of deaf leaders. It is noted that the leaders utilize the speech ability as a tool to further the mission or agenda of the deaf community. It does not define their cultural identity.

The sixth subcategory is Improvisation Skills. The deaf leader utilizes opportunities and abilities to improvise during a challenging situation and contribute to positive outcomes; i.e., communication, positioning, and voice. The deaf leaders determine whether or not to engage in various challenging, unplanned situations that are deemed oppressive or exclusionary. The deaf

leaders assess the situation to determine if the outcome will be successful or unsuccessful. She recognizes potential opportunities and improvises to produce favorable outcomes. If they choose to engage, the deaf leaders make conscious decisions about how to manage these situations. Improvisation can be immediate tactics or strategies to direct attention, to re-focus on a solution and/or correct a communication clash. It is either spontaneous or planned.

The seventh subcategory is Navigating Languages. Deaf leaders navigate between two or more languages to maintain full participation in the both cultures. The skills include adaptation, comprehension, framing the context, expression, and explication to meet the communication needs of different languages. The deaf leaders exhibit exemplary skills in mediating both languages fluently. The transitioning between languages is fluid and horizontal.

The eighth and final subcategory under the topic of Positioning is Internal Gauge. An internal gauge refers to an intuitive process that captures the dominant culture's subtleties, social cues, dynamics, and emergent issues that may interfere or create opportunities for sustaining voice. With a strong foundation of understanding of both the dominant culture and the deaf community's cultural and linguistic ideology, the deaf leaders liberate opportunities for sustaining voice.

Voice

The fourth area addresses the deaf leaders' strategic efforts to sustain their voices. Their stories and experiences illustrate the tactics and relational experiences with sustaining voice. The participants reciprocally share their impressions that sustaining voice qualifies as an ongoing and continuing act. It is also an act of stating their position or making their message obvious to the recipient. Voice represents the deaf leader's persona and stance. The themes related to the topic of voice recognized eight subcategories. The subcategories are as follows: Empowered

Articulation; Nurture Relationships/Connections; Credibility; Owning Processes; Solution-Oriented; Bridging Communications; Experiences; and Managing Peripheral Challenges.

The first subcategory under the topic of voice is Empowered Articulation. The deaf leader develops a message that is empowered and purposefully articulated. The message is choreographed and designed to make an impact to the audience. The goal of the message is unwavering, ownership, and intention. The message is delivered and conveyed with consideration of cultural and linguistic dynamics.

The second subcategory is Nurture Relationships/Connections, which relates to the importance of nurturing relationships and cultivating connections to gain support and allies to bridge worlds. Effectively conveying a message requires a receiving element. The receiving element's capacity to comprehend and/or respect the message depends on the existing relationship or connection between the messenger and recipient. The relationships and connections help to cultivate an ability to maximize success of integrating values of diversity.

The third subcategory is Credibility—a demonstration of skills, knowledge base, and confidence that affirms acceptance and respect from individuals and representatives from the dominant culture. By abiding by the rules of the dominant culture and playing in their sandbox, so to speak, the deaf leaders capitalize on their resources. The dominant system is highly competitive, fast-paced, and auditory-based with access to information and expertise at the snap of their fingers. The deaf leaders realize this challenge and strategize through their credibility. The credibility of the deaf leaders earns them respect, status, and a position within the dominant culture.

The fourth subcategory is Owning Processes. A deaf leader is acutely aware of the dynamic processes in her environment. She takes ownership of processes and situations to

sustain voice or maintain a position. The outcome of the situations varies from situation to situation; however, the deaf leaders recognize the ownership and management of the processes. This is nicely reflected in Henry David Thoreau's (1854) belief that “Things do not change, we change.” To have an impact or create change, deaf leaders must begin by owning and managing the process.

The fifth subcategory is Solution Oriented. The deaf leaders direct their focus on seeking solutions for challenges and/or conflicts. Presenting a solution-oriented approach to a conflicting process or situation positions the deaf leader favorably among the representatives of the dominant culture. It integrates the relationship building; upholds the deaf leader's credibility; and supports the navigation strategies toward positive outcomes. The experiences of the deaf leaders show that it is they who need to create solutions and guide the dominant culture toward optimal outcomes.

The sixth subcategory is Bridging Communications. All forms of direct and indirect communications are mediated and supported by the deaf leader's knowledge of languages and cultures. The deaf leader shows an ability to seamlessly interweave the communication diversity to produce a clear message.

The seventh subcategory is Experiences. The participants' stories clearly personify the life and leadership lessons that contribute to the maturity and knowledge for a deaf leader to effectively lead. Their stories repetitively emphasized that life and leadership experiences are the key to developing compilations of skills and knowledge to effectively manage or lead. The versatility and adaptability of the deaf leader is built on a foundation of experiences.

The eighth and final subcategory under the theme of voice is Managing Peripheral Challenges. These challenges are secondary to cultural and linguistic challenges. The challenges

may include obstacles created by peers from own cultural group; discrimination based on gender or age, barriers raised by particular politics and/or history, or other areas. The challenges vary from situation to situation. The deaf leaders recognize that dynamics in addition to cultural and linguistic are complicated and proliferated by other peripheral challenges. This concludes the findings of the phenomenological study.

Scope and Limitations

This dissertation research implemented a descriptive phenomenological study with a selected group of leaders who are deaf. The aim of this study was to illuminate the essence of these leaders' experience in their lifeworlds of deaf leadership and to offer a multi-media descriptive interpretation of this experience in text and in ASL. This study aimed to uncover leadership experiences that will promote an understanding of the specific variables that dictate effective practice in sustaining voice and deaf leadership; however, there were several limitations to consider for this study.

The first limitation is geography. My participants were identified as deaf or hard of hearing leaders who reside and work in three states. The interviews with the leaders took place on three different occasions with a short span of time in between the interviews. The geographical selection was based on the flexibility and accessibility to a larger number of deaf leaders who were readily available. Due to the fact that the interviews were conducted in person to capture their data on video the researcher made multiple trips.

The second limitation is the selection method of the participants. The selection was a participative and purposeful sample of participants. I identified the participants based on my own professional network. I gathered a collaborative review and recommendations from a dissertation committee member, a retired professor/reputable national leader, who is deaf. My

criteria for selection of participants were: 1) past or current work experience with dominant culture and systems; 2) leadership contributions to the deaf community; 3) availability for multiple interviews; 4) openness toward video interviews as well as a willingness to be candid; and 4) maintaining diversity, i.e., people of color, age, speech/hearing status, education, type of work, and gender.

The third limitation is the restrictive exposure of narrative material. The anonymity of the participants is very crucial. The deaf community is very small and insular. It would be relatively easy to figure out the participants' identity. Unfortunately, some of the rich details were heavily edited to eliminate any identifying information. The editing could impact the potency of the narrative and/or alter the contextual meaning of the text. The inclusion of narrative examples was carefully selected and uncompromised in terms of editing.

Chapter VI: Implications for Leadership and Change

Deaf leaders know that each situation is unique, and each situation is either spontaneous or meticulously planned with a purposeful choreography to promote the voice and position of the deaf community. Deaf leaders utilize personal resources and fine-tune them as she experiences the relationships between the dominant system and deaf community. Like any dominant culture leaders, deaf leaders merit the right to use experiences, knowledge, skills, and resources to maximize leadership potential.

Sinclair and Wilson (2002) summarize the challenges and ambivalences of leadership in articulating how it is different from traditional templates of dominant culture leadership,

argues, in contrast, that much new work in leadership is going on in organizations in response to these challenges, but to understand it we need to look in different places and from a different set of perspectives. We also need to analyze the systemic pressures on leaders to censor their differences, to conform, adapt and follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before, rather than adopt radically different leadership directions and postures. Our 'anti-heroes,' and their experiences before assuming leadership roles, have much to tell us about leading in a world of difference.(p. 14)

This descriptive phenomenological study uncovered stories that spoke to the multitude of questions among deaf leaders today. “What do I need to do to position myself in this situation?” “What are my challenges and barriers at this time with the current system; what strengths do I possess to use as leverage?” “Is this a good time to educate about the voice of the deaf community or do I aggressively advocate for their rights?” “Are they ready to open the door a crack?” “Is that a door opening? What are my strategies?” “How do I effectively voice and sustain my position with the dominant system?” “Why did she not recognize the looming challenges of a resistant dominant culture?” “Was there a cultural or a linguistic disconnect?” “Does it make a difference if one person has intelligible speech?” “How does the use of an interpreter factor in perceived authority in her voice?” “What did she do to overcome this

challenge?” The questions will persist, thus satiety for an understanding of how a deaf leader sustains voice and position herself continues to be vital. Understanding the leadership relationship between the deaf leader and the dominant system remains a burning question in the minds of novice and seasoned deaf leaders across the United States.

My formal research question was: How do deaf leaders sustain voice and position in challenging dominant cultures/systems? The sub questions were as follows:

1. Are there leadership qualities that are unique among deaf leaders who lead in challenging dominant cultures/systems?
2. Are deaf leaders challenged to conform to traditional dominant culture leadership in relation to their cultural lens?
3. How do deaf leaders position themselves to sustain voice and create change?

The findings have uncovered leadership relationships between the deaf leader and the dominant system and its potential and obvious challenges. Deaf leaders are compelled to be perilously responsible and astutely aware of the intricacies of this relationship. The purpose of this research was to learn and understand through a phenomenological lens how deaf leaders sustain voice and position themselves in the dominant systems to advocate for progress in the deaf community? The exploration of the relational dynamics between deaf leaders and the dominant system was intriguing and complex. It has also indicated a great need for further studies to significantly contribute to the field of deaf leadership. Today, rapidly changing technology, dynamic communications, and life-changing political decisions pose tremendous challenges for the deaf leader. Nevertheless, the fundamentals of effective deaf leadership remain consistent. The keys for promoting parity and leveling the playing field are arming oneself with

strategic ammunitions related to leadership and voice. The important work of deaf leaders sustaining voice will continue for generations to come.

Acknowledging the tremendous gaps in empirical research studies and literature by researchers who were deaf themselves or the topics related to deaf leadership brings to light the fact that research needs to be expanded and promoted vigorously. Documented evidence is a critical component in strengthening and positioning voice among the deaf and hard of hearing leaders in the dominant systems. As potential direction for any future studies or contributions to deaf leadership, the following areas should be explored further:

1. Expand phenomenological studies with additional leaders with an emphasis on the four categories: Qualities, Cultural, Positioning, and Voice and its respective subcategories may give additional stories and depth to support the subcategories with more evidence. Consider developing a mixed method study to integrate survey illustrating the sub-categories.
2. Consider developing the findings into a conceptual content and skill-building training program.
3. Consider compilation of deaf leaders' experiences in narratives and video to create the transparency and disclosures in a safe and controlled manner. Data, information, and evidence in published works are ammunition for the deaf leaders in a battle to survive and thrive to the fullest extent of their human potential.
4. Develop coaching and feedback programs for young deaf leaders utilizing the seasoned deaf leaders' skills, knowledge, and experience in the framework of Qualities, Cultural, Positioning, and Voice.
5. Consider a comparative study to examine the everyday racism and audism.

Researcher Experience

As a researcher, I commenced this study with a set of theoretical implications, fully aware of potential challenges and a clear plan to maneuver away from any predicted path of questioning or preconceived conclusions. For example, I kept my potential development of disabling bias and defined ideas in constant check in order to be critical with my reflections on the participants' responses. The work of Schwandt (2001) supports the theory that the researcher's role is to reflect on any prejudgment and distinguish between processes enabling versus disabling prejudice. I utilized bracketing techniques to be mindful of the content, influences, environment, and current dynamics facing the participant at the time of the interview as well as my own cognitive and emotional framework. This reflective practice enabled me to exercise the rigor required in a classic descriptive phenomenological study, as defined by Husserl (1965). The probing questions were crafted to encourage exploration of experiences; however, there were few occasions in which the participants sought out affirmations regarding their responses and/or support to continue the exploration journey. I utilized various reflective and mirroring techniques borrowed from counseling to elicit more responses. There were one or two occasions where I recognized the interview process straying into directions where the development of the responses was based on what the participants thought I was seeking. After minor redirections, the content of the responses were very rich and revealing. I explored both sides and kept possibilities open for new ideas and uninhibited dialogues. The interviews not only captured rich and deep meanings, they also revealed intimate and identifying information that may risk their anonymity. These disclosures affirm that the deaf community may not have developed the facility to manage transparency and full disclosures regarding deaf leaders due to the complex level of standards imposed by the members of their community. This is an entirely

other research opportunity to explore. For the purposes of this study, the anonymity of our participants and identifying information will be held in the highest regard. It is noted that there are overlaps between the four areas. This suggests a complex and integrated phenomenon experienced by deaf leaders. More research is required to understand the implications and connections between and among these complex phenomenon. Yet this study has made a beginning that will deepen our initial understanding of what it means to be a deaf leader and to sustain voice within an already complex and multidimensional dominant society.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Description of Terms

1. American Sign Language, also known as ASL - a visual- gestural language primarily used by many members of the Deaf community in America. ASL is recognized as a language with its own syntax, grammar, and unique non-manual features including facial expressions and body language.
2. Audist - an individual who judges a person with hearing loss as incapable of a specific behavior, occupation, skill, ability, or achievement due solely to that hearing loss. It is an attitude that he or she, who happens to hear and speak, or hear and speak better, or have excellent English skills, is superior to others. There are different forms of audism or audist behaviors that have a negative impact and oppressive to the deaf individual and/or deaf community.
3. Cultural Identity – The cultural identity of a deaf individual is someone who ascribes and lives faithfully by the rules of Deaf culture. Her cultural roots are deeply rooted with the deaf community. The cultural identity defines the deaf leader and is a big factor to her effectiveness as a leader. The deaf leader is also proficient in American Sign Language and is a model for the deaf community.
4. Deaf community - a group of people who ascribe to the principles of Deaf culture and embrace ASL.
5. Dominant system – dominant system is used interchangeably with mainstream American society, dominant community and dominant culture. mainstream American society is a dominant community with established cultural rules, beliefs, communication, values, traditions, and paradigms belonging to non-deaf, English-speaking individuals in America.
6. Gallaudet University – is located in Washington, DC. It is the only liberal arts university in the world for deaf and hard of hearing students.
7. Manual language – is a form of sign language that mimics the structure of the English language.
8. Oralism – a communication philosophy that stress the use of speech among the deaf and hard of hearing people. The philosophy believes combining speech reading and auditory training will help integrate with the hearing world.
9. National Association of the Deaf (NAD) - a consumer advocate organization that protects, preserves, and promotes the rights of every deaf and hard of hearing individual in America. It was founded in 1880 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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