Chapter 1

Sign Language and the DEAF⁀WORLD as a Special Case: An Overview

The traditional way of writing about Deaf people is to focus on the fact of their condition—that they do not hear—and to interpret all other aspects of their lives as consequences of this fact . . . In contrast to the long history of writings that treat them as medical cases, or as people with "disabilities" who "compensate" for their deafness by using sign language, we want to portray the lives they live, their art and performances, their everyday talk, their shared myths, and the lessons they teach one another. We have always felt that the attention given to the physical condition of not hearing has obscured far more interesting facets of Deaf people's lives. (Padden & Humphries, 1988, p. 1)

Lately . . . the deaf community has begun to speak for itself. To the surprise and bewilderment of outsiders, its message is utterly contrary to the wisdom of centuries: Deaf people, far from groaning under a heavy yoke, are not handicapped at all. Deafness is not a disability. Instead, many deaf people now proclaim, they are a subculture like any other. They are simply a linguistic minority (speaking American Sign Language) and are no more in need of a cure than are Haitians or Hispanics. (Dolnick, 1993, p. 37)

For those interested in language planning and language policy, deaf people, as a cultural and linguistic community, are an especially fascinating case study.[1] Both the DEAF⁀WORLD and sign language exist only in the plural; that is, although deaf people in different countries and settings certainly share certain experiences, attitudes, values, and concerns, they are also quite distinct in nature. In addition, and making the situation even more complex, whereas language planning and language policy studies for sign languages are similar to such activities for

spoken languages, they are not identical. Thus, language planning and language policy studies for sign languages essentially creates something of a parallel universe to that with which language planners and policy makers are normally most familiar. And yet, at the same time, this universe in which deaf culture and natural sign languages exist is not completely independent of the universe in which we live and operate. It overlaps the world of the hearing and spoken languages, in important ways. Furthermore, because deaf people inevitably live in the hearing world as well as in the DEAF⁀WORLD, the decisions that we make with respect to language planning and language policy for both spoken and sign languages have immense impacts on them.

This book, as mentioned in the preface, addresses two very different audiences. The first are those readers who are familiar and concerned with the literature on language planning and language policy studies but not particularly familiar with either the DEAF⁀WORLD or sign language and wish to learn about the case of sign language and deaf people with respect to issues of language planning and language policy more broadly conceived. The second audience for this book are those readers who are either members of or those close to the DEAF⁀WORLD and sign language but unfamiliar with matters of language planning and language policy studies. Thus, the first two chapters of this book will attempt to provide introductions for each of these groups: Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the nature of sign language and the DEAF⁀WORLD, whereas Chapter 2 provides a broad overview of the language planning and language policy literature as it has developed for spoken languages.

Although this chapter is not focused explicitly on language planning and language policy, such issues are addressed implicitly here in two ways. First, in order to understand issues related to language planning and language policy for sign languages, both in the U.S. and around the world, it is essential to have a foundational understanding of the nature of sign language and the DEAF⁀WORLD, and in this chapter I will provide that foundation. Second, although many of the aspects of language planning and language policy for sign languages do reflect and overlap those for spoken languages, there are some important differences between spoken and sign languages in terms of language planning and language policy, and this chapter will address some of these.

CONCEPTIONS OF DEAFNESS

The literature on deafness now commonly identifies two quite different ways to view deafness (see Baker, 1999; Benvenuto, 2005; Branson & Miller, 2002; Corina & Singleton, 2009; Janesick & Moores, 1992; Kyle, 1990; Lane, 1992; Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan 1996; Lindgren, DeLuca, & Napoli, 2008; Mather, 1992; Padden & Humphries, 1988, 2005; Reagan, 1988, 1990a, 1995a, 2002c, 2005b [1985]; Senghas & Monahgan, 2002; Skelton & Valentine, 2003). The dominant perspective is grounded in the view that deafness is essentially a medical condition, characterized by an auditory deficit—that is, deaf people are people who cannot hear. Such a perspective, which has been labeled the "pathological" or "medical" view of deafness, leads naturally enough to efforts to try to remediate the deficit. In short, the pathological view is premised on the idea that deaf people are not only different from hearing people, but, at least in a physiological sense, are also *inferior* to hearing people. If one accepts the pathological view of deafness, and the myriad assumptions that undergird it, then the only reasonable approach to dealing with deafness is indeed to attempt to remediate the problem—which is, of course, precisely what is done when one focuses on the teaching of speech and lipreading or speechreading in education, utilizes technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implantation to maximize whatever residual hearing a deaf individual may possess, and otherwise seeks to develop medical solutions to hearing impairment. In other words, the pathological view of deafness inevitably leads to efforts to attempt to assist the deaf individual to become as "like a hearing person" as possible. Such a perspective is common in general in the hearing world, and, perhaps most importantly, among hearing parents, who "typically view being deaf through the lens of audiology, hearing loss, and difference, not as a cultural phenomenon" (Leigh, 2008, p. 23).

The alternative way of understanding deafness has been termed the "sociocultural perspective" on deafness. This view of deafness operates from an anthropological rather than a medical perspective, and suggests that for some (though not all) deaf people, it makes far more sense to understand deafness not as a handicapping condition, let alone as a deficit, but as an essentially cultural condition (Ladd, 2003, 2005; Lane et al., 1996; Padden & Humphries, 1988, 2005; Reagan, 1988, 1996, 2005 [1985]). Thus, from the perspective of advocates of the sociocultural perspective, the appropriate comparison group for deaf people is

not individuals with disabilities but individuals who are members of other dominated and oppressed cultural and linguistic groups. In short, the sociocultural view leads to efforts that focus on issues of civil rights and to assist deaf people to function fully in the dominant (hearing) culture (Bauman, 2004; Ladd, 2005; Shapiro, 1993, pp. 74–104; Simms & Thumann, 2007).

SITUATING THE TARGET POPULATION: THE MANY FACES OF DEAFNESS

The case of deaf people presents an especially interesting example of the limitations of traditional discourse about "mother tongue" and "native language." The vast majority of deaf individuals are born to hearing, and nonsigning, parents.[3] Once a child is identified as having significant hearing loss, intervention begins (under the best of circumstances)—perhaps through the introduction of a sign language, perhaps through intensive oral and aural rehabilitation, and perhaps through surgical interventions such as those provided by cochlear implants.[4] In some instances, a combination of these different approaches is used. What is important to note here is that in most cases the deaf child's exposure to language (whether spoken or sign) is delayed. Such delays, in turn, have developmental consequences that are difficult to address later on in the child's education. The exceptions here—and by far the luckiest of deaf children—are those who are born to parents who are themselves signers (and, in most cases, presumably also deaf themselves).

In everyday discourse, however, the terms *deaf* and *hearing impaired* refer to a wide array of different kinds of hearing loss and responses to hearing loss—including, for example:

- A person who uses ASL (or some other natural sign language) as his or her primary language and identifies with the deaf cultural community.
- A person who communicates primarily through speech (i.e., in a spoken language) and identifies with the hearing community.
- A person who does not know either ASL (or some other natural sign language) or English (or some other spoken language), but rather communicates through gestures, mimes, and their own "home" signing systems.

- A person who became deaf later in life, generally as a result of aging (i.e., the elderly deaf).

The population with which I am concerned in this book is a subset of the hearing impaired population: children who are prelingually deaf—that is, deaf prior to the acquisition of spoken language—and profoundly or severely deaf, not with those with a broadly defined hearing impairment.[5] I am also concerned both with children who are raised in homes in which the dominant language is not a sign language, regardless of the hearing status of the parents, and those who are raised in homes in which the first language is indeed ASL. This may seem to narrow my focus, but it actually does not do so all that dramatically—the vast majority of children in residential schools for the deaf, for example, fit into this definition. Although, as we will see in Chapter 3, the numbers of such children is declining, it is these children who are most likely to constitute core members of the DEAF⁀WORLD.

THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SIGN LANGUAGE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Since the 1960 publication of William Stokoe's landmark study, *Sign Language Structure* (Stokoe, 1993 [1960]), there has been a veritable explosion of historical, linguistic, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic research dealing with ASL (see, e.g., Fischer & Siple, 1990; Liddell, 1980, 1995, 2003; Lucas, 1989, 1990, 1995, 1996; Lucas & Valli, 1992; Metzger, 2000; Siple & Fischer, 1991; Valli et al., 2005), as well as with other natural sign languages (see, e.g., Emmorey & Reilly, 1995; Lucas, 1990; Plaza-Pust & Morales-López, 2008; Reagan, Penn, & Ogilvy, 2006). The result is that we now know far more about the nature and workings of natural sign languages than we did a half-century ago. In his recent book on grammar, gesture, and meaning in ASL, Liddell notes:

> By the early 1970s many other linguists and psychologists began studying the properties of ASL. At that time, their published papers tended to begin with brief justifications explaining that ASL was a language. Such explanations were needed since most people still held the view that ASL was not a language. By perhaps the mid-seventies, and most certainly by the early eighties, the weight of published descriptions of ASL and its grammar was sufficient to turn the tide of opinion about the language status of ASL. Studies of various aspects of the grammar of ASL left no

> doubt that signers using ASL were using a real human language. . . . The recognition that sign languages were real human languages set off a flurry of activity in a number of academic arenas beginning in the seventies . . . More and more sign languages continue to be identified and investigated as researchers around the globe pursue answers to a wide variety of interesting scientific questions. (2003, pp. 4–5)

Although I do not have the space here to provide a comprehensive overview of what linguists now know about ASL and other natural sign languages (see, however, in particular Johnston & Schembri, 2007; Lillo-Martin, 1991; Meir & Sandler, 2008; Nakamura, 2006), a very brief discussion of some of the principal, and generally common, linguistic features of natural sign languages will be useful. Because the greatest amount of linguistic research to date has been concerned with ASL, this discussion will necessarily focus on ASL, although examples from other sign languages will be provided as appropriate.

Different Kinds of Signing

There are, broadly speaking, four different kinds of "signing": the natural sign languages used by deaf people themselves in intragroup communication, which are unrelated to surrounding spoken languages; contact sign languages typically used by deaf and hearing people in intergroup communication; manual sign codes, which are efforts to represent spoken languages in a visual/manual format; and signed communication used by (and between) hearing people in certain situations. One useful way of thinking about these different kinds of signing is in terms of the diversity of signing and sign language. The diversity of sign languages actually refers to a number of different, and significant, kinds of diversity.

First, there are large numbers of sign languages that are natural sign languages used by deaf people in different settings around the world. Although these different natural sign languages share certain generic features (such as their gestural and visual nature, their use of space for linguistic purposes, etc.), and while some sign languages are genetically related to others, these languages are nevertheless distinctive languages in their own right. Many of these natural sign languages have been studied by linguists; among these are not only ASL, but also Australian Sign Language, British Sign Language, Danish Sign Language, Dutch Sign Language, French Sign Language, German Sign Language, Hausa Sign Language, Hong Kong Sign Language, Indo-Pakistani Sign Language, Israeli Sign Language, Italian

Sign Language, Kenyan Sign Language, Modern Thai Sign Language, Russian Sign Language, South African Sign Language, Swedish Sign Language, Taiwanese Sign Language, and Venezuelan Sign Language, and this is far from an exhaustive list. Indeed, although impressive in its own right, this list is but the proverbial tip of the iceberg, since most natural sign languages (like most spoken languages) remain unstudied. Skutnabb-Kangas suggests that "there probably are something between 6,500 and 10,000 spoken (oral) languages in the world, and a number of sign languages which can be equally large" (2000, p. 30). This is likely a gross overgeneralization, because many spoken languages are far too small to have a concomitant deaf community using its own sign language, but the underlying point is well taken: there is a huge number of natural sign languages in the world, of many of which we are not even aware.

The number of natural sign languages is but one sense in which we can talk about sign language diversity (see Reagan, 2007; Schermer, 2004). The second way in which diversity enters the picture is with respect to the diversity present *within* particular natural sign languages. In the case of ASL, for instance, we know that there is not only extensive lexical diversity related to region of the country, but also diversity related to age, gender, and ethnicity (see Lucas, 1989, 1995, 1996; Lucas, Bayley, & Valli, 2001, 2003; McCaskill et al., in press). A far more extreme case is provided by South African Sign Language (SASL). SASL, at least in part as a consequence of the social and educational policies of the apartheid regime (see Penn & Reagan, 2001), has been characterized by extensive lexical variation coupled with an underlying syntactic unity. Indeed, the situation is so complex that sign language linguists concerned with SASL have engaged in arguments about whether it is a single sign language or a related collection of different sign languages (see Aarons & Akach, 1998, 2002; Branson & Miller, 2002, pp. 244–45; Heap & Morgans, 2006; Morgan, 2008; Reagan, 2004).

The third sort of diversity that plays a role in understanding sign language, and one to which I have already alluded, is not so much a diversity in terms of sign language as it is a diversity with respect to what the term *signing* actually means. The distinction between *sign language* and *signing* is a significant one. Up to this point, I have been concerned only with natural sign languages, the sign languages that have emerged and are used in communities of deaf people for intragroup communication. Deaf people, however, do not live apart from hearing people; rather, they are integrated into the hearing world in a number of ways and on a number of different

levels. The vast majority of deaf people have hearing parents, and the vast majority of deaf people will have hearing children. In addition, deaf people need to have access to at least some hearing people in order to function socially and economically. Although the children of deaf people may well learn their parents' sign language as a native language, most parents of deaf children and other hearing people who are in contact with deaf people will generally not learn a natural sign language. Instead, they will learn to sign using a contact sign language—that is, a sign language that has elements of both the natural sign language and the surrounding spoken language (see Lucas & Valli, 1989, 1991, 1992). Such contact languages, originally labeled *pidgin sign*, are in fact the primary kind of sign language used in many hearing–deaf communicative interchanges. These contact languages, like natural sign languages, are the result of normal linguistic development, and their emergence parallels that of spoken contact languages.

Next, *manual sign codes* were developed in educational settings as a way of providing deaf children with access to spoken language (the development of such manual sign codes will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4). These are simply efforts to represent a spoken language in a gestural/visual modality—comparable, really, to writing a spoken language (see Figure 1.1).

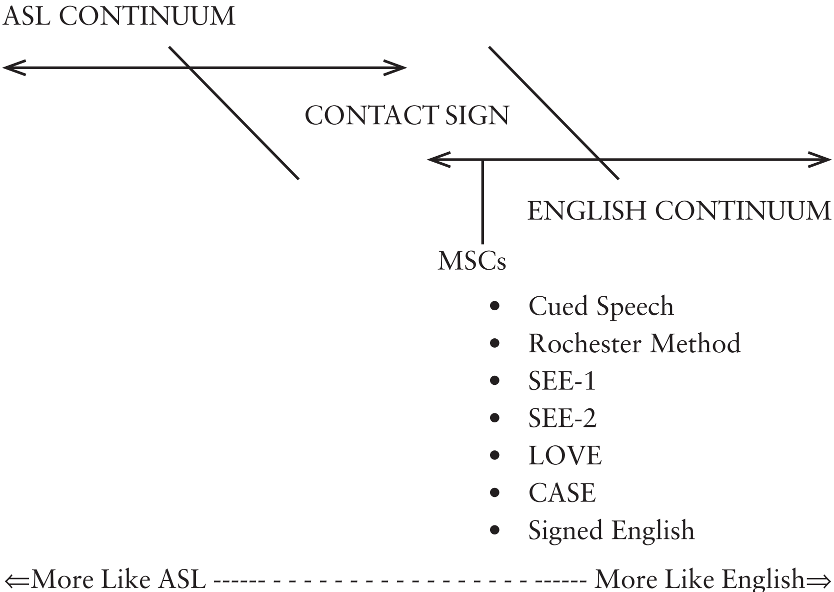

Figure 1.1. *Diagram of the ASL-Contact Sign-MSC continua*[6]

Finally, there is signed communication that has been used by hearing people, not to communicate with deaf people, but rather to communicate with other hearing people in certain settings. Examples include the kinds of signing used by the Plains Indians in North America (see Davis, 2006, 2007, in press), the signing used in monasteries (both historically, from at least the tenth century, and in some contemplative orders such as the Benedictine, Cistercian, Franciscan, and Trappist orders, even today; see Barakat, 1975a, 1975b; Barley, 1974; Kendon, 1990; Nitschke, 1997; Umiker-Sebeok & Sebeok, 1987), and so on. Although different in both nature and purpose from other kinds of signing, and more accurately described as *gestural lexicons* than as *sign languages*, there is no doubt that all these are also kinds of signed communication.

THE CULTURE OF THE DEAF⌒WORLD

The extraordinary impact of ASL on American deaf culture is just one example of the complex interaction between language and identity. Indeed, in discussions about this relationship deaf people stand out as an exceptionally complicated and intriguing case (Bragg, 2001; Goodstein, 2006; Harris, 1995; Monaghan, Schmaling, Nakamura, & Turner, 2003; Neisser, 1983; Padden, 1980; Parasnis, 1988; Reagan, 2002c). As Charlotte Baker observes, “Deaf people do not necessarily identify with the hearing world and increasingly regard the hearing world as a different language community. Rather than allowing themselves to be defined by the majority hearing group, Deaf people are progressively expressing and valuing their own self-constructed identity” (Baker, 1999, p. 129). Since the 1970s, social science scholars have recognized that many individuals identify themselves as members of a common deaf cultural community (see Baker & Battison, 1980; Ladd, 2003; Lindgren et al., 2008; Padden & Humphries, 1988, 2005; Paul & Jackson, 1993; Reagan, 1988, 1990a, 1995a, 2002c, 2005b [1985]; Schein, 1989; Siple, 1994; Stokkoe, 1980; Vernon & Andrews, 1990; Wilcox, 1989). Such a cultural conceptualization of deafness presents a significant challenge to the more popular view among hearing people of deafness as a disability. The difference is not merely a semantic one; it is fundamental to one’s conception of what deafness is, what it means to be deaf, and how both individuals and society as a whole ought to address deafness. As Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan note in their powerful book *A Journey into the DEAF–WORLD*, “When hearing

people think about Deaf people, they project their concerns and subtractive perspective onto Deaf people. The result is an inevitable collision with the values of the DEAF⌒WORLD, whose goal is to promote the unique heritage of Deaf language and culture. The disparity in decision-making power between the hearing world and the DEAF⌒WORLD renders this collision frightening for Deaf people" (1996, p. 371).

The complexities of the situation become even greater when one takes into account the fact that not all *deaf* people are *Deaf*. Audiological deafness and cultural deafness are distinct and different conditions. The deaf population can be subdivided into a wide range of different groups, distinguished in part of degree of hearing loss, but also by language preference, educational experience, and relative integration into either the DEAF⌒WORLD or the hearing world (see Goodstein, 2006; Monaghan et al., 2003). My focus in this book is on understanding the multiple, competing conceptions of deafness that divide the DEAF⌒WORLD and hearing world, with emphasis on the dominant constructions of deafness that exist in each of these worlds. It is important to note at the outset, then, that the concern here is primarily with *Deaf* people rather than with *deaf* people. As Harlan Lane observes in his masterful book *The Mask of Benevolence*, "Most Americans who have impaired hearing are not members of the American deaf community. They were acculturated to hearing society, their first language was a spoken one, and they became hard of hearing or deaf in the course of their lives, often late in life. This book is not about them; it is about people who grow up deaf, acculturated to the manual language and society of the deaf community" (1992, p. xi). Although there are many interesting issues that might be addressed with respect to the identities of deaf people, as well as with regard to the complex identities of the hearing children of deaf people (generally referred to as Codas, for *children of deaf adults*), these issues are beyond the bounds of this book (Bishop & Hicks, 2008). It is, nevertheless, important to recognize that the dichotomy separating the hearing and deaf worlds is in fact a false one; rather than two completing distinct identities, the reality of deafness is one of a continuum of multiple identities ranging from "hearing" to "deaf."

At issue here is the broader issue of disability. As numerous scholars have explored in detail in recent years, "disability" is a social construct grounded in cultural, political, ideological, and economic assumptions and biases (Barton, 1997; Charlton, 1998; Davis, 1995, 1997; Linton, 1998; Safford & Safford, 1996). In the case of deaf people, the relative emphasis

and importance accorded to audiological versus social factors is the central feature of differentiation between what can be labeled the *etic* and *emic* views of deafness (Gregory & Hartley, 1991; Ohna, 2003; Reagan, 2002c; Schein, 1989). At stake, ultimately, is the question of who defines "deafness": the dominant hearing world or the DEAF⁀WORLD. It is, fundamentally, the relationship of power and discourse that is at stake.

Deaf constructions of deaf identity, which are grounded in the experiences and history of the DEAF⁀WORLD (see Fischer & Lane, 1993; Van Cleve, 1993, 2004), stress the sociocultural and linguistic aspects of deafness (Andersson, 1990, 1994; Burch, 2000; Corker, 2000; Ladd, 2003; Lindgren et al., 2008; Padden & Humphries, 1988, 2005; Paul & Jackson, 1993; Reagan, 1988, 1990a, 1995a, 2002c, 2005b [1985]; Schein, 1989; Skelton & Valentine, 2003; Vernon & Andrews, 1990; Wilcox, 1989). Such emic constructions of deafness focus primarily on deaf people as a cultural and linguistic minority community (and, indeed, on that community as an oppressed one). The deaf cultural community is, from this perspective, characterized by the same sorts of elements that might characterize any cultural community, among which are:

- a common, shared language
- a literary and artistic tradition
- a shared awareness of cultural identity
- culturally specific humor
- endogamous marital patterns
- distinctive behavioral norms and patterns
- cultural artifacts
- a shared historical knowledge and awareness
- a network of voluntary, in-group social organizations.

We turn now to a brief discussion of each of these elements of the DEAF⁀WORLD.

ASL as the Language of the DEAF⁀WORLD

The single most significant element of deaf cultural identity in the United States is, without a doubt, communicative competence in ASL (Lane et al., 1996; Schein & Stewart, 1995; Valli, Lucas, & Mulrooney, 2005). ASL serves multiple roles within the deaf community, functioning not only as the community's vernacular language, but also as an indicator of cultural group membership. An indication of the important role of ASL

in the establishment and maintenance of cultural identity can be seen in the use of "name signs" (see Hedberg, 1994; Meadow, 1977; Stokoe, Casterline, & Croneberg, 1976, pp. 291–93; Supalla, 1990, 1992; Yau, 1982, 1990, pp. 271–72; Yau & He, 1990). Name signs constitute a special category of signs in ASL (and in other natural sign languages). They

> seem to develop wherever a group of Deaf people have extended contact with each other and use sign language as their vernacular language. They are created for individuals within each generation or social grouping of Deaf people. Most typically, name signs originate in deaf school settings where Deaf children form an autonomous social world beyond the gaze of teachers . . . the name signs that Deaf adults bestow on each other later in life are determined by Deaf social norms and visual language structures rather than those of the "outside" hearing society. (McKee & McKee, 2000, pp. 4–5)

Further, "the acquisition of a name sign may mark a person's entry to a signing community, and its use reinforces the bond of shared group history and alternative language use (in relation to mainstream society)" (McKee & McKee, 2000, p. 3).

The critical roles ASL plays in reinforcing and strengthening the bonds of the deaf community are really restricted to ASL; other types of signing commonly used in the United States (including both the contact sign language normally employed by hearing signers and the artificially constructed manual sign codes) fulfill very different functions and are viewed very differently by members of the deaf community (Lucas, 1989; Lucas & Valli, 1992; Reagan, 1988, 1990a, 1995a, 1995b, 2002c, 2005b [1985]). For instance, contact sign language is viewed as an appropriate means of communication with hearing individuals, while manual sign codes are often rejected by the deaf community as awkward efforts to impose the structures of a spoken language on sign.

ASL also plays an important role in the construction of what could be termed the *DEAF⁀WORLD worldview*—that is, the way in which deaf people make sense of the world around them. It does this in two distinct ways: first, through its role as linguistic mediator, and second, as an identifying facet of cultural identity. For instance, ASL mediates experience in a unique way, as of course do all languages. The structures and vocabulary of ASL provide the framework within which experience is organized, perceived, and understood, and this framework is inevitably distinct from the frameworks employed by other languages. For example, in ASL if one describes a person as VERY HARD-OF-HEARING, it means that the person has substantial residual hearing, whereas LITTLE HARD-OF-HEARING

suggests far less residual hearing. In other words, the concepts themselves are based on different norms than is the case in English (where the meanings of these two expressions are reversed).

The use of ASL as one's primary vernacular language is arguably the single most important element in the construction of deaf cultural identity. Deaf cultural identity presupposes communicative competence in ASL, and is impossible without it. As Jerome Schein explains, "Being deaf does not in itself make one a member of the deaf community. To understand this, one has to remember that the distinguishing feature of membership in the deaf community is how one communicates" (1984, p. 130). It is not merely *signing* that is necessary, though—it is, specifically, the use of ASL. Many hearing people sign, but relatively few are competent in ASL. ASL has historically functioned as a language of group solidarity.

The Literary and Artistic Tradition of the DEAF⁀WORLD

Regarding the literary and artistic tradition of the DEAF⁀WORLD, Lane and colleagues write:

> The arts . . . also play a critical role in bonding the members of any culture, and the members of the DEAF⁀WORLD are no exception. In fact, in at least two respects, the arts have a privileged relation to Deaf culture. Deaf people are, as we have seen repeatedly, best thought of as a visual people, so it should be no surprise that there has always been a substantial number of Deaf artists, many with worldwide renown. Then, too, ASL is an unwritten language, so literature such as storytelling and humor carry much cultural information that, in cultures with written languages, would be passed down through the generations in books. (1996, pp. 138–39)

There is a fundamental distinction between individuals who happen to be deaf and who produce works of art (whether literary, visual, multimedia, or of whatever sort), and those individuals who produce what is termed *Deaf Art* (see Sonnenstrahl, 2003; see also Bauman, 2008a; Davidson, 2008; Novak, 2008; Perlmutter, 2008). My focus here is, needless to say, solely on the latter group of artists. Several efforts have been made to articulate this difference and to provide opportunities for deaf artists to perform and display their work. For instance, in the 1970s, in the midst of the rise of Deaf Art, *Spectrum: Focus on Deaf Artists* was started in Austin, Texas, and was able, under the deaf painter Betty Miller, to assemble some two dozen deaf artists within a few years, leading to the establishment of the Spectrum Visual Arts Institute in 1977

(see Lane et al., 1996, p. 139). Later, the creation of the Deaf Artists of America in Rochester, New York, in 1985 made possible the presentation of more than twenty exhibitions prior to its closing in 1992 (Lane et al., 1996, p. 140). Perhaps the clearest articulation of the difference between Deaf Art and art created by deaf people is that provided by the De'VIA (Deaf View/Image Art) Manifesto, which was written by eight deaf artists at a four-day workshop prior to the "Deaf Way" arts festival held at Gallaudet University in May 1989 (Miller, Sonnenstrahl, Wilhite, & Johnston, 2006; Sonnenstrahl, 1996, 2003). The Manifesto argued that

> De'VIA represents Deaf artists and perceptions based on their Deaf experiences. It uses formal art elements with the intention of expressing innate cultural or physical Deaf experience. These experiences may include Deaf metaphors, Deaf perspectives, and Deaf insight in relationship with the environment (both the natural world and Deaf cultural environment), spiritual and everyday life. . . . De'VIA can be identified by formal elements such as Deaf artists' possible tendency to use contrasting colors and values, intense colors, contrasting textures. It may also most often include a centralized focus, with exaggeration or emphasis on facial features, especially eyes, mouths, ears, and hands. (Quoted in Sonnenstrahl, 1996, p. 132)

The deaf literary canon has only recently begun to be recognized and studied, but it is already clear that novels, plays, poetry, and theatrical presentations in ASL can be and often are very powerful and compelling (see Bahan, 1992; Peters, 2000). Deaf literature now includes a number of novels, such as *Islay* (see Bullard, 1986), which meet the standards of traditional literary works and present and focus on issues of the DEAF⁀WORLD, and which in some ways may surpass traditional written works in their use of visual metaphors (see Christie & Wilkins, 1997; Frishberg, 1988; Peters, 2000). There is also a rich tradition of stories and storytelling in ASL (see Krentz, 2000; Winston, 1999). To some extent, such storytelling parallels that found in other oral traditions, but there are also distinctive aspects of such stories in ASL. Apart from their focus on the DEAF⁀WORLD and deaf people, and the history of the DEAF⁀WORLD (see Rutherford, 1993), such stories also include particular genres not found, for obvious reasons, in spoken language traditions. One example is the *A-to-Z story* (also called the *ABC story*):

> In an A-to-Z story each sign represents one of the twenty-six handshapes in the manual alphabet, from A to Z. The stories cover a wide range of topics, including an operation, a haunted house, a romantic couple, a car race, and a basketball game. The transition from A to Z must be very smooth, as in a

> regular story. A-to-Z stories are not easy to translate into English since their meaning depends on the visual effect created by the alphabet handshapes. (Valli et al., 2005, pp. 184–85)

The *numerical story* is similar in format but employs numbers, using 1 to 15. Another genre, the *classifier story*, employs classifiers, one of the more significant linguistic characteristics of ASL (see Emmorey, 2003; Sandler & Lillo-Martin, 2006, pp. 76–93):

> The classifier story is a very rich, creative art form. The story is told exclusively with classifier predicates. One of the many classifier predicate stories is about a golf ball. In this story the storyteller's head becomes a golf ball. It creates a point of view as it is put on a tee and watches a club approach several times before it is hit. After the ball is hit, it flies high over trees, and then descends and lands on the ground, bounces, rolls slowly, and finally stops. It is hit again, rolls toward the cup, and circles the rim of the cup before going down into the hole. (Valli, et al., 2005, p. 185)

The theatrical tradition in ASL is quite strong, in large part because of the active agenda of the National Theatre of the Deaf and other historical theatrical groups (see Bragg, 1996; Corrado, 1990). Examples of plays that clearly focus on the DEAF⌒WORLD include such productions as *My Third Eye* (Barman et al., 1973; the debut production of the National Theatre of the Deaf), *Sign Me Alice* (a deaf version of Shaw's *Pygmalion*; Eastman, 1974), and *Children of a Lesser God* (Medoff, 1980). Note here the difference between a theatrical production that is *interpreted* into ASL and one which is actually *performed* in ASL (see Novak, 2008).

Interpreted performances are certainly of value in many ways (not the least of which is that they expose hearing people to ASL), but the nature of the performance itself is quite different from that of a truly ASL performance. Consider, for instance, Caliban's line in *The Tempest* that reads, "You taught me language and my profit on't is, I know how to curse." In ASL, this would be interpreted as YOU FINISH TEACH-TEACH ME LANGUAGE, ME BENEFIT WHAT? ME KNOW-HOW SWEAR. Willy Conley comments:

> [This] doesn't exactly capture the rich beauty of Shakespeare's language, but at least it is practical enough to deliver the concept. The deaf audience member now has to figure out who said the line—was it Caliban, Prospero, or Miranda? Next, the line needs to be put into context. And then, very quickly, the audience member needs to look over to the group of characters to see what happened as a result of saying that line. Most good actors in Western theatre act on the line, so this bit of action gets finished by the time a deaf person's eyes return to the stage. (2001, p. 59)

On the other hand, Peter Novak points out that

> the translation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* into American Sign Language (ASL) reflects a confluence of cultures, where the nature and process of theatrical translation have been revisited and, to some extent, re-envisioned . . . The translation stands at the center of two distinctly different cultures: the hearing world with Shakespeare as one of its greatest poets, and the American Deaf community with its visual/manual language and literature. The product of these two languages and literatures creates a new "text"—a literature of the body—a corporeal artifact that will expand conventional notions of language, text, and performance. (Novak, 2008, p. 220)

ASL poetry is another powerful artistic product of the DEAF⌒WORLD (see Bauman, 2008a; Davidson, 2008; Low, 1992; Perlmutter, 2008; Valli, 1990). Although difficult, if not impossible, to translate adequately into a spoken language, the following translation of the ASL poem "Windy, Bright Morning" by Clayton Valli gives some sense of what ASL poetry is capable of expressing:

Through the open window
with its shade swinging, sunshine, playful,
taps my sleepy eyes.

[The hand, used to represent the shape, moves in a slightly irregular but not unpleasant rhythm.]

Breezes dance in my room,
around me, not shy, but gentle,
letting me know that it's time
to get up! Slowly I wake
my eyes stung by sunlight
flashing past the swinging shade
that seems to know I'm deaf.

[The presence of the light is unmistakable; the movement revolves around the center of the light.]

I stand up, tired, ignoring the light,
chilled in the dancing air
that meets me by the window
I closely shut it. And with the shade still,
my room darkens.

[The irregular movement abruptly ceases, and the room becomes silent. As Valli moves back to the familiar bed, movement is slow and comforting.]

Happy
back under the covers,
I'm drowsy, purring, warm . . .

[The audience, lulled by Valli's slow delivery, is unprepared for the next verse:]

But suddenly, how strange!
The shade flaps wildly,
bright, dark, bright, dark, bright
Fierce wind flung open the window . . .
so bitter cold, so cold, the wind, the shade,
the storm!

[The movement is wild and unpredictable. Valli as experiencer widens his eyes and moves his body with a sense of urgency.]

Slowly I rise, and try to make them calm down.

[As he moves toward the window, the movement, formerly dissonant, changes again, beginning to come together in one organized and focused form:]

The wind, the shade, dancing gracefully, happy.
One bright ray gently pulls me
to raise up the shade
like unwrapping a gift.
Warm sunlight tickles me,
morning breeze laughs with me . . .
Joyful, I welcome the day.

(Quoted in Padden & Humphries, 1988, pp. 104–6; translated by Karen Wills and Clayton Valli)

Such poetry employs the structural components of ASL, as well as its visual and gestural nature, to essentially paint a picture or series of pictures in a way simply not possible in a spoken language. In addition, the use of ASL metaphors further adds to the beauty and power of such poetry (see Taub, 2001; Wilbur, 1990; Wilcox, 2000).

Finally, there is visual Deaf Art, which includes photographs, paintings, ceramics, stained glass, and a host of other kinds of artistic production. A common theme in much of such Deaf Art is the punitive nature of much of deaf education historically. The theme of the oppression of deaf people by the hearing world includes a variety of styles, techniques, and images, and transcends national boundaries. It is also a recurring theme, often focused on the denial of sign language as a language and the related denial of deaf people as a cultural community (see Barton, 1997; Baynton, 1996). The explicit use of the hand, either as a central focal point of the artwork or in terms of the use of a particular sign, also characterizes much Deaf Art. For instance, Susan Dupor has used signs extensively both in paintings related to deer and other wildlife, as well as in a series related to hands themselves. Another theme that emerges in much Deaf Art is that of the DEAF⌒WORLD itself. Finally, there are in Deaf Art examples of more traditional artistic themes, albeit from a deaf perspective, and these should not be overlooked. For example, Ethan Sinnott's *The Last Supper* portrays Jesus' last meal with his disciples from the perspective of a deaf outsider. Sinnott explains this complex painting:

> The moment during *The Last Supper* I have chosen to portray is Jesus' revelation that he would come to be betrayed by one of his twelve disciples. Instead of the usual full-frontal and linear arrangement of the same scene found in Renaissance paintings, I set the scene up as if being observed by a Deaf outsider in a Hearing world. Jesus' back is turned to the viewer, who cannot see his face and what he's saying. The disciples' violent, vehement protestations—as human nature tends to shy away from fallibility and culpability—become more mysterious, confusing even, with everyone talking over each other. Judas is not made so clear-cut; it could easily be a table full of Judases. This dramatic event, as it unfolds, is an absurd, bizarre spectacle to the Deaf person who obviously cannot hear what is obviously being spoken. (1999)

A similar painting is Mary Thornley's *Milan Italy, 1880* (named in reference to the Congress of Milan, which basically sought to eliminate sign language in deaf education), which is reminiscent of Goya's *Third of May, 1803*, except that it is ASL itself that is being shot by a firing squad (see Lane et al., 1996, p. 141).

Attitudinal Deafness and the DEAF⌒WORLD

Members of the deaf cultural community identify themselves as socially and culturally deaf, maintaining a clear-cut distinction between audiological deafness and sociocultural deafness—a phenomenon that is sometimes referred to as "attitudinal deafness" (Janesick & Moores, 1992, pp. 49–65; Reagan 1988, 1990a, 1995a, 2002c, 2005b [1985]). Thus, within an emic construction of deafness, the fact of audiological deafness is actually neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for cultural deafness. Codas, who grow up with ASL as their first language, are (at least in some significant ways) potential members of deaf culture, just as older hearing people who lose their hearing are, under normal circumstances, not deaf—they are, rather, hearing people who can no longer hear. It is interesting to note that in ASL there is actually a very pejorative and insulting sign, HEAFIE (see Figure 1.2), used to denigrate a deaf person who "thinks like a hearing person" (rather like the highly pejorative term "Oreo" in the African American community). Further, a common facet of cultural identity for many ethnic groups is the presence and maintenance of endogamous marital patterns, and the same is true in the case of deaf people. Indeed, estimates of the rate of in-group marriage in the deaf community generally indicate a remarkably high rate in contemporary American society. Such a high rate of in-group marriage is certainly facilitated by the role of the residential schools for the deaf, but it is also tied to the common, shared language of deaf people as well as to the power of the concept of attitudinal deafness.

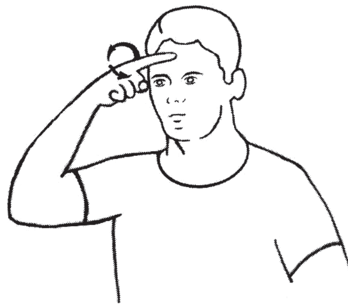

FIGURE 1.2. *ASL sign* HEAFIE. *Reproduced from Phyllis Perrin Wilcox,* Metaphor in American Sign Language *(Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2000), p. 93.*

Deaf Humor

The concept of attitudinal deafness is a key element in understanding much of deaf humor (Bienvenu, 1994, pp. 16–23; Bouchauveau, 1994, pp. 24–30; Lane et al., 1996, pp. 116–19). Jokes and funny stories abound in the DEAF⁀WORLD, and many involve the presumed difference between deaf people and the DEAF⁀WORLD and hearing people and the hearing world—almost inevitably, as one would expect, with the punch line focusing on hearing people's ignorance of signing, deafness, and deaf people. Deaf humor tends to have the deaf person win out *because of his or her deafness*. This does not mean that deaf humor is necessarily anti-hearing; rather, it is simply a case of a culturally and socially oppressed group poking fun both at the dominant group and, sometimes, at themselves. It is often the very condition of deafness itself that is at the core of deaf humor.

One story, for instance, involves a hearing man who is hitchhiking and is given a ride by a deaf man. As they drive along, the deaf driver exceeds the speed limit and is stopped by a police officer. The police officer comes to the car and the deaf man signs to him, indicating that he is deaf. Unable to communicate with the driver, the police officer just says, "Oh, never mind—just slow down!" Some time later, the hearing man offers to drive so that the deaf man can rest. The deaf driver accepts the offer, and the hearing man begins driving. Before too long, they are again stopped by a police officer. The hearing man, recalling what occurred before, copies what he saw the deaf man sign to the police officer. This police officer, though, immediately signs back, "Oh, you're deaf? So are my parents. So why are you going so fast, anyway?" The joke is, of course, on the hearing man, who had tried, for selfish reasons, to "pass" as a deaf person.

Another example of deaf humor is a story about a deaf couple on their honeymoon. One night, the husband leaves his wife in the hotel room to get them a drink. When he returns, he realizes he has forgotten which room is theirs. So he begins honking the horn of his car until all the room lights in the motel turn on except one—and thus he finds his room. He triumphs *because of* his wife's deafness.

Behavioral Norms in the DEAF⁀WORLD

There are also differences between the hearing world and the DEAF⁀WORLD with respect to behavioral norms, most notably differences in eye contact patterns, rules governing the permissibility of physical contact of various

sorts (including certain kinds of touching to gain attention), the use of facial expressions, gesturing, and so on (Kersting, 1997, pp. 252–63). Similarly, the cultural artifacts of the deaf community are primarily technological devices designed in recent years to facilitate the ability of deaf people to function in the hearing world. The key difference between the audiologically deaf and culturally deaf with respect to the use of such technologies is that there is a reluctance on the part of many culturally deaf people to utilize some technological devices (such as hearing aids) that focus primarily on *hearing*. Other kinds of technological innovations, although they are cultural artifacts to some extent, are widely and commonly used both within deaf culture and by those who are audiologically deaf but not culturally deaf—technologies such as TDD/TTYs (which are now becoming obsolete) and, more recently, videophones, computers that enable video teleconferencing, e-mail and instant messaging, text messaging, and vlogging and the like; televisions with built-in closed-caption decoders; and doorbells and alarms tied to lights are examples of these. Cultural artifacts emphasizing membership in deaf culture, such as jewelry, T-shirts, bumper stickers, and so on, which often involve visual images of signs (and especially of the I-LOVE-YOU sign), are additional artifacts that are somewhat more likely to be found among culturally deaf people, though such artifacts are also used more generally by both deaf and hearing people with an interest in deafness—sometimes even inappropriately, as Tom Willard articulates in a wonderful short essay entitled, "I've Had Enough of the I-LOVE-YOU Sign, Thanks" (1993, p. 2; see Figure 1.3).

FIGURE 1.3. *The* I-LOVE-YOU *sign. Reproduced from Clayton Valli, ed.,* The Gallaudet Dictionary of American Sign Language *(Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2005), p. 229.*

Historical Awareness and the DEAF⌒WORLD

Members of the deaf community have a strong sense of the history of their community, and this awareness was previously passed from generation to generation largely through "oral" means. However, the 1981 publication of Jack Gannon's *Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America* began a continuing process of the written transmission of this historical awareness of the deaf community to the hearing world, and, more recently, there have been a number of outstanding scholarly works on the history of deaf people that are also reinforcing pride in the community's history and heritage (see, e.g., Baynton, 1993, 1996, 2002; Bragg, 2001; Fischer & Lane, 1993; Nover, 2000; Van Cleve, 1993, 2007; Van Cleve & Crouch 1989; Winefield, 1987). At the same time, it is worth noting that some elements of the community's "historical memory" may not be completely accurate or true, as is the case with any cultural community. In the case of the DEAF⌒WORLD, for instance, the very common notion that the hands of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial are fingerspelling *A* and *L*, the initials for "Abraham Lincoln," because the sculptor (Daniel Chester French) had sculpted the 1889 statue of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Alice Cogswell, his first pupil, is at best highly contentious. The National Park Service (NPS), for instance, sees this claim as simply a myth. According to the NPS website, "the artist studied casts of the former President's hands to get the proper appearance. They were both in a closed shape for the casting, the artist decided to open one up a bit to give a more life-like aspect."

Voluntary Network of Deaf Social and Cultural Organizations

Finally, an extensive voluntary network of social organizations serving deaf people works to maintain the cohesiveness of the deaf community and provide, to a very significant extent, for the companionship needs of group members. This network includes local deaf clubs, the state and national organizations of deaf people (such as the National Association of the Deaf [NAD]), sports associations, political organizations, and so on (Lane, 2005; Lane et al., 1996, pp. 131–38). Although local deaf clubs are now less popular than they once were, perhaps due to other ways for deaf people to keep in touch and interact (e.g., using videophones, text messaging, etc.), they still play an important role both with respect to passing on deaf culture and providing a kind of "second home" for

many deaf people. Deaf community organizations are found in virtually any part of the world in which deaf people live in reasonable numbers.

THE DEAF⌒WORLD AND THE HEARING WORLD: A STUDY IN TENSIONS

It is clear, then, that in an anthropological sense, that the DEAF⌒WORLD is a legitimate and viable culture (see Senghas & Monaghan, 2002). Thus, attempts to medically "cure" or "remediate" audiological deafness are seen as not merely misguided but as culturally and linguistically oppressive as well. This point was made quite vividly by I. King Jordan, the retired president of Gallaudet University, in an interview some years ago. Jordan was asked by the interviewer whether he wouldn't like to have his hearing restored, to which Jordan replied, "That's almost like asking a black person if he would rather be white . . . I don't think of myself as missing something or as incomplete . . . It's a common fallacy if you don't know deaf people or deaf issues. You think it's a limitation" (quoted in Lane 1993a, p. 288). From the perspective of deaf culture, this response was appropriate, meaningful and indeed relatively uncontroversial; from outside the culture, it no doubt strikes many hearing people as somewhat odd, bizarre, or puzzling. An indication of the fundamentally different way in which many hearing people see deafness is represented by the following statement from a chairman of a National Institutes of Health planning group, quoted in the *New York Times*: "I am dedicated to curing deafness. That puts me on a collision course with those who are culturally Deaf. That is interpreted as genocide of the Deaf" (quoted in Lane et al., 1996, p. 379). It is the tension between these two kinds of constructions of deafness that is at play here, and it is this tension that is, on a fundamental level, probably ultimately irreconcilable.

Perhaps the clearest contemporary manifestation of this tension between the two competing perspectives of deafness has been the debate about the use of cochlear implants in young children. Cochlear implants do not restore hearing; rather, they can create the perception of sound which, coupled with effective rehabilitation, can assist some hearing impaired individuals to function more effectively (see Christiansen & Leigh, 2006; Woodcock, 2001 [1993]). In the case of young children, advocates of cochlear implants argue that "early implantation of deaf children should be considered as a way to expose them to the spoken

word, enable them to learn spoken languages, and develop better speech skills" (Woodcock, 2001 [1993], p. 325; see also Jones, 2002).

Cochlear implantation involves a three to four hour surgical procedure, during which

> the hospitalized child is placed under general anesthesia . . . The surgeon cuts the skin behind the ear, raises the flap, and drills a hole in the bone. Then a wire carrying electrodes is pushed some twenty-five millimeters into the coiled inner ear. The tiny endings of the auditory nerve are destroyed and electrical fields from the wire stimulate the auditory nerve directly. A small receiver coil connected to the wire is sutured to the skull and the skin is sewn over it. A small microphone worn on an ear piece picks up sound and sends signals to a processor worn on a belt or in a pocket. The processor sends electrical signals back to the implanted receiver via a transmitter mounted behind the ear, and those signals stimulate the auditory nerve. (Lane et al., 1996, p. 388)

In short, the cochlear implant functions as a kind of equivalent for a hearing aid, though it is by no means the same. There is no doubt that cochlear implants can be helpful for some late-deafened individuals, for whom the procedure was originally designed. The debate is not about the choice of adults to seek cochlear implants; it is about whether the procedure is appropriate for very young children (Aiello & Aiello, 2001 [1999], pp. 406–7; Howe, 1992, pp. 67–68; Lane, 1993a, 1993b; Lane et al., 1996, pp. 386–407; Woodcock, 2001 [1993]). From an outsider's perspective, the arguments in favor of cochlear implants for young deaf children are fairly compelling. The procedure does have the potential to help the hearing impaired individual function more effectively in the hearing world, offering if not a cure for deafness, then at least the possibility of the individual acquiring the skills necessary to "pass" as hearing and, hence, as "normal," though this is neither the articulated goal of the procedure nor a particularly likely outcome (see Woodcock, 2001[1993]), and while its long-term effects remain unclear (see Padden & Humphries, 2005, pp.178–79). There is some evidence for the educational effectiveness of cochlear implants (see Paul, 2001, pp. 220–22), and the option of a cochlear implant is clearly one that both many physicians and hearing parents of deaf children see as desirable. This said, the surgery itself is only the beginning of what is required for success with a cochlear implant:

> Each year thousands of deaf children are surgically implanted with electronic devices that direct electronic impulses to the cochlea to simulate hearing . . . After surgery, the child begins a long course of rehabilitation that tailors the

electronic device to the capabilities of the child, and then the child is trained to recognize sounds transmitted by the device. The child interacts first with the surgeon, then the specialists who train the child for the device. The child's teachers may also be enlisted in the task, to coordinate training with education. (Padden & Humphries, 2005, p. 166)

From a deaf perspective, however, cochlear implants raise a number of both practical and ethical questions, as Padden and Humphries note:

> In the early years of the cochlear implant technology, some Deaf people spoke out, raising questions about the immediate and long-term effects of the devices, especially for young deaf children. A position paper written in 1985 on behalf of a Deaf organization asked questions about the medical risks of the procedure: the possibility of infection, and other hazards related to surgery such as facial paralysis, or if in the event of failure or technical obsolence of the device, the child would need to be reimplanted. This attempt at voice had limited effect and was roundly dismissed by supporters of cochlear implant surgery as exaggerating the risks of the medical procedure and obstructing the desires of parents of deaf children and deaf individuals who wanted the devices. Harlan Lane, an eloquent hearing speaker and scientist, wrote several articles questioning the goals and claims of cochlear implant specialists, but he was severely criticized by parents of deaf children with implants as being romantic about deafness and alarmist about the dangers of the surgery. (2005, pp. 166–67)

Even more, deaf people tend to be concerned about the lack of information about the DEAF⁀WORLD that most hearing parents of deaf children have:

> The majority of parents of children with cochlear implants report not meeting deaf adults, whether oral or signing, at the time of diagnosis of deafness or when deciding on cochlear implantation for the deaf children . . . For deaf children of hearing parents, exposure to deaf peers or to Deaf culture comes, if at all, when the children get older and are provided with opportunities for interacting either in educational programs that include deaf children or during social functions that involve large groups of deaf people . . . Very often, this exposure hinges on the advice, guidance, and information provided by professionals specializing in working with deaf and hard of hearing individuals, typically within early intervention, audiology, or educational settings . . . How these professionals convey implicit messages about successfully integrating into hearing worlds or interacting with other deaf peers can play a significant role in framing the meaning of deaf identity, whether as a minuscule difference (not hearing), a stigmatized concept to be minimized, or as a significant core identity. (Leigh, 2008, p. 23)

It is the very conception of what constitutes "normal," however, that is at the heart of much of the deaf community's resistance to such procedures. Michel Foucault explored the epistemological power of socially established norms in terms of mental illness, punishment, and sexuality; here the deaf community likewise illuminates "the power of normalization and the formation of knowledge in modern society" (Foucault, 1969) with regard to the equation of "hearing" with "normal." As Jim Cummins (2009) notes in a recent article in the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, the devaluation of community languages in the wider society often results in ambivalence among parents and teachers about the extent to which such languages should, in fact, be supported in the school—a point with direct ramifications for both ASL and the DEAF⌒WORLD. Returning once again to Harlan Lane's observation, from a deaf perspective it is clear that

> if the birth of a Deaf child is a priceless gift, then there is only cause for rejoicing, as at the birth of a black child, or an Indian one. Medical intervention is inappropriate, even if a perfect "cure" were available. Invasive surgery on healthy children is morally wrong. We know that, as members of a stigmatized minority, these children's lives will be full of challenge but, by the same token, they have a special contribution to make to their own community and the larger society. (1993b, pp. 490–91)

Although the tension between the dominant hearing and deaf constructions of deaf identity may well be irreconcilable on a conceptual level, it is nevertheless important to recognize that the reality of deaf experience is more complex and less clear than this might suggest. The vast majority of deaf people become members of the DEAF⌒WORLD relatively late in comparison with membership in most cultures. This is the case because most deaf people have hearing parents and are introduced to deaf culture not by adults but rather by peers, most often in the context of residential schools for deaf children. Further, membership in deaf culture is not really an either/or proposition: individual deaf people identify as culturally deaf in different ways, and to different extents. Perhaps the clearest example of this complexity is manifested in the case of individuals who are hard of hearing, for whom membership in deaf culture is related to often conflicting attitudes about deafness itself. The extent to which the process of normalization of deafness to hearing norms (or "hearization") is accepted or rejected is key here, as Nover makes clear: "hearization leads many deaf children into wishing or thinking they will become hearing some day.

Others prefer to be called 'hearing impaired' or 'hard of hearing' rather than deaf. Unfortunately, deaf and hard of hearing children may learn to view hearing people as superior to those who are deaf" (1993).

The cultural and linguistic identity of individuals who are hard of hearing is, in short, both potentially and practically ambiguous, as indeed is the identity of many other individuals who straddle multiple cultural and linguistic worlds. It is this ambiguity that makes simple descriptions of cultural identity misleading, not only in the case of deaf people, but with respect to virtually all minority cultural and linguistic groups (Motoyoshi, 1990, pp. 77–94; Ogbu, 1978, 1987, 1988, 1992, 2008).

Thus far, I have been concerned with presenting what I take to be the standard description and analysis of the DEAF-WORLD, and its relationship with the hearing world. As the field of Deaf Studies has emerged in many universities in the United States as a legitimate academic discipline, however, there have inevitably been developments in the field, including calls for a reconceptualization of the standard dichotomous view that has been the norm (see Bauman, 2008b)—for example, in two recent articles by Jane K. Fernandes and Shirley Shultz Myers published in the *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* (see Fernandes & Myers, 2010; Myers & Fernandes, 2010). Fernandes and Myers make a number of compelling points that should be taken into account in understanding the nature of the DEAF⁀WORLD. In essence, they recommend that the field of Deaf Studies "take a more expansive, nuanced, and interdisciplinary approach that encompasses the many ways deaf people live today" (Fernandes & Myers, 2010, p. 17). Few could object to such a call, but Fernandes and Myers go on to note that the "founding scholarship [in Deaf Studies] validates and instills pride in native ASL users and demarcates the boundaries of Deaf culture. What remains in the shadows is the fact that the pride of ASL users has evolved into a powerful hierarchy through which native White ASL users and those born into Deaf culture receive privileged status at the expense of other deaf people" (Fernandes & Myers, 2010, p. 17). Fernandes and Myers are also critical of the use of the past in making arguments about the present. Although they recognize that deaf people have historically been oppressed, they argue that "the ahistorical view needs to be brought current in order to generate fuller, multiple understandings of the reality of deaf people and their complex lives" (Myers & Fernandes, 2010, p. 32); further, deaf people in the United States are not currently an oppressed population:

> The status quo for deaf people today reflects a reality where they are known as safe drivers who get insurance from companies other than their own National Fraternal Society of the Deaf—now dissolved because of this progress. Deaf people also own property and have children. And they have moved into all types of professions including the law, dentistry, and medicine. Deaf people's rights to live with full citizenship are widely acknowledged and guaranteed by law. ASL courses are taught in many school systems and universities . . . Moreover, many ASL courses are taught by Deaf individuals so that these courses are a valuable way to bring Deaf people into desirable and rewarding employment. (Myers & Fernandes, 2010, p. 34)

The alternative view is that the integration of deaf people into American society remains at best problematic, whether educationally, economically, professionally, culturally, or in whatever domain—a point acknowledged even by Fernandes and Myers: "These criticisms are not meant to imply that audism does not exist. It most certainly does" (Myers & Fernandes, 2010, p. 34). This point is important to bear in mind in our discussion here.

The second half of the twentieth century has been, in many ways, the most liberating for deaf people—for their language, their culture, and their rights—in the history of the world. This is no small matter, and it is important to recall. This is not the same thing, however, as saying that deaf people have finally achieved equality with hearing people. The distance between the hearing world and the DEAF⁀WORLD remains not really so much as a gap as a chasm much of the time. Robert Panara, one of the best-known deaf writers and poets in the United States, makes the tension between the two worlds clear in his poem "Lip Service," in which he castigates the hearing world for its hypocrisy:

> You want to rap
> you said
> and let it all hang out
> this thing about
> the communication gap
> that keeps us separate
> your kind
> from mine.
> You want to rap
> you said
> you want to integrate
> but you decline

to change your line
of crap
from speech
to sign. (1992, p. 29)

In short, as Robert Frost so eloquently put it in his 1922 poem "Stopping By the Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1969), we still have "promises to keep, and miles to go" to address the issues of inequality and oppression that separate the DEAF⁀WORLD from the hearing world.

NOTES

1. A common distinction made in writing about deafness is between *deaf* and *Deaf*: the former refers to deafness solely as an audiological condition, the latter to deafness as a cultural condition. The basic idea underlying this distinction is that when writing about cultural groups in general, uppercase letters are employed (African American, Hispanic, Native American, and so on). Thus, a person can be deaf without being Deaf (as in the case of an older person who gradually loses his or her hearing). Although I believe that this is a valuable distinction conceptually and heuristically, I also think that it oversimplifies and dichotomizes the complexity of membership in the DEAF⁀WORLD. I have therefore chosen simply to use the lowercase *deaf* throughout this book, with the understanding that deafness is not only socially and individually constructed, but that its construction is complex and multilayered (see Branson & Miller, 2002; Ladd, 2003; Lane et al., 1996; Padden & Humphries, 1988, 2005; Reagan, 1988, 1990a, 1995a, 2002c, 2005b [1985]).

2. The phrases "deaf culture" and DEAF⁀WORLD are both commonly used, and I have chosen to use them interchangeably in this book.

3. The disconnects between hearing parents and deaf children, and then, in the next generation, between deaf parents and hearing children contribute to the complexity of life as a culturally and linguistically deaf person. For further discussions of this topic, see Bishop and Hicks (2005), Cohen (1994), Preston (1994), and Walker (1986).

4. For a discussion of early identification of hearing impairment and its implications, see Cone-Wesson (2003); for intensive speech perception and spoken word recognition strategies, see Bernstein and Auer (2003); for cochlear implants, see Spencer and Marschark (2003). For discussions of the implications of deafness and the early identification of deafness on literacy, see Paul (2001, 2003).

5. The degree of hearing loss is clinically measured in decibels (dBs); severe hearing loss is between 71 and 90 dBs, whereas profound hearing loss is 90 dBs

or above. Between 1/800 and 1/1000 infants in the U.S. are born with profound or severe hearing loss.

6. Although the relationship of different types of signing (ranging from ASL through contact sign to various manual sign codes) is typically presented as a falling along a single continuum (see, e.g., Baker & Cokely, 1980, p. 73), I believe that this is an erroneous representation of the linguistic reality (see Reagan, 2005b [1985]). The use of a single continuum makes sense when we are dealing with two historically (i.e., in a linguistic sense *genetically*) related languages. Thus, a continuum showing the relationship between Spanish and Portuguese, or between German and Dutch, makes perfectly good sense. However, when one is dealing with two languages (in this case, ASL and English) that are *not* genetically related, what is required, in my view, is the use of two separate continua. This allows us to see that there are two quite distinct and separate languages involved, and that while there may be what seem to be common linguistic behaviors found among some speakers (in terms of contact sign, in this case), what is actually taking place is that native users of ASL are modifying ASL in ways that make it appear more like English, while native users of English are modifying their signing in ways that make it appear closer to ASL. This does not, to be sure, eliminate the possibility that an individual might "jump" from one continuum to the other (that is, become truly bilingual), but in the case of ASL and English, this is in fact relatively rare.