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# Acculturation and Identity Development of Deaf Ethnic Minorities

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Glennise Candice Schlinger entitled "Acculturation and Identity Development of Deaf Ethnic Minorities." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Teacher Education.

Kimberly A. Wolbers, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

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Accepted for the Council:

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Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Acculturation and Identity Development of Deaf Ethnic Minorities

A Thesis Presented for the  
Master of Science  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Glennise Candice Schlinger,  
December, 2012

**Dedication**

To David my one true love.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you Justin

### **Abstract**

This study examined whether experiences in the family and the education systems could influence Deaf ethnic identity development. Data were collected via administration of the Deaf Acculturation Scale (DAS). Participants' responses were assessed as outlined by the developers of the DAS (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011). Results suggested that parents' attitude towards their child's deafness may affect the deaf individual's identity development. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with four deaf ethnic minority participants: One Venezuelan American and three African American. Two hearing parents (both mothers) also participated in the interview: one Venezuelan American and one African American. Thematic analysis was used to code and identify patterns among the participants' responses. Some themes discussed were: the role of spirituality and how it shaped deaf ethnic minority parents' attitudes toward their child's deafness; the impact of educational experiences and Deaf identity development, and what factors determined whether an individual identified with their ethnicity or Deafness first. The study suggests that familial/parental attitude toward deafness and experiences in the education system strongly influence Deaf identity development. Limitations and suggestions to further research are also discussed.

*Keywords:*, Deaf, Deaf identity, Deaf ethnic minority, Deaf African American, Deaf Hispanic American, Deaf Venezuelan American, education, family

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**Acculturation and Identity Development of Deaf Ethnic Minorities**

Acculturation and identity are two very similar but not synonymous aspects of human development. On the one hand, acculturation may refer to an individual's behavioral response from exposure to a new culture or cultures. (Leigh, 2010). For deaf individuals, acculturation into the new Deaf culture typically begins at school age (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011). Acculturation into Deaf culture, may allow the Deaf individual to “acquire and maintain aspects of Deaf culture, while simultaneously acquiring and maintaining aspects of the predominant Hearing culture” (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2010, p338).

Identity on the other hand, may be defined largely as a psychological process where one identifies oneself (Brinthaupt, 2008), and feels a sense of belonging with a social group (Leigh, 2012; Triandis, 1989; Taylor, 1999). Identity is interactive between the individual and others throughout one's lifespan (McCaw, Leigh & Marcus, 2011). As a result, some researchers argued that identity is neither a static internal aspect of human development – like chronological age – nor how one represents oneself (Leigh, Marcus, Dobosh & Allen, 1998; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) but developed and influenced by one's environment and relationship with others (Hintermair, 2007; Taylor, 1999). Acculturation and identity therefore represent the interconnectedness between the psychological and behavioral response of an individual within the social context. McIlroy and Storbeck (2010) therefore noted identity was “based on how children's family and school experiences become internalized” (p.494).

Similar to the definition of identity, ethnic identity may be defined as a psychological process. Yinger (1976) highlighted ethnic identity referred to a minority individual who identified with:

a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and share segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients (as cited in Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999, p. 41).

Because ethnic identity is very subjective, even within an ethnic group there may be variation. As a result, common histories, cultural mores, skin color or language, ethnic identity alone cannot determine ethnic identity (Leigh, 2012; Rodriguez & Santiviago, 1991; Bennett, 1988). For example, within Hispanic and African American families may differ among each other in terms of language, mores, traditions and other characteristics (Anderson & Grace, 1991; Fischgrund, Cohen & Clarkson, 1987).

Like ethnic identity, Deaf<sup>1</sup> identity is subjective and may give a sense of belonging to members therein. Lane, Pillard and Hedberg (2011) noted that the sense of belonging from Deaf identity could be as strong as familial ties and may offer a sense of solidarity within the Deaf community. Moreover, like hearing cultures, Deaf culture has significant variation among its members (Fischer & McWhirter, 2001). Deaf ethnic minority identity development could refer to how individuals find a sense of identity within Deaf and ethnic minority cultures.

The purpose of this study is to investigate factors which may influence Deaf ethnic minority identity development. It will investigate whether parental attitude can affect Deaf ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, the terms Deaf and hard of hearing refer to “ individuals with hearing loss, regardless of the type and severity of the loss, their communication preference or cultural affiliation” (Israelite, Ower & Goldstein, 2002 p.135). In literature on deafness *deaf* typically refers to the physicality of hearing impairment whereas *Deaf* is used to refer to Deaf culture and deafness as a social construct (Erting, 1985).

identity development. It will also investigate whether educational experiences influence on 3  
Deaf ethnic identity development. Finally, the study will evaluate whether deaf ethnic minority  
individuals tend to identify primarily with their ethnicity or with their Deafness.

The literature review for this study is divided into five sections. The first section  
considered theoretical frameworks and how the family and education systems may influence  
identity development. Then, parents' attitudes as well as deaf educational experiences are  
discussed. Next, ethnic minority groups' attitudes toward deafness and Deaf ethnic minority  
groups' experiences in the education system are addressed. Finally, the study reviewed the  
development of the DAS and literature in Deaf identity development.

**Literature Review****Theoretical framework**

Ecological Systems theorist, Bronfenbrenner (1977) found a strong connection not only with the individual and their environment (or society) but also the impact that the society had on developing an individual's identity. For example, Bronfenbrenner (1986) linked the education system and a child's identity development. Researchers (Chavous, Hilken, Schmeelk-Cone, Caldwell, Kohn-Wood & Zimmerman, 2003; Trueba, 1988) have supported that link and found a direct link between a student's ethnic identity, and academic outcomes. Specifically the researchers found that a positive ethnic identity was directly associated with high academic outcomes and vice versa. Chavous et.al also noted student's academic outcomes were linked to how students perceived how their teachers viewed them.

Some researchers have found there was a correlation between teacher perception of Deaf ethnic minority students and academic outcomes. Rugg and Donne (2011) for instance, attributed low reading scores to insufficient support by teachers of deaf minority students. This may explain why only 8% of college enrolled Deaf can read at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level or higher and why Deaf ethnic minority college students have an even lower functional reading level (Dowaliby & Lang, 1999; Rodriguez & Santiviago, 1991).

Like Bronfenbrenner, Erikson (1980) suggested that there is a strong correlation between an individual's identity development and society's expectations of the individual. These expectations dictate how the individual behaves and is integrated as a member of the wider society. Erikson contended that the family is the first social institution which places society's expectations of the individual. As a psychosocial theorist, Erikson defined identity as an ongoing

process merging the individual's past experiences, future expectations and present interactions 5  
with the wider society. Researchers (Leigh et.al, 1998; Eckert, 2010) have supported the  
argument that the family and education systems have a strong impact on identity development  
further highlighting that an individual's identity is "interdependent with the surrounding context  
(Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 225).

Cultural Ecologists like Ogbu (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) described how individuals  
perceived and then interacted with society. Ogbu (2004) explained historical interactions  
between ethnic groups and not population size determined ethnic minority status.  
Marginalization and feelings of inferiority were experienced by hearing ethnic minorities as well  
as by the Deaf community and Deaf ethnic minorities. In the education system, of historical  
experiences of marginalization of persons who belonged to ethnic minority groups resulted in  
parents' distrust toward teachers and other educational professionals (Borum, 2012; Bennett,  
1998; Harry, 2008; Kretschmer, 1997).

Within the dominant hearing culture, deafness has historically been based on the  
medical/pathological model of deafness. Deaf identity has often been defined as disabled and  
atypical (Bauman, 2005). As a result, a sense of marginalization and inferiority is entrenched  
within the minority Deaf culture. McIlroy and Storbeck (2010) reasoned that an individual who  
was Deaf acculturated had a "second class identity" (p.495). Furthermore, Anderson & Grace,  
(1991) found Deaf ethnic minority individuals are presented with greater marginalization both  
from the dominant hearing culture as well as within the Deaf community.

### **Parents' attitude toward deafness**

The concept of Deaf identity was introduced to prominent literature journals during the  
1970s. Prior to that, deafness was perceived primarily from a medical/pathological perspective. It

was not uncommon for deaf persons to be labeled as inferior or abnormal when compared to the majority hearing population by their parents and teachers (Leigh, Marcus, Dobosh & Allen, 1998). The medical/pathological view of deafness coupled with other factors (such as the age of onset of the child's deafness and lack of familial support) accounted for the increase in marital stress levels among families with deaf children (Mapp & Hudson, 1997).

Furthermore, researchers found a correlation between parents' hearing status and their attitude toward their child's deafness. Weinberg and Sterritt (1986) illustrated this in their analysis of how high school deaf students perceived the relationship with their hearing parents. The Deaf Identity Scale (DIS) was administered, and more than half of the deaf students felt their deafness determined the extent of affection their parents showed them. Further reinforcing the connection between hearing loss with parent-child relationships, Weinberg and Sterritt (1986), also reported that hearing parents were likely to urge their children to appear to be as "hearing" as possible. Weinberg and Sterritt (1986) concluded this push to be "hearing" by parents negatively impacted their children's identity development. Conversely, Mejstad, Heiling and Svedin (2009) reported deaf children of Deaf parents had more positive identity development when compared to deaf children of hearing parents.

Another factor which may impact deaf children's identity is their parents' communication preference. Mejstad and collaborators (2009) emphasized how the language used in the home specifically parents' perception of deafness and their communication preference (e.g. sign language) influenced their children's identity. Leigh, Marcus, Dobosh and Allen (1998) agreed with the aforementioned findings and concluded that the higher the deaf child's satisfaction with the communication at home, the higher the child's identity development.

### **Educational experiences of the deaf**

Five general school options are available to deaf children: self-contained, mainstream, 7 oral schools, residential and day schools for the deaf. Self-contained classrooms are classrooms within the public school system which only contain deaf and hard of hearing students. Mainstream (also known as inclusion) options allow deaf children to attend school with hearing peers. Students may be removed from their hearing peers and placed in Resource rooms for additional support. Oral schools focus on the use of speech and use of the students' residual hearing. Unlike mainstreaming, residential schools are comprised of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Finally day schools for deaf students are similar to residential schools with an all deaf student enrollment.

Researchers indicated school experiences deaf children's identity development. For example, Nikolarazi and Hadjidakou (2006) suggested that teachers in mainstreamed school settings quickly labeled deaf children with learning disabilities. Through semi-structured interviews, Nikolarazi & Hadjidakou (2006) reported students experienced feelings of isolation and felt targeted in mainstream school settings. This finding was supported by other researchers who reported that deaf children experienced feelings of being alienated at school (Leigh, Maxwell-McCaw, Bat-Chava & Christiansen, 2008). On the contrary, Leigh and collaborators (2008) concluded students who were educated in residential schools for the deaf experienced higher self-esteem and positive identity development than students who were educated in mainstreamed settings.

Cole and Edelman (1991) also found a link between educational experiences and an individual's Deaf identity development. Their research indicated if the teachers promoted a predominantly "hearing identity" (example encouraging speech instead of use of sign language), this negatively impacted the deaf students' identity development (Cole & Edelman, 1991).

Further, Cole and Edelman (1991) further found differences between how hearing teachers 8 perceived their deaf students. Specifically, hearing teachers tended to describe deaf students as having more psychological and behavioral problems than the students themselves indicated.

Factors which influence how a deaf individual chooses to identify (as “hearing” or Deaf) and parents and teachers’ attitude toward deafness are complex. Additionally, the discussion of paternity (involuntary characteristics such as deafness) and patrimony (voluntary characteristics such as acculturation towards group membership) are opportunities to expand the literature on Deaf ethnic identity (Erting as cited by Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011). Research on Deafness should now develop beyond the *Deaf* versus *deaf* aspect of Deaf acculturation and Deaf identity development (Leigh, 2010). Deaf ethnic minority identity development would add greater dimension to the literature on Deaf identity development.

### **Deaf ethnic minority parents’ attitude toward deafness**

Researchers (Christensen & Delgado, 1993) have noted that parental attitudes toward a child’s deafness, as well as educational experiences of deaf students, differ depending on ethnicity. This study focused on African American and Hispanic American ethnic groups. Parental perception of deafness of both African American and Hispanic American ethnic groups, are discussed as generalizations, since both cultures have significant variation within (Rodriguez & Santiviago, 1991; Fischgrund, Cohen & Clarkson, 1987). For example although similarities in language and traditions may connect members of an ethnic group, these factors alone do not define all individuals who identify with that ethnic minority group. Likewise, while there may be similarities in educational experiences of deaf African American and deaf Hispanic American students those experiences are unique and are also discussed as generalizations.

Mapp and Hudson (1997) reported that White hearing families described feeling marital stress associated with their child's deafness. Among African American and Hispanic American families however, the researchers (Mapp & Hudson, 1997) reported less marital stress between parents and decreased likelihood for poor parent/child interactions. This may be a consequence of religious affiliation. This finding has been supported by other researchers who find both ethnic minority groups prefer support from religious affiliations and family members (Fischgrund et.al, 1987) than secular institutions like schools.

In general, African American and Hispanic American families perceived deafness as a spiritual cause, not strictly the medical model dominant in Western society (Fischgrund, Cohen & Clarkson, 1987; Yacobacci-Tam, 1987; Lamorey, 2002). Therefore, African American and Hispanic American families of deaf children tended to turn to religion for support (Anderson & Grace, 1991; Bowen, 1999) rather than the education system and other professionals (Fischgrund, Cohen & Clarkson, 1987).

### **Educational experiences of deaf ethnic minorities**

Language differences exist between Deaf ethnic minorities and other ethnic groups. Researchers indicated that the language differences may be a result of the historical segregation of American schools which included schools for the Deaf. Discrimination and segregation of deaf African American minorities not only affected identity development, but the development of Black American Sign Language (McCaskill, Lucas, Bailey & Hill, 2011; Lucas, Bailey and Valli, 2001). Their latest research is a continuation of the early works by Hariston and Smith (1983) who began to compile information of the differences in Sign Language between deaf African Americans and White deaf. Regarding Black ASL Hariston and Smith (1983) wrote:

Historically, the roots of Black sign language developed because of societal attitudes 10 and educational policy in Southern schools for the deaf, where dual systems had existed... as Black schools for the deaf merged with predominantly White schools, Black children began to sign “White”...this was more survival than a social adaptation. Most adopted this way of signing so as not to appear to be different (Hairston & Smith, 1983, p.56).

Mapp and Hudson (1997) indicated that differences in what constituted a productive parent-teacher relationship between ethnic minority groups existed. In general, both African American and Hispanic Americans respected authority and perceived teachers as the expert with their children. As a result, African American and Hispanic American parents tended to defer to teachers (Bowen, 1999; Anderson & Grace, 1991). However, this deference has often been misinterpreted by teachers as apathy or disinterest by parents (Rodriguez & Santiviago, 1991).

Erting (1985) found that the majority of teachers of deaf students reflected the biomedical etiology of deafness which mirrored the dominant hearing White majority and differs from ethnically diverse groups (Harry, 2008). As a result what may typically be considered as protective and nurturing among African American and Hispanic American families (e.g. being unwilling to give their deaf child greater independence), may be regarded as maladaptive and deficient by Western standards (Bennett, 1988; Rodriguez & Santiviago, 1991). Regardless of what hearing parents attributed deafness to, researchers still found that the deaf child constructed a negative sense of Deaf identity (Skelton & Valentine, 2003; Yacobacci-Tam, 1987; Davis, 2007).

Anderson and Grace (1991) highlighted another factor which determined the order of how Deaf ethnic minority individuals identified themselves – whether Deaf first or ethnicity first – was school placement. Individuals who responded Deaf first were more likely to be educated in

residential schools, than individuals who responded by ethnicity first. The order that Deaf ethnic individuals identify is complex. For example, when asked which minority group they first identified with, 87% of Deaf ethnic minorities responded that they identified themselves as African American first, however others said communication barriers with hearing members of their hearing ethnic minority group, meant they affiliated themselves neither as Deaf nor by ethnicity (Foster,2003). 11

A study of Deaf ethnic minority identity development would be critical for two reasons. It could help educators become more sensitive to the differing needs of culturally diverse families. An examination of Deaf ethnic minority identity development could also illuminate unique issues Deaf ethnic minority individuals' face between their Deaf culture and their ethnic minority culture across the lifespan (Stewart 2008).

### **Trends in measuring Deaf identity development**

Glickman and Carey (1993) developed the Deaf Identity Development Scale (DIDS). The scale was based on racial identity scales as the researchers theorized that oppression and discrimination based on hearing status was similar to the oppression and discrimination faced by ethnic hearing minorities. Like ethnic identity development, Glickman and Carey (1993) theorized that Deaf individuals' identity developed along four set stages: Pre-Liberalization, Encounter, Immersion and Internalization.

The DIDS by Glickman and Carey (1993) in particular could assist the reader to be cautious when reading literature which may unnecessarily attach negative stereotypes of the behavior of the Deaf individual that the Deaf individual is deviant or, abnormal and needs to be "fixed" in order to fit into the wider hearing society. The following section of this paper discusses the developing trends in the issue of deafness and Deaf identity assessment.

Leigh et.al (2008) modified the DIDS to better assess deaf individuals' cultural

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identification within the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing continuum (Leigh et.al, 2008). To achieve this, Leigh et.al (2008) administered the DIDS to 244 participants. The researchers tried to diversify the Scale geographically, by expanding the demographics of the original study by Glickman and Carey (1993). Nevertheless, an overwhelming 91.4% of the respondents were White, pre-lingually deafened adults. As a result, the findings primarily represented White pre-lingual Deaf rather than other ethnic groups.

### **The Deaf Acculturation Scale (DAS)**

Not all researchers concluded that a mere revision of the demographics of the DIDS would be sufficient. For as many accolades as the DIDS received, others (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea (2000) found the Scale's subsets muddled. By their definition, Maxwell-McCaw and Zea's (2011) grouse with DIDS was three-fold. Firstly, they disagreed with Glickman and Carey (1993) that at some stages of identity development a deaf individual was not self-deprecating. Secondly, they contended that acculturation was bi-directional not the rigid uni-linear set of stages Glickman and Carey (1993) presented. The final distinction between the DIDS and the DAS was the DAS' attention to internal aspects of identity development specifically attitudinal, behavioral and psychological components of identity were separated in the DAS (Maxwell-McCaw and Zea, 2011).

Maxwell-McCaw and Zea (2011) maintained that Deaf identity developed in stages. They also retained that Deaf identity should be grounded on racial identity scales because the oppression and discrimination that Deaf persons and ethnic minority groups faced were similar. Lastly, they also found commonalities between Deaf identity and ethnic minority groups' identity (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2010; Anderson & Grace, 1991). The resultant DAS

comprised of two acculturation scales and assessed whether an individual had a Deaf or hearing identity. DASd represented a deaf individual who was acculturated to Deaf culture and had a Deaf identity, whereas DASH represented an individual who was hearing acculturated and had a hearing identity. 13

Within the two acculturation scales, were five sub-scales. The five sub-scales (Cultural Identification, Enjoyment/Liking, Cultural Preferences, Cultural Knowledge and Language Competence) improved on the DIDS in three ways. Firstly, it did not attach a negative stigma to the stages of identity development. The DAS also recognized that identity development may change based on different social situations and an individual's identity could change over time (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011). The final improvement was the DAS separated behavioral and psychological aspects of identity development (Maxwell-McCaw, Leigh & Markus, 2000).

To gauge whether the person had been acculturated to either the Deaf or Hearing culture and had either a Deaf or hearing identity, the researchers suggested that the DAS be used (Maxwell-McCaw and Zea, 2011). However, in spite of the improvements to the DAS, the researchers (Maxwell-McCaw and Zea, 2011) acknowledged that their sample did not include sufficiently include responses from Deaf ethnic minorities.

## **Purpose**

This study sought to answer four research questions. Firstly, do Deaf ethnic minorities acculturate similarly or differently from Deaf Whites? Secondly, does parent attitude toward deafness affect Deaf identity development? Thirdly do educational experiences and school placement (e.g., mainstream versus residential) affect Deaf ethnic identity development? Finally the study will examine whether an individual's Deaf ethnic minority status affect identity development and if so, how?

## Chapter 3

### Materials and Methods

#### Participants

Participants were invited to be involved in this study in two ways. One option was to complete the DAS. Participants could complete the DAS online or request a hard copy. Participants were also encouraged to participate in an interview. The following portions of this section, describe the participants based on those who completed the DAS and those who participated in the interview.

#### Data Sources

Two materials were used to collect data. Firstly, the DAS survey, available in Appendix A, was administered. The DAS was developed by Maxwell-McCaw and Zea (2011), for two reasons. One was to improve the DIDS by clearly demarcating sub-scales. The DAS was also used to assess whether a deaf individual was Hearing or Deaf acculturated. Interviews were also conducted. The interview questions were developed by the researcher of this study and were used to answer the research questions related to this study. Table 1 summarizes the research questions and the materials which were used to answer the research questions.

Research questions and the corresponding data sources used to answer each research question

Research Question	Data source used
Do Deaf African American and Deaf Hispanic Americans acculturate similar to Deaf Whites?	DAS and Interviews
Does parental attitude affect Deaf ethnic identity development?	Interviews
Do educational experiences impact Deaf ethnic identity development?	Interviews
Do Deaf African Americana and Deaf Hispanic Americans identify with their ethnic or Deaf identity first?	Interviews

## DAS

The DAS consists of 58 items. The items were developed to correspond to themes of identity development of deaf individuals (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011). Individual assessment is based on sub-scales. The first three sub-scales: Cultural Identification, Enjoyment/liking and Cultural Preferences measure a deaf individual's identity or psychological degree of acculturation to the Deaf culture (e.g. "I feel part of the Deaf world") and acculturation or behavioral response to being exposed to a new Deaf culture(e.g. "Socializing with hearing people"). The other two acculturation scales: Cultural Knowledge and Language Competence, measure other aspects of Deaf and/ hearing culture competence. For example "How well do you know important events in Deaf history" measures the degree of knowledge of Deaf and/or hearing culture. Finally items such as "How well do you speak English using your voice" are

used to measure a deaf individual's degree of ability to communicate within the Deaf and/or 16 hearing culture.

Acculturation is obtained by averaging participants' scores within each sub-scale and then averaging the scores within the DASd and DASH scales. An individual could be placed in one of four categories: Hearing acculturated, Deaf acculturated, Marginal acculturated and Bicultural (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011). The DAS contained 58 items and rated on a Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To complete the DAS, participants were given a statement and asked which number best matched how they felt. The DAS took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

### **Interviews**

Data were also collected by conducting interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and initial interview questions can be found in Appendix C. The interviews were developed and conducted by the researcher, and questions centered on Deaf ethnic minority participants' experiences in the family and at school. The interviews also discussed whether Deaf ethnic minorities felt their minority status was unique within the Deaf community and if so, how. The interviews ranged from 45-60 minutes in duration.

### **Procedure**

Data for the study were collected several ways. Participants were invited to participate in the study primarily via the Internet. A website was created, and the DAS, informed consent letters and an invitation to participate in an interview were placed on the website for a 2-month period. E-mails were first sent to Colleges and Universities with Deaf Education and Interpreting concentrations throughout the US. The e-mail requested administrators forward the website link of the study to Deaf individuals on their mail list and permission to link the website to their own

webpage<sup>2</sup>. Emails were also sent to Deaf community organizations, support programs for families with deaf children. To target Deaf ethnic minority participants, additional emails were sent to Deaf ethnic organizations (African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American), Deaf ethnic clubs and churches with Deaf ministries. Administrators were asked to inform the researcher of Deaf community events whereby the DAS and interviews could be administered. Follow-up emails were also sent to administrators, reminding them to invite Deaf and hard-of-hearing clients or staff to participate in the DAS and/interview. The website could be accessed by deaf persons without affiliation to any of the aforementioned organizations. 17

The website invited Deaf participants in both written English and American Sign Language (ASL) formats. A YouTube video was posted on the website. The video detailed (in ASL) the purpose of the study and invited participants to complete the DAS and/or interview. Privacy policies as well as consent forms were also posted on the website.

The website remained active over a 2-month period. Even though this study's focus was Deaf ethnic minority identity development, participants from different ethnic backgrounds, educational levels, modes of communication, degree of hearing loss and ethnicity were asked to complete the DAS. This was done to compare whether Deaf ethnic minorities responded to items on the DAS similarly and if not how. Interviews were semi-structured with focus questions to ensure that the interview remained within the scope of the study. Only participants who resided in the US were used in this study.

ASL is a visual language. As a result, the website invited deaf and hard-of-hearing participants to be interviewed via Skype, Videophone or in person. Skype is a free downloadable program that allows persons to communicate visually with each other in real time. The

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B (pp.45-47) for the informed consent letters sent to administrators as well as to participants.

Videophone is a free telecommunication service which allows deaf persons to communicate 18 face-to-face with each other in real time. The disadvantage to both Skype and the Videophone is that the deaf individual must have access to the internet to access the program. In this study, three interviews were conducted via Skype and three were conducted in person. The interviews were recorded with an external camera equipped with recording capabilities.

Informed consent forms were placed on the website. Participants who engaged in the interview were encouraged to review the consent forms prior to the interview and were reminded of the purpose of the interview, how their responses were going to be used and how their rights as participants was protected in this study. Before the interview, participants were also informed of their rights as participants and promised access to results of the study at its conclusion, if they desired.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **DAS**

The 58 items of the DAS are divided into five sub-scales: Cultural Identification, Enjoyment/Liking, Cultural Preferences, Cultural Knowledge and Language Competence. The DAS can be used to assess whether a deaf individual was Hearing or Deaf acculturated. The DAS is divided into two acculturation scales: DAS deaf (DASd) and DAS hearing (DASh). Acculturation was obtained by averaging scores within each sub-scale and then averaging the scores within the DASd and DASh scales.

Deaf individuals could be placed in one of four categories: Hearing acculturated, Deaf acculturated, Marginal acculturated and Bicultural. A Hearing acculturated score described a deaf individual who preferred “hearing” values and did not find a sense of identity within Deaf culture or Deaf values. A Deaf acculturated individual on the other hand, identified with Deaf

culture and attitudes. An individual who was assessed as Marginal, had low acculturation scores (2.9 or below) with both Deaf and hearing culture whereas a Bicultural acculturated individual's response was high on both the Deaf and hearing acculturation sub-scales. 19

This study followed Maxwell-McCaw and Zea's (2011) analysis to determine which category a deaf individual placed. First, scores from each sub-scale was averaged, and then the scores within the DASH and DASd were averaged. An individual could receive a high score (3 or above) or a low score (below 2.9) within each scale. Combinations could be: "Hearing acculturated (high DASH and low DASd); Marginal (low DASH and low DASd); Deaf acculturated (low DASH and high DASd) or Bicultural (high DASH and DASd)" (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, p.331).

### **Interview**

To analyze the interview data, this study used a descriptive thematic analysis to gain a better understanding of the familial and educational experiences of individuals who are Deaf ethnic minorities. According to Aronson (1994) thematic analysis can be used for "identifying, analyzing, interpreting and reporting themes (or patterns) within data" (p.82). Preparation and analysis of the interview data generally followed guidelines outlined by Aronson (1994). Briefly, each interview was recorded, transcribed and coded.

After the interview was recorded and transcribed, the researcher read them without coding. Next, the transcriptions were re-read and coded. Interviews were coded by analyzing the transcriptions, looking for common vocabulary and descriptions the participants made regarding their experiences in the familial and educational systems. The codes which emerged were written index cards. Focus questions were established before the interview by the researcher, to ensure that the interview remained within the scope of the research questions of this study. Questions

such as “Did you know any other parents with a deaf child” and “How did your parents feel 20 about you being deaf” correlated with the research question on parental attitude toward deafness. “What was your educational experience” and “Describe school life for you and your child” were some questions which corresponded with the second research question regarding educational experiences as a deaf ethnic minority student. Finally, focus questions like “Do you think Deaf African American (and Deaf Venezuelan American) experiences are unique within the Deaf community and if so, how” were aimed at answering the third research question on Deaf ethnic minority identity within the Deaf community.

## Results and Discussion

**DAS and interviews**

The first research question asked whether Deaf ethnic minorities acculturate similarly from Deaf Whites. The majority of Deaf White participants and Deaf Hispanic participants were assessed as Bicultural. However, among Deaf African American minority participants, the sample was too small and the individual responses were too inconsistent to have a general acculturation for this group. Even among the Deaf Latin American participants, there were inconsistencies. Therefore even though most were assessed as Bicultural (2 out of 3), individual responses to items on the DAS differed. Table 2 details the results of the participants who completed the DAS study based on ethnicity and how they were assessed.

Comparison of participants based on ethnicity and DAS assessment

Participant	Ethnicity	Acculturation
1	African American	Deaf Acculturated
2	African American	Marginal Acculturated
3	Hispanic American	Deaf Acculturated
4	Hispanic American	Bicultural Acculturated
5	Hispanic American	Bicultural Acculturated
6	White (Caucasian)	Deaf Acculturated
7	White (Caucasian)	Deaf Acculturated
8	White (Caucasian)	Hearing Acculturated
9	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
10	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
11	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
12	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
13	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
14	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
15	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
16	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
17	White (Caucasian)	Hearing Acculturated
18	White (Caucasian)	Deaf Acculturated
19	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
20	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
21	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
22	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
23	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated
24	White (Caucasian)	Bicultural Acculturated

There were some similarities between the Deaf ethnic minority groups. Regarding the two African American participants completed the DAS; the demographics of both participants had similarities. For example, regarding family communication, both were born to hearing parents and Spoken English was used at home. Both participants reported they were not born deaf: the African American male became deaf relatively young (Age 0-3) whereas the African American female became deaf at 14 years old.

There were many differences between the two African American participants. For example, the African American male indicated he attended different types of schools for the deaf

(mainstream, oral and residential); whereas the African American female responded she was mainstreamed and also attended college. With so few similarities, the analysis of the DAS differed. The African American male was Deaf acculturated (low DASH and high DASd) whereas the African American female was assessed as having a Marginal acculturation (low DASH and low DASd).

Among Latin American participants, there were many similarities as well as differences. For example, all of the participants reported that they were born to hearing parents and spoken Spanish was used at home. Another similarity was all the participants stated they were either born deaf (1 out of 3) or became deaf from an early age (2 out of 3). A final similarity among deaf Latin American participants was the sub-scale regarding Cultural Preferences received the lowest scores. A major difference with the deaf Latin American participants was the disparity within the sub-scales. For example, among the three sub-scales which assessed Deaf Acculturation some participants scored at a 3.0 rate, whereas other participants above 4.0.

Similarities and differences among deaf White participants were also identified. For instance, the majority of the deaf White participants (15 out of 19) indicated that they were born to hearing parents. Another similarity among deaf White was the majority were assessed as Bicultural (14 out of 19). This was followed by Hearing acculturated (2 out of 19) and Deaf Acculturated (3 out of 19). Unlike deaf African American and deaf Hispanic American groups, (4 out of 19) deaf Whites indicated that they either had one (1 out of 4) or more (3 out of 4) deaf parents.

Deaf White participants' surveys were analyzed to determine whether any comparisons or contrasts existed between ethnic groups. One comparison was participants' responses to the five sub-scales within the DAS. Across the ethnic groups, the Language Competence sub-scale

received the highest scores (5 on the Likert Scale) and above 3.0 when assessed. These high 24 scores would be consistent since the majority of respondents assessed as Bicultural. The results of the DAS also revealed Deaf Whites and Deaf Hispanic Americans scored high (above 3) in Cultural Identification.

### **Interview**

The second research question asked whether parental attitude could affect Deaf ethnic identity development. The results of the interview determined religion did influence Deaf ethnic identity development. Furthermore, the results indicated that parental attitude regarding the role of education greatly influenced Deaf ethnic identity development. Finally, the results suggested that parental attitude toward deafness influenced Deaf ethnic identity for many years.

### **Religiosity**

Two parents were interviewed in this study. Themes which emerged regarding parents' perception of deafness were: parents felt that their child's deafness was "part of God's plan" or found comfort in their religious convictions. Both parents found religious beliefs – specifically the cause of their child's deafness – gave them resiliency when they were told about their child's deafness. For instance R.M. stated even though she cried when she first learned of her son's deafness, she felt there was a "purpose" for having a deaf son and it "made [her] a better person." S.H. shared similar sentiments and stated that her religious beliefs and the support from members of her religious community helped her cope with her daughter's deafness.

Interestingly, although C.H. and D.M. were interviewed separately from their parents, both shared the same attitude toward deafness. C.H. explained that her deafness was because of "imperfection" and D.M. said his deafness was part of "God's will". C.H. and D.M.'s responses

may suggest that religion did influence how they perceived themselves. If their deafness had 25 a positive purpose then their deafness did not need to be fixed.

The interviews indicated that parents' attitude toward deafness from childhood was enduring and was a greater indicator of how children identified themselves as adults. Themes emerging from the interviews with E.B. and D.J. indicated parents expected that them to be "hearing". This was done in an attempt to help their deaf children "function in the hearing world". Both E.B. and D.J. said their parents' desire for them to appear "hearing" (example using their speech) helped them to communicate effectively within the Deaf and hearing communities.

### **Parents' frustration with the education system**

Deaf ethnic minority parents reported dissatisfaction with the education system. Both mothers described the education system as "unfair" and stated that teachers were quick to place their children in special education classes and focused on their children's weaknesses rather than on their child's potential. Both parents said they fostered positive identity in their deaf children by encouraging their children to achieve academic success beyond what they thought teachers expected of them.

The third research question asked whether educational experiences affected Deaf ethnic identity development. Themes which emerged from the interview found parental attitude played a greater role in Deaf ethnic identity development. This was true for the younger interviewees (S.H and D.M). The results also indicated that parental attitude towards deafness influenced Deaf ethnic minority children over for many years.

### **Parents' role in their deaf child's academic success**

Parents also mentioned that they encouraged their children not to view their deafness as a handicap. When asked who greatly influenced their academics, both E.B. and D.J. mentioned

that it was their parents. E.B. and D.J. said that their parents taught them to be “hearing”. To 26 them this meant not accepting their deafness as handicap and to pursue academic excellence. For example E.B. indicated that her father “expected [her] to get good grades, even if it meant studying for very long hours”. C.H. and D.M. shared similar sentiments and credited their parents’ high expectations with achieving their academic goals.

The fourth research question sought to determine whether Deaf African American and Deaf Hispanic American minorities identified with their deafness or their ethnicity first. Participants initially described themselves as Deaf. However, participants said that for as much as they “knew” they were deaf and part of the Deaf culture, they identified with their ethnicity first.

### **Hearing culture and Deaf ethnic minority identity development**

Each participant was asked whether he/she identified with his/her Deafness or ethnicity first. The interviewees indicated they identified with their ethnicity first. Two themes which emerged as reasons were phenotype and family ties. E.B. and D.J. explained that deafness was not easily noticed by others unless interaction was necessary and the communication barrier became apparent. Interestingly, younger deaf ethnic minority participants said they identified with their ethnicity first because it connected them with their family whereas their deafness did not mean that they felt the same connectedness within the Deaf community.

### **Discussion**

The results of this study indicated that parents have a great influence on Deaf identity development of ethnic minorities. In this sample, the results also indicated that the educational experiences do not impact the Deaf ethnic minority individual’s identity development as greatly as parents’ attitude toward deafness. For example, when asked who had the greatest impact on

their identity development, all the interviewees mentioned their parents. When asked whether 27 teachers influenced how they perceived themselves, the interviewees indicated that teachers did not. This was true for older participants as well as interviewees who were still attending school. Finally, it seems Deaf ethnic minority individuals are more likely to associate with their ethnicity first rather than their deafness.

The results of this study indicated that parental attitude toward deafness had a direct impact on Deaf identity development. The results from the interview highlighted parents attributed deafness from a supernatural standpoint and in turn looked to their religious beliefs for support. Religious conviction not only helped parents cope with their child's deafness but also helped Deaf ethnic minority individuals have a positive sense of self and not be ashamed of their deafness, perhaps feeling that they needed to be "fixed".

Interestingly, even though parents recognized their children's deafness, they strongly encouraged their children to identify with their ethnicity first. Results also highlighted that the combination of parents' attitude toward deafness (for example that deafness "made them a better person"), coupled with parents' desire to teach their children their cultural values (perhaps through celebrating traditional holidays) developed within Deaf ethnic participants a sense that they could easily identify in either Deaf or Hearing cultures.

Contrary to researchers (Cole & Edelman, 1999; Leigh, Maxwell-McCaw, Bat-Chava & Christiansen, 2008) who found that educational experiences fostered a negative identity, this study found parental perception of deafness was a greater indicator of identity development than educational experiences. For example, both parents who were interviewed said it was important that their children be educated in a mainstream setting. Additionally, D.J. mentioned, his mother advised him to have hearing friends at school. However, D.J. did not

perceive his deafness as a handicap. Furthermore, E.B. (who was also educated in a mainstream setting) said while she saw the benefits of residential schools and having other deaf peers she still preferred her experiences in a majority hearing school because that prepared her for the “reality of living in a hearing world”.

### **Limitations**

This study had several critical limitations. The sample size in this study was small. Therefore, results from neither the DAS nor the interviews could be used to generalize to all Deaf African American and Hispanic American families and their children. A larger sample size would ensure that the relationship between the education system and the family and individual identity development was more representative. Although some research (Harry, 2008) indicated ethnic minorities typically do not respond to surveys, more can be done to increase the low responses through incentives. Another limitation is the short timeframe in which the data was analyzed. This may account for the low response rate for both the DAS and the interview. A next limitation was only female hearing parents were involved in the interview. Therefore, the responses of parents in this study cannot be used to include fathers. A final limitation of this study is the responses from the interview also cannot be representative of Deaf parents’ attitude toward their children’s deafness.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This study illuminated three salient points. Firstly, it highlighted that parental attitude toward their child's deafness (for example its causality) differs from Deaf White families. Secondly, this study delineated that acculturation for Deaf African American and Deaf Hispanic Americans differ. Previous research suggested that educational experiences like school placement could affect Deaf ethnic identity development. However, this study outlined that education did not strongly influence Deaf identity development as much as parental attitude toward deafness did. This was evidenced both among older deaf African American as well as Hispanic American minority groups.

Little is known about deaf minority children and their unique identity development issues (Borum, 2012). Therefore, it is important to research literature on Deaf ethnic minority identity development. This will ensure that deaf ethnic minority individuals and their families receive the most effective services from institutions like the education system.

#### **Suggestions for future research**

Several opportunities for future research exist. For example, there is a difference between how deaf White individuals and deaf African American and Deaf Hispanic American individuals perceive themselves. One opportunity for further research is what social contexts besides the family and education system determine whether deaf individuals chose acculturation with their Deaf or ethnic minority identity.

This study also highlighted the role of spirituality and its influence on parents' attitude towards their child's deafness. The interviewees in this study affiliated with two different Judeo-Christian religions. Another opportunity for future research could compare how similarities and

differences of religious affiliation and parents' attitude towards their child's deafness. 30

Literature could also be expanded to include parents who do not have a religious affiliation and their attitude towards their deaf child's identity development.

A final opportunity for expansion in the literature of Deaf identity development relates to deaf individuals from other ethnic minority groups within the US. Research could also compare the Deaf ethnic identity development of individuals who recently immigrated to the US compared to deaf ethnic identity development of individuals who have resided in the US for longer periods of time.

**Acculturation** – an individual’s behavioral response from exposure to a new culture.

**Bicultural** – an individual who has high average scores (3.0 or higher) on both the DASH and DASd scales of the DAS.

**DAS** – a scale used to assess a deaf individual’s identity development. The scale consists two broad scales that assess Deaf acculturation (DASd) and hearing acculturation (DASH). The two scales consist of five sub-scales (Cultural Identification, Enjoyment/Liking, Cultural Preferences, Cultural Knowledge and Language Competence). The five sub-scales are averaged and an individual is categorized into one of four categories: Deaf, Hearing, Bicultural or Marginal Acculturated. These categories assess the predominant identity a deaf individual has.

**Deaf** – typically refers to Deaf culture and deafness as a social construct.

**deaf** – typically refers to the physicality of hearing impairment. It may also refer to deaf individuals who do not affiliate with Deaf culture, its traditions, norms etc.

**Deaf acculturated** – a deaf individual who has high DASd (above 3.0) and low DASH averaged scores on the DAS.

**Deaf identity** – a Deaf individual who is acculturated to and finds a sense of belonging with Deaf culture, Deaf norms, traditions etc.

**Ethnic minority identity** – an individual who is acculturated to an ethnic minority group and finds a sense of belonging with a segment of society.

**Hearing Acculturated** – a deaf individual who has high DASH scores (3.0 or higher) and low DASd scores (2.9 or lower) on the DAS.

**Identity** – a psychological process where an individual finds a sense of belonging with himself/herself and the social context.

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**Marginal Acculturated** – a deaf individual who has low scores (2.9 or lower) on both the DASd and DASH scales.

**Paternity** – An individual's involuntary membership to a group, for example by ethnicity.

**Patrimony** – An individual's voluntary membership to a group.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A DEAF ACCULTURATION SCALE (DAS) -58**

#### **Instructions:**

You will be asked to answer several questions about yourself. This should not take more than a half hour of your time. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions so please answer them as honestly and accurately as possible. You may find out your identity type by following the score sheet on the back. ENJOY!

**The following section contains questions about your involvement in the deaf and hearing world. Please check (✓) the number that best corresponds to your answer.**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>AgreeStrongly</b>	
	Disagree	Sometimes		Agree

1. I call myself Deaf.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
2. I feel that I am part of the hearing world.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
3. I call myself hard-of-hearing or hearing-impaired.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
4. I am comfortable with deaf people.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
5. Being involved in the hearing world (and with hearing people) is an important part of my life.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
6. I feel that I am part of the deaf world.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
7. I am comfortable with hearing people.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
8. I often wish I could hear better or become hearing.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
9. My deaf identity is an important part of who I am.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

10. Being involved in the deaf world (and with deaf people) is an important part of my life.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

### ENJOYMENT/LIKING

**Please answer the questions below using the following responses:**

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>		<i>A great deal</i>	

HOW MUCH DO YOU ENJOY:

11. Going to deaf parties/gatherings?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

12. Socializing with hearing people?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

13. Attending hearing events/parties/gatherings?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

14. Reading magazines/books written by deaf authors.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

15. Going to theater events with hearing actresses/actors.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

16. Participating in hearing political activities.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

17. Watching ASL video-tapes by deaf story-tellers or deaf poets.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

18. Attending professional workshops in the hearing world.

- 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
19. Going to theater events with deaf actresses/actors.
- 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
20. Participating in political activities that promote the rights of deaf people.
- 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
21. Participating in or attending hearing athletic competitions.
- 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
22. Attending Deaf-related workshops/conferences (e.g., workshops on Deaf culture or linguistics in ASL)
- 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

#### CULTURAL PREFERENCES

**Instructions: Sometimes life is not really as we want it. If you could have it your way, how would you prefer the following situations in your life to be like? Please answer the questions below using the following responses:**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>AgreeStrongly</b>	
	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>		<b>Agree</b>

23. I would prefer my education to be at a deaf school.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

24. I would prefer it if my roommate was deaf.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

25. I would prefer my children to be hearing.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

26. I would prefer my work environment to be hearing.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

27. I would prefer that my church/temple is mostly deaf.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

28. I would prefer my partner/spouse to be deaf.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

29. I would prefer to attend a hearing school or mainstreamed program.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

30. I would prefer my roommate to be hearing.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

31. I would prefer my closest friends to be hearing.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

32. I would prefer my partner/spouse to be hearing.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

33. I would prefer my closest friends to be deaf.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

34. I would prefer that my church/temple to be mostly hearing.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

35. I would prefer my children to be deaf.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

36. I would prefer my work environment to be deaf.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

**Please answer the questions below using the following responses:**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A little</i>	<i>Pretty Good/</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Excellent/</i>
		<b>Average</b>		<b>Like a Native</b>

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW:

37. Important events in American/world history  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
38. Names of national heroes (hearing)  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
39. Names of popular hearing newspapers and magazines  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
40. Names of famous hearing actors and actresses  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
41. Names of famous hearing political leaders  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
42. Traditions and customs of deaf schools  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
43. Names of deaf heroes or well-known deaf people.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
44. Important events in Deaf history.  
 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
45. Well-known political leaders in the Deaf community.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

46. Organizations run by and for Deaf people.

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

### LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

**Please answer the questions below using the following responses:**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Pretty Good/ Average</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Excellent/ Like a Native</b>

47. How well do you sign using ASL?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

48. How well do you understand other people signing in ASL?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

49. When you sign using ASL, how well do other deaf people understand you?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

50. How well do you finger-spell?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

51. How well can you read other people's finger spelling?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

52. How well do you know current ASL slang or popular expressions in ASL?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

53. How well do you speak English using your voice?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

54. In general, how well do hearing people understand your speech?

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1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

55. How well do you understand other people when they are speaking in English? (i.e., how well do you lip-read?)

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

56. How well do you read English?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

57. How well do you write in English?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

58. How well do you know English idioms or English expressions?

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

## Administrator Letter

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

My name is Glennise Myers-Schlinger and I am a Master's candidate in the Department of Theory & Practice in Teacher Education at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. For my thesis, I am conducting a survey of deaf ethnic minority individuals' identity development, and request your organization to place the survey for participants to complete.

The purpose of this study is to understand the identity development of deaf minority individuals. The survey is the Deaf Acculturation Scale (DAS) that is currently used to assess deaf identity development. This is the survey's first use with minority individuals, although they are identified as part of the Deaf community. The survey asks general information about cultural identification, likes, cultural preferences, cultural knowledge and language competence. The survey is to be completed anonymously. No individuals will be identifiable (unless they divulge that information), and all data will be aggregated for reporting purposes. Even though this study focuses on deaf ethnic minority individuals, all deaf individuals regardless of their degree of hearing loss, modes of communication, age and ethnicity are encouraged to complete the DAS.

The survey should take approximately 30 minutes. The survey does not ask any identifiable information, record IP addresses, or record who participated or the organization where the individual completed the survey. It is free and does not offer any compensation to the participant. When participants complete the survey, they will be invited to participate in an interview. Participants who wish to **participate in the interview would request to do so via email**. Pseudonyms would be used to maintain participants' privacy.

If you wish to participate in the study, I would like to link the DAS to your organization's website. Individuals viewing this site may click onto the link to complete the DAS. The link will remain active for approximately 4 months. Thereafter, the link will be removed from your organization's website. I will like to administer the survey at any events your organization may sponsor in the coming months. After introducing myself, the purpose of the survey and the participants' rights related to privacy will be discussed. Participants will also be told that their involvement is voluntary, may be terminated at any time, is not linked to your organization and does not impact the services they receive at your organization.

I thank you for your participation in this Master's thesis study. If any point during or after the survey you need to contact the principal investigator, please feel free to do so via email at [deafidentity@gmail.com](mailto:deafidentity@gmail.com). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or if you are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact—anonously, if you wish—Brenda Lawson, Compliance Officer, UT Office of Research, phone: (865) 974-3466, email: [blawson@utk.edu](mailto:blawson@utk.edu).

However, your participation would be valued greatly! To view the survey please click here: <http://web.utk.edu/~gmyers1/index.html>

Sincerely,  
Glennise Myers-Schlinger  
Masters Candidate  
Deaf Education  
Department of Theory & Practice in Teacher Education  
University of Tennessee

### **Participant letter**

Dear Participant,

My name is Glennise Myers-Schlinger and I am a Master's candidate in the Department of Theory & Practice in Teacher Education at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. For my thesis, I will examine how deaf persons from different ethnicities are similar or different in terms of identity development within the Deaf community. If you agree to participate, this will help me gather and assess data on this topic.

Once you agree to the research study, you will be given a survey to complete. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The survey does not ask any identifiable information or record IP addresses. The survey will ask what are your feelings about Cultural Identification, Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Preferences, Enjoyment/Liking and language Competence. There are no right or wrong answers.

Another part of this study is an interview. The interview will be your opportunity to discuss any of the questions in the survey, or your experiences as a deaf person within your community. The interview may be conducted via Videophone, Skype or in person, whichever option you prefer. Pseudonyms would be used to maintain your privacy. The interview will be taped. Recordings of the discussion will **not be distributed** or viewed by anyone else but my immediate advisor and myself as needed.

There are minimal risks to participating in this study. You may experience discomfort during the completion of the survey and/or the interview process. The discomfort may result from completing the survey or from discussing stressful or negative past experiences during the survey or interview.

At any time, you may request to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation in the survey or the interview. Your requests will be honored and any data collected from you will be destroyed. Your requests will not interfere with the services you receive at this facility.

If any point during or after the survey you need to contact the principal investigator, please feel free to do so via email at [deafidentity@gmail.com](mailto:deafidentity@gmail.com). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or if you are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact—anonously, if you wish—Brenda Lawson, Compliance Officer, UT Office of Research, phone: (865) 974-3466, email: [blawson@utk.edu](mailto:blawson@utk.edu).

Please note your email will **not** be sold, distributed or used in any way by a third party.

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To access the survey please click here: <http://web.utk.edu/~gmyers1/>

## Appendix C

### **Interview Questions:**

#### **Venezuelan American mother**

Was your child educated at a school in your country, and if so what was it like?

Did you know any other families who had a deaf child when you came to the US?

What was school life for you and your child in the US?

How did the parents interact with each other?

What did you think of the education system before you came to the US?

What advice would you give parents who migrated to the US?

Do you help immigrant parents now that you have experience in the US education system?

What is the highest level of education of your son/daughter?

What is your level of education?

What advice would you give to parents who do not have a high level of education?

Do you think as a Venezuelan American your experiences are unique? If so how?

#### **African American mother**

Was your child educated at a school in this state, if not what was it like?

Did you know any other families who had a deaf child when you came to TN?

What was school life for you and your child in TN?

Why did you decide to homeschool your child?

How did the parents interact with each other?

Do you support other families who have deaf child, where do you get support from?

Do you engage in any outreach programs in TN, if so, which ones?

What is the highest level of education of your son/daughter?

What is your highest level of education?

Do you think there are different signs that are used in the different states?

Do you think as an African American your experiences are unique? If so how?

How do you describe yourself – Deaf African American or African American deaf – and why?

**African American adult:**

Did you grow up in this state or another state?

How did your parents feel about you being deaf?

Were you the first deaf person in your family, or are there other deaf?

What was your educational experience like?

Do you think there are differences in the state you grew up in and TN?

Do you go to Deaf community organizations in TN, if so why or why not?

What is your highest level of experience?

Do you think as a Deaf African American your experiences are unique? If so how?

How do you describe yourself – Deaf African American or African American deaf – and why?

## Education

M.A	University of Tennessee, Knoxville		2010 - 2012
BSc.	Florida memorial University, Miami	Magna Cum Laude	2002 -2005

## Experience

**Graduate Assistant**      University of Tennessee, Knoxville      Fall 2010 –Present

- I operate a Lab which tutors students at different levels of American Sign Language (ASL) development;
- I assist the director of the Educational Interpreting Program by grading ASL assignments;
- I teach ASL level one classes in teachers ‘ absence;
- I research and conduct workshops for students for students at different ASL levels to hone their ASL skills.

**Guidance Counselor**      Ministry of Education, Trinidad & Tobago      Dec.2008- Dec.2009

- Provided interactive exercises on various developmental, social and emotional topics to low SES students as well as students with physical disabilities;
- Developed workshops to increase parents and caregivers awareness of emotional and social development of their child;
- Conducted workshops for teachers and school coordinators on strategies to enhance academic performance;
- Ensured that the education system operated in accordance with the rights of the child as mandated by the United Nations Rights of the Child;
- Served as mediator between parents and children in times of conflict.

## Research Experience

**Graduate Research Assistant**      University of Tennessee, Knoxville      May –July 2011

- Supported the researchers by transliterating video files from ASL to English
- Created DVDs which were used to evaluate participants ASL proficiency levels

**National Institute of Health**

September, 2011

- Ethics Training

**Tennessee Hands & Voices**

August 2011 to Present

- I assist with registration of participants at community events.