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# The Impacts of Disability Policy and its Implementation on Deaf University Students: An Applied Anthropological Approach

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# The Impacts of Disability Policy and its Implementation on Deaf University Students: An Applied Anthropological Approach

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Department of Applied Anthropology
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# DEDICATION

I am dedicating this master’s thesis to my family and friends who have supported me along my academic career and have sat through my many exaggerated meltdowns as I navigated graduate school. Thank you to Bonnie and Terry, my bonus family, for pushing me to be the best version of myself I can be, and never allowing me to quit. Thank you to Aron and Pauleen, two of the best friends I could’ve ever asked for, for distracting me when I need it the most. Lastly, the biggest and most heartfelt thank you to my tía Cristina for reminding me that my feelings are valid and normal and that I will get through all trials and tribulations and successfully make it to the other side.

I am also dedicating this thesis to the research participants who provided me with their time and insight and for all deaf individuals that I have had the honor to meet and work with throughout my time in academic and as an ASL interpreter. Thank you all for sharing your experiences and knowledge with me.

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# ABSTRACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) has provided legal requirement for universities to provide accommodations for all disabled students, including deaf students. The ADA is intentionally vague to allow flexibility for how institutions implement accommodations provisions. This leads to high variability across universities. Using ethnographic data from policy analysis, semi-structured interviews and focus groups with accommodations coordinators and deaf students from a large-public university, this applied anthropological study aims to investigate the impacts of policy and policy practices on the experiences of deaf students while proposing interventions informed by the coordinators and deaf students themselves.

This study is oriented along the nexus of three frameworks: the anthropology of policy, deaf anthropology and deaf studies. Situating this research in this way is key to a holistic understanding of the intertwined experience of deaf students, the accommodations coordinators, and the disability policy of the university. In terms of a theoretical orientation, I apply Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice but incorporate important critiques regarding his concept of *habitus*. Although I incorporate his concept of practice and structure to analyze the innerworkings and relationships between the university, federal and university disability policy, and the social actors within this structure, I diverge from habitus by framing social actors as neither static and disembodied, and their position within the university structure as inescapable (McDermott and Varenne 1995; Wolfreys 2000), but as individuals with agency who implement an intertwinement of participations and resistances to the situations they face within the overall university system. University disability policy focused primarily on academic educational

settings and little on academic social settings and academic non-educational settings (such as with employees and staff in other departments such as the bookstore, cafe, maintenance, and parking). This was reflective on the experiences of both Student Accessibilities Services and the accommodations coordinators that work directly with the students. With no central enforcement overseer and minimal organization among the departments responsible for accommodations and access, SAS was made the informal ADA expert, overextending themselves to provide accommodations and access awareness to all departments at the university, taking time and resources away from the students they were centrally responsible for. This was also reflective in the deaf students' experiences. Students negotiate support or lack thereof with various social actors such as instructors, peers, and administrators, and create practices according to the practices of others. In turn, students also navigate responsibility, often placing extra responsibility onto themselves to ensure academic success, increasingly so when surrounding social actors, such as instructors and staff refuse to take responsibility onto themselves for providing equitable and accessible environments.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*"Even with an interpreter, even with the FM[1] system, it's never really enough because even with all that, I will never fully understand everything that happens in the classroom because it's limited. It's not full access. Not too limited, but not enough."*
-Stanislaus, deaf State University student

Jane was frustrated. As disability coordinator at State University, she said that the federal policy in place that supposedly provided accommodations to people with disabilities, including deaf students, "isn't specific enough." She felt that the policy is vague and does not have specific implementation procedures to which the university can adhere. To rectify this, she noted that the university drafted new disability policy over the years meant to support federal disability policy and to provide university staff, whose responsibility it is to provide accommodations to disabled students, less challenges in implementing and enforcing the law. However, with multiple iterations of new university disability policy, some with the same policy information repeated, came a new challenge. Now there was "too much policy" and, as Jane said, "some of the policy is like theory and sounds good but from a practical procedural point, we haven't figured that out yet." For Jane, creating new policy over the years did not completely solve the challenges that accommodations coordinators faced. As she said: "This is so large, trying to figure out who has jurisdiction and who is going to drive the law. That's where we have our gaps in the university." For Jane, the challenge she faced was not that this large, public university in the United States needed to create more policy, but that there was "too much policy" and what was needed was

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[1] An FM system is an assistive listening device with its own radio frequency. The speaker hangs a microphone around their neck and the speech is transmitted through the radio frequency to the receiver which is either connected to their hearing aids or has a direct placement in the receiver's ears.

improved implementation procedures and more resources. I open with this quote from Jane to show the need for an analysis of policy and policy implementation practices and how they impact deaf university student’s practices and experiences. This ethnographic study analyzes disability policy relating to accommodations for deaf university students, investigates the challenges accommodations coordinators face when attempting to enact on their roles and responsibilities, and how these factors impact deaf university students and their experience of college life.

To better situate this research among studies and analyses of policy, a brief history of US federal disability policy is first warranted to fit this study within the larger historical and ideological scope that influences disability policy today. The timeline of disability policy can be seen as moving parallel to the general disability models impacting perceptions of disabled peoples and their lived experiences in the United States (Blanck 2021). Possibly the first national disability policy in the United States was for Union Army veterans disabled by the Civil War, and this policy was established in the mid to late nineteenth century. This was known as the pension system approach, later known as the medical model. To qualify, an inability to work was required, approved by medical professionals and government officials. The medical model encouraged segregation and marginalization of disabled peoples, viewing aid as charity and disabled peoples as needing to be fixed. This event was key in establishing dominant views of disability in the United States (Blanck 2021; Scotch 2000; Fjord 1996). The medical model continued well into the twentieth century, categorizing people with disabilities as a weakness, preventing full participation in society and the economy (Blanck 2021).

It was not until the US civil rights movement gained momentum in the 1950s that the disability rights movement began to take form. Arguably, the civil rights movement, with its main focus on eliminating discrimination against African Americans, and the women's movement influenced the disability rights movement the most, providing their rights-based models as inspiration for their own. During the emergence of the disability social movement through grassroots initiatives, disabled peoples with diverse disabilities, often, were educated and socialized together. While this was not an effective approach for offering services to disabled people, it had the unintended consequence of providing the basis for a collective identity. The main goals of the disability rights movement was independence, inclusion, and participation in mainstream society. The United States began to see increased employment of people with disabilities and enrollment of disabled peoples in post-secondary school. This was not because of schools were becoming more accessible, but because disabled peoples fought for their right to attend universities and for increases campus access. This movement was led by the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (consisting of 65 local and national affiliated organizations, including the National Association of the Deaf). In the 1970s, there was the passing of major laws for disabled peoples such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which guaranteed free and appropriate public education to children with disabilities. There was a movement away from ineffective and segregating special education programs or the exclusion of children with disabilities from public schooling altogether. There was also the amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1978, which moved funds to programs that would support independent living for those with severe disabilities that might prevent employment. This was the last major legislation for disability rights prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (Scotch 1989, 2000; Schriner 1990; Blanck 2021).

The ADA was signed into law on July 26, 1990. The enactment of the ADA is seen an admission that the medical model approach for disability policy had failed and that society was moving towards a disability rights model approach (Dejong and Batavia 1990). This new approach was, in brief, to accept and accommodate rather than fixing disabled peoples and excluding them from mainstream society (Blanck 2020). The ADA recognized disabled people as a “minority group” allowing the same rights and protections for equality as other marginalized groups. The purpose of the ADA was to: (1) provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities and (2) to provide clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities (ADA 1990). After enactment, over time the ADA witnessed court rulings that significantly narrowed the population the ADA was originally intended to protect. To reinstate the protections for which the ADA was originally intended, amendments were enacted in 2008 restoring the original legal definition of disability (see below) (Rozalski et al. 2010). Although the enactment of the ADA was seen as the sweeping law that ended the marginalization and discrimination of disabled peoples, scholars have noted that there were still practical challenges in society due to the lingering impacts the medical model on mainstream societal perceptions of people with disabilities (Blanck 2021). The main challenges that confronted the ADA are implementation efforts, cost, and stigma (Percy 1993). A concern is that the ADA does not reflect how mainstream society may think of disabled peoples due to the persistence of the medical model in mainstream thought and perceptions (Blanck 2021).

It is worth noting at least two things at this point. First, the term “disability” is defined by the ADA as “(1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (2) has a record of such an impairment; or (3) regarded as having such an impairment” (ADA 1990). In this thesis, I use this definition. Secondly, although this study aims to analyze disability policy at State University (SU), this research focuses on disability policy that impacts deaf students specifically. Throughout deaf scholarship there are different identifying markers used when regarding deaf people, such as d/Deaf, deaf/Deaf, Deaf, DHH, and deaf and hard of hearing. My intent is to challenge the binaries used to categorize deaf people such as (d)eaf/(D)eaf (d/Deaf). In Woodward and Horejes's (2016) article, James Woodward, who is known as first separating these ideas, discusses using "Deaf" as a "sociocultural framework of being" and "deaf" as an "all-encompassing term to represent the deaf population" in his writings. While his use of d/Deaf was never intended to be used outside of his own academic writings, this way of categorizing deaf people stuck and expanded to become a classification model for deaf people, with "deaf" following a medical model and "Deaf" following a cultural model and identifying marker. Scholars have argued that this strict binary categorization is dangerous and problematic adding that people can be deaf and Deaf at the same time and being d/Deaf is not a fixed and unchanging identity (Friedner and Kusters 2020; Mills 2015; Senghas and Monaghan 2002; Woodward and Horejes 2016). Woodward himself came to agree with this critique (Woodward and Horejes 2016, 4). Friedner and Kusters (2020) followed Woodward and Horejes (2016) and chose to use the term "deaf" in their writing, therefore I will follow the increasing common conventions and not capitalize "deaf."

In this thesis, I use policy analysis and ethnographic methods to investigate the experiences of accommodations coordinators and deaf students to gain insight into the practices of social and policy actors that ultimately impact the deaf university student experience in some way. This study was conducted to analyze the current disability policy at a large public university in the United States, how accommodations coordinators navigate implementing university disability policy and how this all may impact the lived experiences of deaf university students, through an applied anthropological and deaf-centered approach. This research was intended to answer the main research question: How does the institutional field with its policies and policy as practice ultimately impact the deaf student experience? How do social actors impact deaf student experience? Supplementary questions answered in this study include: how do deaf students think the university can improve to enhance university life for deaf students? What are the challenges accommodations coordinators face when attempting to provide accommodations to their students? What do they need from the administrative level to improve upon their services?

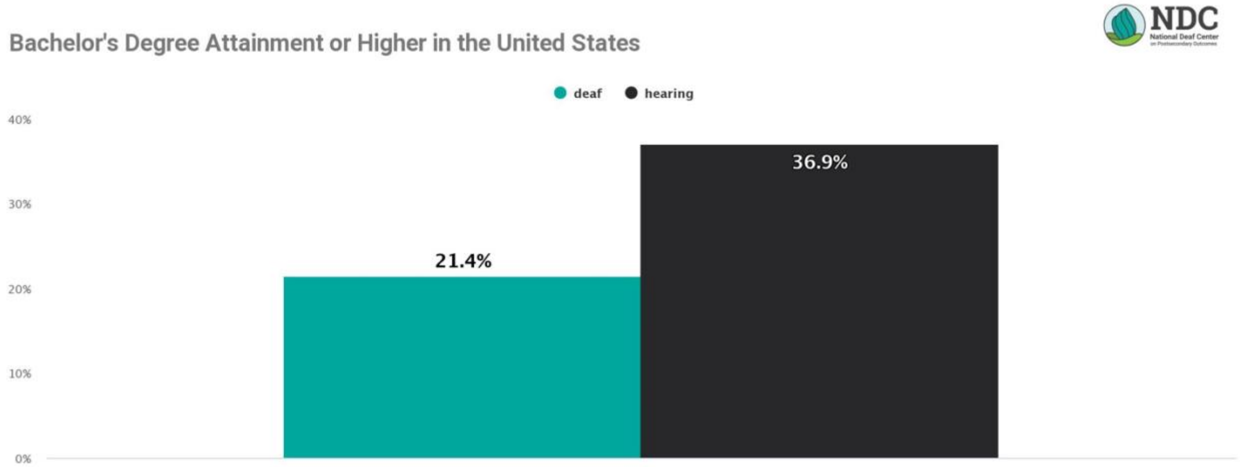
There are deaf-centered options deaf people can consider when enrolling into a university. Gallaudet University, in Washington D.C., was established in 1864, when President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation allowing the college the ability to grant collegiate degrees, although the college was acting as an educational institution for deaf and blind individuals for seven years prior. This university is the first and only university in the world that is committed to servicing deaf students with instruction carried out in American Sign Language (ASL). There is also the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), as part of the Rochester Institute of Technology, was established in 1965 to promote deaf individuals to seek out graduate degrees in technical fields. NTID is the first and largest technical college that services deaf students in the world. These two institutions offer an immersive and accessible environment where ASL is the language of instruction and the language used in the college environment. However, these two options may not fit the individual needs of all deaf students, regardless of ASL being the primary language of the colleges. If students do not live nearby, they are required to move closer (with the exception of full online instruction), which is not always feasible. Students may also need some level of proficiency in ASL in order to successfully involve themselves in academic and social college life. These institutions may not offer the programs or degrees that a student may seek out. There is also the financial factor. Deaf students have many factors to consider when deciding where they would like attend college. Attending a predominantly-hearing university or college, where they are mainstreamed -- where a deaf person enrolls or is enrolled into a public educational institution compared to a deaf residential school or deaf-centered university -- is also an option for deaf students to receive a degree and may be an appropriate choice dependent on their individual needs.

Upon enrollment in K-12 settings, deaf students are given accommodations governed by Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act Amendments of 2004 (IDEA). Upon transitioning to the university setting, accommodations are governed by the ADA, marking a shift in accommodations access and pulling much of the responsibility away from the institution and onto the individual (Cawthon and Leppo 2013). Despite the ADA ensuring equitable access to post-secondary institutions, deaf students continue to encounter challenges, reducing their chances of graduating (Lindsey, Cagliostro, and Carafa 2018). The transition from K12 to the university setting can be fraught with challenges for some. Deaf students may not be aware of the accommodations requirements that were on their Individual Education Plan (IEP), therefore they are not always aware of the kinds of accommodations they can/should request from the university, the variety of accommodations available, or of technologies that might be useful (Lartz, Stoner, and Stout 2008). Students may not even be aware that they are required to disclose their disability to the university in order to receive accommodations (Lindsey, Cagliostro, and Carafa 2018).

The ADA has provided increased access for deaf people in the community, the workforce, and in post-secondary education. It has provided legal requirement for universities to provide accommodations for all students with disabilities, including deaf students (ADA 1990).

However, regarding implementation of accommodations and accessibilities, the ADA is vague to allow flexibility for how institutions implement accommodations provisions. It is the framework in which most public disability policy function (Scotch 2000). This leads to variability across universities in how they implement accommodations/accessibilities policy and allows flexibility for what kinds of resources are available to deaf students to ensure academic success (Johnson and Fann 2015). An example of this is that, as stated above, SU created university policy to supplement the ADA in the goal of providing more instruction in how to implement accommodations, however, only a few hundred miles away, United University, another major public university, does not have university policy established that supplements the ADA, meaning those that are responsible for implementing accommodation services, only have the ADA to go by. Another example is that while SU has Student Accessibility Services (SAS) centers assigned to each campus, Modern Community College, a large community college with multiple campuses, also located a few hundred miles away from SU, only has one assigned to all of its campuses. While variability among universities is not what this research is investigating, this is worth noting because vague policy can lead to challenges in implementation. Percy (2003) notes that when policy is vague, those charged with implementing said policy have to commit time and energy clarifying policy objectives and creating strategies for execution.

The most recent statistical data shows that, among students enrolled in the 2015-2016 school year, 1.3 percent of students were deaf (Garberoglio et al. 2019) meaning it was estimated that there were over 400,000 deaf college students in the United States during academic year 2015-2016. As of 2021, there are about 21.4 percent of deaf people with a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to 36.9 percent of hearing people (see Figure 1). Although history has shown an overall steady increase of enrollment into post-secondary institutions, the gap between deaf graduates and hearing graduate completion has slightly increased, meaning hearing students are graduating at a slightly higher rate than deaf students. In 2008, the degree attainment gap for a bachelor's degree between hearing and deaf people was 14.4 percent; in 2021 it was 15.5 percent (see Figure 2). Garberoglio et al. (2019) noted that although deaf student's expectations of graduating with an undergraduate or graduate degree were optimistic, completion rates did not reflect their expectations. This begs the question, is policy implementation affecting the success of deaf students? I hope to answer this question.



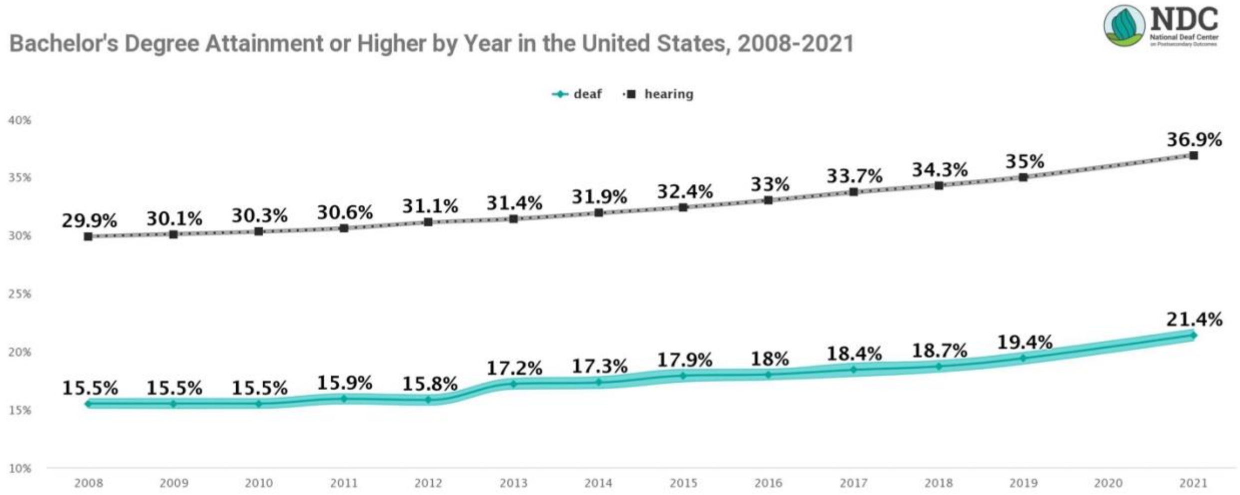
Bachelor's Degree Attainment or Higher in the United States

In the United States, among people aged 25-64, an estimated 21.4% of deaf people have completed a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 36.9% of hearing people.

In this chart, estimates are based on a sample size of 8,388 deaf people and 607,270 hearing people in the United States who participated in the 2021 American Community Survey. The margin of errors are 0.49% for deaf people and 0.15% for hearing people.

Bloom, C.L, Palmer, J.L., & Winninghoff, J. (2023). Deaf Postsecondary Data from the American Community Survey [Data visualization tool]. National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes, University of Texas at Austin. www.nationaldeafcenter.org/dashboard

**Figure 1.** Bachelor's Degree Attainment or Higher in the Unites States. Source: Bloom, C.L., Palmer, J.L., and Winninghoff, J. (2023)



In the United States from 2008-2021, among people aged 25-64, bachelor's degree attainment rate has increased less for deaf people than hearing people. From 2008 to 2021, bachelor's degree attainment rates increased by 5.9% for deaf people and increased by 7% for hearing people.

Bloom, C.L, Palmer, J.L., & Winninghoff, J. (2023). Deaf Postsecondary Data from the American Community Survey [Data visualization tool]. National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes, University of Texas at Austin. www.nationaldeafcenter.org/dashboard

**Figure 2.** Bachelor's Degree Attainment of Higher by Year in the United States, 2008-2021. Source: Bloom, C.L., Palmer, J.L., and Winninghoff, J. (2023)

While disability policy impacts all who claim to have a disability, disabled people are not a monolith. Disabled people as a whole may experience shared stigmas and marginalization; however, different disabilities warrant different nuanced experiences and accommodations (Scotch 1989). Institutions at the state and federal level have made enormous investments into creating a more accessible world for disabled people. It only seems fit that researchers of policy and researchers of disability conduct studies to investigate whether disability policies are being implemented and enforced effectively in a way disabled people deem fit.  For this purpose, I chose to focus specifically on deaf university students. The success of deaf students at a university is directly affected by disability policy both at the university and federal level (Schriner 1990). Policy and implementation require revisitation and revisions to continue accommodating their target audience, in this case, disabled peoples. By the time of my ethnographic fieldwork in 2022, there were apparently no studies that had been conducted that analyze the disability policy of a large university, let alone alongside investigating ethnographically how the disability policy of that university impacts the accommodations coordinators along with disabled students, in this case, deaf students. This research will fill in these gaps and provide a basis for further research to build upon.

A word about my own background as a way of providing the reader with an understanding of my approach is needed here. In July 2020, I graduated with a Bachelor of Science in American Sign Language (ASL)/English Interpreting from the University of North Florida (UNF). My internship was at the UNF Disability Resource Center. There I mentored with interpreters who interpreted for deaf university students who used ASL. I moved on to work there upon graduation. Through my internship and work at the center, I witnessed firsthand challenges the deaf students and the coordinators faced, whether it was with other faculty, other students, or policy implementation. What I witnessed was confirmed with the conversations between myself and both students and coordinators. Upon entering my master's program in applied anthropology, I took to further understand this challenge between university disability policy, accommodations coordinators and policy implementation, and deaf students and their experience of college life with a research approach centered on anthropological ethnography. The research reported in this thesis is necessary aims to understand how successful disability policy and policy implementation is at the university level.

## Thesis Outline

Chapter Two provides insight into existing literature and theory in Deaf Anthropology and Anthropology of Policy as it pertains to this research. Pulling from these two anthropological subfields is crucial to investigate and understand the intertwined experiences between the social and policy actors of the university and federal and university disability policy. This research also applies aspects of Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory to investigate how actors respond and contest to each other's practices and the policy implementation of the university. However, because of insights derived from my ethnographic research and because of a consideration of the logic of practice theory à la Bourdieu, I provide a critical perspective on this theoretical tradition. I do so because I am interested in analyzing the innerworkings and relationships between US federal policy and SU's disability policies and the practices of those responsible for enforcing and implementing said policy, how these policies and practices impact the target population, that is, the deaf students, and how these relationships produce and contest power.

Chapter Three discusses the methods for this research. This includes recruitment methods, sampling, participant overview, and data analysis. I conducted archival research as part of policy analysis as well as ethnographic research that consists of ten interviews with deaf students and accommodations coordinators and two focus groups with deaf students. Conducting ethnographic research as part of policy analysis is key to understanding how policy and policy practices are used by policy actors and how they impact its intended audience, in this case, the deaf students. The study's limitations and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter Four provides an analysis of three relevant policy documents, one at the federal level and two at the university level, and the existing online resources for deaf students, faculty and staff that relate to deafness and access in the university setting. To investigate the implementation and policy practices of the university, it's important to analyze the policy they are using that impact their policy practices. Analyzing the policy and resources gives insight into possible practices of social and policy actors.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the data collected from the accommodations coordinators and how their role and responsibilities are impacted by the university and policy. Through accommodations coordinator’s testimonials, and in breaking down the themes found of “team effort” and “policy implementation and enforcement,” this chapter investigates the structure of the bureaucratic process that deaf students are not typically aware of and the struggle between policy actors in implementing accommodations. This chapter provides insight into the practices of accommodations coordinators and their relationship with other policy actors in an attempt to investigate how these practices and relationships may impact deaf students and their success.

Chapter Six discusses the findings of the data collected from the deaf students and breaks down the common themes found in their testimonials; “support network” and “navigating responsibility.” This chapter investigates both academic and social factors that impact deaf student’s experiences and how they navigate the overall university space to ensure success through the participation, contestation, and reproduction of power within the institution using their own practices. This chapter provides another piece to the ethnographic puzzle that provides a more holistic approach to understanding policy analysis and understanding the impact policy practices have on its intended audience.

Chapter Seven provides insight into the recommendations made by deaf students to improve accommodations and overall college life for deaf students, using existing literature findings to support their claims. This chapter provides the reader with insight into what deaf students feel may impact their university experience in a positive way. Using their testimonials, the themes of “preparing and informing deaf students”; “awareness for instructors and staff”; and “fostering mentorship and partnership” are broken down and connected to the findings from their experiences shared in Chapter six.

Chapter Eight, the Conclusion, connects the separate findings from the different datasets to discuss the relationships between policy, policy implementors and enforcers, and target population and how the participants respond to these environments impacted by policy. This chapter revisits the existing literature and also outlines possible contributions to applied anthropology and theory and discuss ways future research could build upon this study.

# CHAPTER TWO: DEAF ANDTHROPOLOGY AND THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF POLICY

*The misunderstandings and the cultural dramas enacted through these countervailing images of deafness effectively detach deafness from a purely biomedical category and place it foursquare in the arena of anthropology. – Lakshmi Fjord (1996)*

## Introduction

Deaf anthropology and anthropology of policy, alongside a practice theory lens, are crucial to the framework of this research which centers the interplay of deafnesses and the state, in this case the university and its disability policy practices. Deaf education has been a long-studied topic within deaf studies since before the enactment of the ADA in 1990. Although there exists long-standing research that may align with the subfields of anthropology of policy and deaf anthropology, they are still emerging fields within anthropology today (Friedner and Kusters 2020; Geilhufe 1979; Tate 2020). This study explores how social actors within the university navigate, implement, or contest to disability policy and, in turn, how their practices ultimately impact the experiences of deaf students and how they respond to their practices. This chapter provides insight into the existing literature within the fields previously mentioned and how this research builds on and fills in gaps of existing work.

## Medical vs Cultural and Culture as Disability

Deaf-centered researchers often use paradigms to approach deaf people's experiences, specifically two theoretical paradigms being the medical model and the sociocultural model. As explained by Senghas and Monoghan (2002, 78):

> the medical model is one based in deficit theory and holds deafness as the pathological absence of hearing and that such a hearing-impaired individual is therefore disabled because of faulty hearing…In a sociocultural model of d/Deafness, deafness is identified as one range within the larger spectrum of human variations, and this view allows for an alternate constellation of very human adaptations, among the most central being sign languages.

As these models have been used, they have been structured as "cultural vs medical" and have led scholars to essentialize and categorize what it means to be "culturally Deaf" and what it means to be "medically deaf" (Friedner and Kusters 2020), also emphasized by the history of back and forth between the oralism approach (which depends on the medicalization of deafness) and sign language approach (which has been intertwined with notions of deaf culture) to language socialization of deaf children (Lakshmi Fjord 1996). Each come with their own critiques with the medical model founded on "the disability image of deafness as measured against an image of the standard 'healthy' body" (58) and "Deaf culture" overdetermining "deaf difference from hearing people" and assuming "similitude between diverse deaf people" (Friedner and Kusters 2015, 2020). However, as Monoghan and Senghas prefaced prior to providing the theoretical distinction, and in which I am in agreement with, "perhaps it is unfortunate that these two contrasting models have been denoted as medical vs cultural because clearly the medical model is one particular cultural model" (2002, 77).

Culture as disability, in some ways, incorporates both prior model concepts and provides a wider, more anthropological perspective on disability (deafness) and views disabilities as a cultural fabrication. With this approach, "a disability may be a better display board of the weaknesses of a cultural system than it is an account of real persons" (McDermott and Varenne 1995). McDermott and Varenne (1995, 336-37, italics in original) define this approach:

> This approach takes up the possibility that every culture, as an historically evolved pattern of institutions, teaches people what to aspire to and hope for and marks off those who are to be noticed, handled, mistreated, and remediated as falling short. Cultures offer a wealth of positions for human beings to inhabit. Each position requires that the person inhabiting it must possess, and must be *known as possessing*, particular qualities that symbolize, and thereby constitute, the reality of their positions to *others*. People are only incidentally born or early enculturated into being different. It is important to understand how they are put into positions for being treated differently.

Through this approach, and as it relates to my study, the deaf person must be seen in terms of "the people with whom he interacts and the ways in which they structure their activities together" (McDermott and Varenne 1995, 337). This approach is as much about the people most immediately involved in the production of moments for the deaf person to be recognized as deaf or disabled, than it is about the deaf person. This approach puts to question the ways in which the institution and its social actors disable an individual. Rather than questioning the deaf person as the reason for them being disabled, this approach puts the focus and questioning on the "cultural practices" that disable them, in the case of this study, the university practices. I believe that this approach is valuable to this study in that the intent of this research is to investigate how policy practices and the practices of social actor's involved in the deaf student's experiences, impact the deaf student, their practices, and their experiences. However, models are not always reflective of the complex reality they try to capture. Rather than sticking to one or another, "it is valuable to recognize the strengths and limitations of each for understanding disability law, policy, and practice" (Blanck 2021, 18). I follow in this sentiment.

## Deaf Studies

In the editorial for Volume 15 of the *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, Marschark and Humphries (2009) use this space to provide the history of deaf studies which began to take shape in around 1985. They write about the First International Deaf Researchers Workshop at Bristol University and how in that space Humphries spoke on distinguishing “deaf” people from “Deaf” people, a concept that was taking shape at the time. They then go on to write:

> The ways that “deaf” interact with “Deaf” turned out to be very complex, indeed perhaps more than we imagined at the time. Discussion for the duration of the conference and for several years after reflected both our determination to understand how to think about categorization and segmentation of people who are deaf and the sometimes problematic ambiguity when we use the sign “DEAF.” (Marschark and Humphries (2009, 1)

They go on to encourage works that “explores alternative perspectives, distinguishes assumptions from fact, and recognizes the complexity of the issues” (2). Although research in deaf studies have been increasingly informed by anthropological thought (Erting 1985; Fjord 1999; Friedner 2014; Green 2022; Hayashi and Tobin 2015; Hoffman-Dilloway 2008; Kusters 2019; LeMaster 2006; Pfister 2017; Robinson 2022; Schertz and Lane 1999) essentialist ideas of what it means to be deaf are found in deaf studies works, many times putting an emphasis deaf people who sign and marginalizing those that do not. The articles I use within deaf studies are pertinent to the framing of this research because of the similarity in topics and settings and the centralizing of a deaf experience.

## Deaf Anthropology

Although the subfield of deaf anthropology is fairly new, the study of deafness within anthropology goes back to as early as 1865 with anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor and his work *Researches into the Early History of Mankind the Development of Civilization* (Tylor 1865). Deaf anthropology is "grounded in understanding deafnesses (Mills 2015, 45 cited in Friedner and Kusters, 2020, 32) across time and space while holding on to 'deaf' as a category that does something socially, politically, morally, and methodologically" (Friedner and Kusters 2020, 32). It also means placing "deaf" at the center of the research, illuminating "different ways to be deaf" (Friedner and Kusters 2020) and conducting ethnographic research that is contextualized and localized with particular deaf people in their specific spaces while interacting within specific circumstances (Senghas and Monoghan 2002). This means conducting research through a lens of seeing deafness as not only "the absence of hearing" (Senghas and Monoghan 2002) or as lacking and deficient, but as a means of sensing, communicating, and socializing in the world (Friedner and Kusters 2020); not seeing deafness through a harsh binary categorization of deaf as medical and deaf as cultural, but deafness as a spectrum that incorporates deaf experiences as impacted by cultural, social, and medical aspects (Mills 2015). Therefore, a deaf anthropological approach "avoids trafficking of essentialist ideas of deaf and hearing people's biological and sensory practices, arguably found in deaf studies works" (Friedner and Kusters 2020, 33). This anthropological approach provides my research with a centering of deaf students and their university experiences as impacted by the institutional policy practices. As Friedner and Kusters (2020) also note, conversations of deaf sociality cannot be separated from discussions of "(sign) language,", with which I am in agreement, however, my research is limited in this aspect in that I am investigating the practices of deaf students as well the practices of social actors involved which will inevitably include communication practices, but I am not specifically focused on language and/or discourse analysis from a linguistic anthropological approach as is common in deaf anthropology. Rather, I am investigating all practices deaf university students implement to navigate academic and social relationships within the university and how they, and other actors, respond to, contest, and initiate disability policy implementation. This research in part focuses on policy as practice as implemented by the accommodations coordinators, as well as how deaf students negotiate these practices and those of other social and policy actors within the university.

Anthropologists Elizabeth Keating and Gene Mirus (2003) conducted ethnographic research with deaf students in elementary schools using a symbolic interactionist from linguistic anthropology approach with assumptions from Garfinkel's (1967) elaboration of ethnomethodology to investigate their cross-language modality interactions, concluding that the differences in deaf and hearing sociolinguistic practices and hearing-oriented participation frameworks are important contributors to communication failure and impoverishment. They add that mainstreaming is dependent on the assumption that cross-modal communication can be unproblematically satisfied with instilling hearing communication strategies onto deaf students and placing them in hearing-centered settings, however in practice these interactions are problematized in nuanced ways. Throughout their article they highlight that theoretically mainstream education is meant to provide equal access to all students despite their various backgrounds, however as found in their research, deaf students are not receiving the social equivalent to their hearing peers, therefore missing out on crucial knowledge production and socializing moments and instead creating moments of separation and isolation. This is important for my research as communication access and practices are a part of my investigations. However, where I believe there is a gap, is that in using Garfinkel's (1967) elaboration of ethnomethodology their findings are limited to the interactions alone that they have studied, while also not taking into heavy consideration the structure and power dynamics and practices of the institution that impact the ways these students come to converse and learn.

Anne Pfister's (2017) research with deaf children and their families living in Mexico City, Mexico supports aspects of these findings (Keating and Mirus 2003) in that her research highlighted the "importance of sociality and interactivity in language socialization and the role of community in that process" (Pfister 2017, 158). Her research uses theoretical approaches from psychological, medical, and linguistic anthropology such as language socialization theory, and language ideologies to illustrate how "Mexico's therapeutic [medical/oral] approach does not acknowledge the complex relationship between self and society that is best developed through the process of language socialization" (Pfister 2017, 139, 140). She found that due to Mexico's policies that restricted the learning of Lengua de Señas Mexicanas, Mexico's national sign language, and the language and inclusion ideologies of the community, deaf children were not receiving appropriate language acquisition and socialization. She also notes that the "variation represented by ethnographic examples contrasts the standardized expectation that all deaf children can achieve similar outcomes based upon oralist goals and medicalized intervention" (Pfister 2017, 158). In other words, contrary to the stereotypes some people hold, deaf people are not a homogenous group, all with different backgrounds and experiences. The notions of deafness as heterogenous, with varied experiences, and the analysis of social practices and perceptions as impacted by policy and ideologies informs my research. As I have mentioned above, this study does not take a strong linguistic anthropological approach, however although I am not looking into language acquisition or socialization as Pfister has, I understand that aspects of language and communication barriers may be prevalent within the student's responses. In using language socialization, she also uses assumptions of Bourdieu's theory of practice, namely his concept of *habitus*. I do intend to use this theoretical approach for his concepts of practice and structure, however, as will be discussed later in this chapter, his concept of *habitus* will be left out of this study.

Julie Park, Ruth Fitzgerald, and Michael Legge (2015) use Shakespeare's (2008) approach of "predicament" to understand the experiences and perspectives of deaf people in five families in New Zealand, as they complicate being labeled as "disabled." For Shakespeare, "to call something a predicament is to understand it as a difficulty, and as a challenge, and as something which we might want to minimize but which we cannot ultimately avoid" (2008, 243). The authors use this approach to negotiate the mixed perceptions of the deaf individuals as they express that to them they are not disabled; however they recognize and are aware that in order to receive the services that are necessary for communication, family safety, and well-being, they are required to use a disability framing. In other words, although a person may not see themselves as disabled, they recognize that there are activities and practices that will inherently label them as disabled. I believe that incorporating this approach is useful to my research because it provides a realistic approach to implications for mitigating and reducing barriers that are ultimately constrained by the institution. Pfister (2019) also applies "predicament" to frame the sometimes uncomfortable situations that arises with families in Mexico navigating their child's deafness, ultimately reaching to the decision of using sign language as reliable communication rather than trying to fix their children's hearing. In the case of my study, the university is a hearing-majority university, which means that it is possible there will always be some barriers even after implications may be made to reduce these barriers. Additionally, the university is a publicly funded university that is also a business in a capitalist landscape, meaning that any efforts to reduce and mitigate barriers are at the will of those in the university that hold the money. The gaps in this study, as in the others, are an analysis of policy that directly impact its intended audience and the policy practices and power production used by the institution and social actors that impacts the deaf student experience. For a critical approach to policy and policy practices, I look to the anthropology of policy.

## Anthropology of Policy

The anthropology of policy was formally established as a subfield in the 1990's by anthropologists in Europe. An anthropological approach to policy "attempts to uncover the constellations of actors, activities, and influences that shape policy decisions, their implementation, and their results" (Wedel et al. 2005, 30). It is not enough to superficially regard policy as having an impact on its intended community, or that it is simply "there." Policy is not "politically or ideologically neutral" (Shore and Wright 1997, 6). Anthropologists of policy often center the communities that are impacted by policy implementation, investigating how those communities respond to the policy (Tate 2020). Laws and policies have often taken the guise of neutral and instrumental, irrelevant to issues of morality, ideology, or politics, however this is far from policy in its true state of being, as framed through ideological thoughts and categorized by morality (Wright and Shore 1995). During the stages of policy formation, institutional comfort and political priorities are centered, possibly missing the needs of the population policy seeks to target (Geilhufe 1979), creating challenges down the road for all involved. Through an anthropological approach to policy, this research analyzes the disability policy that directly impacts deaf students while also investigating the policy practices of the university through interviews with the accommodations coordinators and through the experiences of the deaf students. With this approach I can investigate how and by whom policy practices are being mobilized and contested, not only in SAS, but with the colleges, departments, instructors, and employees throughout the university and how those practices impact the deaf students. As Tate (2020) expressed and as noted in other scholarly works (Shore and Wright 1997; Wedel et al. 2005; Schwegler and Powell 2008) Foucauldian theories of governmentality have influenced the emerging field of anthropology of policy and in this is where my approach differs. In investigating the practices of social actors within the institution, I not only investigate power production and power practices but also ways that social actors respond, resist, and contest to these practices of power and additionally, the concept of who has power is much more complicated depending on the social actor's position within the university. In that, Foucault's governmentality, which over-emphasizes institutional power onto human subjects, rendering people as passive and resistance as futile, cannot provide a lens for the resistance and contestation of power practices within the institution.

In stepping away from Foucauldian notions, Yelvington, Simms, and Murray (2012) use Marxist assumptions that inform their approach to anthropology of policy when conducting research on wine tourism in southern California investigating the state's involvement in a tourism development and expansion project in the Temecula Valley area. They use ethnographic data from their interviews with social actors in multiple positions and policy analysis to expand on the contradictions and issues that come with the inclusion of the state to perpetuate neoliberal practices onto this area as they intend to expand the commodification of this area for its small and rural aesthetic that, if implemented, would no longer have a small and rural aesthetic. The researcher's use of political economy contributes to my research, even if it is only in a limited way. The university, as mentioned above, is a business and partakes in the political economy as any other businesses. Although this is not the central focus of this research, the resources available to social actors is ultimately impacted by funding allotted to them, therefore my study does not entirely overlook it.

Tate (2020) also noted the early influences of Latourian approaches on the anthropology of policy. Jill Koyama (2011) uses actor-network theory to inform her ethnographic research on public school principals and what they do as policy actors in response to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), a federal intervention policy aimed at closing student achievement gaps. She conducted policy analyses and interviews over the course of 40 months with multiple actors, mainly principals, across 42 schools in New York City. She found that principals co-opted private interventions to do that they thought was appropriate for the school, and at times, contesting NCLB. In this study, principals emerged as powerful policy actors. The focus of her research was not on the students that were impacted by these policies but the policy and social actors responsible for provisions in accordance with the policies. My study differs in that I am interviewing students as well as coordinators, responsible for accommodations provisions, and policy analysis as well that where she used actor-network theory, I will not. In using this approach, she places policy as a social actor with its own agency which I disagree with. Social actor’s perceptions and practices of policy is, in part, responsible for contextualizing and giving meaning to the policy itself. This approach also neglects social structure and materialist abstractions, which Yelvington, Simms, and Murray (2012) note that “when policies are studied anthropologically that their creation and enforcement be treated through a process of abstraction as a diagnostic of larger power relations and the workings of social, economic and political institutions” (60). A key aspect to this research is investigating the institutional social and policy structure in which social actors, the deaf students and all involved in their university experiences, interact with each other and policy as practice.

## A Critique of Bourdieu's Practice Theory

To investigate the practices and interactions among the SU social actors, and in the spirit of Pfister's (2017) theoretical approach, I use Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory (1977, 1980). Practice theory, as Bourdieu intended, aims to show that people are social actors who affect the social structure in which they are found, and in turn the social structure affects the social actors. This theoretical approach is useful to understand how deaf students as well as the accommodation coordinators respond to the institutional field and its social and policy structures and in turn, how they shape it or not, depending on the imposed limitations. In this study, I analyze the relevant disability policies as rules of the system and compare them to the actual practice of the institutional actors, including those responsible for implementation and the deaf students, targeted by both policy itself and its implementation. Where I depart from Bourdieu's practice theory is with his use of *habitus*. Bourdieu's habitus, as informed by culturalist notions, is "a product of history" and "produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history" (Bourdieu 1980, 54). The habitus is the "internalization of objective possibility as subjective expectation" (Wolfreys 2000, 102). Behavior and disposition as produced by the habitus are instilled at an early age and socially reinforced. These behaviors and dispositions, rooted in the unconscious, are limited by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production and are so deeply rooted in individuals "that they are experienced as natural and their social origins (the fact that they are a product of the objective structure of society) remain unrecognized" (Wolfreys 2000, 106). With

Bourdieu's emphasis of the unconscious incorporation of objective structures, he ignores the conscious action of resistance and contestation of those objective structures. In other words, this culturalist perspective on habitus, "risks essentializing people and reducing behaviors to habitus-bound unconscious operations. This reified notion of culture leaves little room for agency, negotiation, or creativity" (Pfister 2012, 30) From a disability perspective, his concept of habitus, "has been transformed into a theory of overwhelming early socialization. This leaves us with…persons with qualities that keep them succeeding, or not, depending on their first steps through social structure" (McDermott and Varenne 1995, 334), essentially blaming the individual as the cause of their failure and not accounting for participations and resistances, or an intertwinement of both, to the various structures that disabled people face every day. As Pfister (2012) notes, it does not fully account "for what real people actually do every day" (31). In moving away from centralizing the individual as to blame for their position and viewing social actors as in an unrecognized perpetual cycle from which they cannot consciously seek to break out of, my study investigates the ways in which social actors use their agency to resist, contest, and produce power and policy practices and how policy practices and social actors in power impact deaf student's experiences. That is, my focus is on the social relationships that structure the practices and experiences of my study participants as well as the meanings for the participants derived from these social relationships.

Although my research is not focused heavily on economic factors, I did want to bring attention to Bourdieu's conception of economic factors as separate from the social structure. In other words, for him the economic field is a field of its own. I would portray the institutional field, the university, as a kind of participant in the larger economic field that is dependent upon capitalism as a mode of production and totalizing system, where the shape and function of the state and its governance structures are ultimately traceable to the historical stage of capitalism and its exigencies.

## This Study's Contributions

This study builds on – and is informed by – the frameworks of deaf studies, deaf anthropology and anthropology of policy, through a critique of practice theory lens by analyzing the federal and university disability policy, investigating the policy and social practices implements by the social actors of the institution and how these practices impact the experiences of deaf students. I conducted research with deaf students registered with SAS that are varied in degrees of hearing and use ASL and/or spoken English. Socialization and relationships with peers are also crucial for academic success. How deaf students socialize in the university setting is experienced through how deaf students interact with other deaf and hearing students. It is beneficial to a holistic analysis to direct attention to deaf student's academic and social experiences on campus to fully investigate their experience as a college student (Luckner and Muir 2002).

Existing research with deaf students in a post-secondary setting has not taken deep consideration into policy as a factor in the experiences of deaf students. This does not mean studies have not been done. Serena Johnson and Amy Fann (2015) conducted an exploratory study on the experiences of deaf students with campus accessibility office, the staff in that office, and campus administrative support. They found that the college campuses varied in support depending on the amount of knowledge and experience with deaf culture, deaf students lacked an awareness on their rights to access and the protocols for obtaining accommodations, and deaf students wanted more interaction from the campus accommodations office as well as social gatherings to interact with other deaf students. The research is informed by assumptions from Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to center the student's experience and how they respond to their environment. In a recent, similarly structured qualitative study, Van den Heujj, Neijenhuis, and Coene (2022) investigated the perspective of 32 deaf students in mainstream higher education. Through a dichotomy of environmental and person factors lens, they found that the attitudes of classmates, lecturers, and student support officers played an important role in their experiences, accommodations and adjustments were needed for most students to cope with fatigue, to participate during lectures or increase speech intelligibility of the lecturer, and most of the students had proactive attitudes to get what they needed to study in higher education. Interestingly, this study provided policy-related implications, calling for the invitation of deaf students to co-create policy for deaf students in mainstream higher education (2022, 395), without analyzing the policy or policy practices of the university. Both articles express that it is important to understand the student's experiences for university's to make implications, and in theory that sounds fine, however these approaches under theorize the importance of the university's structure and how they implement policy in practice that can severely impact the student's experience. They way universities take to their practices may very well impact the experience, therefore impacting what may need to be implicated. Both studies work with either mostly deaf ASL users (Johnson and Fann 2015) or mostly deaf spoken language users (Van den Heujj, Neijenhuis, and Coene 2022). It is important for my study to include deaf students, regardless of language use, to fully understand their experiences in relation to institutional practices. Deaf anthropology can fill in some of the gaps that deaf studies presents. As Friedner and Kusters (2020) have noted, while deaf anthropology cannot be reduced to the field of deaf studies, these fields do exist in conversation with each other and in partial overlap. It seems fit that I use both to inform my research as I am conducting research with a deaf student population, investigating their lived experiences. This present study seeks to unite insights of deaf studies and anthropology of policy and deaf anthropology. I do so by analyzing current federal and university policy, those responsible for policy implementation, and the policy's targeted audience, this study provides insight into the innerworkings of policy, subject formation, power production and response to power. It is not enough to gather the experiences of deaf students without contextualizing their experiences and practices within the overall workings of policy practices and the institution. Analyzing federal and university disability policy, while investigating the roles, responsibilities, and experiences of those in charge of implementing these policies are crucial in understanding how and why deaf students' experiences are what they are. It is not enough to gather the experiences of deaf students without contextualizing their experiences and practices within the overall workings of policy practices and the institution. Analyzing federal and university disability policy, while investigating the roles, responsibilities, and experiences of those in charge of implementing these policies are crucial in understanding how and why deaf students' experiences are what they are and if policy omissions are accidental or if they clearly determine the boundaries between state intervention and what is left for the deaf students (Yelvington, Simms, and Murray 2012). In other words, analyzing SU disability policy can provide insight into SU's implementations for access and accommodations provisions and, after implementation and enforcement, what the deaf university students have to do on their end to supplement what is lacking.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

This study investigates how disability policy impacts the roles, responsibilities, and experiences of accommodations coordinators as well as how policy implementation and enforcement impact the lived experiences and successes of deaf students. Taking this into consideration, qualitative research methods in addition to policy analysis were appropriate to conduct this investigation. In addition, an applied anthropological approach is important as the data produced with this study can inform potential actions that can be taken to improve the status of deaf students and the accommodations coordinators. Ethnographic research was undertaken in three main modes: (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) focus group interviews, and (3) archival research.

## Research Design

I was the sole investigator for this study. The research design is of my own with the help of existing literature. Prior to collecting data, a literature review was conducted of deaf education, disability policy studies, anthropological literature on policy studies, and anthropological literature on deaf and policy topics. I created and submitted a research proposal, semi-structured interview guides, focus group guide, and recruitment materials consisting of a video and flyer, to the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB labelled this study as minimal risk and exempt in July 2022 (see Appendix I).

Ethnographic research began in July 2022 with key informant semi-structured interviews. I conducted ten such interviews with two administrators and eight deaf SU students. Given time constraints, the individual interviews were only held one time for each participant, another reason why semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study (Bernard 2017). The intent of the interviews is to have them discuss their experiences as a deaf student in a mainstream university. Among other things, I wanted to know: Do they feel as if they are gaining full access to everything university life has to offer? This approach is justified in the literature. Serena Johnson and Amy Fann (2015) used semi-structured interviews with deaf students to allow them an opportunity to describe their experiences in depth. Kersting (1997) discussed using semi-structured interviews to allow for a complete understanding of the student's experiences in mainstream college settings. This thesis aims to allow those interviewed to provide in-depth commentary related to their lived experiences and perceptions as first-person participants moving along through the post-secondary setting as well as the coordinators backstage as facilitators of accommodations.

For all interviews (except for one) and focus group interviews, audio or video recording took place after receiving consent, depending on the language being used, ASL or English, and the platform, whether online or in person. Phase one consisted of conducting semi-structured interviews with the deaf participants and the accommodations coordinators. Deaf participants were asked about how they identify within their deafness and the kinds of accommodations they were given. They were then asked about their experiences registering for accommodations, their experiences in class, around campus, and in social settings on campus, they were also asked if they socialized with or knew of others on campus that were also deaf. Participants were encouraged to discuss whatever it is that came to mind, often being asked to expand on their answers and to provide examples. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour long, depending on the participants and how much they chose to share. These interviews varied between using ASL or English as the mode of conversation depending on the preferred language of the participant. Accommodations coordinators were asked in their interviews about their roles and responsibilities at the university. They were asked about the policy they implement and enforce specifically for deaf students, how they work with other departments and faculty on campus to ensure accommodations are being met, how they felt about the universities current state of access and equity for deaf students, and what they felt was the next step in improving access at the university. As for the student participants, the accommodations coordinators were also encouraged to discuss whatever it was that came to mind and were asked to expand and provide examples. These interviews ranged from an hour to two hours, depending on the participants and how much they shared.

Phase two, the focus group interviews, occurred in August 2022. Focus groups were also appropriate for this study as it facilitated a setting where the students could come together, without the presence of faculty members or SU administrators, and share how they thought accommodations could be improved at their university. During these focus group interviews, students provided some thoughts, without asking or probing (Bernard 2017), on what they thought would be good to implement at the university to improve access for deaf students. The focus groups offered an opportunity for more details into these ideas. I chose to use focus groups as a method in this manner because, as scholars of policy have pointed out, it is important for the policy’s target population to be a part of the policy process. In this way, they are playing an active role in policy implementation and resources that could benefit the success of the target population, deaf students at the university (Sheik and Porter 2013; Park, Fitzgerald, and Legge 2015; Van den Heujj, Neijenhuis, and Coene 2022).

There were two focus groups held involving the student participants. One in spoken English and the other in ASL. Two focus groups in the different language modes were conducted because I am the sole researcher and did not want to involve another person to interpret during the focus group while I was moderating, as, unfortunately, I could not hold both roles at the same time. Both focus groups were conducted in similar fashion. The students were asked about what they would like to see improved by the university, what would improve the university environment to foster increased success among deaf students, and what the university overall could do in order create a friendly and equitable environment for deaf students. The two focus groups were about two to two and a half hours long.

To conduct research relating to policy, I felt it appropriate to include archival research as a method as well. This involved a review of disability policy documents at the federal and university level. Analyzing the policy used to enforce disability accommodations was important to wholly understand the processes at play and the decisions that were made regarding policy implementation and why. Typically, the problem with archival research is that the archival data may have errors therefore we must reflect upon who made the document, why, and how it got to be part of an archive (Barnard 2017). The US federal policy I examined was the ADA of 1990. The SU policies I examined were University Policy A: Disability and Accommodations (UP-A) created in 1998 and University Policy B: Captions and Course Content (UP-B) created in 2016.

Phase three, archival research, was conducted in August 2022. During this time, three policy documents were analyzed, one federal policy document and two of the university. The federal policy analyzed was the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title II – Public

Services. The university’s policies analyzed were (1) Disability and Accommodations, created in 1998, and Captioning and Access of Media Used in Course Content, created in 2016. These policies were found easily through State University’s and the ADA’s website. Bernard and Gravlee (2014) mentioned that the emergence of archived data may be heavily relied on, however in this case, it shows how researchers can simultaneously use archived data along ethnographic methods to inform research.

## Research Site

State University is a large state university, with multiple campuses, located in a large diverse city in the United States. The total student population, including undergraduate and graduate and professional students, consists of about 46,000 students. Each campus houses their own SAS center, with accommodations coordinators at each campus. The interviews and focus groups were conducted at one of the campuses or online, depending on the preference of the interviewees. I wanted to allow for flexibility to meet my interlocutors’ needs because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the effects of which were still prevalent at the time of fieldwork, and to be cognizant of the students’ other obligations such as work and family. I wanted to be as accommodating as possible. In-person interviews were held in my office on campus, away from background noise. Online interviews and both focus groups were conducted online through Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams was preferred over other conferencing software because it was what the university used and it was accessible, having automatic captions. Students who relied on using captions would feel comfortable using Microsoft Teams.

## Participant Recruitment

For this study I chose to use purposeful sampling, as I chose participants based on their purpose in this study (Bernard and Gravlee 2014, 223). Through purposeful sampling, recruitment occurred through the informal assistance of the SU SAS office coordinators as I was not legally allowed to obtain information, past general demographics, for deaf students that attend or recently have attended the university. Purposeful sampling was also beneficial as I was conducting research during the summer semester, a time where students may not be taking courses and otherwise difficult to reach via their university email address. Purposeful sampling allowed me to be flexible with the number of participants in my study compared to another sampling method that may require a specific sample population number dependent on the total population for (Bernard 2017, 147). Recruitment materials were sent to the SAS office coordinators for feedback, and once finalized, the coordinators emailed out the materials to current and previous deaf students registered through their department. I also knew of deaf students who have previously attended SU and who attended during the time of the study and sent them the materials as well. For recruitment materials, I created a flyer (see Figure 3) and video. The video is of myself, explaining the study (using the same information as in the flyer) using ASL, English voice-over, and captions. This video was created to supplement the flyer and to be fully accessible to all deaf students. In creating a video, I also introduced myself as a research student which may help people feel more comfortable in participating.

The criteria for inclusion were:

(1) Participants were a minimum of 18 years old.

(2) Participants had some degree of deafness.

(3) Participants were a currently registered student or were previously registered as a student within the past three years.

(4) Participants were or had been registered with the Student Accessibilities Services Center.

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING IN COLLEGE TESTIMONIALS

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

**Participate in**

- A research study designed to learn more about the lived experiences of d/Deaf and hard of hearing college students.

**To participate you must**

- Be 18+ years old.
- Have some degree of hearing loss.
- Be a currently registered student or have been a registered student within the past three years.
- Be or have been registered with Student Accessibilities Services.

**Participation involves**

- A 60-minute interview in person or through video chat (Teams or Zoom).

Interviews are anonymous and confidential.
Interviews can be conducted in ASL or spoken English based on preference.
Live captions available via Teams.

TO LEARN MORE OR SIGN UP, PLEASE CONTACT TAILYN OSORIO AT
[redacted] OSORIO10@USF.EDU

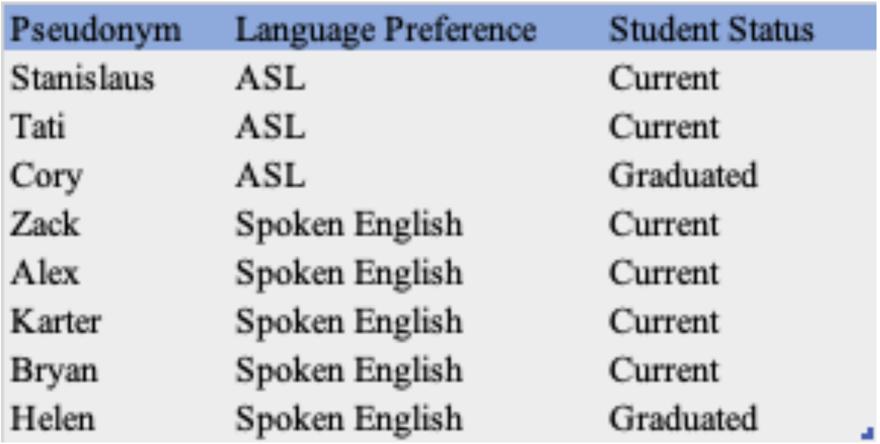
**Figure 3.** Flyer for Participant Recruitment

## Sample

During the time of data collection, the university had a total population of 57 deaf students registered through the SAS. Once the recruitment materials were sent out through the SAS, six students responded. Through my own connections, I was able to recruit two deaf students. The total sample population consisted of eight current and former students (See Table 1) and two accommodations coordinators with whom I had been in contact with since the early stages of this study. Of the seven deaf students, three used ASL as their main means of communication and five used spoken English. I say “main” because, depending on the environment, some students may use these interchangeably. Deaf students vary with their mode of communication and access at the university: some use ASL interpreters, some students use Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services, some use FM audio systems, cochlear implants, and hearing aids.

The two accommodations coordinators interviewed for this study worked at their own respective campus. They were directly responsible for working with and facilitating accommodations for deaf students. One accommodations coordinator, Jane, had been working at the university for over five years at the time of my study. At her campus, she was responsible for providing accommodations for all students registered through her department. The other, Margaret, had worked at the university for over 20 years, starting out as an ASL interpreter and then moving to working as the accommodations coordinator for deaf students in the SAS center at her respective campus.

Table 1. Deaf Participant Profiles



| Pseudonym | Language Preference | Student Status |
|---|---|---|
| Stanislaus | ASL | Current |
| Tati | ASL | Current |
| Cory | ASL | Graduated |
| Zack | Spoken English | Current |
| Alex | Spoken English | Current |
| Karter | Spoken English | Current |
| Bryan | Spoken English | Current |
| Helen | Spoken English | Graduated |

## Challenging Categorizations of Deafness

Although my research does not directly center identity topics, part of the intent with this research is to challenge the categorization of deaf people as all the same or as rigidly split between a binary (following Friedner and Kusters 2020; Fjord 1996; Pfister 2017) which can therefore lead to the assumption that all deaf students require the same accommodations and access (Komesaroff 2007; Marschark et al. 2017; Johnson and Fann 2016). I believe it is worth noting that in all of the interviews with the deaf students I asked them this question: “Within a deaf spectrum, how do you identify?” Although I was anticipating receiving short, few word responses, every single student had a different and complex response. One student responded: “I identify as deaf with hard of hearing privilege.” Another said: “I identify as deaf, but sometimes hard of hearing if I have my hearing aids on because then I have some hearing ability, so really it depends. I go back and forth between the two.” And another responded: “I’m specified or have congenital, bilateral sensorineural hearing loss and I’ve had it since birth.” These students are examples of the complications that come with categorizing deaf identity, especially as researchers. In categorizing deafness, we create superficial identity markers, void of individual complexities, may not be representative of the participants in which we are working with or indicative of their experiences or needs. I add this anecdote to demonstrate the importance of incorporating participants across the deaf spectrum when conducting this kind of research because deaf experiences are not all alike and I would not have gotten these kinds of insights or insights discussed further below had I only included a "specific type" of deaf person. This evidences that conducting research on issues that impact a wide breath of deafnesses, regardless of if they use sign language or not, requires a participant sample that mirrors the population.

## Data Analysis

There were four separate data sets, all qualitative, that were generated in the course of conducting this study: (1) the data from the archival research, (2) the data from the interviews with the accommodations coordinators, (3) the data from the interviews with the deaf participants, and (4) the data from the focus groups. Due to the small sample size among each dataset, I chose against using coding software and manually coded for common themes through each individual data set. Once that was complete, I analyzed for connections among the themes from the archival research and interviews to create central themes and used the findings from the focus groups to inform possible interventions and recommendations. I also used existing literature to support the findings from this research.

## Ethical Considerations

Just as in ASL interpreting, anthropologists must follow their respective code of ethics to reduce any harm onto the participants as well as to protect their rights and privacy. In following the American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics, participants were read or signed a statement about the study and the steps taken to keep their information confidential. I received verbal or signed consent from all participants. I was also transparent with all participants regarding who I was and my position as a research student. With the participants that used ASL during their interviews, I interpreted our discussion into written English. The transcript was sent to each respective participant to revise to ensure that everything in text is how they wanted it said and not how I interpreted it. This is an important step because when interpreting between languages, there are many ways to say one concept, but certain words may conceptualize different meanings.

University of South Florida's IRB approved this study in July 2022, labelling this study as minimal risk and providing IRB exemption. I am the sole investigator of this study. The verbal consent script, approved by USF's IRB, is presented in Appendix 1, with the IRB exemption latter in Appendix 2. To ensure anonymity, I also used pseudonyms for all students and faculty as well as the university itself to protect their right to privacy. All data collected, including audio and video recordings, were kept in an encrypted folder only the researcher had access to.

## Limitations

While this study seeks to provide the reader with enough information to understand the intertwined relationships between policy, accommodations coordinators as policy implementors, and deaf students at the target population, there are limitations to this research. The sample size for this study is small and may not be representative of all deaf students at SU or other universities. This study also does not specifically account for student's intersecting identities, such as race, gender, class, etc. The intent for this study is for future research to build on the findings from this research.

# CHAPTER FOUR: DISABILITY POLICY REVIEW

## Introduction

To investigate the implementation process of the university, analyzing the policy itself is important. The federal policy that forms a legal requirement to disability accommodations at publicly funded universities, such as State University, is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Title II – Public Services. The ADA overall has four objectives, two of which are: (1) "to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities"; and (2) "to provide clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities," meaning the ADA is intended to provide federal legislation with clearcut language and enforcement to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities. This policy is also the foundation for public universities to supplement with their own respective policies if they choose to do so. In the case of State University, there are two main policies that directly impact disabled students and, in this case, deaf students. The first is University Policy A – Disability and Accommodations, created in 1998. The purpose of Policy A is to comply with the requirements of the ADA and other federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of a disability and to provide assurance of accessibility provisions. The second policy is University Policy B – Captions and Course Content Media, created in 2016. The purpose of Policy B is to provide specific guidelines for the use of media in course content. This study seeks to also investigate the existing online resources for deaf students and for faculty and staff that relate to deafness and access in the university setting.

The ADA's definition of "disability," as confirmed and enforced by the Amendments Act of 2008, is intentionally broad to cover a number of individuals with various forms of disabilities. The ADA itself, speaking to Title II specifically, is broad enough so institutions can be flexible and develop their own policy catered to their specific situation. UP-A was intended to supplement the federal policy and set a baseline for all disability accommodation provisions at the university, including accommodations for students, employees, and the non-university public. UP-B came on later to supplement UP-A regarding course content media. There are multiple entities mentioned within these university policies as responsible parties, DIEO, SAS, the ADA coordinator, Office of Innovation Education, Human Resources (in the case of employees), college administrators, faculty, staff, and students, which created an opportunity for possible challenges with each other such as miscommunication and misunderstandings of roles and responsibilities. Although the policy states that accommodations for students are a team effort, the responsibility is dictated to ultimately rest on the shoulder of SAS and, arguably, the students. In many places in both policies it mentions contacting SAS for assistance or guidance. But how did the SAS respond to this responsibility? Did they have the appropriate resources? How did the students respond? These questions will be pursued later in this thesis.

UP-B was created to supplement the course content media portion of UP-A. However, there was also electronic and web accessibility standards put into place that expressed the same goals as UP-B. While there seemed to be explicit information, shown in various forms, dedicated to implementing the requirement of accessible course content, other aspects of accessibility were not given the same treatment. For instance, there was virtually no information in policy that discussed people requesting accommodations for social events and settings on campus. The section in UP-A that discusses public accommodations does not clarify between public events open to people outside of the university community, such as commencement ceremonies, and public events open to most of the university community (for example, a lecture series hosted by the College of Health but open to all faculty and students at the university), or events that may be limited to students. There was also no clarification on whether this section applies to students. Within the public accommodations section, it discusses in detail accommodation provisions, specifically captioning, for university events, but does not go into detail regarding accommodations provisions for events sponsored through other entities within the university. The only mention in this connection is that sponsors are responsible for funding accommodations for the events and that sponsors must advise potential attendees that if they require accommodations and if so to request them no less than five working days prior to the event. In the enrolled student section of UP-A, it states that students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodation to satisfy academic requirements or "to participate in activities or services" must request accommodations in writing from SAS. What did the policy signify when stating "to participate in activities or services?" Are these activities and services inclusive of social, non-academic events on campus or is it restricted to academically related activities or services? How did this ambiguity regarding accommodations for on campus social events for deaf students impact implementation of this portion of the policy? This will also be pursued below.

In the enrolled student section it also discussed that if student's disability and need of accommodations are "adequately shown" – after providing documentation of disability, and explanation of documentation related to the need for the particular accommodation requested. SAS was to discuss the provision of accommodations with other appropriate university representatives, like the faculty member instructing the courses the student is electing to take, and then, if appropriate, with the student be offered the accommodations. How did the students respond to this registration process? How did students respond to their instructor's reactions when met with providing accommodations in the classroom? These questions, as well, are dealt with below.

UP-A states that the ADA coordinator is housed in the DIEO office. However upon searching, at the time of my fieldwork they were housed in the Office of Compliance and Ethics.

There were also hyperlinks for readers of the policy to go on for additional information that did not lead to their intended destination. An example of this was the university's electronic and web accessibility standards. Both the links on the policy and the links for these standards in the different mentioned departments led to nowhere. These obstacles were perhaps minor but could lead to challenges in implementation efforts.

When searching for faculty resources for accommodations provisions in the classroom, it took quite some digging in a few different spaces. There were resources spread through the university library, SAS, and DIEO. The resources that each department housed were also spread throughout their respective websites. They were not easy or quick to navigate. DIEO's resources mainly focused on making online course media accessible. The university library had a short guide to making accessible material for class. However, finding it was difficult. SAS mainly provided information on registering for accommodations, what to do once a student received their accommodations letter, rules for scheduling tests and exams, and generalized tips in using one's accommodations. SAS did provide a resource specifically for deaf students that detailed the kinds of accommodations available to them and how to request those accommodations. They did have a few resources and tips for faculty regarding disabled students in the classroom, but none specifically for classroom management when there were deaf students in the class, or how to support deaf students' needs relating to academic settings. SAS did provide the general student body and faculty and staff with some basic training on accessibility and disability topics. Upon searching through the university policy and on the university website, there seemed to be no guidelines stated for the provision of interpreters for deaf students who use ASL. How did the university employ interpreters? Were the interpreters used in class the same as the ones used for events and social settings on campus? Were they staffed at State University or contracted through a third party? If an interpreter didn't show up for a deaf student, whom did the student contact? Would this have caused confusion among the deaf students who used ASL? Overall, these resources were spread across university departments and were difficult and time-consuming to find. Some of the dated resources found were as old as seven years and those that showed how many people viewed that material had a small number compared to how long they had been published. This showed that faculty and students may not have been looking to any of these resources for guidance prior to reaching out to SAS, as well that the university may have needed to refresh and add to their resources.

## Federal Policy – ADA of 1990 Title II: Public Services

Title II – Public Services is broken down into two parts, Part A being the "Prohibition Against Discrimination and Other Generally Applicable Provisions," and Part B being the "Actions Applicable to Public Transportation Provided by Public Entities Considered Discriminatory." This study focuses on Title II, Part A, Section. 12131. Definitions, and Section. 12132. Discrimination. The two definitions provided are (1) what defines a public entity and (2) for defining "qualified individual with a disability." Publicly funded universities fall under the definition of "any department agency, special purpose district, or other instrumentality of a State or States or local government." The definition provided for "qualified individual with a disability" goes as follows:

> An individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modifications to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity.

Section. 12132. Discrimination states that "no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity." Including the sections not included above, enforcement and regulations, that is the extent of Title II that directly requires publicly funded universities to provide accommodations to ensure full inclusion of disabled students into university life.

## University Policy A – Disability and Accommodations

The purpose of University Policy A (UP-A) is to provide university guidelines and information on how the university intends to adhere to federal policy that prohibits the discrimination of disabled peoples. The main section of this policy details their process steps and specific provisions, which then has four subsections, public accommodations, electronic information and web accessibility, employees, and students. This study investigates the content of all subsections with the exception of the employees subsection.

According to the public accommodations subsection, sponsors of programs and events – meaning those that are funding and hosting said programs and events – are required to inform potential attendees who may require accommodations that accommodations must be requested of the program sponsor at least five working days prior to the event, however lack of an accommodations request does not absolve the sponsor of responsibility for providing applicable accommodations. An example of this is to have a blurb at the bottom at an event flyer stating who to contact in the case of requesting accommodations. While accommodations are meant to be provided and funded by the program sponsor, requests for assistance were to be made with the university's Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity (DIEO).

The electronic information and web accessibility subsection states that all electronic and web-based advertising, announcements, and course content materials must meet the university's minimum electronic and web accessibility standards. They must be inclusive for all. Per this policy, it was the responsibility of the publisher and the publisher's Dean, Vice President, Chair and/or Director to make sure that respective websites and electronic course content comply. If a disabled person had difficulty accessing any of these such materials, then it was the responsibility of the ADA coordinator and the publisher of the specific content to address the accommodation need.

The students subsection focuses on two parts, admission and pre-enrollment, and already enrolled students. This study focuses on already existing students. However, I did want to highlight a statement in the admission and pre-enrollment section as it is pertinent later. If an applicant needed accommodations, they were to contact the ADA coordinator in the DIEO office. In the enrolled students section, it states that disabled students who require reasonable accommodation to meet the academic requirement of the university or to be involved in activities or services must request an accommodation in writing from the SAS. When requesting accommodations, students were instructed to provide documentation of disability and an explanation of any documentation related to the need for the particular accommodation request. This subsection of this policy also states that if disability and need for accommodations are "adequately shown" and the provision of that accommodation would not fundamentally alter the academic program, SAS was to discuss the provision with other appropriate university representatives and then, if appropriate, would offer the student a "reasonable" accommodation.

## University Policy B – Captions and Course Content Media

The purpose of University Policy B (UP-B) is to provide specific guidelines for the use of media in course content. This policy only applies to the use of media by designated instructors in in-person and online courses. It defines media as any material where sound is a part of the educational experience and designates instructors as university departments/units, administrators, faculty, staff, and/or colleges. The university addressed that it is using best efforts to transition to fully accessible media over the course of several years and was expected to complete this transition by 2025. The policy recognized that designated instructors are responsible for selecting media used in their courses and therefore they were in the "optimal position" to ensure that the media ordered in new courses, or new media for existing courses, was accessible. If accessibility was not feasible, then policy called for an accessible alternative format or alternate assignment in the media's place.  The SAS served as the responsible office for this policy and was available as a liaison and guide for designated instructors in ensuring immediate compliance for new courses or new course media.

The Process Steps subsection is the largest section in this policy, comprised of five sections: Resources and role of SAS; new online and new on campus delivered courses, media and programs; existing courses, media and programs; instructor produced media; and alternative formats during the transition period or in the event no captioning is possible. This subsection goes on to state that the goal of this policy is to proactively address accessibility which requires designated instructors to consider accessibility during the creation of course design and to conduct self-audits of instructional media to determine how to ensure accessibility.

Regarding new online courses, media and programs, it mentions the Office of Innovative Education (OIE) as certifying all new courses and media for any new on-line courses to check for compliance. If the courses were not in compliance, OIE was to provide the designated instructors a checklist of what was required to be compliant. Online courses not developed by OIE were required to be made compliant and the designated instructors were to contact OIE or SAS to indicate their compliance with policy. For new in-person courses, in the event designated instructors intended to use third-party media, the designated instructor was made responsible to select and purchase captioned media. SAS and the University Library were to aid in determining if a subtitled version of media exited. If there were no accessible versions of a chosen media, then it was required to be replaced with accessible media.

For existing courses, media, and programs, the university recognized that there was a transition period on the path to having all course content being fully accessible. If a student who required accessible media enrolls in a course during this transition period, the designated instructor and/or department was to work with SAS to provide appropriate access. If the designated instructor decided to use non captioned media in a course and a registered student makes a request for accessible media, the designated instructor was directed to immediately make arrangements to obtain captioned media and to work with SAS to ensure compliance. If the media was deemed an essential part of a required course and a disabled student enrolled in the course, then SAS was it assist with the costs of accommodations. Designated instructors were held responsible for working with SAS in a timely and prompt manner so SAS could provide assistance. For instructor proctored media, the instructor was to consult with SAS or to utilize an accessibility guide developed by SAS. Designated instructors were to plan for accessibility of any university created audio and audio-visual media. If there was no option for captioned media and the non-captioned media was required for the course, the designated instructor was directed to work with SAS or to refer the student to SAS to jointly decide on reasonable alternatives. The SAS had the ability to require the designated instructor to provide access to media within three days. After receiving approval from the appropriate dean or college representative, the designated instructor was able to outsource the media to request a quote, which then was to be submitted to the university's purchasing department.

SAS was responsible for consulting and assisting the efforts of making all courses, media and programs accessible at onset. They were charged with providing the university community with general information regarding the accessibility of course media. When a disabled student enrolled in a course, SAS was to assist the designated instructor in achieving the required accessibilities. But successful SAS assistance depended on the cooperation of faculty and staff.

## Existing Resources

As part of this study, I searched through the university's relevant department websites for resources available to deaf students and for faculty and staff at the university. The intention was to investigate if there were any current resources for deaf students such as how to navigate requesting accommodations for class or for events and advice or tips on how to get through college as a deaf student. For faculty and staff, I sought out to see what resources were available to them to learn how to interact with deaf students and best practices with fostering success in the classroom.

I found resources for faculty in a number of academic departments after examining the SU website and searching extensively through each department noted in the disability policy documents. There was a very brief general guide on making content accessible through the university library website that was hard to find. The DIEO had resources, but mostly for online course content. They had a Digital Learning Resources section, which included a library of video guides on adding extra time to quizzes taken on Canvas, the university's electronic class management platform, and ordering captions to videos that had been recorded using a specific video format. The former video was created in 2022 and had by the time of writing this thesis 40 views. The latter video was created in 2021 and had 29 views by the time of writing. The DIEO office also had a section for Accessibility Tools where I found a Comprehensive Online Accessibility Guide that included information on creating captions and transcripts for recorded instructional videos among other guides with accommodations for other disabilities, such as for blind and low-vision students. DIEO also fostered Faculty Learning Communities yearly that are faculty led and comprised of six to 12 members. For the 2022-2023 year, one of the communities organized was titled "Accommodations, Accessibility and Ableism in Academia." The intention for this community was to foster a faculty community interested in understanding disability and accessibility as diversity. SAS had a resources section on their website that included an "Accessibility Tips for Instructors" subsection, a subsection that housed their accessibility guide, and their online accessibility presentation. The accessibility guide contained a list of the relevant university policies, information on assistive technology available on campus, and it provided external resources for creating accessible course content and guidance on determining accessibility. The online accessibility presentation, which was published in 2016, covered the same topics but in video form. As of the time of write-up, it had 243 views. SAS also provided accessibility training opportunities including, what seemed like, monthly presentations on various topics related to disabled peoples. They also offered general training opportunities for faculty/staff and students alike, these included topics on accessibility, understanding ableism[2], learning about SAS (from a faculty standpoint), and becoming an ally. In this resources subsection, there were also accessibility tips for Canvas.

Resources for deaf students seemed to be limited to the SAS website. The SAS website was equipped with a portal for students to register for SAS services, schedule exams and appointments, and obtain accommodations letters online. The accommodations subsection contained information and guidelines for students to obtain their accommodation letters and how they may be used, as well as a list of some of the accommodations available to them. There was a section that contained exam guidelines that explained what a student might need to know if they were accommodated with extra time on tests and therefore needed to know how to schedule tests and the rules for taking them. There was also a section that provided brief tips on using one’s accommodations. There was a section labeled “Deaf and Hard of Hearing Accommodations” that listed the different accommodations provided by the university to deaf students along with the appropriate steps to take if a syllabus mentioned any audio-related content, how to request an interpreter or transcribing services for class, and how to request an

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[2] The term *ableism* is defined as a “term for discrimination against, and subordination and oppression of, people with disabilities” (Burch 2019, 1). The term is said to have been used as early as the 1980’s among feminists during the disability rights movement.

FM hearing aid system. The resources subsection contained publications and brochures for information on SAS, managing traumatic brain injuries in the classroom, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the classroom, Autism awareness, which contained a video created seven years prior to this write-up, a parent's guide for transitioning to college, and student resources for temporary disabilities, wheelchair and scooter rentals.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I provided an interpretation of the disability policy presented above. This approach is valuable in analyzing policy because it is important to understand how policy actors may interpret this policy and in turn form policy practices that impact its targeted audience. It also provides the researcher with possible aspects that may arise from the actor's testimonials that are connected to the way policy is interpreted. As is shown above with the questions that arose from the policy analysis, interpreting policy is not enough to understand the complex dynamic in which institutional actors and their intended audience interact with policy. It is also important to investigate and understand the structural relations behind policy as well as how it may be used, responded to, and contested.

# CHAPTER FIVE: STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

## Introduction

This chapter explores the experiences of two accommodations coordinators at State University and how they participated within the institutional structure of the university, responded to current policy execution processes, and contest and reproduce power. In this chapter, I argue that other policy actors within the university, regardless of department or position, are dependent on SAS to provide them with knowledge in accommodations and access provisions, or even the provisions themselves. The coordinators overextend themselves by allowing access to their time and energy within spaces and with social actors, no matter if it is out of their jurisdiction or not because they are the ones with the ADA expertise, however this also creates a structure in which they are the immediate go to for all things access, again, whether it is in their jurisdiction or not. The accommodations coordinators negotiate between providing time they do not have to ensure access, and not providing their time, risking the possibility that provisions to access may be oversighted or ignored. I also argue that the structure in which all the departments, policy actors, and protocols responsible for accommodations reside lack organization, communication, accountability, and resources allowing for the challenge in implementation and enforcement, and contestation and resistance of disability policy. This, in turn, puts onus on of SAS to ensure that accommodations and access provisions are being met at an institutional level. Lastly, I argue that due to these practices, the accommodations coordinators are not able to provide as much attention necessary to the accommodations provisions and overall support of their students.

## Roles

Jane’s official position title was the Assistant Director of SAS at the university’s campus where she was based. The campus where she worked was a smaller campus with less staff in the SAS department. She was responsible for working with all students registered with SAS, not only deaf students. She was also responsible for student intake, meaning she received documents for registration, assessed eligibility for disability accommodations; and issued guidance and support to students and their instructors, including notifying the instructors about incoming accommodations. Additionally, she was responsible for policy and procedure making, working with senior leadership and department administrators and faculty.

Margaret’s official title was Deaf and Hard of Hearing Coordinator at her campus. The campus where she worked was State University’s main campus and it had the largest student population. She was responsible for working with deaf students. She was also responsible for student intake and issued guidance and support to students and their instructors. Both SAS departments more or less implemented the same protocols on their campuses. Both coordinators worked directly with deaf students on their campuses. However, there are slight differences in their roles and responsibilities as we will see later in this chapter.

## It’s a team effort… or is it?

There were many actors involved in the provisions of accommodations and access to deaf students academically, and socially, including the accommodations coordinators, the student’s instructors, employees on campus, event sponsors, department administrators, OIE, and possibly others that I did not account for. In theory and according to policy, all policy actors were required to work as a team in order to ensure students were receiving accommodations and had equal access. However, in practice this team concept was much more complex with some having more responsibilities than others, and some contesting to and resisting disability policy. The testimonials of the accommodations coordinators are evidence that although the policy mentions that it takes a team to provide accommodations for students, in practice, the coordinators were stretched thin working with instructors that were not as willing to cooperate with them and providing education and resources in facets of the institution that were not their jurisdiction. Their statements are also evidence that they felt as if they had no choice but to overextend themselves because there were minimal existing resources, including others that faculty and staff could turn to, meaning that if they did not become the institution's "ADA expert," no one else would do what they have done.

Both coordinators have expressed complexities in the interactions and relationships with other actors directly responsible for accommodating deaf students. When asked about their experiences with instructors, they said that instructors were a "mixed bag," meaning some instructors were great to work with while others were more difficult to work with. Their perception of what constituted an accommodating professor was based on how much they saw the professor as willing to work with the coordinators and the deaf students. The instructor's practices directly impacted the practices of the coordinators, including the time the coordinators need to spend working with the instructor. Jane said:

> We have perfectly wonderful faculty and then the other side we have faculty that are not wanting to do things, not reading the [accommodation] letters, assuming all accommodations are the same. I have had conversations with faculty where they are saying things that are blatantly discriminatory and I have had to say that. This all requires me to escalate [report] to a dean, department chair. I will mention this, and the faculty will give in. "I'm going to tell mom or dad" kind of situation. Luckily all deans here are extremely supportive of this office so they will tell faculty to listen. It is time consuming

> and stressful. We have some professors who don't respond to emails, so we don't end up knowing about things [that need accommodations].

Instructors were equally responsible for being equipped to accommodate deaf students, yet it was not consistent. In response to instructors that were not as quick to accommodate students, the coordinators, in turn, then had to take the time to respond to the inaction of the instructors, which, as Jane mentioned above, can be stressful. Working with a challenging professor was a multi-step process, beginning with the introductory email that introduced the coordinators, informed the instructor of any access services that would be present such as an interpreter or CART services, and information that any audio content must have captions. The email then ends with the university policy numbers for reference. If an instructor did not comply, typically the coordinator would have to send a follow up email, again with the policy. And if they still did not comply, it would be escalated to their superiors, the dean and/or department chair. This process takes time, time that the coordinators or the student may not have.

Along with the turnaround time for overall compliance, coordinators were, at times, dependent on the instructor to provide them with items that may need to be captioned or transcribed. This was also a multi-step process. In the best cases, the instructor would provide the file to the coordinator and the coordinator could have the file sent off to be captioned quickly using a third-party company. However, difficulties arose when the instructor sent the file to the coordinator at the last minute and the coordinator did not have enough time to send the file off for captioning by the time the student's graded assignment was due. In those cases, the instructor would have to extend the due date of the assignment for the individual student, separating them from their peers. Margaret talked about her frustration with instructors regarding files that need to be captioned or transcribed. She would go through each individual instructor's syllabus and

Canvas course to attempt to ensure that all files were accessible. However, she noted that it was difficult for her when she was given files close to the deadlines because she was not only working with one instructor but many instructors. During the time of data collection, Margaret was responsible for a total of 52 students, with each student having multiple instructors. It was a time consuming effort for her to examine every one of the syllabi and canvas courses. As she said:

> Look, if you [the instructor] need captions, or if you need a transcript, you have to get me that information ahead of time, you have to give me at least a week ahead of time. I need to have that in an MP4 format, I can get a transcript made for you. But I need to have it at least a week prior to when it's due. So, I will have the syllabus, and I will go down, you know, if I get that the day of classes starting, you know, I will immediately start on module one and get that taken care of and follow it through till I get the whole. But it takes me a while because I'm dealing with other people besides just the one class. So, it can be very difficult. There's been a time when I said "Okay, you're just getting this to me now. I understand that there's some homework due based on this video. The student is going to need extended time because I can't get that transcript to him until later." And I hate that because that puts the student in a different position than everybody else and I'm sure they're aware of it. So having everything on time, so the student has equal access is like, like I said, it's the most important thing.

The coordinators and their use of time were, in part, at the mercy of the instructors. While in the policy it states that all directly involved in the accommodations and success of the student are a team, in practice, this team and the weight of responsibility of its team members was not distributed equally nor consistently. At times, with accommodating instructors, it was more of the intended balance, and at other times, the weight landed heavily on the shoulders of the coordinators. The coordinators were aware of that and felt that how instructors respond to the accommodations needs and processes will ultimately impact the experiences and success of the student.

Both coordinators expressed concern that they were considered accessibility experts to whom others at the university could turn with accessibility questions and concerns. However, when these questions did not relate directly to student access to education, the coordinators considered these requests a strain on their time since they were specifically responsible for student accommodation in the classroom and related educational spaces. The coordinators saw themselves as stuck. On one hand, it was not their job to be an ADA consultant, on the other hand, "if someone is not doing it, who's going to?," said Jane. Jane recounted a few times that they had either noticed a non-ADA compliant issue and had to speak up, and where they had been approached for ADA consult on topics unrelated to student academic access. In both cases, she felt frustrated because it used up her time she where she could have been working on ensuring academic access for her students. But, on the other hand, she acknowledged that if she didn't not provide her expertise, no one else might have:

> I've become the resident ADA expert. What in the fucking world does that mean? Sounds to me like I'm handling HR, complaints, checking parking, checking to make sure things are accessible. That's not a part of my job. I know I am overextending myself beyond the scope of my job. What I should be doing is providing education. One thing I noticed is our parking is not in compliance. I reached out to the person, and they had no idea what I was talking about. Mind boggling. I spoke with head of parking, who has been here a long time. They had no idea what I was talking about. I put on my education hat. Here is the ADA for code compliance parking. Is that my job? No. I don't think it is my job to provide the head of parking, who is supposed to be the expert in parking, he should know ADA parking. If you are the expert in that area, I expect that you know that. I told him, and he didn't know what that meant. I literally had to go out there and take pictures and meet the people from parking. You tell me the parking has an x number of spaces, the chart says you need a number of ADA spaces, point out where they are. It took me four months to show them and show that our parking doesn't meet that. This isn't an educational department, a classroom, physical spaces. This is parking. This is not in my job description. This took a lot of work, a lot of stress… a lot of stress. Having to follow up with them every step of the way.

Jane felt bringing to attention ADA violations, even if they were not in her jurisdiction, were important not only because she believed that no one else would bring attention to these issues, but also because she was trying to "protect the university" from possible ADA related lawsuits. In the case of departments approaching Jane as an “ADA expert,” wishing to consult with her to ensure ADA compliance, for example, these even included such things as ADA compliant height placement of hand sanitizer dispensers. The decisions to “overextend” themselves and place themselves in feelings of stress and frustration was due to their drive to create an accessible environment for all, especially their students. I argue that it is also because they felt as if they were the sole person or entity that could accomplish these things since their department is “known for resolving issues, removing barriers, and being accessible,” as Jane put it.

When it came to events on campus, these were out of the jurisdiction of the coordinators. They were responsible for access in the classroom and related spaces. However when asked about events, they did have comments. They noted that departments did go to them for accommodations requests and for assistance with events. They opened themselves to become a resource for knowledge on the accommodations process for events, starting with placing an accommodations request statement on all flyers to where to turn to in order to contract an interpreter or request CART services. As Margaret was informing me on what she would do if they received accommodations requests from event sponsors, she noted that she would inform the event sponsor of who to contact to contract for accommodations, however, sometimes SAS would provide the accommodations and the event sponsor would reimburse them, so “theoretically, or overall, they are responsible for providing this information, getting this, you know, accommodation, whether it’s an interpreter, whether it’s CART, whatever it is, it’s the department, it’s their responsibility to do that, to get them and pay for whoever.” Funding of accommodations for events is the sole responsibility of the event sponsor “theoretically’” however, in practice, sometimes SAS would provide the accommodations and the event sponsor would have to reimburse SAS for the funds. They admitted that they had provided the education and knowledge for making events accessible, training that was not a part of their job responsibilities. In talking about the things she had done to educate departments on accessible events, Jane also noted that she was “constantly trying to push the messaging for access for those who are putting events on campus. If you want me to review the material, I am happy to do that, or if you want to talk about your plans, I am happy to do that. I’ll give feedback and they’ll implement them so that’s nice, but then I go back to this isn’t part of my job.”

## Policy Implementation and Enforcement

Policy implementation and enforcement was related to every facet of the coordinators’ practices within the institution. For these coordinators, the problems they were facing were not about whether the university’s policy in it and of itself was enough. The issue they faced was policy implementation and enforcement. They had challenges with the way the institution as a whole practiced disability policy. Jane talked about the policy as a sound piece of theory, but a theory that the institution has not been able to fully put into practice successfully:

> Our policy mirrors [federal] laws. They are more specific than the laws. We developed more over the years because the initial policy wasn’t being implemented enough. Entire scope of ADA and our responsibility to provide accessibility in education, the law isn’t specific enough, so we drafted policy to do these things. Some of the policy is like theory and sounds good but from a practical procedural point, we haven’t figured that out yet. This is so large trying to figure out who has jurisdiction and who is going to drive the law. That’s where we have our gaps in the university.

According to the university disability policy, there are multiple departments involved in ensuring accessibility on campus: Student Accessibilities Services, Office of Innovative Education, Human Resources, Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion, and the ADA coordinator. What is not explicitly stated on the policy is that all colleges, departments, and units are also involved in ensuring accessibility on campus, not only in the classroom. As Jane noted, creating a system of jurisdiction, implementation, and guidelines is a huge feat. Both Jane and Margaret indicated that in the past the ADA coordinator was housed under DIEO. DIEO was also where event sponsors and potential attendees would turn to for non-classroom related accommodations request and information, like for events on campus. However, according to Margaret DIEO "doesn't do that anymore" and she had become the liaison for deaf accommodations and information for events. To add, the ADA coordinator was moved to the Office of compliance and Ethics. Jane mentioned that, for the ADA coordinator, "what they are mostly doing now is ADA complaints" and further expanded to say that the ADA coordinator "over the years, they have served in some capacity, however the role has not had enough resources to do all of the things we would like to do." This further validates the notion that these two accommodations coordinators were taking on more responsibility than their position intended. With DIEO no longer being the campus accommodations liaison and with the ADA coordinator mostly handling ADA complaints, SAS is where most turned to for assistance and guidance.

The downsizing of two entities also further widened the gaps in implementation. The challenge of overall disability policy enforcement was due to the responsible departments being disconnected from one another when, in fact, their goals overlap. As Jane explained: "Annual reports highlights overlap of work in different departments. There is no central person to look at the things we are doing, where are the holes, and this is what we are going to do to spearhead the movement." Within the realm of classroom accommodations, Margaret said that department chairs should be involved in enforcing disability policy amongst the faculty members within their departments. She said: “If you’re the chair and you’ve got all these instructors that are answering to you, I would assume, it would seem to me, that it would be your responsibility to ensure that their classes are accessible, and their course material is accessible. This all points to the current power structure of university disability policy enforcement. The accommodations coordinators, theoretically, should hold the power to ensure consistency in accommodations, quick turnaround times, and seamless interactions with other faculty and staff, however, in practice, the power they hold is much more complicated, fluid, and contested.”

Both coordinators also discussed the university practices as being “reactive” rather than “proactive” in various ways. As Jane explained the role of the ADA coordinator at the university as “mostly working with ADA complaints,” she ended with how she felt that “It is very reactionary rather than proactive. It feels like whack-a-mole where we’re punching out problems instead of being proactive.” This concept also related to their experience with the ADA-noncompliant parking, where if she had not brought it to the attention of the head of parking, it could have gone unnoticed until a complaint was initiated. Although this experience occurred 15 years prior, Margaret, speaking of policy implementation and enforcement, also had an experience to share:

> A student one time, maybe 15 years ago, staying in the dorms wanted and needed to have a doorbell, something that flashed lights. This was going to be in Housing [department], and they [the student], they were getting the runaround. “No, they couldn't do this now.”. Then the student filed suit, and it happened just like that. It was taken care of. So it’s like, “Is that the only thing that can initiate, you know, that [accommodations]?”

Margaret also shared her disappointment when UP-B was first enacted because

> they were saying any brand new classes have to be accessible, captions, whatever it needs to be accessible. If we’re rerunning a course, then you don’t really need to do anything unless you have a student requesting it as an accommodation. And we all know how that goes. Because if the student requested an accommodation, then they have to come to us, and then we have to get up to instructor and “Blah, blah, blah.”

The university’s main practice, as history has shown, was to respond retroactively to implementing accessibilities. As both coordinators mentioned, although the university had made strides, including creating new courses accessible from the point of their creation, there was still a ways to go. Jane’s approach to taking a step towards minimizing the retroactivity of the university’s practices is that the entire team “needs to be centralized. This is where they’re going to get resources, but it should be inclusive of all campuses. Having people in the team that are assigned to each campus that knows the campus.” Jane’s approach was to have a centralized department where everyone would work together to create and sustain streamlined, efficient institutional practices to reduce the likelihood of retroactive practices. With that being said, the concept of universal design came up in both interviews. Incorporating universal design in a university setting means to make everything accessible so that no one would have to request accommodations. The accommodations would be embedded in the university practices. Part of the accommodations request protocol for an event was that accommodations must be requested up to a specific time prior to the event. Some events require a full week or more, some require five days. Some events are not known about until maybe a few days prior or until the day of. Putting a time constraint on when a student can submit requests is inherently ignoring the access students that don’t have to request accommodations have to decide to go to events at the last minute. In other words, deaf students don’t have true equal access to university services. As Jane said, “full access is if the student wants to do something last minute, they can.” Being proactive means incorporating practices that are more than the bare minimum. The university “should not be doing the bare minimum.”

## Conclusion

The interviews with the coordinators illustrate how SU was fraught with complex challenges that impact the social actors responsible for providing accommodations, their practices, and therefore the overall practices of the university. As evidenced by the comments of the coordinators, the disability policy of the institution was not necessarily the policy in practice. Although the ADA, UP-A and UP-B legally requires access, the process to create and maintain these provisions are much more complex. Policy enforcement and accountability were topics of ambiguity, with no set actor to ensure accommodations are being met. Each department was responsible for the part in following the policy. The disability policy and the power of the accommodations coordinators to drive policy were in a constant state of contestation by social agents throughout different departments, whether intentionally or unintentionally. There were many actors at State University responsible for providing accommodations, all disconnected, yet there were not any set structures or guidelines in place to run a seamless operation. Faced with multiple challenges, both by other social actors and the institution's structure itself, the accommodations coordinators' practices are to informally overextend themselves in the name of access Around the time of data analysis and write-up, policy actors within the university have sought to improve communication access and awareness through increased educational resources and workshops, and the creation of a presidential advisory committee with the sole focus of disability issues at the university, but there was still more work that needed to be done. The caveat was that, ultimately, the university is just as much a participant in the capitalist world, therefore there was another separate structure within the institutional field that held higher economic power over the possibilities that could be realized by departments, or social agents that sought to restructure the protocols and responsibilities and enhance their services.

The accommodations coordinators, admittedly, went beyond the policy and their job responsibilities because of their commitment to their students, making the university accessible where they could, and ultimately, disability rights. The coordinators greatly cared about access for their students, however, as evidenced, they were also not provided with adequate resources to do all they wanted to do with the goal of access in mind. The accommodations coordinators opened themselves as a resource to others within the institution taking time away from supporting their students. Although they were willing to provide support to other social actors, moving beyond their role, they still expressed how stressful it was on them and how straining it was on their job responsibilities. The policy does discuss SAS as a point of resource for support regarding student's academic settings, meaning inside the classroom or related areas, however they are a point of expertise for other departments such as maintenance, parking, and for event sponsors. They were an informal and default resource for all of the university's disability-related queries.

# CHAPTER SIX: BEING A DEAF UNIVERSITY STUDENT

## Introduction

In interacting with disability policy and policy practices, deaf students developed strategies, practices and produced knowledge to navigate what worked and what did not work for them and if something did not work for them. Their strategies and practices highlighted some of the challenges in policy implementation and enforcement, discussed in the prior chapter. This chapter explores the experiences of eight deaf students at State University and how they have participated, contested, and reproduced power within the institution using their own practices. In this chapter, I argue that deaf students navigate the institutional field and negotiate with different social actors in complex ways. Every student has more or less different approaches to the practices they use depending on the multiple-layered situations they face. They all have varying degrees of hearing, and this factor is only part of what students use and consider when creating practices for themselves in their varying situations. Deaf students face a complex institutional structure with differing power dynamics. Depending on the setting within the institution, such as in the classroom, at a social event on campus, at the bookstore, may warrant different structures and practices. On a daily basis, deaf students are negotiating their environments and the social actors in them, implementing practices as a result of the practices of social actors and of disability policy implementation and enforcement within the university. The practices of others, such as peers, instructors, staff, and other social agents of the institutional field, towards deaf students are impacted partly by their awareness and knowledge of interacting with deaf people. This chapter shows how deaf and hard of hearing students navigate the structures and practices of the institution and how they navigate interactions with other social agents within the university. As we will see, these students sought to build their networks of support for help negotiating the university's policies and practices as they sought to establish spaces between themselves and these policies and practices, carving out social realms. Students aligned their strategies with the notion of "responsibility" as is also discussed below.

## Support System

A support system as it relates to this study is the deaf student's immediate network that more or less consists of instructors, peers, SAS coordinators, and other agents impact student university experiences on a regular basis. This system includes positions funded by the university that are specifically to provide support to students (such as SAS coordinators, faculty and staff) although it does not guarantee the students will receive their support, they also have to seek support themselves (as they would with their peers as well). The students sought to create these systems for help in navigating and negotiating their way through their interactions with administrators and classroom instructors. Instructors are dynamic social actors, that produce power through their practices that, intentionally or unintentionally, can impact the student's experiences for better or worse. Deaf students find themselves responding, and at times contesting, these practices. Instructors may be perceived as neutral agents of education and supporting academic success among students; however, these are human beings with their own background and their own perceptions, assumptions and biases. Some of the students in my study felt comfortable in their academic environments and felt that they were receiving the accommodations they needed because their instructors either were very experienced with interacting with deaf people/deaf students or were at least willing to put in the effort to listen and do what they could to accommodate the student's needs. In some cases, they would go above and beyond what the SAS accommodations letter may require of them. Other students, although they have had instructors who were accommodating, also had to negotiate between the feeling of being annoying or bothersome and/or having to choose whether receiving what they saw as full access to the accommodations they needed. While all instructors are in a similar structural position vis-à-vis the students, in practice there is variation in how individual instructors choose to deal with deaf and hard of hearing students and this treatment, in turn, will impact the student's success and their experience.

When asking the students about their experiences with their instructors and peers in the classroom, there were mixed responses. Most students expressed that their instructors for the most part provided the required accommodations. What was notable was that there were students who felt their instructors and hearing classmates willing to work with them and, therefore, they felt "lucky." They argued that having accommodating instructors is not typically the norm for deaf students in a mainstream university. Cory looked back on his time as a student at the university's Interpreting program and then Deaf Studies program, recounting how receiving accommodations was "easy" because the instructors were either deaf as well or had been interpreters. He was not concerned until he was required to take three courses outside of his major, with instructors he had never met. This was due to his prior disappointing experiences with hearing instructors. He felt that it is not uncommon for instructors to know little on how to interact and accommodate deaf students. But he was pleasantly surprised:

> It wasn't until I took three classes outside of my major that I was required to take where I had hearing instructors that didn't know anything about deaf people. Those instructors actually worked well with me, luckily. I thought I was going to face some problems with them, looking back at my experience at the community college, but no they were great. I felt relieved.

He continued to express that the instructors were very accommodating and asked questions about "how it works" to make sure they were doing the appropriate things. Because of the practices the instructors used to interact with the student and provide them with an accommodating environment, he felt "at peace" and "more connected to the university." His other instructors who were either deaf or who had been interpreters were experienced with interacting with deaf students and accommodating them; that was "a given" for Cory. However, regarding his instructors who had never worked with a deaf student before, because of the steps they took to accommodate him, he felt "connected with them" and therefore he "trusted them." Another student, Zach, who was a History major, also mentioned feeling "lucky" because of how accommodating and supportive his instructors were:

> I'm actually very, very lucky to be in a program a history program with just so many professors that are so accommodating, so nice, and, you know, easy to talk to easy to go up to, to talk about a problem with… It's very rare that you get a program where every professor you work with is so accommodating, and so nice… It's almost refreshing. It was kind of shocking to be honest with you, how accommodating, nice and courteous everybody has been with me and the history department. Yeah, so everybody's been fairly nice at USF, from my professors, they've almost, some of my professors have been so nice and so accommodating, but they treat me fairly, they treat me like any other student, they grade me fairly, they don't give me any special privileges and I like it like that.

The students who had professors who were knowledgeable, or at the very least would ask questions to become knowledgeable and who put effort in to know their deaf students and know what they needed, felt more comfortable with their instructors, and felt a sense of relief. Other students who did not have the same experiences did not feel the same way towards their instructors. Students that expressed negative experiences with their instructors talked about "picking your battles," meaning that the students felt they had to choose which accommodations to ask for Some professors were "stuck in their ways" and were not as helpful, showing their frustration with accommodations provisions. These instructors also did not know how to interact with deaf students or manage classrooms when there was a deaf student involved. For example, a few students mentioned how classroom management was an issue because people would talk over each other. Some deaf students have residual hearing and depend on turn taking to isolate and focus on the person speaking. When people speak all at once, honing in on one particular voice becomes increasingly difficult and the deaf student's residual hearing and the student themselves, become overwhelmed and fatigued. When a student relies on people speaking one at a time it can be very frustrating for them when people don not practice turn taking. The students that had challenges with this expressed that they would just let it go rather than bringing it up with the instructor, and hoped they would be able to find another way to understand the classroom discussion. However, Karter mentioned that the disorganized discourse in the classroom actually hurt his grade because he couldn't "participate in group discussion when everyone is talking at once and I can't say anything. Or they're not practicing turn taking when the class is talking, and I don't know when I'm supposed to chime in." The instructor felt that he wasn't participating enough in class and therefore did not give him full participation credit. When he tried to bring up how he felt, the instructor dismissed it.

Multiple students brought up how group discussions are difficult for them because there was typically a lack of discourse management. Some students felt that, in the face of their accommodations not being satisfied, it would be best not to complain because they felt like nothing would have been done to rectify the situation. Bryan spoke about how most of the time his videos come captioned. However, he had an instructor who wouldn't caption or provide a transcription for the pre-recorded lectures. When asked about his response, he said:

> I don’t want to complain about like, this just this is not ADA accessible. Like, I just didn’t want to go there. Choose your battles, I guess…Some of these professors, Ph.D. professors, especially older ones are like “This is how I’ve been doing it! And I’m not changing!” Like, I don’t want to have to deal with that. Go to an ombudsman, who’s a third party, who says they can’t do shit.

Alex brought up similar sentiments. He said that if an instructor was not willing to work with him for certain accommodations, he had to just deal with it because “SAS isn’t going to do anything about it.” He also felt that for some professors “They would just be kind of annoyed by the thought that they had to. You know, we all had those professors who are very set in their ways and anything that deviates from that is going to annoy them.” His response to these instructors would be to “try to stay out of the way” because at some point, he might “need them” or “need their help.” Karter also talked about the repercussions he experienced in going to SAS about an issue he was having with an instructor and his accommodations:

> You don’t really want turn to the accommodations place because I’ve done that before on a teacher and the teacher found out and they got upset because they thought I was talking bad about them to the disabilities office. And it was kind of like a back and forth and he got really upset with me. I was like “No, sir, that wasn’t like that,” but he interpreted it one way from what I told him. So,….

In attempting to have SAS mitigate the situation so that he could receive his accommodations, Zach’s instructor perceived him as “talking bad about him” rather than as a deaf student who needed support from an entity that was charged with providing accessibility accommodations at the university. In this experience, Karter decided that moving forward, he wouldn’t use SAS in this manner, therefore separating himself from part of his potential support network.

As with their instructors, the students navigated rapport-making and peer support in different ways. The constant interaction and negotiations between deaf students and their hearing peers were complex and somewhat separated from the power structure in which deaf students negotiated with their instructors. The practices and strategies that deaf students used for instructors are not necessarily the same practices they use for their hearing peers, nor did they have the same goals in mind. Instructors could determine deaf students' academic success. Deaf students' relationships with their hearing peers, however, were developed in order to make friends and colleagues and develop meaningful relationships as fellow students and young people. Some deaf students found that once they were able to show their hearing peers that they were not fundamentally different from them, they had an easier time establishing rapport. Some students approached cautiously, waiting for other students to show them how they would possibly treat them as friends, therefore purposely selecting students with whom to establish rapport whom they knew would not treat them differently because of their deafness. Students, both in the classroom and out of the classroom, would at times depend on their peers or friends whether it was for communication purposes, as an accommodation, or for liaison purposes, to build a bridge between the deaf student and other hearing students. All students expressed their want to meet other deaf students on campus to share resources, ideas, tips, and advice. In other words, to understand the practices used by other deaf students to possibly incorporate them into their own.

It was notable that deaf students used their peers as a support system in various ways, both in the classroom and in social settings on campus. The deaf students who used ASL were in deaf-centered programs, and/or were involved with an ASL student club on campus. These students explained that, in these spaces, the other students already knew how to interact with deaf people, therefore interacting with those peers was not an issue. However when in classes with mostly hearing students who did not know how to interact with deaf people, "they [the hearing students] can be a little awkward at first." In the case of Cory, he and the one other deaf student who used ASL found themselves explaining "how everything works" and that the deaf and hearing students "are all the same." Once they did that, moving forward, they didn't feel left out in the classroom. In the case of Stanislaus, sometimes his classes included students who were involved with the ASL club. Therefore, for him these students knew how to interact with deaf people and were his friends. In these classes, he depended on his friends to meet the students in the classroom:

> I typically meet people through friends that are ASL students. The people I meet begin to understand I am a normal person too. I'm just deaf. That's it. I can do anything they can do. They start to understand that I'm not someone special or someone they need to walk on eggshells with, I'm a normal person. In the classroom, as time goes on, they start to interact with me and start to see that ASL is just another language. They don't need to be afraid of me. Through interacting with other people, they start to understand and change their perception of deaf people and they become more open-minded. So, yes, it's a little hard to interact with "normal hearing" people in the classroom but my ASL friends are like a bridge between our worlds. They help show those people that deaf people are normal people too. I depend on my ASL friends to help me interact with other hearing people who don't know any ASL.

However, he said that if he was in a class with none of his "ASL friends" he would have felt more isolated. He expressed that he could "only chat with the interpreter because the interpreter knows ASL" and that he could not fully communicate with others in the class because the students "don't know ASL or how to interact with deaf students." For Stanislaus, his social practices were dependent on the social agents in the field. In the cases of Cory and Stanislaus, they had to convince the students through their practices that they were "normal," that, as Cory put it, "deaf and hearing, we're all the same," in order to move past the initial awkwardness they were perceiving from the other students to initiate the foundation for a connection, or rapport.

Tati, a student in a deaf-centered program, spoke of her classmates in relation to her previous experiences:

> They're very supportive and friendly and very interactive. Before I joined the program, I didn't have many friends because I was kind of rejected by hearing people, when they would see the cochlear implant or the hearing aids. They didn't want anything to do with deaf people, because they can't hear or speak, but, yes, I do hear and I do speak.

Other students talked about their practice of "sitting back and observing." This practice was used as a form of what they said was self-preservation. Students would observe their peers first, to figure out who they could approach and interact with depending on how they would interact with each other and also how they would interact towards them as deaf students because, as Zach explained, "you want to want to make sure that you're going to the right group of peers that are going to respect you as a person." This practice provided them with knowledge on whom they could comfortably reach out to in class.

Although the policy states that public events should be accessible, and although Jane also noted this in my interview with her, in practice it was not the case for all public events at State University. Therefore students would use different ways to navigate events and similar spaces. Some of the students reported that for social events they would use the support of their friends, or other attendees, to understand what they have missed or to help them navigate those spaces. Alex explained that events where there would be someone with a microphone standing far away from him were difficult because "they make your words kind of blend together." In this situation, he said he would usually ask someone what the person is saying or talking about. He talked about this practice as his "version of accommodations" with the caveat that he would try to ask different people as to not be "annoying" and having one person act as his "unpaid interpreter." Other students, like Karter, felt that, depending on the event, he did not need accommodations.

But he did mention that when he would go to university sportings events, given these loud, chaotic environments, his friends would help him with communication in certain areas such as in the concession stands:

> Usually because I'm going with someone else, they work with me, they help with the ordering and stuff. So it was trying to find out how much I have to pay the person. If I went by myself it probably would have been harder and then, like communicating with them, the loud environment definitely. But because I'm with someone else, I guess it made it easier for me.

When asked if it was hard to meet other deaf students on campus, all students said yes, and most students said that they have not met other deaf students on campus, except for those that have gone to the ASL club meetings. SAS was not allowed to disclose names, contact information, or anything of the sort to the deaf students registered with SAS because of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, the law which protects access to medical records. As a consequence, there was no policy in place to facilitate deaf students meeting each other. This complicated some of their experiences because most went on to talk about how beneficial they thought it would be to meet other deaf students on campus to share tips, talk about the different things they're doing for access, what works for them and what does not, and to provide mentoring and support for anyone who needed it. Karter talked about how it felt for him to go to the ASL club and being around people with whom he could communicate:

> So like at the [ASL] club, you get to meet someone who's also [deaf] and you can talk with them in ASL the whole time or you can just communicate with them. It's more comforting and reassuring. Definitely something I prefer. Trying to get with the general [hearing] population is much more frustrating, because it's not just frustrating for the person you're talking to. It's also frustrating for us, because we feel like you're not trying to understand us, and then it's like a back-and-forth thing, then they're like, "Oh my gosh," so by the time the conversation's over you're like so exhausted, you're like "That did not go well." So I enjoy it, like when I'm in that club, because it's like, okay, this is more wholesome and easier to deal with.

While some students felt that they could navigate dominantly hearing environments better than others, all expressed that it would be beneficial to them to have a space where they could meet other deaf students on campus. They felt that it would have helped them establish a support system.

## Navigating Responsibility and Choice

This theme of navigating responsibility and choice was expressed through the negotiation between students and, ultimately, the policies and structures in place that dictated their accommodations and access inside of and outside of the classroom. These students incorporated different, sometimes unique, practices in order to respond to the challenges they faced in the university. Deaf students' practices entail assigning or being assigned responsibility and the practices they implement are dependent on their interactions with other social agents. When social actors within the university, such as faculty, staff, and event hosts, contest or refuse their responsibility in fostering accessible environments for deaf students, these social actors are reallocating responsibility onto the deaf students, creating situations where deaf students respond by accepting and/or contesting this reallocation. In turn, when these social actors take up their responsibility, responsibility is not reallocated onto deaf students, therefore accessible environments are given where deaf students do not have to make up for any lack of access. When deaf students are met with university environments that are difficult for them to navigate, they are increasingly responsible for their success within the university. In other words, as students face communication barriers, lack of access, and unknowledgeable or unsupportive faculty and staff, students sometimes create practices as a substitute in an attempt to make up for these challenges so as to try to get through their college experience without failure. Where the university falters in access, the deaf students make up for it in their own ways.

When asking students about their accommodations, most students expressed that they pick and choose the accommodations they wanted to use based off of the accommodations letters that the SAS office provides. That is, they said, if the instructor was willing to provide the accommodations to begin with. Stanislaus expressed that, for them, the accommodations they use depends on the class: “If I feel I don’t need someone to take notes for me, then I don’t use that accommodation.” Alex and talked about how since he went “virtual,” meaning his classes transitioned to online course, he didn’t need many of his accommodations. Bryan shared a similar experience, saying he didn’t need one of his accommodations because he was taking online courses. Some students expressed that they would use their “extra time on quizzes and tests” accommodations if they felt like they needed to. Some said that if their instructors offered for the student to take the quiz or test in class and arrive a bit early, or stay a little late, they would accept that offer because they didn’t like using the testing center. A few students noted using their own resources as accommodations for class. One student said that they bought their own FM system that connected directly with their hearing aid and could control the volume with their cell phone. Another student noted that they have a live captioning app they would use on their phone in class. When asked why he used his own resources, one student talked about his experience as a deaf person who grew up completely oral, meaning he didn’t use ASL to communicate, and that while those who used ASL had interpreters, the accessible technology that was around during his time was very limited, so ultimately “I think that my path, it led me to kind of rely on my own resources now, than you know relying on total help of the SAS department.” Depending on certain limitations, such as with the instructors, deaf students negotiate and assess what accommodations they feel are necessary depending on the class as a form of responsibility. While SAS does provide some accessibility technology for accommodations such as FM systems and CART, the students also negotiate whether that is enough for them. They are in constant negotiation with their sense of responsibility, being responsible for what accommodations they want to implement depending on multiple factors, and what supplemental accommodations they choose to bring into the classroom while still under the constraints of the instructor.

Stanislaus and Cory detailed the challenges they experienced using on campus services at the bookstore and in the academic advising department. They both had a hard time navigating these spaces, partly because they had difficulties in communicating with bookstore workers and their academic advisors, but also because of the perceived practices and attitudes of the agents the students were approaching for help. Stanislaus expressed that with the bookstore attendants, he would tell them that he was deaf and would ask them to lower their masks to read their lips, but then "they'll still keep talking and I'm like, 'You can keep talking all you want but until you lower your mask, I won't understand you.'" Cory spoke about the difficulties he had at the bookstore when he tried to get an attendant to help him find a book:

> I had what I needed on my phone, but they would run around, ignore me, walk away. It ended up being a lengthy process. They were taking too long with me. It was a waste of my time, so I went to look for the book myself. I found it, but it took me an hour to find the book. I wish it was a faster process, it shouldn't have taken an hour for me to find a book by myself. When I showed them the message on my phone, they would look somewhere else and help other people. So, you'll help a hearing person because you can speak with them, but because I'm deaf you don't have enough time to read or help me?

Cory also talked about an experience he had with the academic advising office. When he first enrolled at the university, he made a last-minute appointment with the advisor to understand what would happen if he switched from one major to another one. They wrote notes back and forth, and "that was fine, but the responses were short." He needed in-depth information, but he did not receive any. He felt it "was awkward and part of a communication barrier." Both students mentioned the difficulties with access out of the classroom, as mentioned before, but also with other areas on campus like the café and Starbucks. In these experiences, they feel they are tasked with the responsibility to navigate communication because of the way they are perceived as deaf students, therefore needing "extra steps" for communication. The students said they were responsible for explaining to these social agents on campus how to communicate with them. They said it might work, and it might not, or it might take a little extra time for the deaf students to explain depending on the social practices of those agents. These experiences were moments of frustration and exhaustion for them. They explained that they are not uncommon situations. When Stanislaus spoke of access across campus, outside of the classroom, he talked about how outside of the classroom campus services aren't accessible for him and that there is an extra step of having to explain himself to the social agents with whom he would try to interact:

> At least in the classroom, it's limited but I have the interpreter there. When I go around on campus like the library, student center, bookstore, etc., I don't have an interpreter there or any of my accommodations, I don't have access. So I need to write notes back and forth, I need you to lower your mask. Sometimes I'll try to bring my ASL friends with me to help me interpret for me, but I also don't want to depend on them because I need to grow and support myself and not always depend on others. I need a world where I can speak up for myself because I need to go into a building and be able to communicate with ease. I want to go into a building and the hearing person acknowledges that I am deaf and writes notes back and forth, lower their mask, write messages back and forth on the phone. I need them to be ready to accommodate, to work with me because sometimes it takes a minute and then I look around and all eyes are on me. I don't know. Oh well.

These students knew what they needed to do in order to communicate with others, they had strategies in place to communicate with those that do not know ASL but are met with the constraints of the practices used by these social agents who do not know how to interact with them.

Some students expressed that they didn’t feel the need to request accommodations for events, they managed to get by fine without them. Other students, like those that depend on an ASL interpreter, do feel that they need accommodations for events. At State University, there were two entities that provided interpreters: the SAS and an interpreting agency that is run through the interpreting training program at one of the colleges of the university. Interpreters funded by SAS were meant for academic settings only, meaning the classroom, academic meetings, and anything directly related to the student’s coursework. Interpreters funded by the interpreting agency were meant to cover anything else on campus. They were used for university lecture series, commencement ceremonies, social events, and such. However, in practice, it is more muddled than that. Stanislaus and Cory both expressed confusion with the interpreter accommodation and requests protocol, with Cory stating:

> Sometimes we have to request through disability services, some events we have to request through the interpreting agency, but which, when? It’s very confusing. It’s not clear who you have to go to. The process easily confused me. For example, with the interpreting agency you can only request an interpreter for specific events like a board meeting. With disability services, only some events are possible. I went there to request an interpreter for an event, and they said I had to contact the interpreting agency. When I asked the interpreting agency about another event, they told me to contact disabilities services.

Both students experienced frustration because there was no clear process for them to request accommodations for an event. Cory said that this constant back and forth and the confusion of to whom to request access led him to feel like he “shouldn’t go to events” and that he just would not request interpreters. He felt like he “lost that time.” Stanislaus said that he was told by an interpreter that all events have interpreters assigned. However when he went to a student organization-led event, they did not have one. Cory noted that for “big events, like a concert, there’s an interpreter always there because they might expect deaf people to show up.” For smaller events, like movies on the lawn, he said that sometimes they have captions, sometimes they don’t. In other words, sometimes smaller events are accessible, sometimes they are not. Stanislaus expressed that he preferred to go to student organization-led events because events hosted by State University were boring for him because those events generally don’t have interpreters. With requesting an interpreter, he felt “weird” about it because he “might be the only deaf person that goes that needs and interpreter and I feel like it’ll put a spotlight on me,” and that he would “feel responsible to be there the whole time because I am the audience for that interpreter. I’m the one that requested the interpreter, so I feel like I have to be there the entire time.” Both students also expressed that many events were not announced, or they did not find out about it until a few days prior to the event. In this situation “it is impossible to get an interpreter there.” Cory talked about what this situation would look like if he were interested in a theater event:

> If you’re talking about theatre events, okay, so I need the background information, what does it look like? What do I have to do? I need all of that before I put in a request, but sometimes it’s too late, like the show starts in two days. It’s hard to request an interpreter for that.

Bryan also supported this by agreeing that State University does not do a great job of promoting their events or clubs. Stanislaus said that he would go to more events if they already had planned and advertised to have an interpreter there. “If the interpreter is already there, I don’t feel the need to stay the whole time. I won’t feel like I’m wasting the interpreter’s time.” He went on to talk about how felt it would be better for the university to practice universal design, “where an interpreter is placed at all events.” Students are responsible for requesting accommodations for events, yet there are constraints to this process. Although policy stated, and the accommodations coordinators confirmed, that all flyers were required to have an accommodation request statement, in practice this does not happen consistently. There is also the constraint of the “last-minute.” It was virtually impossible for deaf students to request accommodations right before an event, most of the time through no fault of their own. If deaf students do not have access to “last-minute” as their hearing peers do, that begs the question: Do deaf students have full access?

In general, students are responsible for attending class, for taking in the lecture, for completing and submitting their assignments, and for overall success in their coursework. In various ways, these deaf students expressed the extra effort they put in to make sure this success was realized. Alex said that there is “a little bit more work that comes with making sure you did not miss something” when he spoke on how he navigates spoken lectures in the classroom. He talked about having to be extra careful when doing the readings because he may not have heard something being said by the instructor during the lecture. He noted that some days were better than others based on how tired or stressed he was. Karter shared how frustrated he would be after class sometimes because he knew he did not get all the information from the lecture so then he had to “work even harder. Like you just sat through a three-hour class and now you have to listen to a three-hour class on a recording and it’s a waste of time so it’s more tiresome.” Due to the classroom environments in which these students are located, it was possible for them to miss out on some of the important information they needed in order to do well on an assignment or take a test. They are aware of these risks. Therefore, they implement their own practices, putting in extra effort to ensure that what they did not hear in the classroom did not affect them negatively.

For his major, Stanislaus spoke about how they required him to take two semesters of a foreign language, and in the spirit of not wanting to limit himself, he took Chinese. He requested an interpreter for this course, but SAS would not provide him one due to it being an immersive class with little to no English. He described the efforts he went through to be successful in the class but also to successfully satisfy his requirement:

> I struggled in that class because there is no interpreter and the instructor does not know how to work with deaf people, so I have to figure it out myself, figure out how I am going to succeed in class. So I transferred to an online class with more one-on-one instruction, which I was successful in, however, I don't get the foreign language credit for it because that specific online language course didn't count towards a foreign language credit. So I *have* to go in person. I tried transcription but it wasn't working well for me since the class is fully immersive, meaning everything is said in Chinese. I went to SAS and asked if there is anything else that could help me and that's when they offered the FM system. The FM system helped *a lot*, but it was still not enough because with the system, it only catches what the instructor is saying, not the rest of the class so I couldn't hear them, and with masks, I couldn't read their lips.

Ultimately, he took matters into his own hands – attempting to take an online course, and when that couldn't work, going to SAS for an FM system – to find a successful way to take the course and satisfy his major requirement. Although he put in the effort and was able to find a solution to successfully navigate the instructor, the challenge that the social and group aspects of the class posed were not resolved, leading him to feel isolated and embarrassed. Cory talked about how his time as a "deaf minority student" was not easy in a "hearing college." He explained how his experiences depended on the "hearing perspective of the deaf student" and that he had to work hard in both the classroom and the university community. He talked about how he was proud that he graduated but not happy because there weren't any "fun or pleasurable experiences with the hearing students" and that it was a "different environment, a different culture, a different perspective, just different." For many of these students, putting in the extra effort they had to to make up for what they were missing, in whatever way that meant for them, was part of their responsibility to ensure success in their classes and in their university experience.

## Conclusion

Deaf students navigate multiple subfields within the institutional field, implementing unique, strategic practices that will help them succeed. “Success” was defined in ways that were meaningful and individual. Their practices are dependent on the strategies they develop in relation to what they see as their challenges, and, more generally, in the way they perceive the world, but they are also dependent on the practices instilled by other social actors within the field. These students found themselves negotiating and contesting the various ways social actors perceived them, and the various ways social actors would provide, or not provide accommodations and access. Each deaf student’s support system within the institution looks different and therefore provides different challenges, obstacles, and successes. These support systems impact the amount of responsibility deaf students may perceive themselves to have.

Deaf students sought out social support academically and socially in informal ways as they navigated going to a mainstream large state university. For some deaf students, peer support was a supplement to or a replacement for a lack of academic and social accommodations, as a way for them to obtain any verbalized information they might have missed, for other students peer support, with students familiar with interacting with deaf students or with some kind of ASL fluency, created a bridge to meet and socialize with other students. Deaf students used peer support as a practice to navigate the challenges they faced being deaf in a dominantly hearing university. They also had to navigate a lack of support with the instructors that were not accommodating or did not know how to interact with them or manage classrooms with deaf students present. Students felt they were limited in what they could do due to the perceived attitudes of instructors, the power dynamics of instructor-student relations and the perceive role of SAS as passive actors. Deaf students as supporting each other was also lacking since they didn’t have access to each other due to the lows preventing SAS from sharing student information with them.

I argue that students allocated extra responsibility onto themselves as a response to the lack of resources or support they were receiving from policy actors and in efforts aimed at “success”. Deaf students navigated responsibility in different aspects of university life. Students partly dictated the practices they chose depending on their perception of who was responsible for what giving certain settings within the institution. Students felt they had to put in extra work to make sure they succeeded in class by listening to audio recordings of their lectures and obtaining missed information from peers. They felt responsible for taking it upon themselves to navigate their accommodations upon receipt of their accommodations letters, indicating that most of the students felt that once the letter was out of the coordinator’s hands, that was the extent of their responsibility to the students. While most students spoke positively of SAS, they did not use them as source of continuous support. Upon receipt of their accommodations students also used or did not use different accommodations options depending on if they felt they needed them for a specific class. In many ways, students felt responsible over communication and interactions with instructors, peers, and employees to ensure they got what they needed, whether it was a lesson plan for the course, or books from the bookstore. In social settings, some students felt responsible for figuring out a way to obtain any missed information and in requesting interpreters, students felt responsible in navigating the accommodations request process, not with the event sponsor, but with SAS or the interpreting agency which are the behind the scenes entities that the event sponsors would reach out to rather than the student. In that aspect, students felt responsible for a process that was not made clear to them from the beginning.

In analyzing the ethnographic data through practice theory, I have shown how students navigated the structures of the institution and its social and policy actors, including their instructors, their peers, SAS, and employees of the university. The students are seen as responding to powerful structures that provide a landscape with limitations. The students, aware of the limits, adjust a head of time. At the same time, these structures ten to circumscribe the practices of students requiring an adjustment of everyday behavior in accordance. However, where the divergence of practice theory applies is that the students are aware of the limitations of the landscape and do contest, resist, and ask for change. These students were social actors participating in the larger structure of the institution using practices and strategies they used that responded to and contested power dynamics, policy and social structures within the institution. This approach was crucial in understanding how the interactions and relationships between the deaf students and the different actors they interacted with.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: EXPRESSED NOT ASSUMED

## Introduction

Van den Heujj, Neijenhuis, and Coene (2022) suggest inviting deaf students to co-create policy for deaf students in higher education. The ideas is to create many possible implications to address expressed needs, rather than assumed needs. This study incorporates applied anthropological components in an effort to provide readers with implications that can contribute to increased access and success for deaf students. In this chapter, I argue that improvement for deaf student experiences at a university includes preparing and informing deaf students, creating aware and understanding employees, including instructors, and fostering mentorships and partnerships across campus and with external entities Deaf students, among disabled students, are impacted by university disability policies and policy practices, therefore, in practicing applied anthropology, I conducted focus groups with students that were previously interviewed and asked for their suggestions based on their prior testimonials to investigate how they would like the university to move forward in improving their practices. This chapter provides the reader with insight into what deaf students feel may impact their university experience in a positive way. Students were asked about what they see as possible improvements in preparing and informing deaf students, awareness for instructors and staff, and fostering mentorship and partnerships. These topics aligned with the student's experiences as they felt they were not fully prepared for, or informed of, many different institutional practices, nor their rights and responsibilities within the institution. Further, instructors and employees lacked awareness in accommodating the needs of deaf students, whether in the classroom or in other university spaces, such as for social events, and there was a felt need for mentorship and social networking opportunities with other deaf students. Deaf students in mainstream universities want to be knowledgeable in their roles, responsibilities, and their rights within the institution; access to other deaf peers; for instructors and employees to have more awareness and knowledge in interacting with deaf students; and partnerships across campus and with local entities to foster self and professional development that can help them both during their time as a university student and after graduation. The hope for deaf students is to be able to navigate the institutional field with reduced contestation and challenges from social agents who are meant to be a part of their support network while simultaneously feeling a sense of community involvement and being centered in university practices.

## Preparing and Informing Deaf Students

The students identified many resources for deaf students to use when navigating certain settings and situations. Overall, the students pointed to wanting as much information as possible on the processes and protocols that impact them and being adequately prepared to handle settings where their accommodations might be contested. The students expressed that when they first arrived and went through orientation, there was not any information provided to them about SAS and registering for accommodations. Participants in this study felt strongly that those who are in charge of university orientations should be trained to provide those resources to incoming students. As Stanislaus said:

> I went to orientation for SU, and they did not have any information about the SAS office, and I think it's important to have that information. I had to ask them questions about access and who I need to contact for that information, and they weren't sure. They said "Uhm.. I'm not sure who you have to contact but I think maybe the disability office" but it was obvious they didn't know what to say about that. I believe the people that host

> orientation they need to be trained so if a deaf person shows up or anyone with a disability shows up they can let them know what SU resources are available for t them…they need to let students know about the disability resources on campus, not just about the cafeteria or where to go for class. People have disabilities. They need to know of all the resources available to them.

They brought up self-advocacy training, especially for incoming deaf/disabled freshman students, to learn to self-advocate for accommodations, both on the accommodations letter and off, such as for classroom management and also how to be proactive, such as using instructor's office hours and the syllabus and course schedule to one's advantage and in preparation, and tips and tricks led by prior deaf university students that may help them navigate social life and the classroom. In discussing this, they talked about how they could not wait for people to want to work with them, they had to make people work with them, in order to have what they deemed necessary for their success. As Zach said:

> I think there needs to be a workshop to really teach these kids that come in that are 17, 18, 19, years old to be more proactive more assertive in what they need, how they need it and when they need it. I think a lot of times we get complacent; I've been deaf since birth, and it's been hard. It wasn't until I was 21, 22, 23 when I realized I can't wait on somebody to come to me. I have to go to them, and sometimes I'm so assertive, I drive them nuts, but that's what you have to do. You have to make sure you have the necessary tools to be a successful student…Giving them these tools on how to be assertive I think will go a long way in building up communication and rapport between students and SAS.

They wanted to see some kind of resource outlining the chain of command they could refer to when needing to address issues with accommodations, the clear roles and responsibilities of the students and of SAS, the students' over all rights to accessible environments, and the protocol for requesting accommodations for different events and whom to contact. Students discussed how they felt out of the loop and were not fully sure what their rights were as deaf university students. As Karter said:

> What I never understood when it came to SU for the first time were the rights I have as a student. I actually found out from my mom not from SU about the disability act and everything like that. There are procedural safe guards in the [K12] IEP, “this is what is supposed to be followed, these are the rights you have as an individual, these are the services being provided to you”…if they [SAS] had the rights listed on their homepage, or brief rights listing, a poster somewhere saying “this is the disability act, this is what we promise you, this is our agreement, this is what we have, this is what you’re supposed to be getting” like a poster right in front of the [SAS] office, that would be great…If they had that available, “Oh, these are my rights, and this is what they need to do and this is what I’m responsible for.”

## Awareness and Education for Instructors and Staff

The main concern for students regarding instructors and employees were what they saw as the lack of awareness and understanding of how to interact with deaf students or manage a classroom with a deaf student present. With instructors, students brought up a university-wide exploratory survey to assess what instructors know and do not know regarding interacting with deaf students and having deaf students in the classroom and based off of the results, creating trainings, and resources for instructors. They discussed this ideas as a response to the large amount of effort it takes for them to work with instructors that are not knowledgeable in instructing deaf students. They felt responsible for the practices of the instructors. As Karter said:

> Has it ever been done where the department ever sent out an email to all the teachers at SU and do like a deaf or hard of hearing survey? It gave a general basis on do you know how to do this with this student. This is what they do for teachers generally, like for my special needs students, they ask us and have you worked with students with severe disabilities have you worked with students in wheelchairs, because if we haven’t then, we get training on it. So if you reach a certain score, then you have to get training, so you’re properly able to provide the accurate services for the person who has a disability. So, I mean, so many of them [instructors] that I’ve had at SU, whether it was in person or virtual, that struggled, and you have to, like consistently stay on top of them about providing services. Then they probably haven't really or aren't knowledgeable about how to provide services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and like, either it’s virtual or in person is still just providing the services. I mean, if the survey was sent out, to see who does and who doesn’t, you know, understand it. That might help a bit.

Students wanted the university to “create more accommodating professors,” as one said, meaning from the moment instructors are hired they are provided with training and resources to best navigate having deaf students in their courses. Ideally, this would include providing an awareness that students are allowed to use all of the accommodations they requested through SAS, including recording devices. The students expressed that they wanted to see all State University employees “be more knowledgeable with communication access efforts” in order to reduce the times deaf students are met with flustered employees, or employees that ultimately ignore them out of discomfort or lack of understanding. Tati said:

> I think it’s good to have videos for staff, instructors, everyone that works at SU to know how to help deaf students. We don’t want to be left out. What if we’re walking to class with hearing friends which is fine, some hearing people like to interact with deaf people, but if another hearing person, staff or teacher is rude to us because we’re deaf or because we don’t speak or hear. I think having a video that they can watch will help them understand and I want that because most of us feel left out. We’re not getting support from them if we need something. If there’s an emergency and we need something quick, they overlook our emails, our comments. They’ll say, “hold on” and then walk away and forget us.

## Fostering Mentorship and Partnerships

My study participants felt that deaf students in a mainstream university could benefit from mentorship, community formation, and partnerships that directly impact them in positive ways. Students expressed the desire to have a mentorship program amongst the deaf student population on campus, where experienced deaf students could be “supportive of the newly enrolled students and provide advice and insight to improve chances of success in the university,” as one study informant said. They also talked about wanting a space through SAS where they could get together and connect, such as a “Coffee Mondays where students can show up and mingle,” one offered. The students emphasized that they wanted the university and SAS to provide the opportunity and the space so deaf students can socialize with and help other deaf students. Zach said:

> I think we [SU] need to do a better job of trying to put deaf and hard of hearing people in a position to help the new deaf and hard of hearing people that come in. Who knows the deaf and hard of hearing community better than people that are deaf or hard of hearing you now…They understand what deaf and hard of hearing communities experience. They understand our issues, how to rectify our issues, how to manage those issues and how to maneuver within a structure, according to SU, that doesn't allow deaf and hard of people to maneuver fully because they don't have the right tools in place.

The students also brought up ideas related to their future success post-graduation. They brought up partnership ideas such as the SAS partnering with the university's career services department to provide more equitable support in finding a career after graduation and partnering with deaf professionals and creators to go to the university and present their careers, how they came about being in their career roles, and their overall experience being deaf. Stanislaus said:

> We can bring in deaf professionals to present about how their experience graduating college, what did they do after. They can come present about their experience and deaf students can ask questions, gain more information.

Students also expressed that they wanted the university to partner with their deaf students and local deaf people in the community to keep State University "accountable and growing" by conducting annual focus groups with deaf students to understand their experiences on campus and to host open public discussions on the state of the university from a deaf lens. They expressed that in doing this, State University could become more "deaf friendly" and prospective deaf students would be more willing to attend.

## Conclusion

This chapter explored different ideas for the university to implement in an effort to increase access and success within the institutional field for deaf students. Although these ideas were created by the students themselves, there are other social agents that play a part in the implementation and success of these programs, initiatives, and resources. SAS and disability access related departments and entities, such as with the ADA coordinator, were not adequately resourced and were unsupervised to implement new practices to improve deaf student success. For deaf students to be taken seriously within their institutional field, those that have the power must provide a platform to raise their concerns and work with them to reduce the challenges social agents and the institution itself brings forth, therefore increasing their chances of success. This includes providing the adequate resources so the expressed needs of the students can be implemented appropriately. The university's practices must allow for these spaces, otherwise it is a contestation of their voices, rooted in power.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

## Introduction

Through policy analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews with two accommodations coordinators and eight deaf university students, this thesis explicate how deaf students create and use practices and strategies to respond and contest the practices by other social agents within the university. This chapter revisits the existing literature to lay out the study's contribution to anthropological theory and recommendations for further research. This chapter also provides possible, interventions informed by interviews and focus groups, and recommendations for policy initiatives.

## Contributions to Anthropological Theory

This ethnography responds to gaps in research on higher education and policy practices and their impacts on deaf students. This study contributes to and builds on prior deaf studies and anthropological works in deaf anthropology and education (Johnson and Fann 2015; Keating and Mirus 2003; Park, Fitzgerald and Legge, 2015; Pfister 2017; Van den Heujj, Neijenhuis, and Coene 2022) by highlighting a neglected nexus of deaf anthropology and anthropology of policy as a space to more wholly analyze not only the deaf student experience, but how policy practices make an impact on those experiences.

This study contributes to existing research in deaf studies and deaf anthropology in various ways. The deaf student participants have evidenced that placing them in hearing-centered settings along with using hearing communication strategies did not automatically allow for full access and equitable integration with their hearing counterparts, agreeing with Keating and Mirus' (2003) conclusions that the concept of mainstreaming and mainstreaming as practice are not always aligned and that deaf students are not receiving the social equivalent to their hearing peers. As evidenced through their self-expressed identities within deafnesses, these students have also shown the importance of straining from homogenous ideologies of deafness and the deaf experience as they all navigated their experiences with other social actors in various ways, partly depending on their level of residual hearing, their spoken language preference, and their accommodations, contributing to Pfister's (2017) conclusions that "variation represented by ethnographic examples contrasts the standardized expectation that all deaf children can achieve similar outcomes based upon oralist goals and medicalized intervention" (158). In this case their experiences did not align with the standardized expectation that all deaf university students can realize similar results based upon the disability policy implementation and enforcement practices at the time. While the findings from this research agreed with Johnson and Fann (2015) that deaf college students were not completely aware about their rights to access and the protocols for obtaining accommodations, and that the students wanted more engagement from the accommodations office, this study furthers these findings by incorporating the experiences of the accommodations coordinators, providing insight into the administrative challenges of policy implementation and enforcement that impact the experiences of deaf university students. In conducting a study that places deafnesses and deaf experiences as heterogenous, as deaf anthropology seeks to do, it further contributes to deaf anthropology by investigating the experiences of the accommodations coordinators, alongside conducting policy analysis to provide an increased holistic understanding of deaf student practices and limitations within the larger university structure.

Using both an interpretation of policy and ethnographic methods to investigate policy as practice has proved beneficial and as a contribution to policy research. This study is evidence that solely conducting policy analysis and an interpretation of policy is not enough. It must be paired with ethnographic research with policy actors, those who implement and enforce the policy, and students, or those who are most directly affected by specific policies. This provides a more representative picture of the structure of the institution and how it puts policy into practice and may provide more accurate implications for that setting Policy as written is not always indicative of how said policy is practiced. Ambiguous policy paired with minimal guidelines for implementation and enforcement can provide varied outcomes. In the case with social settings on campus, students did not have as much access to these settings, partly due to the ambiguous nature of the policy regarding events on campus and the lack of concrete guidelines for departments to follow, and partly due to the defunding of the ADA coordinator over time, therefore social settings lacked accessibility which conflicts with the disability policy itself.

In turn, policy analysis and interpretation of policy contributes to deaf anthropology. A focus of policy and policy practices as a primary cause of practices implemented by deaf students and the social and policy actors that impact their experiences not only provided reasons for why deaf students experience challenges within the university setting, but it also provided a comparison between what the policy stated, what the actual policy practices are, and what the deaf students do in response. This highlighted that, at times, the accommodations and access deaf students were receiving at best, met the minimum requirements according to policy, at worst, did not. This contradicted some of the expressed needs of the students, such as classroom management, that were not accommodations according to policy or SAS, but nonetheless had a crucial impact on their academic success. Prior similar research focused only on deaf student experiences, neglecting the practices, perceptions, and roles of the accommodations coordinators. Accommodations coordinators are not static, passive actors. They also have their own challenges within the institutional structure in which they are responding and contesting to and this research is evidence of that. The practices within an institution are much too complex to only conduct ethnographic research with one population.

Bourdieu's practice theory alongside a critique of his concept of habitus also contributes to the nexus of deaf anthropology and anthropology of policy in that it invites a critical investigation of the institutional structure – the university – and the structures within – pertaining to disability accommodations and access – in addition to relationships and interactions that are formed and contested. This approach also provides a lens in which to investigate knowledge production and production and contestation of power within the structure and amongst each other. Policy influences all areas of life, so it is nearly impossible to ignore (Shore and Wright 1997) and Bourdieu's practice theory can provide a lens to investigate how actors interact with the many facets of policy. This theoretical approach was useful to understand how deaf students and the accommodation coordinators, respectively, respond to the institutional field and its social and policy structures. This approach allowed for a focus on the strategies and resources employed by the deaf students and the faculty directly responsible for policy implementation. Where this study diverged was in his concept of habitus and his approach to the economic structure as separate and irrelevant to the institutional structure, in this case, the university. Bourdieu's concept of habitus had social actors as static, non-reflexive, disembodied, and their position within the social structure as inescapable, however, both the accommodations coordinators and the deaf students have proven that their everyday are full of practices that place them as dynamic actors faced with varying situations and challenges that are an intertwinement of participation and resistance of the systems in place and of other social actors within the university. The accommodation coordinators were in a position where they were both responding to the power structures of the university while simultaneously reproducing power structures that were directed as a response to the university and using reproduction of power to navigate interactions with deaf students. From the student's position within the social structure of the university, the accommodation coordinators and the university were one in the same, as in part of the same position within the social structure of the university, therefore the ways the deaf students reproduced and contested power of the institution also include the accommodation coordinators as an agent within that realm. This study highlights the strategies and resources employed by the deaf students and the faculty directly responsible for policy implementation. As noted by the coordinators, the university has also defunded accessibility and compliance efforts over time, therefore creating challenges due to lack of resources that lead to inconsistencies in access across the university.

## Applied Implications

The findings from this ethnographic research can provide universities and university departments that directly serve in accommodations provisions for deaf students insight into the impacts of institutional practices on deaf student's university experiences, and ultimately, their success. They can form a basis for universities to create their own ethnographic studies among their deaf student population to build on this study and provide nuanced insight into the practices of their specific institutional practices. This research is intended to be shared in post-secondary education conferences, conferences relating to disabled students in post-secondary educational settings, and with deaf community leaders and organizers interested in deaf student's university experiences. This research supports Van den Heujj, Neijenhuis, and Coene (2022) who argue that universities must provide a platform for their deaf students so they can share their expressed needs rather universities basing policy and policy practices off of their assumed needs.

Both coordinators and some of the deaf students alluded to the idea of universal design, a proactive approach to access, making everything accessible always before anyone would have to request accommodations. In a utopian world, this approach may be possible, however as previously mentioned throughout this study, the university had limited funding, therefore may not take too keenly to fundings a fully accessible approach to all aspects of their universities, especially if they had a history of reducing funds in accessibility efforts. This aligns with prior research that discusses the disdain entities to accommodations provisions because this requires them to spend their own funds (Watson 1994) but as research has also shown, accommodations are not expensive (Percy 1993; Scotch 2000). Accessibility technology has also come a long way since the enactment of the ADA of 1990. It is worth it for universities to investigate how they can make their universities more accessible and conducting these investigations with their disabled students maybe provide them with an expressed route to those resources because they know what works for them.

## Recommendations for Future Research

First and foremost, I call for increased research on the nexus of deaf anthropology and anthropology of policy. Conducting this study has shown that it is not enough to only obtain deaf experiences and that it is important to turn a holistic gaze onto systems that impact their experiences and their success. In doing this, the researcher may have a more accurate representation for applied implications. As this research was constrained in time and resources, further research should be conducted with a larger deaf student population that is equally diverse, with varying degrees of hearing and varied methods of communication within a university. Additionally, as evidenced in the policy analysis and participant testimonials, other social actors and departments are involved in shaping the deaf university student experience, such as instructors, administrators, and various staff on campus. Conducting similar research that incorporates participants of varying positions and responsibilities may prove valuable. At the time of this study, the ADA of 1990 is a 33 year old law with deaf students that are old enough to remember their lives prior, and the timeline of technological advancement in accessible technology as they have gone throughout their lives. As each individual's life stories and experiences have an impact on the practices they implement, conducting a comparative analysis among younger deaf university students and older deaf university students may provide insight into the practices they use to navigate those spaces.

## Recommendations for Policy Initiatives

Based on the results of this study, it is clear that universities need to assess their existing disability policies and evaluate how they are being practiced. Jane, one of the coordinators interviewed for this study, described the system responsible for accommodations and accessibilities within State University as broken up into departments with no communication amongst each other and recommended that the university have a centralized person or team to bridge the departments together and oversee and manage their efforts. The findings from this study provide evidence that this solution could be efficient and beneficial for all involved, including the deaf students. The findings also support the recommendations provided by the deaf students through the focus groups. The students faced challenges within the institution when their university support networks faltered, or in some respects, were non-existent. The coordinators have shown that they want to support their students to their fullest extent but were frustrated with the lack of support and resources that they were given. The main recommendation based on this ethnographic research is for universities to use time, resources, and funding to invest in providing truly equitable and accessible spaces for their disabled students, to invest in the departments responsible for providing accommodations and access, and to establish resources that aim to provide disability awareness and knowledge to all social actors within the university.

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## APPENDIX 1: VERBAL CONSENT

# Script for Obtaining Verbal Informed Consent

Information to Consider Before Participating in this Research Study

**Title:** The Impacts of Accommodations Policy and Implementation on the Lived Experiences of Deaf Students at a Large University

**Study # 004497**

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**Overview:** You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: The study is being led by Tailyn Osorio who is a research student at the University of South Florida. This person is called the Principal Investigator. Dr. Kevin Yelvington is study personnel with the role of faculty advisor.

Study Details: This study is being conducted at the University of South Florida. The purpose of the study is to learn of the lived experiences of d/Deaf and hard of hearing students at the university level relating to communication and accommodation access. The research includes a one-hour interview and, if you choose to participate, a two-hour focus group.

Subjects:

Students - You are being asked to take part because you have identified yourself as a current or recently former college student with hearing loss that is registered with Student Accessibility Services.

Accommodations Coordinators – You are being asked to take part because you have identified yourself as currently holding the position of accommodations coordinator at Student Accessibility Services.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start.

For students: Your decision to participate or not participate will not affect your student status, course grade, recommendations, or access to future courses or training opportunities.

For employee participants: Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. There is no cost to participate. You will not be compensated for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your record must keep them confidential.

**Total Number of Subjects**

About 10-15 individuals will take part in this study.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal**

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Decision to participate or not participate will not affect your student status or job status.

**Benefits**

We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

**Risks or Discomfort**

This research is considered to be minimal risk. Due to the nature of in-person procedures, there is a risk of transmission of the novel coronavirus. While precautions will be taken, the researcher cannot guarantee that the participant will not be exposed to the virus. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

We will do our best to keep your records private and confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Certain people may need to see your study records. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the principal investigator and academic advisor.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records.

This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP).
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, and staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

Your information collected as part of this research, even if identifiers are removed, will NOT be used or distributed tor future research studies.
We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

For Phase 2: Focus Groups –

Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind you to respect the privacy of your fellow subjects and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

**You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints.**

If you have any questions, concerns, complaints, about this study, call or text Tailyn Osorio at (813) 586-4344 or contact by email at osorio10@usf.edu. If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu

**Consent to Take Part in Research**

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that be giving verbal consent, I am agreeing to take part in research.

**Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent and Research Authorization**

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what they can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject uses the language that was used to explain this research and verbal/signed informed consent in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

# APPENDIX 2: IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION

UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

July 15, 2022

[redacted]

Dear Tailyn Osorio:

On 7/13/2022, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

| | |
|---|---|
| Application Type: | Initial Study |
| IRB ID: | STUDY004497 |
| Review Type: | Exempt 2 |
| Title: | The Impacts of Accommodations Policy and Implementation on the Lived Experiences of Deaf Students at a Large University |
| Protocol: | • Osorio Tailyn IRB Protocal Submission.docx; |

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

**Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance**
FWA No. 00001669
University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 / 813-974-5638

Page 1 of 2

UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

Sincerely,

Jennifer Walker
IRB Manager