

BOOK REVIEW

Solitary Suggestions: Mainstreamed Singletons Speak Out

Oliva, G. A., and Lytle, L. R. (2014). *Turning the Tide: Making Life Better for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Schoolchildren*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press. 229 pages. \$29.95.

Only recently has the role of incidental learning in the academic, emotional, and social success of DHH children received research attention. Ramsey (1997) observed the mainstreamed experiences of three Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) children, aged 7 years, and found they were consistently left out of most classroom discourse (which happens to be where much of the learning occurs). Hopper (2011) offered the first look into mainstreamed DHH students' own understanding of what they were missing by not having access to conversations occurring around them. This book offers both a wide and narrow lens into the experiences of DHH school children who were mainstreamed as either one of, or the only DHH children at their school for at least 5 years. Based on survey and focus group data, the social, emotional, and academic lives of these individuals are summarized during their K-12 years.

Participants were aged 18–34 years with at least a 50-dB bilateral loss since childhood. Procedures involved asking 21 participants to (a) write a two- to four-page essay describing his/her solitary experience in the mainstream (along with a short demographic survey) and (b) participate in a focus group with six to eight in each group. Focus groups were held in three cities across the United States. Additionally, 113 participants who met the same criteria were surveyed.

Chapters cover friendship; the struggle to shape an identity; interpreters and placement issues; challenges of reform efforts; challenges of a mediated education, summer and weekend programs; scholars, advocates, parents, and allies; and suggestions for policy change and practice. By and large, growing up as a solitary DHH student in the mainstream is a lonely experience. Parents good at advocacy and teachers comfortable and open with inclusion make a large positive impact on these children's lives. Interpreters provide access to only a subset of the communicative environment of school, and DHH students are left out of much that impacts their social, emotional, and academic

success. Camp and weekend programs have a tremendous positive impact on these children, mediating some of the difficulties they face at school.

This book offers profound insight into the solitary experiences of DHH mainstreamed school children. While the sample is skewed towards college-educated, social-media using, written-English focused DHH young adults, this book offers new insights into the experiences of children raised without many (often any) other DHH peers at school. The suggestions for improving the lives of these children were thoughtful and some quite creatively novel. For example, it would be technologically possible to add speech-to-text capture-and-transcribe stations around a school (in classrooms, lobbies, hallways, even on busses) where DHH students could read about conversations and fill in information that they were not able to "overhear." The chapter on the challenges of reform efforts was multilayered and insightful. This is a valuable resource for a qualitative view of the experiences of DHH students in the mainstream and provides numerous first-hand stories from confident, happy young DHH adults who had all learned how to effectively advocate for their needs.

References

- Hopper, M. (2011). *Positioned as bystanders: Deaf students' experiences and perceptions of informal learning phenomena* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Rochester, NY.
- Ramsey, C. (1997). *Deaf children in public schools: Placement, context, and consequence*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Sara Schley
National Technical Institute for the Deaf,
Rochester Institute of Technology