2024

BEYOND THE HANDS: EXPLORING INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES OF BLACK AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE USERS

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Digital Object Identifier: https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2024.126

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AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE USERS

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Edward "Rusty" Barrett, Professor of Linguistics

Lexington, Kentucky

2024

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

BEYOND THE HANDS: EXPLORING INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES OF BLACK
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE USERS

There is a significant gap in research related to the impact of intersectionality on linguistic identity performance among individuals negotiating multiple marginalized identities. This gap is especially significant among deaf Black and African American individuals who use the American Sign Language (ASL) variety deemed Black American Sign Language (BASL) (Hairston & Smith, 1983). This research aims to identify and discuss the use of the eight distinguishing features of BASL (McCaskill et al. 2011) as indexes of intersectional identities.

My data consists of videos sourced from YouTube, each chosen according to the following criteria: must have at least one self-identifying Black or African American person; said person must be communicating via signed language; and said person must be signing for a minimum of forty-five seconds. Each video will be glossed and discussed in terms of the number of BASL features used and how those features may index each signer's identity. This study claims that signers of Black ASL variably choose features of Black ASL to incorporate in their communicative practices, and there are multiple linguistic features that mark a Black identity within d/Deaf discourse, revealing that features that mark Black ASL also have indexical meanings within the Black ASL community.

KEYWORDS: intersectionality, identity, indexicality, embodiment, enregisterment, persona

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04/26/2024

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Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to my esteemed committee chair, Dr. Rusty Barrett, for his unwavering support, expert guidance, and invaluable mentorship throughout the entirety of this thesis journey. His profound insights into theoretical and ideological approaches have not only shaped the trajectory of my research but also enriched my academic growth in immeasurable ways. To Dr. Allison Burkette and Dr. Kevin McGowan, I owe a debt of gratitude for their exceptional expertise, unwavering patience, and steadfast encouragement. Dr. Burkette's thoughtful guidance and Dr. McGowan's meticulous attention to detail have been instrumental in shaping the quality of this work. I am also deeply appreciative of the entire linguistics faculty, staff, and my peers at the University of Kentucky for fostering an intellectually stimulating environment that has fueled my scholarly pursuits. Lastly, heartfelt thanks to my friends and my parents for their boundless support, encouragement, and belief in my academic endeavors.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, the field of sociolinguistics has witnessed a growing interest in the intersection of language, identity, and social diversity. Within this evolving landscape, the linguistic group of Black American Sign Language (BASL) users stands as a vibrant and culturally rich community, whose experiences and identities have been shaped by a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and sociopolitical factors. Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of understanding diverse linguistic communities, there remains a notable gap in research focusing specifically on the identities and experiences of Black signers within the BASL community. This thesis aims to address this gap by exploring the intricate processes through which Black signers internalize, develop, and exhibit their intersectional identities, and by investigating how these identities are reflected and indexed through the use of BASL. By delving into these questions, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of identity and intersectionality within the Black Deaf community, while also shedding light on the broader sociolinguistic dynamics at play.

1.2 Background

The linguistic group of Black American Sign Language (BASL) users represents a distinct and vibrant community within the broader deaf signing population in the United States. Rooted in African American and Black Deaf culture and history, BASL has evolved as a unique form of sign language, characterized by its distinct lexicon, grammatical structures, and cultural practices. Like other linguistic minority groups, Black deaf signers navigate a complex sociolinguistic landscape shaped by intersecting dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and deaf identity. Within the broader American Sign Language (ASL) community, Black deaf signers have played significant roles in shaping linguistic and cultural practices. ASL, as the predominant sign language used by deaf individuals in the United States, serves as a common medium of

communication and cultural expression for diverse Deaf communities, including Black signers. However, despite the shared use of ASL, Black signers often experience unique challenges and opportunities within the Deaf community, reflecting broader social dynamics of race, ethnicity, and identity.

Our knowledge concerning Black American Sign Language is primarily taken from the work of Dr. Carolyn McCaskill and her colleagues in their project titled *The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL* (2011). Their research offers insights into the sociohistorical effects that led to BASL's creation, distinct BASL features, African American English influence on BASL, and the linguistic and social factors that condition the use of BASL. This work is the first and most comprehensive study of Black American Sign Language since its first documentation in the 1970s, and it includes a rich collection of stories about life in segregated schools and about encounters with white teachers and students in the early years of integration. McCaskill et al. (2011:8) speak to the shared history of hearing and deaf Black and African American individuals and its social and linguistic impacts: "As for settlement patterns, migration, and geographic isolation, the physical and social segregation and oppression that have affected the Black hearing community and contributed to the emergence of AAE have also affected the Black Deaf community."

Throughout history, Black deaf individuals have faced systemic marginalization and discrimination, often confronting multiple forms of oppression within society and within the Deaf community itself. Despite these challenges, Black deaf individuals have forged resilient and dynamic identities, drawing upon their linguistic and cultural heritage to assert their agency and visibility within both the Deaf and broader African American communities. However, the experiences and identities of Black deaf signers remain understudied and underrepresented in academic scholarship, with limited research dedicated specifically to understanding the complexities of their linguistic and cultural practices. Consequently, there is a pressing need for research that centers the voices and experiences of Black deaf signers, exploring the ways in which they negotiate and express their identities within the context of BASL, ASL, and broader sociocultural frameworks.

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1.2.1 The D/deaf Distinction

Within the rich and ever-changing world of human communication, sign languages stand out as vibrant expressions of culture and identity, particularly within the diverse communities of individuals who are deaf. A nuanced aspect of this cultural landscape lies in the distinction between capitalized "Deaf" and uncapitalized "deaf."

The original use of the distinction between capitalized "Deaf" and uncapitalized "deaf" was implemented by Woodward (1975) to express the sociocultural experience of being deaf (uppercase-D "Deaf") and the medical model connected to explicitly audiological deafness (lowercase-d deaf). A common convention found in earlier literature held that when the "D" is capitalized, it heralds the embrace of a unique cultural and linguistic identity, giving rise to the term "Deaf Culture," (Holcomb 2013:11). This cultural framework was meant to extend beyond a mere audiological condition and emphasize the richness of a shared language, often sign language, as well as collective history, values, and community bonds. Whereas the lowercase "d" has tended to align with a more clinical perspective, focusing on the auditory condition associated with deafness. This viewpoint often leaned towards a medial understanding of deafness, with connotations linked to a want or need for correction or accommodation to assimilate individuals into a predominantly hearing society.

However, recent literature has moved away from this division; as Kusters et al. writes, "The d/Deaf distinction creates or perpetuates a *dichotomy* between deaf and Deaf people (even when trying to be inclusive by writing "d/Deaf"), and it has caused practices and experiences of exclusion," (2017:p). The multifaceted nature of positionalities and multimodal language use makes it impossible to encapsulate within a simplistic binary framework, and the distinction between d/Deaf is problematic as an oversimplification of an evolving array of identities and language practices. The initial employment of this dichotomy was initiated at a time when it was common practice to capitalize groups and nationalities (such as "Irish") as customary in the English language. However, Kusters et al. (2017) argue that using "Deaf" is patronizing, ambiguous, authoritative, obsolete, and antiquated in terms of reporting on deaf history, and ethnocentric in applications outside of Western academia. Capitalized "Deaf" is often used to self-identify as culturally Deaf,

in such that one's hearing status reflects a distinctive way of being – one that fosters pride in a vibrant cultural heritage. But a deaf person who signs does not inherently constitute a formal allegiance with that of capital-D Deafness nor does it insinuate a personal opinion on the matter. To label a deaf signer as Deaf is controversial at best without taking into account the preferred self-identification.

This research takes from the arguments and conventions established by Kusters et al. (2017) in that we use "deaf" to mean biologically/corporally deaf. Contending that the practice of the d/Deaf dichotomy within the community at large and in academic literature should be discontinued, the term "deaf" is utilized in this study to refer to all deaf and hard of hearing individuals, to which additive descriptors such as "deaf signers" can be included for more accurate representations. Acknowledging that there are benefits and values connected to capitalizing "Deaf" in terms of cultural recognition, the capitalized "Deaf" will be used only in reference to the greater Deaf community within this work.

1.2.2 "Black" or "African American"?

In the long and resilient history of Americans of African descent, the collective terminology used to refer to this group has been historically assumptive, involuntary, and exclusive to the considerations of the group members themselves. In the twentieth century, prior to the Civil Rights Movement, the predominant referents for this group evolved from "colored" to "Negro" then to "black," (Sigelman et al. 2005). However, the term "African American" took hold in the late 1980's when a group of civil rights leaders pressed for a term that implied "a shift from race to ethnicity or culture as the defining characteristic of the group and consequently…evoke[d] the notion of similarities between this group and other ethnic groups," (qtd. Grant & Orr 1996 cited in Seigelman et al. 2005). By 1994, "African-American" seemed to be the preferred choice in a national survey with 53 percent in favor, while "black" showed only 36 percent in favor (Sigelman et al. 2005). Sigelman et al. (2005) stated that for many African Americans, self-representative terminology was considered a matter of relative indifference, referring

to a common sentiment illustrated by W. E. B. Du Bois's 1928 dictum: "It is not the name – it's the Thing that counts." In Sigelman et al.'s study of identifying preferential terminology of this group, they found that, of 2,382 respondents, 48.1 percent voiced a preference for "black", 49.2 percent preferred "African-American," and 2.7 percent declined to express and opinion (2005). They concluded stating that it remains unclear as to which term is preferred by the greater ethnocultural group, and the naming of this group is subject to change over time.

As someone who does not want to impose how a group is to be named, I use both Black and African American interchangeably in this research, recognizing that these names may have differing connotations and may vary in terms of individual self-identification. Most often, I will use the term "Black" with a capital "B" to refer to this group, taking from the conventions of McCaskill et al. (2011).

1.3 Research Questions

This study aims to address two primary research questions that center on the intersection of identity, language, and culture within the linguistic group of Black American Sign Language users:

1) How do Black signers internalize, develop, and exhibit their intersectional identities?
2) How are Black deaf identities indexed through the use of Black American Sign Language?

The former question explores the complex processes through which Black deaf signers navigate their identities at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and deaf identity. By examining the lived experiences and subjective perspectives of Black deaf signers as provided by my data, this research seeks to uncover the diverse ways in which identity is constructed, negotiated, and expressed within the BASL community. The latter question investigates the roles of Black American Sign Language as a linguistic and cultural resource for Black deaf signers in expressing and asserting their identities. By analyzing

the linguistic features, discourse patterns, and cultural references present BASL interactions included in my data, this research aims to elucidate how Black deaf identities are reflected and reinforced through the use of sign language within the Black ASL community.

In order to investigate these questions, I conduct interactional and variationist sociolinguistic discourse analysis of eight videos selected from YouTube that feature users of Black American Sign Language. Chapter 2 offers background information on the history of BASL, including an illustration of the historical origins of American Sign Language and an overview of the sociocultural events that have shaped Black and African-American communities in the United States. Chapter 3 summarizes key theoretical and methodological developments and research pertaining to identity, intersectionality, dialectical variation in American Sign Language, and Black American Sign Language. Chapter 4 then outlines the data collection process, the transcription conventions, and discursive methodologies used in the present study, which primarily includes discourse analysis and a variation and indexical fields approach (Eckert 2008) to examine the negotiations of intersectional identities encoded within the data. Chapter 5 presents a detailed analysis of the linguistic features, discourse strategies, and embodied expressions observed in the video data, exploring how these features index intersectional identities within the Black Deaf community. Chapter 6 discusses the methodological advantages of using YouTube-sourced data for studying Black ASL discourse, addresses challenges, such as potential limitations in data authenticity and representativeness, and outlines avenues for future research, including more extensive ethnographic studies and longitudinal analyses of linguistic change. The seventh and concluding chapter synthesizes the key findings from the analysis and reflects on their significance for understanding the intersection of language, culture, and identity within the Black Deaf community.

Through the exploration of these research questions, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between language, identity, and intersectionality within the Black Deaf community. By shedding light on the lived experiences and linguistic practices of Black signers, this research endeavors to amplify

their voices and perspectives within both academic scholarship and broader sociolinguistic discourse.

CHAPTER 2. BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

2.1 Introduction

In order to discern the sociolinguistic variability within the African American deaf community, a comprehensive understanding of its nature necessitates an exploration of the sociohistorical milieu in which it occurs, with particular emphasis on facets pertaining to the origins of American Sign Language, prominent educational institutions of deaf children such as residential schools, and the interplay of racial segregation shaping these dynamics.

2.2 American Sign Language Origins

Before the pivotal establishment of the first school of the deaf in America, often noted as the origin of American Deaf culture, historical and anecdotal reports indicated that there were several signing groups located across the country predating the establishment of deaf educational institutions, from individual families to widely spread communities. Most predominantly, signed language varieties were used as a lingua franca among both hearing and deaf Native Americans across the United States for generations pre-European contact, known collectively as Indian Sign Language (Davis 2010). Similarly, during the early years of European colonization, a bilingual community consisting of deaf and hearing individuals emerged in a village, Chilmark, located in the western part of Martha's Vineyard, an island off the coast of Massachusetts (Bahan 1996). Most of the population of Martha's Vineyard consisted of former residents of Kent, England, where Old Kent Sign Language was utilized by its large deaf community. Its substantial quantity of genetic deafness, accounting for four percent of the village's population, is thought to have resulted from many generations of intermarriage in Kent before the settlement of the American village in the 1690s (Bahan 1996). Particularly distinctive and noteworthy about this community was that the eventually-evolved and sophisticated sign language, referred to as Martha's Vineyard Sign Language (MVSL), was used by not just deaf individuals, but hearing people with and without the presence of deaf individuals, as well; both MVSL and English were established as the primary

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modes of communication by this small bilingual community. It is speculated that language contact may have transpired during the early years of settlement, as the native Wampanoag Indians inhabiting the island of Martha's Vineyard encountered the sign language employed by the deaf immigrant community in that locale (Davis 2010).

Additionally, and to a less widely known extent, numerous home sign systems have been developed by deaf individuals independently of each other across the country, a practice that continues today. Compelling evidence indicates that deaf children have commonly formed home sign languages that exhibit a higher level of sophistication compared to the typical gestures crafted and utilized by hearing individuals in everyday conversation (Bahan 1996). Thus, distinct and complex variations of gestures and signs have existed and continue to be developed as deaf and hard of hearing signers learn to use visual-gestural communication as needed in their environments.

Despite early communities that developed and employed sign languages, the birth of American Deaf culture consistently points to the establishment of what is now the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut. In 1815, Dr. Mason F. Cogswell, along with financial support from the community, sent Yale College graduate Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet to Europe in hopes of finding a method of instruction for his deaf daughter, Alice. In his time abroad, Gallaudet attended an exhibition given by the director of the Institute for Deaf Mutes in Paris, Abbé Sicard, striking Gallaudet's interest in "sign language" instruction. It was when his funding grew scarce that Gallaudet had to return to the United States. However, recognizing he was still not ready to independently run a school for the deaf, Gallaudet contracted with Laurent Clerc, a graduate of and teacher at the Paris institute. After their arrival in Connecticut, with the help of Cogswell, Gallaudet and Clerc opened the Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons in 1817. Later named the American School for the Deaf (ASD), as previously mentioned, the completion of the first school year yielded the enrollment of thirty-two pupils (Hairston & Smith 1983; Lucas, Bayley & Valli 2001).

The role that educational institutions, particularly residential schools, have played in the advancement of American Deaf culture cannot be understated, as they have "participated directly in the creation of an ASL community across the United States,"

(Lucas, Bayley & Valli 2001:51). In a study conducted by Lucas, Bayley, and Valli (2001), they confirmed a clear and strong link between linguistic variation in American Sign Language and the history of deaf education. Because the majority of deaf children are born to hearing parents (Holcomb 2023; Lucas, Bayley & Valli 2001), most deaf children have acquired ASL through peers and instruction in residential school settings, notably peers who belong to the even fewer children born to deaf parents and consequentially are first-language users of ASL. In early generations, residential schools provided the first opportunities for deaf individuals to congregate with others experiencing similar non-hearing orientations towards life. Spending some of the most formative years of their lives in residential schools, deaf individuals were allowed the freedom to form habits and solutions leading to a more effective and beneficial lifestyle. Now hallmarks of Deaf culture, some of these solutions included communication strategies such as signed language, social interaction strategies such as attention-getting and turn-taking devices, and successful identity formation through the accessibility of deaf signing role models (Holcomb 2023:103).

The privileged access to coalesce and grow as a community at the American School for the Deaf was not inclusive to all of those who may have needed it. It wasn't until 1852 that ASD admitted Black deaf students, though it was the first integrated school in Connecticut (Hairston & Smith 1983; McCaskill et al. 2011). While this marked a significant milestone in fostering integration at ASD, it is imperative to contextualize this development within the broader historical landscape of racial segregation prevalent during that era.

2.3 Segregation & Civil Rights: Black ASL's Context

Black American Sign Language is an example illustrating the inherent connections between language and speaker experience and between language and identity. Black American Sign Language is the linguistic outcome of the complex historical backgrounds that have shaped the experiences of being deaf and being Black in the United States. The development of Black ASL is a direct reflection of deaf and Black

history, and thus it is imperative to recognize the events that undeniably shaped it. As Smith et al. (2020:255) affirm, "The history of social isolation has had a large impact on the signing members of the black Deaf community. The segregated schools and other social conditions generated circumstances conducive for the development of a distinctive variety of ASL that was unmistakably separate from the ASL used in the white Deaf community."

Racial segregation did not start but was continuing into the late 1800s, as a result of the public policy adopted during slavery that prohibited the education of Black individuals. With the delicate white power structure in fear of the influence of educated Black people, it was illegal during this era to teach reading or writing to both slaves and freedmen alike. Claims of white superiority had no grounds to be maintained if the education of Black people prevailed (McCaskill et al. 2011). As the attitudes in American society evolved and changed, though delayed, so too did the schools for the deaf. Following the Civil War, schools dedicated to the education of Black deaf children slowly began to arise with the establishment of race-specific residential schools, largely adopting the "separate but equal" tenet. Though reported that no separate schools for African Americans were established in the North, it was found by Baynton (1996 cited in McCaskill et al. 2011) that the Clarke School in Massachusetts affirmed a 1908 policy excluding the instruction of Black students. While rare, some states did eventually allow Black and white students to attend classes together.

Though, this separation may have served as a benefit to the education of Black deaf children for a time. From the 1890s to the 1960s, the majority of the United States educational system opted for oralism over manualism. Following the Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf in 1880, now known as the Milan Conference, a discussion was held arguing the merits of oral instruction, or articulation, versus manual instruction with the use of sign language (Lucas, Bayley & Valli 2001). Advocating for oral instruction, prominent figures such as Alexander Graham Bell began implementing methods of teaching that included learning how to speak and lip-read while banning the use of the hands to communicate. It was held by those in favor of oralism (oralists) that spoken language was inherently more superior to sign language, and this

belief caused a great shift in American deaf education. Contrarily, manualism, an educational approach conducted in the visual-manual modality involving sign language, experienced setbacks during this era. As a consequence, the continuity of American Sign Language was disrupted for several generations of white deaf signers. Additionally, with the prominent racial notions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries deeming African Americans as "being less highly evolved than white people", oralism was not strictly enforced in schools for Black deaf children (McCaskill 2011:107). Moges (2020:81) notes, "The history of oralism...was not a Black Deaf experience but an element of whiteness because the oralists used the teaching method to normalize deaf schoolchildren to perform and speak like an ideal white child." As a result, manualism was the primary method of instruction in Black schools for the deaf. A paradoxical consequence arising from both racism and the misconception of scientific theory led to the provision of an education for many Black deaf children that was comparatively more intelligible than the educational experiences afforded to their white deaf counterparts (Moges 2020), especially in Southern states. Despite this unpredicted benefit to the Black Deaf community, the majority of Black deaf children were still placed on vocational tracts and received instruction in facilities that were far less superior than white deaf children (Hill 2017).

Miller v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia was the first to challenge the educational segregation of Black and white deaf children in 1951. The case resulted in a federal district court ruling, stating that Black deaf children had the right to attend the white school the following year, although it maintained its segregated instruction until 1958 (McCaskill 2011). After the famed verdict of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 posited that "racially segregated schools are inherently unequal," resistance to this decree prevailed strongly in some southern states. Deaf schools among seventeen southern and border states continued patterns of segregation. In the 1950s, thirteen states, the majority located in the South, continued to support segregated schools for the deaf; and, as late as 1963, eight states sustained separate facilities (Hairston & Smith 1983). Compiled by McCaskill et al. (2011), it took an average of thirty-three years between the establishment of a white school for the deaf and a Black school for the deaf among the States, namely

Kentucky with sixty-one years, Virginia with seventy years, and Louisiana with eighty-six years. The time between the establishment of a Black school for the deaf and desegregation averaged at about seventy-three years.

In examining the historical segregation of Black and white deaf children in the United States, it becomes evident that intersectionality played a significant role in shaping their experiences. Being both deaf and Black, these individuals faced compounded discrimination and marginalization. Their identities as members of both marginalized communities rendered them particularly vulnerable to systemic injustices. Despite the landmark ruling in *Miller v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* in 1951, which affirmed the right of Black deaf children to attend white schools, resistance to desegregation persisted, perpetuating patterns of segregation in deaf schools across Southern and border states. This systemic discrimination not only deprived Black deaf individuals of equal educational opportunities but also perpetuated the false notion of racial superiority and inferiority. The prolonged period between the establishment of white and Black schools for the deaf, as highlighted by McCaskill et al. (2011), underscores the enduring legacy of racial segregation in deaf education. It is imperative to recognize the intersectionality of race and deafness in understanding the historical injustices faced by Black deaf individuals and to continue striving for equity and inclusion in education for all marginalized communities.

Social movements often serve as a catalyst or can facilitate the advancement of subsequent social movements. Consequently, observers vested in the surge of activism within the hearing-impaired community would find it unsurprising to discern parallels and affiliations with other movements advocating for various rights. Notably, the Civil Rights Movement, which stands as a pivotal catalyst for societal transformation in America over the preceding century, prompted numerous groups to articulate their calls for fair and equitable treatment within the societal framework. Beginning around 1954 with the *Brown v. Board of Education*, culminating in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, a series of legislative reformation endeavored in addressing years of "second-class citizenship" for African Americans and inspired a call-to-action for other marginalized minority groups in America (Rittenhouse et al. 1991:393).

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Though, it should not be left unsaid that these legislative acts were spawned out of the collective demands of people in the Black community and other allies. With generations of innumerable attempts, precursors of the Civil Rights Act like the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956, the freedom rides of 1961, the mass demonstrations across the country, and the riots in Tulsa, Los Angeles, Birmingham, New York, Chicago, and other major American cities forced politicians to enact change (Rittenhouse et al. 1991). Becoming increasingly aware of their own versions of "second-class" status, the Deaf community joined in the fight for anti-discriminatory policies.

Legislation, coalition-building, political pressure, and advocacy were the staple tools in addressing the problems involving the Black and Deaf communities of this time. Leading up to the advocacy and eventual passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Deaf community and allies mirrored similar principles garnered from the civil rights activists by picketing and lobbying. Proven worth the battle, Rittenhouse et al. (1991:393) declare that the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 contained the best civil rights protection provisions ever enacted on behalf of the Deaf community until the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The legislative backing of deaf individuals curated validation for the Deaf community to be who they were without being subject to discrimination, as well as the empowerment to ask for reasonable accommodations and equal opportunities in education and employment (Rittenhouse et al. 1991).

It can be said that the Civil Rights Act can be made analogous to the Rehabilitation Act, as both acts instilled hope in the minority groups involved to enter in the American mainstream society without discrimination, judgement, prejudice, and bigotry. While drawing an analogy between the Civil Rights Act and the Rehabilitation Act, it is important to acknowledge the historical context and magnitude of suffering experienced by specifically Black individuals prior to and during the era of segregation and blatant, adamant discrimination. The Civil Rights Act played an undoubtedly pivotal role in addressing systematic racial injustice, with its impact significantly benefiting the Black community. Although, such benefits did not occur overnight, as decades following the Civil Rights Act still lacked progress in small-scale daily life. During the years surrounding the Civil Rights Movement, "the constitutional amendments set off a series

of challenges and court battles to interpret and enforce new laws. From resistance to school desegregation…to continued discrimination in hiring, the battle put into place appropriate remedies to second-class citizenship persisted," (Rittenhouse et al. 1991:393-394). The social structures, educational processes, and work environments continue to suppress the success and inclusion of Black and deaf people to this day.

CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The intersection of identity, language, and culture within the linguistic group of Black American Sign Language users has garnered increasing attention within the field of sociolinguistics. As a distinct linguistic and cultural community, BASL users navigate a complex sociolinguistic landscape shaped by intersecting dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and deaf identity. This literature review aims to synthesize and review existing frameworks on identity, intersectionality, dialectical variation in American Sign Language, and Black American Sign Language. By examining key studies, theoretical frameworks, and linguistic phenomena, this review seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding identity and intersectionality within deaf, Black, and Black deaf communities.

3.2 Theoretical Frameworks on Identity

Language, both spoken and signed, is a fundamental aspect of human identity as a medium of shaping thoughts, interactions, and cultural affiliations. Although identity is highly individualized and personal to any given individual, previous work dedicated to understanding the construction of identity through language posits the unavoidable roles that socialization and linguistic interaction play in forming, maintaining, and changing one's identity. Within the realm of this linguistic research, exploring the complex and dynamic characteristics of deaf identity provides rich insights into the intricate relationship between language, the self, and identity perception. Before delving into the myriad of nuanced identities pertaining to this study, a question must first be asked: How are we defining identity? We elicit from the work of Irene Leigh to define identity within the context of this study as a complex and dynamic "cognitive and social construction" that is based on one's understanding of "the biological (i.e., race, disability, gender, age), psychological (i.e., drives, intellect, competencies, self-understandings), social (i.e., cultural, social roles, the resolution of conflict and crisis), and religious-spiritual aspects" of one's being (2009:4). Additionally, it is necessary to account for the dynamic and

ongoing interpretations of past experiences, present experiences, and potential or expected future experiences in considering one's identity.

For centuries scholars have debated and explored the complex nature of identity within the social sciences. Two basic ideological perspectives on identity have emerged amid the extensive body of research on identity: primordialism or essentialism, and constructivist or nonessentialism (Leigh 2009:4; Woodward 2002). Essentialism is grounded in the idea that identity is understood as essential, relatively fixed, and predetermined, or "natural" (Leigh 2009:4). These aspects are understood to be based on "authentic" traits that unmistakably delineate an overarching identity construct, fostering a sense of connection, shared historical truth, and stability. Conversely, the nonessentialist view dictates that identities are not inherent within the self nor comprised as a result of one's environment. Nonessentialism recognizes the self to be in a constant state of development and evolution, formed by "the social environment in the guise of political, economic, and sociocultural forces that contribute to shared meaning systems or cultural contexts that evolve over time," (Leigh 2009:4). Within culturally diverse and dynamically intricate environments, it has become increasingly normalized for individuals to form flexible, multi-dimensional identities. It is within this research that we find the nonessentialist approach to best fit our understanding of multiple marginalized identities of a singular individual, as concepts and interpretations of what it means to be deaf and what it means to be Black continue to constantly shift on economic, political, and societal fronts, as well as at the individual level.

Our understanding of the key features of identity is anchored in the findings of sociologist Kath Woodward, as her work offers thorough and crucial insights into the nuanced dimensions and theoretical frameworks of identity. Woodward (2002:xii) presented fundamental components of identity, asserting that identity is the location of convergence between the personal-self and the social-self:

- Identity provides the links between the personal and the social, self and society, the psychic and the social.
- Identity is relational, being constructed through relations of difference, such as 'us' and 'them'.

- Identity also has to accommodate and manage difference.
- The formation and establishment of identity involves both locating and transgressing boundaries; there is a constant attempt to establish boundaries which may be impossible to secure.
- Identity is historically specific; it can be seen as fluid, contingent and changing over time.
- Uncertainty about identity may lead people to lay claim to essential truths in their search for security and stability.
- Identity involves identification and thus the exercise of some agency on the part of those who identify with a particular identity position.
- Identities are marked symbolically and are reproduced through representational systems.
- Identity has material bases, including social, economic and political bases as well as those that are linked to the material body.

What Woodward (2002:16) constitutes as the primary distinguishing concept of identity is the interrelationship between "the personal and the social; between what I feel inside and what is known of me from the outside." Though, what is "felt inside" is not possible to conceptualize apart from the social world that provides its meaning. Experiences in the social world provide opportunities to determine one's positionality within a larger society, develop opinions, and choose which group(s) one wants to associate with and differentiate from. It is within social experiences that internal stimuli (thoughts, opinions, morales, etc.) and external stimuli (persons present, physical location, societal formalities, etc.) force an individual to react and respond, utilizing social context to curate their identity. Varying social circumstances provide contexts for identity formation and social belonging as each circumstance requires differing responses. Identity is intricately linked to both personal feelings and external perceptions within social contexts. Individuals navigate their internal experiences and how they are perceived by others, shaping their sense of self within a broader societal framework. Social experiences serve as pivotal factors in the formation of individual identities. Interactions within various social contexts provide opportunities for individuals to establish their positions within society, develop person beliefs, and align themselves with specific social groups or identities. Identity is curated through the interaction between internal and external stimuli within social environments. These stimuli, ranging from

person thoughts to societal norms, influence how individuals express themselves, negotiate social meanings, and assert their identities within diverse social settings.

3.2.1 Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Identity

If identity were a painting, culture would be the gallery, society would be the viewers, and language would be the paint on the canvas; language is the medium in which human beings express themselves. Navigating through the diverse facets of identity underscores the intrinsic connection to language. The sociocultural linguistic perspective on identity brings attention to the interplay between language, culture, and society, as elucidated by the work of Bucholtz and Hall (2005). Their article proposed a framework for the analysis of identity as it pertains to linguistic interaction based on five principles: (1) identity is the product of linguistic and other semiotic practices and is thus both social and cultural; (2) identities include demographic categories, interactional and temporary stances and participation role and ethnographic cultural positions; (3) identities may be linguistically indexed through disparate linguistic structures, systems, labels, styles, and stances; (4) identities are constructed through numerous, potentially overlapping, aspects of the relationship between the self and others; and (5) identity may be an outcome of interactional negotiations, partly intentional, partly habitual, and not always consciously (585).

The first principle, termed the emergence principle, is informed by the traditional scholarly view of identity as existing primarily within one's mind, originally discounting the social ground on which identity is formed, maintained, and transformed. Bucholtz and Hall (2005:588) consider arguments against this structuralist, generalist view and find a middle ground, determining that "[i]dentity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore is fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon." This view provides a lens through which we can perceive identity not merely as a psychological self-classification mechanism manifested in social conduct, but rather as a construct formed through social action, particularly within the realm of language.

Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) second principle, the positionality principle, questions the perspective that identity is a conglomerate of broad social categories which correlate social behavior, like age, gender, and social class. Their claim here aims to encompass macro-level constructs of social subjectivity, local, ethnographically specific cultural positions, and transitory interactional positions. This principle holds that linguistic exchanges can demonstrate multiple positionalities at once in a single interaction, highlighting the multi-dimensionality of identity.

The third indexicality principle concerns itself with the system whereby identity is formed. Understood on multiple levels within this research, indexicality is defined by Bucholtz and Hall (2005:594) as, "the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings." When considering identity formation, indexicality is intricately intertwined with ideological structures, wherein the associations between language and identity are grounded in cultural beliefs and values regarding speakers who can or should use specific linguistic expressions. This concept reveals how individuals use linguistic resources to "indexically position self and other in discourse," (Bucholtz & Hall 2005:587). Within the scope of this study, indexicality is also employed to address the semiotic links associated with particular signs in ASL and BASL. The dual use of this term underscores the nuanced nature of indexicality, demonstrating its relevance across both spoken and signed modes of communication.

The relationality principle emphasizes that identities are never independent of social meaning. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) state that identity is imbued with social meaning with respect to other available identity positions and social actors. This principle challenges the oversimplified view that identity revolves merely around sameness and difference. Proposing a more broad perspective, Bucholtz and Hall (2005:598) indicate that "[i]dentities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy." They call attention to the intersubjective basis of identity, underlining that discourse is the medium in which diverse methods of relationality work at the linguistic level.

The final principle asserts that inherent relational identity is necessarily partial, shaped by context-specific and ideologically influenced formations of self and other. Within this partiality principle, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) claim that any construction of identity is in part intentional, in part habitual and potentially unconscious, in part a result of outside perspectives and representations, and in part influenced by larger ideological processes. Thus, identity is in a constant state of change as interactions take place and as contextual discourses shift.

3.2.2 Embodied Sociocultural Linguistics

Whether constructed naturally or curated intentionally, the body is the point of concurrency between the abstraction of identity and its outward performance. The self is both bounded to and bounded by the body; it offers limits and structural constraints as well as being the site of identity formation, development, and continuity. Woodward (2002:2) acknowledges the relationship between the body, the self, and society, claiming that, "[n]otions of who we are and the relationship between the individual and the personal, and the societies that we live in are always located within the parameter of embodiment." The role of bodies and embodiment plays a crucial part in the production, perception, and social interpretation of language, as gesture, gaze, posture, and bodily movements are forms of embodiment that embed social meaning in linguistic communication (Bucholtz & Hall 2016; Stamp 2022). The sociolinguistic perspective on embodiment is understood as "the way in which a range of semiotic practices, such as gestures, gaze, posture, and bodily movements, can embed social meaning for linguistic communication," (Stamp 2022:2).

Social and identity information are supplied directly and indirectly through such semiotic practices. An example of this may be understood through the research of Rose Stamp (2022) in which she investigates how deaf signers convey sexual identity through embodiment practices, such as gesture, posture, gait, and eye gaze. Stamp (2022) uses her work to illustrate how signers, like speakers, use their bodies "for a variety of communicative purposes that go beyond language as it is traditionally defined in

linguistic literature," and it is emphasized that, for deaf individuals who use sign language, embodiment practices are necessarily intertwined in the use of a singular modality, the visual-gestural modality. That is, signed articulation is always embodied and cannot be separated from the signer. Visual languages, like American Sign Language and Black American Sign Language, involve the use of various articulators to achieve diverse objectives, as evidenced by studies on face, head, and torso movements. These bodily motions assume crucial roles in the grammar of sign languages, consistently accompanying different linguistic structures like questions, topics, conditionals, and more. Stamp's work examines the use of different articulators of the body – hands, head, face, torso – to index aspects of social identities, including sexuality and gender. In this comparative study, focusing on the gay-indexed movements of signers and gesturers, it was found that several embodiment practices, such as kinematic movements, distalization, wrist-flicking, and the utilization of a larger signing space, were shared among gay-identifying participants. However, Stamp notably mentioned that these features appeared to reflect embodied acts of gender and sexual identity that are modality independent and are thus not exclusive to sign language. That is to say, the embodiment practices denoted in Stamp's study seem to index gender and sexual identity rather than a particular deaf identity, and these practices may be utilized cross-linguistically regardless of linguistic modality.

"The notion of indexicality, or the production of contextualized meaning, arises from the bodily engagement with the world," (Bucholtz & Hall 2016:178). Just as identity relies on the social world to provide meaning, information taken from forms of embodiment must rely on pre-existing representational systems which give embodiment practices meaning. The understanding of both oneself and of others is achieved through representational systems; human beings comprehend one another by using these systems as tools for categorization. We mark ourselves as belonging through all of the different aspects of representation, including language, practice, performance, and display; and it is through language "that we are constructed and that we come to know who we are," (Woodward 2002:79).

3.2.3 Deaf Identity Research

As it pertains to the identities of those who are deaf, literature involving such identities have emerged only within the last fifty years. Prominent to this area of study is the discussion held by deaf author and psychologist, Irene Leigh, who provides a multidisciplinary approach to deaf identities. Her work speaks to the multifaceted and complex identities of those who are culturally hearing, culturally Deaf, and hard of hearing, among others. Similarly, we look to the work of the deaf scholar, Thomas Holcomb, for perspectives on Deaf culture as it relates to the social context of the various deaf identities presented.

Holcomb loosely defines deaf as a term that "usually describes an inability to hear well," (2013:45). However, both Leigh and Holcomb bring to light that within the Deaf community, the given definition is decidedly more socially oriented, members referred to as "culturally deaf," (Leigh 2009:47). The myriad of various deaf groups across the globe with differing social expectations influenced by political, cultural, linguistic, religious, regional, and ethnic dynamics offers a challenge in defining Deaf culture and, consequentially, deaf identity. Leigh acknowledged the diversity encompassed within Deaf culture, and she imposes the crucial element that unites those who identify with it: "the use of a signed language and eagerness to achieve fluency," (2009:48). With language as a symbol of social identity, signed language stands at the core of Deaf culture (Holcomb 2013:45). Variations in sign language, specifically in the United States, also mirror various notions of hearing communities, wherein membership based on signed language fluency differs in specific Deaf communities. Variations in use and proficiency of sign language may impact an individual's value and respect within Deaf communities, either diminishing or enhancing them (Holcomb 2013:35). Acceptance into these groups is granted through practices of identification, sharing common experiences, and participation in group activities, all while utilizing conversational signing. Holcomb (2013) addressed a theory proposed by Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980) which illustrates four domains that one must meet in order to accomplish successful membership into the Deaf community: audiological, linguistic, social, and political requirements. According to Baker-Shenk and Cokely, to be a member of the Deaf community, one must exhibit a

hearing level that is significantly different from that of a hearing person, use sign language, have deaf friends, and show interest in the prosperity and integrity of the Deaf community. Though, beneath all of these requirements of membership, most essential to Deaf culture is exhibiting a positive attitude towards and an interest in the well-being of the community (Holcomb 2013:43).

However, with ninety percent of deaf people being born to hearing parents, it is essential to discuss the challenges of those who are faced with a less readily available culturally Deaf support system, referred to as "culturally hearing" (Holcomb 2013:39; Leigh 2009:45). Leigh reports of studies conducted on deaf persons relying on speech and audition growing up as "being caught to varying extents between the deaf and hearing worlds, and needing to be comfortably at home in both worlds," (2009:45). Most of the participants in the reported studies revealed positive values surrounding both deaf and hearing peers alike. Leigh's research from 1999 notably mentions the majority of its participants as identifying with the hearing community, and half expressed feelings of affinity with deaf peers who have similarly experienced being raised culturally hearing, sometimes referred to as "oral deaf culture". Although, within Deaf culture, the term "oral" is negatively connotative, as it is associated with oralism and its push against the use of signed languages. The use of "oral" as an identity marker elicits a sense of "otherness", non-belonging, or even opposition towards those who identify with Deaf culture.

But how do identities differ between those who identify as deaf and those who identify as hard of hearing? Turning to Holcomb's definition of *hard of hearing* as a way "to describe those who have some use of their residual hearing" (2013:47), the delineation between the two definitions give rise to a discernable gray area that illustrates their cultural ambiguity. The vagueness between *deaf* and *hard of hearing* is speculated to reflect contrasting views of what hard of hearing means to deaf and hearing people. To many deaf signers, *hard of hearing* implies resemblance to hearing experiences; and, to many hearing people, *hard of hearing* implies resemblance to deaf experiences.

Individuals who are hard of hearing are said to be able to "pass for hearing", as their fundamental existences and needs usually favor "being participating members of

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and culturally identifying with the larger society rather than coalescing into a recognizable hard-of-hearing group, even if they identify as hard of hearing," (Leigh 2009:57). In a small-scale study conducted by Leigh (1999), all four of her hard-of-hearing participants, of thirty-four oral deaf participants, self-reported as feeling more closely bonded to their hearing communities in terms of communication preferences and feelings of naturalness (Leigh 2009:57). It seems that there is a reluctance to self-identify as hard of hearing shared by many of these individuals, with reports of growing out hair to cover hearing aids and tolerating inadequate lighting in attempts to avoid being stigmatized. Though, this is not representative of the hard of hearing contingent entirely, as some hard of hearing individuals feel compelled to join the Deaf community and identify as such.

Referring back to the domains presented by Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980), it was claimed by Holcomb (2013) that a hard of hearing person who meets three of the four required domains would likely be readily accepted into the Deaf community. Unfortunately, this is not wholly representative of the sentiments held by some deaf individuals, as some assert that people who have intelligible speech and communicate audio-verbally with ease should not be labeled as hard of hearing, regardless of sign language fluency or participation in the Deaf community (Holcomb 2013:48). This presents a challenge for hard of hearing individuals who are members of the Deaf community, wanting to avoid identifying or being identified in a way that is not considered socially acceptable. The "hard of hearing" label is sometimes even viewed negatively by members of the Deaf community still; by "not being deaf enough", hard of hearing individuals may find it challenging to be accepted by some members of Deaf communities for being read as "too hearing", not belonging, or for maintaining a "hearing" perspective.

Those who are late-deafened, losing hearing after being accustomed to a hearing world, are tasked with shifts in self-perceptions when learning to navigate and communicate in their newly deaf world. This shift, or lack thereof, is what situates a late-deaf individual in their journey. Initially internalizing the late-deafened identity label often emerges "as an alien identity that forces them to acknowledge their need to learn

how to be 'deaf'," (Leigh 2009:46). Often resisting this change, those who are late-deafened are generally unwilling to connect with other deaf individuals. That is to say, rejection of Deaf culture is not always held by late-deafened persons, as research tells us late-deafened people usually maintain strong ties to their previously established hearing communities while valuing meetings and support from late-deafened groups. Evolving one's identity when becoming late-deafened may involve "confronting feelings of marginalization as the late-deafened person fluctuates between the former pre-hearing loss status and current status," (Leigh 2009:47). While there may be instances of push back from some Deaf communities for "thinking hearing", it would be false to assume that all late-deafened contingents persist exclusively as culturally hearing.

3.3 Theoretical Frameworks on Intersectional Identity

In order to understand the intricate identities of Black American Sign Language users, it is necessary to explore previous work pertaining to intersectionality to further define the scope of this research. With the pioneering work of feminist legal scholar Crenshaw (1989), her research asserted the necessity to consider various interconnected systems of power and oppression that concurrently favor certain individuals or groups while subjugating others among diverse social occurrences and locations. Additional intersectional approaches emphasize other social constructs at play, an example being the work of Erevelles and Minear (2010), wo delineated methods for integrating intersectionality with both critical race feminism and disability studies to examine the complex experiences of women of color with disabilities. The emphasis of their study holds that individuals "located perilously at the interstices of race, class, gender, AND disability are constituted as non-citizens and (no) bodies by the very social institutions…that are designed to protect, nurture, and empower them," (Erevelles & Minear 2010:4)

Erevelles and Minear (2010) outlined three ways to frame intersectional research – anticategorical, intracategorical, and intercategorical approaches – to consider both race and disability in the academic field. The anticategorical framework aligns with the

poststructuralist argument that social categories like race, gender, and sexuality are socially constructed fictions. This approach challenges the boundaries of identity with studies offering the existence of five rather than two sexes (Fausto-Sterling 2000 cited in Erevelles & Minear 2010:7) or claiming multiracialism does not allow the defining of race (Michael & Winant 1994 cited in Erevelles & Minear 2010:7). Erevelles and Minear (2010:7) argue against this framework by quoting that of Crenshaw (1996): "To say that a category such as race and gender is socially constructed is not to say that they category has no significance in our world. On the contrary, a large and continuing project for subordinated people…is thinking about the way in which power is clustered around certain categories and is exercised against others." Scholars opting for the intracategorical approach contrarily focus on the neglected points of intersection of particular social groups as it relates to larger, multitudinous categories in reporting on the complex lived experiences in these groups. This particular framework resides between advocates of identity politics and advocates of the anticategorical framework (Erevelles & Minear 2010). However, while the intracategorical approach "validates the reality of racism as it intersects with sexism and other social categories of difference," like heterosexism and classism, Erevelles and Minear (2010:8) denotes the inconceivability of the additive proposal in addressing all possible social categories intersecting with one "master category" at any given time and the necessary rejection of acknowledging multiple differences at once.

Thus, the theoretical framework adopted in this current study takes from the intercategorical approach, as it involves utilizing existing analytical categories to study inequality in relationships among social groups across multiple dimensions. It was accentuated by Erevelles and Minear (2010) that this approach to intersectional analysis aims to avoid a fragmented and additive approach, focusing instead on how social divisions are concretely interwoven and constructed by each other in relation to political and subjective identities. This framework adds complexity to analyses by examining the structural context where social categories are (re)constituted, steering clear of an incomplete additive approach. In this specific context, the intercategorical framework is applied to explore the intersection of race and disability, prioritizing historical contexts

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and structural conditions over a mere additive inclusion of disability in an intersectional analysis.

3.3.1 Intersectional Identity Research

Building upon this work, Chapple, Bridwell, and Gray (2021) addressed the scarcely studied subject of intersectionality relating to identity formation for those negotiating multiple marginalized social identities. Their study explored the lived experiences of Black deaf female college students in the northeastern region of the United States through ethnographic interviews. It was found through these various group and individual interviews that the identities of Black deaf women were necessarily intersectional, as privileged groups' (e.g., hearing and white deaf people) views and interactions with them were largely coupled with and reliant on negotiations of marginalized social identities based on race, gender, and hearing status. Chapple, Bridwell and Gray (2021:587) emphasized that the lived experiences of Black deaf women were situational; that is, "depending on the situation, their other marginalized identities could become more salient." Furthermore, their data revealed four sentiments: (1) participants understood the aspects and challenges associated with their identities, but not consistently able to articulate how each identity (e.g., gender, race, or deafness) influences their interactions; (2) participants recognized challenges associated with negative stereotypes of their racial, gendered, or deaf identities; (3) participants described the "messiness" of their identities and outsider perceptions; and (4) participants acknowledged feelings of helplessness and frustration due to the lack of education associated with deaf people in general (Chapple et al. 2021:587-588).

For deaf individuals, their diverse identities encompass not only the usual identity aspects associated with common factors such as ethnicity, gender, religion, education, and employment, but also other identities, potentially linked to sexual orientation and disabilities, for example. The intersectional foundations of these identities "encompass variable degrees of stigmatizing or optimizing influences that can determine the valences attributed to each identity constellation," (Leigh 2009:8).

As it pertains to the identities of those who are deaf and also ethnic minorities, literature involving this topic has emerged only within the last fifty years. Even on the brink of becoming the deaf majority, diverse ethnic groups who are deaf have hardly been acknowledged or recognized in deaf literature (Leigh 2009). It is imperative to acknowledge not just the social environments surrounding the expanding ethnic minority of Deaf communities but also to grasp how these contexts perpetuate inequity, adding to the complexity of the internalization and integration of ethnic and deaf identities. Leigh takes from Phinney (2002) to designate ethnicity as "a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group," (2009:126). Ethnic groups are objectively constructed by sharing at least one or more of the following: culture, phenotype, religion, language, kinship, or place of origin. Whereas subjective membership of an ethnic group involves self-labeling, belonging and feelings of belonging in terms of valence, and the level of ethnic identity development in terms of self-exploration and internalization of one's ethnic identity (Leigh 2009).

It is through daily interactions that an individual's ethnic identity, sense of self, social position, and social relationships are formed and exhibited (Dunn & Anderson 2020:281). It is necessary to also recognize the presence of historical power differentials that ethnic minority groups have endured in the United States. Those holding high social power positions might display attitudes and beliefs, whether intentional or not, that shape their perceptions, either positively or negatively, of individuals in lower social power positions who belong to racial or cultural minority groups distinct from the majority. Consequentially, in-groups, constituted of those who identify with the majority and are culturally similar, are often provided access to certain social privileges (i.e. white privilege), whereas culturally different minorities comprise out-groups that are not always granted access to those same privileges (Dunn & Anderson 2020:281).

Dunn (2008) and Padden and Humphries (2005) have presented studies demonstrating that formation of in-groups and out-groups based on power differentials exist within Deaf communities as well, both between those who are hearing and those who are deaf and between white deaf individuals and Black deaf individuals (Dunn & Anderson 2020:281-282). Dunn's (2008) narrative included dialogue between a Black

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deaf male from South Africa and a white hearing male from the United States. The conversations regarded issues involving racism and audism, in which the hearing American male was considered exhibiting a sense of entitlement and superiority attributed to being white and hearing: "I mean, let's look at it this way; it's definitely an advantage to be a normal hearing white person in society today, wouldn't you agree?" (Dunn & Anderson 2020:282). Padden and Humphries (2005) presented historical evidence of segregated deaf clubs in several urban communities throughout the United States in the 1940s through the 1970s as proof that sharing a language (ASL) and sharing cultural experiences as deaf persons were not adequate enough to triumph the social/racial barriers between the Black and white Deaf communities (cited in Dunn & Anderson 2020:282).

Foster and Kinuthia (2003; cited in Dunn & Anderson 2020) explored the ways in which deaf college students of color thought about and described their identities and experiences at a predominantly white, hearing college. Using an interactive model to analyze the mutual influence between the participants and their environments and social structures, they accounted for individual and situational factors: physical characteristics such as race, gender, and hearing status; cultural characteristics and roles, such as student, daughter, and son; beliefs (religious and political); character (e.g. proud, courageous, leader); citizenship status; type of educational program; and geographical location such as local or out-of-state residency. They also accounted for social factors (including reactions and feelings associated with others) and societal factors (e.g. societal trends, institutionalized forms of behavior, and activist or political movements), as well. The participants held a common sentiment of "conflict and tension between the cultural heritage of their predominantly hearing families and their identity as culturally Deaf individuals," (Dunn & Anderson 2020:282). The respondents specified that challenges of accessing easy communication with their families impeded amassing a deeper understanding of and connection to their racial/ethnic culture. Some even noted that they depend on social media and pop culture as a means of understanding and relating to their own racial/ethnic culture. A portion of the respondents more closely identified with Deaf culture than their ethnic identity, despite being aware that their peers may note their

ethnic identity as more salient. Conversely, it was found that those with a more positive internalized ethnic identity reported more positive reinforcement or ability to positively internalize that identity, even in the face of discriminatory experiences (Leigh 2009:135). Leigh (2009) mentioned that Foster and Kinuthia (2003) asserted fluidity of conceptions of deaf and ethnic identities and how individual factors determine the nature of internalizing those identities.

Moges (2020:76) quotes Aramburo (1989) to emphasize that the identities of a deaf Black signer constitute a sort of double-edged sword, as issues of "identity; association with the individually identified communities of Black, Deaf and Black Deaf groups; and code-switching, with sign variations among themselves and with white people" persevere in daily social interactions. It is apparent that an individual's identity would be automatically associated with visible race before the deaf identity and communication methods are presented: "You see I am black first. My deafness is not noticed until I speak or use my hands to communicate," (qtd. Aramburo 1989:110 cited in Moges 2020:77). Moges (2020) speaks to the visibility of Black ASL when two fluent-signing individuals share similar intersectional backgrounds with Black ethnicity, deaf identity, and shared socioeconomic classes. Though, these signers nearly always code-switch to the standardized use of ASL in the presence of other non-Black or non-deaf signers. Thus, the identity of this ethnic group holds considerable importance and enjoys a strong presence within the Black deaf community due to shared experiences and the establishment of a supportive environment born out of mutual struggles (Moges 2020).

3.4 Dialectical Variations in American Sign Language

American Sign Language is a robust language that changes over time, and these changes are illustrative of the influence of geographic and social isolation (McCaskill et al. 2011). Having been ratified as the "official" language of the Deaf community in the United States, variants, or dialects, have emerged based on primarily region and culture among multiple other linguistic and social constraints (McCaskill et al. 2011; Lucas, Bayley, Rose & Wulf 2002; Toliver-Smith & Gentry 2017). Lucas, Bayley, and Valli

(2001) emphasized that ASL users' decisions regarding diverse linguistic forms are consistently being influenced by various social and linguistic factors that mirror foundational grammatical structures. Additionally, the choices made by speakers and signers among these varied linguistic forms both mirror and shape the social structures within the communities they are a part of. Despite more discrete factors, such as region or socioeconomic class, daily interactions and an individual's aspiration to perform a certain identity to others can play a crucial role in constraining variation (Lucas, Valli, & Bayley 2001:24). This acknowledgement, which was historically withheld from academia for decades, prompted thorough investigations into the various linguistic facets of ASL structures. As a consequence, since natural sign languages function as complete, independent linguistic systems shared by communities of users, the dialectology and sociolinguistics of sign languages can be characterized in a manner analogous to descriptions of spoken languages.

3.4.1 Sociolinguistic Variation in American Sign Language

Within the context of this study, the definitions for a *standard* language variety and a linguistic *dialect* are adopted from the words of famous ASL scholars Lucas, Bayley, and Valli, where *standard* is "used by the majority of a given population," and *dialect* is "used by a particular section of that population," (2001:9). We take from the work of these scholars to further expound upon what variation in American Sign Language looks like, how areas of sign language may be equated to areas of spoken language, and what factors may cause dialectical variation. Their study supports the fact that dialectical variations of ASL can be noted in all linguistic domains including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

When we say phonology in reference to a language that does not typically employ sound like American Sign Language, we equate phonological variables to locations of signs and to handshapes (See Figure 3.1 for standard ASL sign locations; See Figure 3.2 for ASL handshape inventory). Using a sequential distinctive-feature model, Lucas, Bayley, and Valli presented quantitative analyses of one of three target phonological

variables – signs produced with a 1 handshape – to define the variations of the target feature and explore what linguistic and/or extralinguistic features may influence those variations. With twenty-five tokens collected from more than 200 signers, it was found that signs whose citation[1] form requires a 1 handshape is highly systematic, with respect to the three most commonly observed variants: citation form (+cf); noncitation form 1, the L handshape variant (thumb open, fingers closed, index straight); and noncitation form 2, the open hand variant (thumb and fingers open, index straight or hooked). What resulted as a significant restraint on a signers choice of the 1 handshape involved the sign's grammatical category and the features of the segments in the immediate environment (Lucas, Bayley, & Valli 2001:110). This aspect of variation was thought to be shaped by a continuum of indexicality, specifically pertaining to the use of pronouns. In ASL, pronouns carry semantic burden and, thus, permit variability. Furthermore, the effects of 1 handshape phonological variation in other contexts can be accounted for by the processes of progressive and regressive assimilation. Beyond these, demographic characteristics like age, social class, and geographical region revealed correlative responses in phonological variation, as well, the most salient being geographical region.

Lucas, Bayley, and Valli's study provided insights on variation in the location of signs, as well. Conducted using the same methodology, it was found that a sign language user's choice of alternative locations is influenced by linguistic, social, and geographical factors (2001:140). The linguistic constraints mirror that of the variations found in the 1 handshape study, wherein grammatical category and phonological features surrounding the target sign influenced the sign's location. Among the social factors, comparing gender, region, age, language background, and ethnicity by social class was demonstrated as most influential (2001:134). The use of the noncitation form of a sign's location was most unpopular among older signers, African Americans, rural signers, native signers, and women (2001:136).

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[1] Citation forms are those that appear in dictionaries and are taught in sign language classes, whereas noncitation forms are produced in alternate locations, usually near the citation location (McCaskill et al. 2011:59).
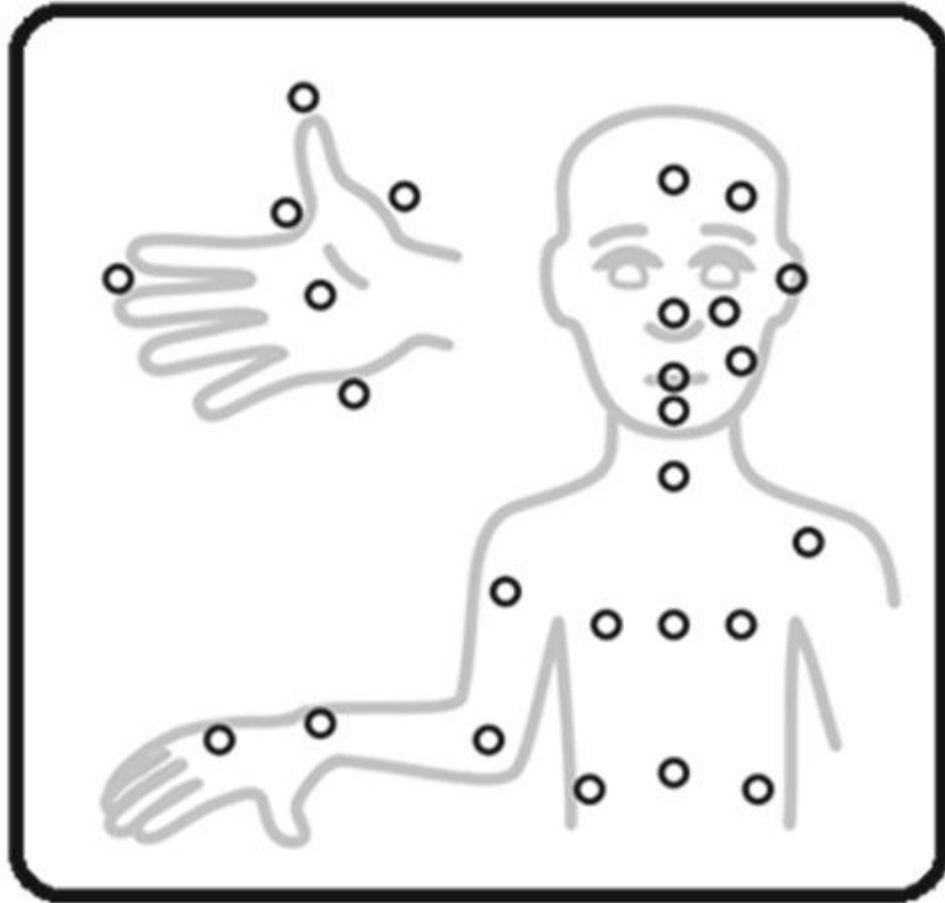
Figure 3.1 Standard ASL Sign Locations (Prikhodko et al. 2020)

HANDSHAPE INVENTORY:
ASL HANDSHAPES 1-40

NOTE: Several handshape variations are included in this section that do not appear on any of the Handshape Cards. They will be labeled A, B, and C.

1	A (GRADE) AFRICA ALCOHOLIC ARIZONA ARMY/SOLDIER ATTEMPT/TRY ATTITUDE	AUDIOLOGY BATH CAN CHANGE DANGEROUS/DANGER DUMB/STUPID HIDE	PATIENCE SECRET SORRY SUFFER WASH (BODY) WITH
2	ACCIDENT ADVERTISE BASEBALL BICYCLE CAR COFFEE COUGH	EXAGGERATE EXERCISE HOLD ICE CREAM MAKE REVOLUTION/REVOLT SAFE/SAFETY	SATURDAY SHOES SOUTH SWEDEN WORK YEAR
3	APPLE CALL-BY-PHONE CHARGE (FINED) DENTIST DOLL DREAM ELECTRICITY	FRIEND/PAL GIFT MUST NEED/NECESSARY ONION PUZZLED SEWING-MACHINE	SKI SUMMER TEASE TEXAS TIME WISE

		A.			
4			BRUSH-TEETH CHINA DEAF DIFFERENT DON'T CARE FALSE FALL-IN-LOVE	FAR FIRST PLACE FOR HEARD HURT/PAIN INSULT LONELY	OWE NOSEY PAY QUARREL/ARGUE SAY/PRONOUNCE SIGNING WHERE

5	BACON BELT BUILD BUTTER EGG FUN FUNNY	HOSPITAL HURRY KNIFE NAME NECK TIE PAINT (ARTISTIC) SCREW DRIVER	SIGNATURE SUGAR TAPE UNCLE UNIVERSITY USE
6	CAREFUL CHEAT DOUBLE-DATE KEEP LOAN/BORROW LOOK MISUNDERSTAND	PREDICT/PROPHET PURPOSE (MEAN) READ SECOND-PLACE SMOKE (CIGARETTE) STUPID/DUMB SUPERVISE	SALT STUCK TWO-OF-US/YOU/THEM VERY VEGETABLE VOICE
7	BLIND CHEWING GUM DOUBT HARD HAVING-THE-NERVE IRISH ORAL/SPEECH	POISON/SKELETON POTATO PROBLEM PROTESTANT STEAL STRICT	TICKET TITLE (QUOTE) TOUGH TOURNAMENT TRAVEL VAMPIRE

Figure 3.2 : ASL Handshape Inventory (Bahan & Paul 1989)

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8	ART IDEA IDENTITY IDIOT IMAGINE/IMAGINATION INDEPENDENT INFERIOR	INSTITUTE INTEREST (MONEY) INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE ITALY JAPAN JEALOUS	LAST/FINAL SPAGHETTI STEEL STRING SUPPOSE/IF THIN
9	BACHELOR BEER BLUE BOARD (MEMBERS) BROWN BOSTON (CITY) BUSY	CLOSE DONKEY DOOR FULL-WITH-FOOD FLOOR OPEN OVER (ACROSS)	RELIEF SATISFY (SATISFIED) SHELVES STRAIGHT TROUBLE WINDOW
10	CURTAIN DRIP FENCE FOOTBALL FOUR OF US/YOU/THEM FOURTH PLACE IGNORE	INSANE INVENT JAIL LINE-UP PARADE PLAIDS RAINBOW	SCOTCH SCREEN STRIPE TALK/SPEAK WAR WRESTLING
11	BUTTON COOPERATE CURIOUS DARE DECIDE/DEFINITE FAMILY FEDERAL	FRENCH FOUND/PICK FOX IMPORTANT INDIAN INTERPRET INTERPRETER	JUDGE/COURT POSTPONE/DELAY SENTENCE SOON TEA VALUABLE/VALUE/WORTH VOTE
12	A.	BIRD BOBBY PIN BULLET CREWCUT GRAMMAR GRADUATE GREECE	GREEN GROUP GUARANTEE GUILTY IGNORANT MOUSTACHE PRIEST	PRINT POINTS (CAR) QUEEN TURKEY TWEEZER TWENTY
13	ALTOGETHER DECORATE (FIX) EXPENSIVE EXPERIENCE FLOWER FOOD GIVE	HOME JEWISH KISS LIGHT-OFF MEETING MORE MORMON	NUMBER PERCENT/PERCENTAGE SPRING (WEATHER) WEDDING WHITE WOLF
14	BECAUSE BEST BETTER CHALLENGE COMPETITION (COMPETE) DENY DROWN	ESTABLISH (BASED) GAME GASOLINE GIRL LIQUOR-BAR NOT NUTS (PEANUTS)	POLAND/POLISH SCIENCE SOCIALIZE SWEETHEARTS TOMMOROW YESTERDAY
15	COUNTRY COW DON'T-LIKE-VERY-MUCH DRINK (BEER) DUTCH ENGINEER LONGTIME	MEASURE (INCHES) NOW PARTY PHONE PIPE (SMOKE) PLAY SAME-OLD-THING	SILLY STAY TROPHY WHY WRONG YELLOW

Figure 3.2 (cont.) : ASL Handshape Inventory (Bahan & Paul 1989)

16	ALRIGHT BAD BECAUSE BETTER BEST BODY BOTHER	BOOK CUP ENJOY MUSIC OWE PAY PIG	PLEASE PROOF SCHOOL STOP THANK YOU WHY
17	BINOCULARS CHARACTER CHOCOLATE CHURCH CLASS CERTIFICATE	COMMUNICATION CONSTITUTION CULTURE DRINK GENIUS HUNGRY/STARVE	LOOK FOR (SEARCH) PARAGRAPH POLICE PROTEST/COMPLAIN SUN TELESCOPE
18	ACTION BALL COOKIE CRAZY CURLY-HAIR DISGUST	DIZZY FREEZE HEADPHONES MAD/ANGER MIX MONKEY	MONSTER PARACHUTE RAIN SANTA CLAUS WANT YELL/SCREAM
19	BLANK MIND CONCERN CONTACT DEPRESS EARLY EMPTY EXCITE	HEART HONEYMOON LUCKY/FORTUNATE NUDE PEST PREFER SENSITIVE	SENTIMENTAL SICK SMART TAKE ADVANTAGE TASTE THRILL
20	DEER DESPISE DRESS (CLOTHES) FARM FATHER FIFTH PLACE FINE	FINISH FIVE-OF-US/YOU/THEM FOREST FORMAL GRANDFATHER GRANDMOTHER MOTHER	MOVIE SAD SLOPPY TREE UPSET WAIT
21	A.	BOAT/SAILBOAT COMPARE EQUAL INVITE NIGHT	PROGRESS SEEMS (APPEAR) SWEET TOBACCO WELCOME
22	ALTOGETHER CAMERA-SHOOTING EXPENSIVE JEWISH LIGHT-ON	MEETING SPRING (WEATHER) SUN BATHE WEDDING WHITE	
23	KNOW NOTHING NEW ORLEANS (CITY) NONE/NOTHING OAKLAND (CITY) OFFICE	ORGANIZATION OPINION SHUT-OUT ZERO	

Figure 3.2 : ASL Handshape Inventory (Bahan & Paul 1989)

24		EAST ELEMENTARY EMERGENCY EMOTION ENERGY	ENGAGE (ENGAGEMENT) EVALUATE EVOLUTION EUROPE EXPERIMENT
25		TAN TEAM TEMPLE THEORY TOILET/BATHROOM	TORONTO (CITY) TRADITION TRENTON (CITY) TRY TUCSON (CITY)
26		CHANGE EXACT LITTLE BIT PEN/PENCIL	PICK-ON REVENGE STING-BY-BEE WRITE
27		ARTICLE COLLAR COMMUNIST (SOVIET) COOKIE DRINK (ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE)	EYE-GLASSES MOON PLATE POLICE/SHERIFF
28	A.	BORROW CLAP-ON-EARRINGS CLOTHESPIN DUCK	INVEST MOOCH NO
29		CHOOSE (PICK) DELICIOUS GRAVY GREASE INTERESTING	LIKE MEAT SMOOTH STICKY STORY
30		HANDS OFF HATE KICKOFF LIGHT (LUMINOUS)	MELON MOSQUITO TERRIBLE TERRIFIC
31	A.	BULL CAMPING CIGARETTE FIELD GOALS KID	MOCK SARCASTIC (IRONIC) SNOB (SOPHISTICATE) WHISKEY WHISTLE
32		AIR FORCE (ARMYPLANE) AIRPLANE-CRASH AIRPLANE/FLY/AIRPORT AIRPLANE-LAND	AIRPLANE-TAKE OFF ETCETERA I-LOVE-YOU

Figure 3.2 (cont.) : ASL Handshape Inventory (Bahan & Paul 1989)

33	WASHINGTON (STATE) WATER WEATHER WEDNESDAY WEST	WINE WINTER WORLD WORRY WORSHIP
34	BUG DIGNIFIED GARAGE LISTEN-TO LOUSY	ROOSTER THIRD PLACE THREE OF US/YOU/THEM TRIPLE-DATE THROW
35	BUG CHAMPION DEVIL	MISCHIEVOUS LISTEN-TO RECHARGE-BATTERY (CAR)
36	BIG-HEADED BRACES (TEETH) FAST INTERESTING RUN	SPEEDING SPRAY WATCH (TO LOOK) WHO
37	DRILL (TOOL) FAST GUN LATER LAZY	LIBRARY LICENSE RUN SHOT (MEDICAL) SHOOT

38	A.	DEMOCRAT DETECTIVE DETROIT (CITY) DIAMOND DISNEYLAND	DIVORCE DOCTOR DORMITORY DUTY MINNEAPOLIS (CITY)

39	FAIL KILL KING PINK PARTY PEOPLE PERFECT	PERSON PHILADELPHIA (CITY) PLACE POLITIC PRINCIPAL PURPLE SECRETARY	SKUNK SMOKE (CIGARETTE)

40	CIGAR READY REASON RELIGION REPUBLICAN	RESPECT RESPONSIBLE RESTAURANT ROCKET ROLE

Figure 3.2 (cont.) : ASL Handshape Inventory (Bahan & Paul 1989)

In the same study, Lucas, Bayley, and Valli presented variability in American Sign Language in terms of lexical items, with respect to region, age, ethnicity, gender, social class, and language background by presenting each participant with thirty-four stimuli (majority pictures, some fingerspelling) to elicit the sign used to represent each lexical item (2001:176). Among the seven sites included in the study, some lexical forms were unique to each site and some lexical variants were shared across the seven sites (2001:185). This was proposed to be a result of the shared history of the participants and of deaf education practices, specifically attendance and exposure to the American School of the Deaf. When it came to age, differences found in lexical forms were accounted for by natural language change over time and generation-specific coining, such as the invention of the microwave and its subsequent assigned sign (2001:186). Ethnicity was determined to be a significant indication of lexical variation, as African Americans used twenty-eight of the thirty-four signs that white signers did not (2001:186). Only eight signs of the thirty-four were shared between men and women, where most of the shared signs were fairly recent additions to the ASL lexicon, such as COMPUTER, JAPAN, and MICROWAVE. Between the working-class signers and the middle-class signers, each had forms unique to each group, with the exception of the previously mentioned fairly new signs. Middle-class signers also more regularly fingerspelled lexical items in comparison to those labeled as working-class (Luas, Bayley & Valli 2001:186). Participants who grew up in a non-ASL-speaking family but learned ASL early on in residential schools displayed more variability than those coming from ASL-families (Lucas, Bayley & Valli 2001:186). This was thought to be a reflection of ASL-families preferring more conservative lexical choices, where the non-ASL-family signers may have been exposed to a wider range of variants, both at home with hearing families and at residential school settings.

Of the innumerable sociolinguistic factors that may have influenced the participants of this research, Lucas, Bayley, and Valli (2001) recurringly mention the roles of locations of language acquisition and language attitudes as crucial to individual variation. To better visualize perceptions and treatment of deaf individuals, these scholars note that historical language attitudes and policies in schools for the deaf are imperative

in understanding perceptions that may have shaped language use in Deaf communities. There is overwhelming evidence that shows the majority of deaf children (and most born to hearing parents) have acquired American Sign Language from peers at residential school settings; thus, residential schools have been the vessel in which ASL has been transmitted across the Deaf community and continues to do so in the lives of deaf adults, as well. This could constitute as compelling evidence for shared lexical items found in Lucas, Bayley, and Valli's study, as they propose a "standard" form of ASL potentially made its way across the country through former students of the American School for the Deaf graduating and maintaining that "standard" in instructional positions at other various schools for the deaf (2001:62). Historically, many schools founded in the early nineteenth century looked to ASD for instructional guidance, resulting in the development of a standard variety, and consequentially language attitudes, surrounding the use of American Sign Language (Lucas, Bayley & Valli 2001:65). Finally, Lucas, Bayley, and Valli affirm the key roles that social organizations play in the transmission and maintenance of ASL, as social events provide safe spaces for effective communication, acceptance, and socialization opportunities (2001:80).

3.5 Black American Sign Language

"There is a black way of signing used by Black deaf people in their own cultural milieu – among families and friends, in social gatherings, and in deaf clubs," (Hairston & Smith 1983:55). Until the extensive, pivotal work of Black deaf scholar Carolyn McCaskill, little research had been conducted on Black American Sign Language as its own distinct dialect. While it is now widely known among the American Deaf community that BASL does in fact exist, anecdotal reports convey a perceived parallel between BASL and African American English (AAE) and between ASL and middle-class white English (McCaskill et al. 2011). However, the first empirical study to explore this idea was conducted by McCaskill et al. (2011), basing their research on natural language use of Black ASL. Their study looked to discover the sociohistorical events that may have caused a separate variety of ASL, the distinct features emblematic of Black ASL, the potential of shared features between AAE and Black ASL, and the linguistic

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and social factors that may condition the use of these distinct features. It is the work of McCaskill et al. (2011) that we use to understand and define Black American Sign Language in the context of this research.

The data collected by McCaskill et al. (2011) were conditioned to be conductive for the production of Black ASL, including the sites, the signers, the contact persons, and the settings for filming. They recruited signers according to whether they had attended segregated or desegregated programs in six states: North Carolina, Arkansas, Alabama, Virginia, Texas, and Louisiana. The participants included members of the local Black Deaf community, selected by age: 55 and older to represent those who attended segregated schools, and 35 and younger to represent those who attended desegregated schools. The signers were selected via contact persons, those who lived in the area and with whom the participants were previously familiar.

First, the participants engaged in free group conversation lasting between thirty to forty minutes without any researchers present. Following the free conversation, the Back members of the research team conducted group interviews, inquiring about the signers' life stories, educational backgrounds, previous schools, and the nature of language use both in and out of the classroom. They were also provided pictures of particular signs and asked what sign they used to refer to the image. Thirdly, the signers completed a focused narrative elicitation task by watching one of two wordless cartoons then retelling the story to another participant. The final component of data collection involved the filming of the August 2007 National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA) meeting, of which two members of the research team filmed spontaneous conversations and narratives.

Before analyzing linguistic features, McCaskill et al. (2011) noted the sociohistorical role in shaping language varieties and lists physical isolation and geography some of the major factors that "have served to increase the variability of American Sign Language among African-American Deaf," (qtd. Tabak 2006 cited in McCaskill et al. 2011:8). Geographic factors including the isolation of one community from other and geographic and political boundaries that dictated where people could and could not live were conditions met by Black deaf children in the early stages of BASL development. McCaskill et al. (2011) called specific attention to the role that early

education played in the formation of Black deaf schools and the consequent development of the separate variety of ASL. Black deaf children were impacted in various ways, as some states enforced laws requiring Black deaf students to be taught by only Black teachers. Though, a large number of the African American deaf were taught by white teachers despite administrations effort to seek better-qualified Black teachers to educate members of their own race (McCaskill et al. 2011). Some schools turned to recruiting teachers from HBCUs, one participant recalling experiences with their teacher as "never bothering to really learn the signs. She mostly made up her own signs and her motions were quick and jerky. We had to teach all of the new teachers how to sign," (McCaskill et al. 2011:24). Sources such as white ASL, homesign systems, the signing brought to residential schools by Black deaf children from deaf families, spoken southern white English, and southern African American English were all influential to Black American Sign Language explored in *The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL* (McCaskill et al. 2011).

The features analyzed by McCaskill et al. (2011) included phonology (variation between one-handed and two-handed signs, location of signs such as KNOW, and size of the signing space in Black and white ASL), syntax (clausal or phrasal repetition), discourse and pragmatics (constructed dialogue and constructed action), contact with English (voiceless mouthing of English), lexical and phrasal contact with AAE (borrowing of expressions from AAE), and lexicon (differences in Black and white signs for common items and concepts). McCaskill et al. (2011:10) found eight possible distinguishing features of Black ASL: two-handed versus one-handed signs; forehead location versus lowered; size of singing space; incorporation of AAE into singing; use of repetition; use of role shifting; amount of mouthing; and lexical differences (See Figure 3.1).

When looking at the phonological variations found by McCaskill et al. (2011), it is imperative to note that while spoken languages only use one articulator (the vocal apparatus), signed languages employ two articulators (the two hands). That is, the use of two (generally) identical articulators behave in a unique and nuanced way. Certain lexical items that require two-handed signing can be executed using just one hand without compromising their meaning, whereas attempting to produce other two-handed signs with

Two-handed vs. one-handed signs	Forehead location vs. lowered	Size of signing space	Incorporation of AAE into signing
Use of repetition	Use of role shifting (CA/CD)	Amount of mouthing	Vocabulary differences
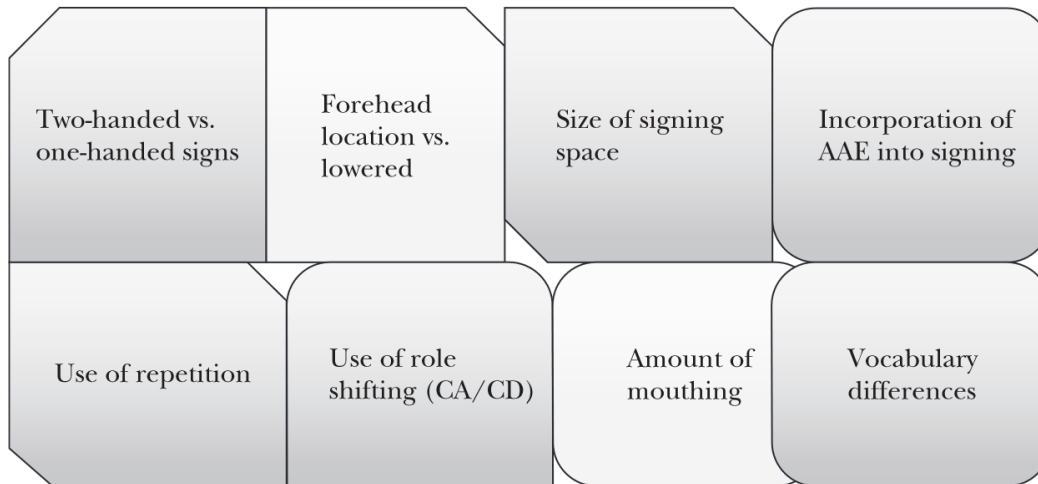
Figure 3.3 Possible distinguishing features of Black ASL (McCaskill et al. 2011:10).

only one hand might lead to a misunderstanding. Using the one-handed variant of a two-handed sign is often associated with a more casual style of signing, and two-handed signs tend to be more commonly produced in more formal discourses. The results found by McCaskill et al. (2011:83-84) showed that the features of the preceding and following signs conditioned the signers' choices between one-handed and two-handed signs; so, when a one-handed sign was used preceding or following the target sign, signers tended to choose the one-handed variant. Only one social constraint had a significant effect: older signers who attended segregated schools were more likely to use the two-handed than the younger signers who attended integrated schools.

McCaskill et al. (2011:89) found that variations in the lowering of a sign (the phonological component referred to as location) were significantly conditioned by the grammatical category of the target sign as well as whether the preceding sign contacts the head or the body. Nouns, compounds, prepositions, and interrogatives favored the noncitation form, where verbs did not; and when the preceding sign contacts the body, a signer is more likely to choose the lowered, noncitation form of the target sign. A comparison was drawn between Southern Black ASL, Louisiana Black ASL, Northern Black ASL, and white ASL and between the younger and older signers within each

group. All three African American groups chose the noncitation form at a lower rate than the white signers from the same age group, and, within each group, younger signers used more noncitation forms than older signers, proving age to be the most significant factor in lowering.

One of the more conspicuous and informal observations of Black ASL is the use of a larger signing space. Signing space in manual communication refers to an invisible, three-dimensional space extending from the top of the head to the waist, from shoulder to shoulder, and a foot in front of the signer. McCaskill et al. (2011) used data from their participants' cartoon retelling in exploring signing space and coded each extension beyond the signing space by the participants' race and the sign's grammatical category. They found that Black signers produced 58.5 percent of the signs coded within the usual space, while white signers produced 65.8 percent (McCaskill et al. 2011:101). However, when compared by race and age, it was shown that younger and older Black signers were almost identical, whereas older white signers were significantly less likely to extend beyond the signing space. McCaskill et al. (2011:105) found that younger white signers appear to be signing more like Black signers than their older counterparts.

Concluding their phonological research components, McCaskill et al. (2011:105-106) determined that Black ASL is traditionally conventional and conforms to prescriptive norms in comparison to white ASL. They consider this to be a result of the collective historical experiences of Black deaf students who attended deaf schools which did not adhere to oralist approaches and who experienced adult signing role models as well as consistent use of American Sign Language as their medium of education.

In examining variation in syntax and discourse, McCaskill et al. (2011) focused on the use of repetition, constructed action, and constructed dialogue by comparing participants from their research to that of Lucas, Bayley, and Valli (2001). By "the use of repetition," we distinguish this as the completed repetition of a single sign or phrase by one signer within one turn. McCaskill et al. (2011:116) found that there was a significant difference between Black and white signers, regardless of age, showing that Black signers used repetition three times more than that of white signers. Although, interestingly, more repetition did occur among older Black signers than younger,

evidencing that "[i]ntegration has resulted in a partial convergence of Black and white ASL varieties, whether in the number of citation forms in the case of lowering or two-handed signs or in characteristics that have nothing to do with the citation/noncitation distinction such as repetition, which seems to have a pragmatic function," (McCaskill et al. 2011:116). It was concluded that repetition is a feature that distinguishes Black signers from white signers.

Constructed action (CA) and constructed dialogue (CD) have been addressed in previous literature that Dudis (2004) explains as "different parts of [a] signer's body [are] projected as separate visible real-space elements into their respective blends," (qtd. in McCaskill et al. 2011:118). Thus, constructed action and constructed dialogue is essentially the process by which a signer assumes the role of an established character (including themself) and embodies the actions and discourse of that character within an utterance of their own. The results indicated that older white signers supply more units of constructed action than Black signers, while the narratives of older Black signers have more instances of constructed dialogue than the narratives of the white signers. McCaskill et al. (2011) suggest that CD is utilized more often by Black signers than by white signers, regardless of age. Although, further investigation is recommended, as there was a great deal of individual variation.

To understand the potential effects of language contact between spoken English and BASL, McCaskill et al. (2011) explored the use of mouthing English words and the incorporation of features from African American English. Previous literature has claimed that Black signers use voiceless mouthing more often than that of white signers, and McCaskill et al. (2011) observed 26 ten-minute clips randomly selected from a set of 95 to determine the viability of this claim. It was found that the older Black males, the older Black females, and the younger Black males were groups that had only intermittent individual instances of mouthing, with no continuous mouthing; this suggested an age effect among Black signers and a gender effect between the younger Black women and younger Black males (McCaskill et al. 2011:132).

Incorporation of African American English has been discussed as one of the most important features of BASL, particularly with instances of facial expression and body

movement. Previous literature remarks on "Ebonic shifts" within a performed ASL narrative, characterized by "a marked rhythmic pattern, a side-to-side head movement, and a shift in body posture," (McCaskill et al. 2011:133). McCaskill et al. (2011) collected examples from signers under the age of 35 and from integrated schools, the examples consisting of single words and phrases along with discussions of African American English features. Some of the AAE words and phrases mentioned by these participants included: TRIP/ STOP TRIPPING; STUPID FOOL; PLEASE (in a discussion about big city traffic); GIRL, PLEASE; WHASSUP; #DANG; MY BAD; HELL (conclusionary). Younger participants often demonstrated their perception of Black singing style by shifting their bodies conspicuously to one side, exaggerating their movement, and expanding the size of their signing space. Users of Black ASL notably recognize differences between Black and white signing, and McCaskill et al. (2011:136) concluded that Black signers incorporate lexical items, phrases, and gestures from African American English into their signing. They also offered that, due to technological advancements allowing for more exposure to AAE, younger signers use more lexical items that originated in spoken AAE than that of older signers.

The last feature examined by McCaskill et al. (2011) discusses the lexical variation found in Black ASL by regarding the kinds of lexical variation spontaneously produced by participants during the filmed free conversations. These lexical items were more commonly used by older signers and were signs that relate to daily experiences, like food, school, sports, places, people/relationships, personal characteristics, feelings, etc. Older signers repeatedly commented that the Black signs produced were ones they used in school but are no longer common, often the case being that those signs were not used at a particular white school. With older signers being able to produce more Black signs than the younger signers, there was a great deal of location-specific variation, as well.

McCaskill et al. (2011:165) concluded that the main distinctions between ASL and BASL are quantitative rather than qualitative, noting the incorporation of AAE and lexical items to be the most salient. They note that white signers also produce one-handed versions of two-handed signs, lower signs from the forehead, extend the signing space, use repetition, mouthing, and CA/CD; the only difference is that BASL users tend to

implement these features more frequently than that of ASL users (See Table 3.1 for summary of findings by McCaskill et al. 2011).

Table 3.1 Summary of Results for the Linguistic Variables (McCaskill et al. 2011)

Feature Type	Feature	Data Analyzed	Results
phonology	variation in one-handed and two-handed signs	818 tokens from free conversations, interviews, and NBDA conversations	Black signers use more two-handed variants than White signers, and older Black signers use more two-handed variants than younger Black signers.
	location of signs such as KNOW	877 tokens from free conversations, interviews, and NBDA conversations	Black signers use more non-lowered variants than White signers, and older Black signers use more non-lowered variants than younger Black signers.
	size of the signing space in Black and White ASL	2,247 tokens from elicited and free narratives	Black signers use a larger signing space than White signers; however, younger White signers have converged with younger Black signers.
syntax	clausal or phrasal repetition	26 ten-minute conversations	Black signers make greater use of repetition than White signers.
discourse and pragmatics	constructed dialogue and constructed action	24 elicited narratives; 21 free narratives	Black signers appear to use more constructed action and constructed dialogue; however, the data show a great deal of individual variation. Further research is needed.
contact with English	mouthing of English	26 ten-minute conversations	Older Black signers appear to mouth less than other signers; further

			research is necessary.
contact with AAE (lexical, phrasal)	borrowing of expressions from AAE (e.g., "girl," "my bad")	examples spontaneously produced in interviews and free conversations	Black signers incorporate AAE lexical items into their signing. Younger Black signers incorporate more AAE lexical items than their elders.
lexicon	differences in Black and White signs for common items and concepts (e.g., MOVIE, COLOR, RABBIT, AFRICA)	spontaneously produced examples, spontaneously discussed signs, and responses to specific interview questions	Lexical variation persists, but younger Black signers use fewer "Black" variants than their elders.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study explored the ways in which Black deaf signers internalize, develop, and exhibit their multiple intersectional identities through the use of Black American Sign Language.

4.1 Data Collection

This research design involves the systematic collection and analysis of data obtained from YouTube videos featuring self-identifying Black or African American individuals communicating using some variation of American Sign Language. This study employs a purposive sampling strategy to select videos that meet predefined criteria, ensuring relevance to the research questions and the linguistic context under investigation. Videos were sourced from YouTube based on the following criteria: (1) inclusion of at least one self-identifying Black or African American individual; (2) use of sign language as the primary mode of communication; and (3) duration of signing activity reaches a minimum of forty seconds. These criteria are established to focus on instances where participants' linguistic and cultural identities are likely to be prominently displayed and potentially recognizable within the Black American Sign Language community.

4.2 Transcriptions

The transcription practices utilized for this study adhere to the conventions set forth by Lucas Ceil, Robert Bayley, and Clayton Valli in their book *What's Your Sign for Pizza?* (2001). Their conventions read as follows: (1) Signs are represented with small capital letters called glosses; (2) words such as index-location represent pointing; (3) full fingerspelling (in which each letter is clear) is represented by dashes between each letter; (4) fingerspelling that is more like a sign is marked with this symbol: #; (5) repetition of a sign is shown with this symbol: +; (6) glosses do not include verb and noun markings in the same way these words would be written in English; (7) CL: stands for classifier; (8) "rs" stands for role shift; and (9) POSS stands for possessive (43). While these explicit

rules were helpful in the process of transcribing my data, there were several instances in which it was necessary that I take from other transcriptions within the book. For example, I noted instances in which my participants gestured while signing, seen in *What's Your Sign for Pizza?*, as to differentiate that gesture from a meaningful sign in my transcriptions. I also noted head nods and head shakes indicating yes and no respectively, as these movements often indicate semantical meaning in sign languages.

In the process of transcribing and identifying signs for analysis, I drew upon a combination of resources and expertise. Leveraging my prior knowledge of sign language, supplemented by provided translations and online resources, I meticulously transcribed my data set to the best of my ability. In the case that I was unfamiliar with a sign used, I utilized reliable online dictionaries provided by SigningSavvy.com, Handspeak.com, and Sign.com.au. The Signing Savvy dictionary was referenced when I was unfamiliar with a sign and intended to use the context clues provided by the translations to find the sign. Handspeak was an especially useful tool, as this website includes a reverse sign language dictionary. In the case that I was unable to find an unfamiliar sign using context clues and Signing Savvy, I searched for the sign using Handspeak's reverse dictionary; from the list given by the site, I chose the handshape(s), movement, location, and specific hand symmetry/asymmetry of the particular unknown sign. Handspeak would then provide a list of signs that matched the categories, and I was able to identify that sign. Furthermore, in the case that I was still unable to identify a sign, I checked the Sign.com.au site, which provides a dictionary for Signed English[2]. In instances where signs exhibited multiple meanings, the selection of corresponding English words in the transcription was guided by available translations to best capture the intended use within the context of the discourse. Additionally, three instances were encountered where specific signs could not be confidently identified due to either unclear signing or unavailability of corresponding references, denoted in the transcriptions within angle brackets for transparency and acknowledgment of these limitations. As someone

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[2] Signed English is a form of American Sign Language which matches each spoken word of English with a sign. Signed English does not use the same linguistic conventions found in ASL, but those found in spoken English (Holcomb 2013).

who is not a fluent signer, I acknowledge that any mistake within the transcriptions is of my own doing.

Each transcript was analyzed to identify instances of distinctly Black American Sign Language features, including two-handed versus one-handed signs, forehead location versus lowered, size of signing space, incorporation of African American English into signing, use of repetition, use of constructed dialogue/action, amount of mouthing, and vocabulary differences as elements characteristic of BASL (McCaskill et al., 2011). These features were documented and categorized for each video to facilitate the analysis of how Black deaf identities may be indexed through linguistic practices.

4.3 Sociolinguistic Approaches

4.3.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis serves as a powerful analytical tool in sociolinguistics, providing researchers with a systematic framework for examining the ways in which language shapes and reflects social identities, power dynamics, and cultural norms within specific linguistic communities. Rooted in the tradition of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, discourse analysis offers a nuanced understanding of how language is used in context to construct, negotiate, and contest meanings and identities. Central to discourse analysis is the recognition that language is not merely a means of communication but a social practice imbued with cultural meanings and power relations. Discourse analysts examine not only the linguistic features of texts but also the social contexts in which they are produced and interpreted. Through the analysis of discourse patterns, rhetorical strategies, and discursive resources, researchers uncover the ways in which language is used to construct and reinforce social identities and ideologies.

4.3.2 Interactional Sociolinguistic Analysis

The approach to discourse known as interactional sociolinguistics is based in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and linguistics sharing concerns with culture, society,

and language (Kamalu & Osisanwo 2015). Originally derived from the works of anthropologist John Gumperz and sociologist Erving Goffman, this approach is constituted from their respective fields. Gumperz provided an understanding of how shared grammatical knowledge often does not align with contextual interpretation such that a single idea may be stated and understood differently. Gumperz's contribution to this this approach was a toolkit that offers a structured framework for examining language use in interpersonal communication, focusing on how a speaker's intention or discourse strategy is critically reliant on interpretations of context for information exchange. Conversely, Kamalu and Osisanwo (2015:173) mention Goffman's contribution which provided a description of "how language is situated in particular circumstances of life, and how it reflects and adds meaning and structure in those circumstances," focusing on how the social world necessarily provides contexts in which both self-conduct and communication with another can be interpreted. For Gumperz, language was seen as indicative of background cultural understandings that inconspicuously illustrate one's knowledge about how to infer meaning through an utterance; whereas, for Goffman, language was understood as one of many symbolic resources that index social identities and relationships that are continually constructed and shifted during interaction (Kamalu & Osisanwo 2015).

  Interactional sociolinguistics takes from the foci of Gumperz and Goffman and approaches discourse as a social interaction of which the construction and negotiation of meaning is facilitated by the use of language. This approach seeks structural attention towards contexts in which language is used and contexts in which meaning and identity is partially created and sustained by language. Similarly, holding the view that language both contextualizes and is contextualized, interactional sociolinguistics understands language, culture, and society to be grounded in interaction where discourse is created at the intersection of the relationship with the self, the other, and the self-other relationship (Kamalu & Osisanwo 2015).

4.3.3 Variationist Sociolinguistic Analysis

Initially theorized by William Labov, the variationist approach to discourse analysis is concerned with the study of variation and change in language. The theory operates under the premise that linguistic variation is structured by both social and linguistic factors, and that uncovering these patterns necessitates a methodical examination of a speech community (Kamalu & Osisanwo 2015). Variationists seek to find distributive patterns of alternative formations of the same meaning and seek to identify potential social and linguistic factors that attribute those alternations. Kamalu and Osisanwo (2015) describe one of the primary tasks of variationists to be discovering linguistic or social constraints of alternative realizations to determine the underlying form of an utterance. They mention the consideration of social contexts in variationist analysis to be critical under certain methodological and analytical practices in the field of linguistics. A variationist approach to discourse is linguistically-based and considers social context to analyses of language use (Kamalu & Osisanwo 2015).

4.3.4 Variation and Indexical Fields

While the historical and pivotal work on variation in sociolinguistics holds great value in linguistic research, there have been more contemporary claims that argue for a more nuanced and dynamic approach to variation. Eckert (2008:423) best exemplifies this in asserting that "the meanings of variables are not precise or fixed but rather constitute a field of potential meanings – an *indexical field*, or constellation of ideologically related meanings, and one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable." Eckert (2008) defines an indexical field as fluid, in which each experience related to the indexed feature can morph its respective indexical field by building upon the related ideological connections. As such, an individual's variation comprises an indexical system embedded with social ideologies within language that, in turn, constitutes the construction of ideology (Eckert 2008:423).

In previous work on linguistic variation, the perspective on variables originated from the sociolinguistic examination of the propagation of sound change. Within this

framework, the socio-economic hierarchy functions as a social environment through which sound change disseminates, and an individual's position within this hierarchy dictates when sound change is adopted. The agency of speakers in utilizing variables has been perceived as constrained to asserting their position in the social hierarchy by either highlighting or minimizing their group affiliation "through the quantitative manipulation of linguistic markers," (Eckert 2008:455). However, Eckert (2008:455) draws attention to the fact that this generalized approach ignores the behaviors and ideologies that promote these patterns, the meanings associated with the conservative and innovative variants, who may or may not "fit" the pattern, and why that is. Eckert (2008:453) is, in essence, calling for the exploration of variation, along with the broader study of linguistics, to be incorporated into a holistic comprehension of language as a social practice, as previous research on indexicality in variation has been dominated by the overarching "power of the internal workings of the great linguistic system." Regarding the work of Silverstein (1985), Eckert (2008) states that there is an indirect, rather than direct, indexical relationship between variables and demographic categories through associations with qualities and stances that are involved in the construction of categories; thus, it is necessary to explore the meaning of variations and examine the underlying social constructions beneath the observed generalizations.

Engaging in social interactions necessitates an ongoing examination and understanding of various categories, groups, types, and personas, as well as the disparities in their linguistic expressions. In terms of social cognition, this process involves the development of the mental frameworks, or *schemata*, as described by Piaget (1954 cited in Eckert 2008:455). These schemata gradually form as individuals perceive differences, discern distinctions, and attribute significance to them. Consequently, we construct a social framework by segmenting the societal landscape, and a linguistic framework by segmenting the language patterns within that landscape. The level of social activity corresponding to the distinctions observed in the landscape, where variation is studied, is referred to as *style*. Thus, variables take place as elements of styles, and the interpretation of variables requires a judgement of these elements (Eckert 2008:456). Personal interpretation and implementation of stylistic elements, known as persona style, operates

independently of the formality continuum typically examined in traditional studies of variation, like that of Labov (1972). The emphasis on formality in these studies confines the exploration of variation to the cognitive domain, seen in Eckert (2004), as it primarily determines the level of attention given to speech, thus limiting individuals' stylistic choices to manipulating their status within the socio-economic hierarchy. Styles associated with social types within the societal landscape are closely linked to social class, although not in a direct manner. Rather, they are shaped by the process of *enregisterment*, in which one must locate register in a continual process of production and reproduction (Agha 2003, 2005 cited in Eckert 2008:456). Alternative to the traditional sociolinguistic view of style to mean stating the same thing in different ways, we take from Eckert (2008:456) to understand style as originating in content, rather than style as merely a surface manifestation, to prevent the separation of form from content.

Eckert (2008) contends that persona style provides the more effective framework for understanding the significance of linguistic variation. At this level, linguistic styles intersect with other forms of stylized expression, such as clothing and other commodified symbols, as well as with the ideological constructs that individuals collectively interpret and utilize, thereby shaping the social imagination. Ideology serves as the focal point of stylistic practice: every stylistic choice reflects an interpretation of the social landscape and the meanings attributed to its elements, while also positioning the individual within that milieu. While these stylistic variations and maneuvers may often seem confined to specific locales, they ultimately establish systematic connections between linguistic expression and the political-economic landscape, particularly with regard to demographic categories that emerge from and shape the local practices, which have long been a focal point of variation studies (Eckert 2008). When referring to *stylistic practices*, Eckert (2008:456-457) takes this to describe both the interpretation and creation of styles, as these two actions continuously and interactively. Stylistic practice embodies a process of bricolage (Hebdige 1984 cited in Eckert 2008), wherein individual resources (in this case, linguistic variables) are understood and combined with other resources to form a more intricate and meaningful construct. This process begins when the agent perceives an individual or group style. However, the act of recognizing a style and identifying the

group or individual associated with it mutually reinforces one another, creating a reciprocal relationship between the meaning of the style and its users. The style itself becomes noticeable through distinct features that the observer singles out for attention. Eckert (2008) mentions that of Irvine and Gal (2000) and Irvine (2001) in their elucidations of the semiotic processes through which speakers' categories and their linguistic variations become perceived as distinct entities, as an ideological connection is forged between the linguistic and the social realms. These processes are equally applicable to the construction of meaning for styles and individual linguistic variables. This process of selection occurs against the backdrop of past experiences with styles and features; a stylistic observer may be more attuned to certain types of differences based on prior stylistic encounters. Once the observer identifies and assigns significance to a feature, that feature becomes a resource that they can choose to integrate into their own style or not. The incorporation of that resource into a new style alters the meaning of both the resource itself and the original style, thereby transforming the semiotic landscape.

Understanding the roles of contextual interpretation in driving changes in indexicality within language, we look at what Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) call "acts of identity" (cited in Eckert 2008:463). These acts of identity are not merely about asserting belonging to one group over another, but rather they involve smaller actions that may go unnoticed in large-scale sociolinguistic surveys. However, these actions are not independent of the broader social structure; they are interconnected with the categories used by micro-sociologists and are ingrained in the practices that create and perpetuate them. The connection between individuals and macro-sociological categories is where we find the social practices through which people shape their linguistic styles, adjusting their personas as they navigate various situations throughout their lives. In this process, individuals not only utilize social meaning but also contribute to its creation and maintenance. Eckert (2008:463) calls to Silverstein's (2003) concept of indexical order pertaining to this process, as it acknowledges the relation between "the macrosociological facts and linguistic practice by providing a theoretical account of the role of construal in context in the process of indexical change." To comprehend the significance of variation in practical terms, it is essential to start with the ideological field, where the ongoing

interpretation of the indexical significance of a variable ultimately shapes an indexical field. This field comprises interconnected meanings that are ideologically aligned, thus serving as a linguistic embodiment of ideology. Eckert (2008) asserts that it is crucial to note that this field is dynamic rather than static, reflecting a constant process of reinterpretation at any given moment. The concept of an indexical field suggests that variables possess a dynamic and diverse range of indexical values that constantly evolve over time. Rather than having fixed meanings, variables exhibit an array of indexical fields because speakers employ them not merely to mirror or reinforce their predetermined social status, but to enact ideological strategies. Utilizing a variable entails more than simply invoking an existing indexical value; it involves making an indexical assertion that may either align with an established value or assert a new one.

Essentially, Eckert (2008:472) argues that the social is a "meaning-making enterprise" and not just a set of constraints on an individual's variation. Thus, a theory of variation necessarily involves examining the construction and interpretation of meaning. It is imperative to recognize that the same variable may be used by different individuals to index different meanings in disparate scenarios and social settings; and the meaning associated with a variable is not uniform across a given population. We use this as a methodological approach in this study in order to better understand and reflect on the ways in which signers choose and produce Black ASL features within their respective discourses.

4.3.5 Current Analysis Approach

The choice of discourse analysis, particularly in the framework of Eckert's (2008) variation and indexical fields, serves as the analytical method for this study due to its suitability in examining the nuanced relationship between language, identity, and intersectionality within the Black American Sign Language (BASL) community. Grounded in theoretical frameworks such as variationist and interactional sociolinguistic analysis, coupled with variation in indexical fields, this approach allows for a deep exploration into the underlying discursive practices shaping the construction and

negotiation of Black deaf identities. In this research, discourse analysis, alongside indexical and interactional variation approaches, serves as a methodological lens through which to investigate how Black deaf signers internalize, develop, and manifest their intersectional identities, particularly within the context of BASL usage.

Furthermore, this analysis extends to the examination of BASL features, such as repetition, lowered forms of signs, African American English incorporation, and one-handed versus two-handed signs[3], focusing on how these features serve as indices of intersectional Black deaf identities. By analyzing the discursive practices present in signed interactions and attending to potential indexical meanings, this study identifies linguistic strategies and narrative frameworks employed by participants to negotiate their identities within the intricate sociocultural landscape. Through this approach, the research aims to unravel the multifaceted layers of identity representation and interactional dynamics within the BASL community, shedding light on the complex interplay between language, culture, and identity.

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[3] While acknowledging that signs in American Sign Language (ASL) can be produced with either one or two hands, this analysis focuses on signs that typically exhibit consistent one-handed or two-handed forms. Specifically, the signs included are those that maintain their meaning regardless of whether they are signed with one or two hands. This approach allows for a nuanced examination of linguistic features without altering the fundamental meaning conveyed by the signs.

CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, & RESULTS

5.1 Analysis

In this chapter, we explore the linguistic and cultural dimensions of Black American Sign Language through the lived experiences and communicative practices of individuals within the Black Deaf community. While investigating various BASL features such as two-handed signs, repetition, lowered forms, and constructed action, it's essential to note that our analysis does not include an examination of mouthing behaviors. As noted by McCaskill et al. (2011:132), definitive conclusions regarding the prevalence of mouthing among Black signers compared to their white counterparts remain elusive. Moreover, my participants either consistently exhibited nearly continuous light mouthing or hardly any throughout each video analysis, and this feature did not furnish relevant or contributory information germane to the analytical framework employed. Through the previously mentioned analytical frameworks, we illuminate the intricate ways in which language reflects and reinforces aspects of Black identity and intersectionality within the Deaf community, drawing on insights from sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and intersectional theory. This analysis offers a nuanced understanding of the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and identity within the context of Black ASL discourse among Black Deaf individuals.

5.1.1 Video 1

In this first video, an interaction unfolds between two individuals engaging in signed communication. The participants, identified as Christine and Ericka, speak directly to the camera and each other, the frame showing the two standing in a well-lit hallway. The conversation appears to be taking place in an informal manner in an otherwise formal setting. Christine and Ericka begin the video by providing their respective names and namesigns and introducing the topic of discussion: Black ASL. They explain that the two are enrolled in a Black deaf studies course with Dr. Carolyn McCaskill and intend to discuss lexical differences that they have learned between standard ASL and Black ASL. At first, it appears as though Christine is presenting the

viewers with the standard ASL sign for each word while Ericka presents the BASL sign, specifically for the words PREGNANT, CHICKEN, and FLIRT. However, when the two demonstrate the signs for WHAT'S-UP and MY-BAD – more informal and colloquial terminology associated with African American English – Christine starts to embody a more flamboyant persona. The short recording ends with jovial and lighthearted gratitude aimed towards the viewers.

The Black ASL features noted from this video include the use of repetition, a larger singing space, the incorporation of African American English, and BASL lexical differences. Within the four instances of repetition, two of these instances were used in the initial introduction and in the closing words: HELLO++++ and THANK-YOU+, respectively; and a third use of repetition was employed with the sign DISCUSS+. These uses of repetition are not uncommon among sign language users, as repetition is often used to signify emphasis or intensity, as it seems to be the case for the three signs observed. However, the fourth use of repetition is utilized in the phrase MY-BAD, a phrase that is repeated by Christine thrice with a gesture between the second and third signings, is used not for emphatic purposes but as an interpretation of an indexed persona.

Particularly notable about this recording is the embodied style shift that Christine displays through her signing once she and Ericka begin introducing the phrases WHAT'S-UP and MY-BAD, phrases McCaskill et al. (2011) deemed as incorporations of African American English. Christine's use of WHAT'S-UP exhibits the use of a larger signing space and very nearly constructed dialogue, as she steps back to create more space for her embodied charismatic character when using this sign and greets Ericka with a WHAT'S-UP as if they were just meeting. Following that, the two introduce the sign for the AAE term MY-BAD, in which Christine fully commits to illustrating her intersectional identity. Christine's extravagant employment of this sign exhibits a stylistic practice shift with the incorporation of AAE and repetition, as she vivaciously embodies her enregistered persona with the use of MY-BAD, extending a peace sign following her demonstration. Christine's embodied stylistic shift to index an AAE-associated persona illustrates her own indexical field related to these AAE phrases and, necessarily, her idea of an AAE speaker's enregistered voice. Her version of an AAE speaker looks to involve a stylized

movement, commonly observed in contemporary hip-hop dance culture, characterized by the act of leaning back while pushing one shoulder back and slightly crouching briefly. This instance of Christine's stylized movement also illustrates a comradery between Christine and Ericka, as the displays of AAE-incorporated signs seem to foster rapport between the two and facilitate more open interaction. It appears that Chirstine and Ericka feel a freedom of expression with these phrases, as Christine engages more with Ericka than the camera once WHAT'S-UP and MY-BAD are signed. This could imply that these two individuals are more comfortable using these phrases – therefore exposing their African American or Black identities – with each other than with the potential viewers.

Lastly, we see four instances of lexical variation between ASL and BASL used here, Ericka providing the BASL signs for PREGNANT, CHICKEN, FLIRT, and WHAT'S-UP. Ericka's display of BASL features is very minimal, with only the use of a larger signing space in the closing comments and the aforementioned lexical differences. Her use of these signs seems to remain unembellished as she demonstrates her BASL signs. As Ericka mentions in the video, she innately uses BASL lexical items in her signing, thus her more reserved stylistic practice may be a demonstration of her familiarity with the use of BASL. As a BASL signer herself, the incorporation of AAE phrases in her signing do not call for a stylistic shift; Black ASL is Ericka's first language, and she shows that her idea of demonstrating Black ASL does not require the embodiment of an alternative persona to do what comes most naturally to her.

5.1.2 Video 2

Here, we meet Dr. Glenn Anderson, the first Black deaf person to graduate with a Doctorate degree in the United States, sharing an experience that ultimately altered his academic life and future career. He speaks of the challenges he faced with the institutional policies and financial aid at his hearing college, and the eventual support of his special education advisor that led to his transfer to Gallaudet College. The video itself was uploaded by a YouTube channel run by the company Purple Communications, a leading provider of deaf and hard of hearing communications solutions, involving video

relay technology and interpretation services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Purple Communications used their platform to spotlight Dr. Glenn Anderson for Black Deaf History month, and additional insights into his years of dedication and contributions to the Deaf community are provided through supplementary information accessible via the video's description, including a link to Dr. Anderson's short biography hosted on the National Black Deaf Advocates, Inc. website.

Glenn looks to be seated in front of a camera with an artificial backdrop behind him, exhibiting characteristics reminiscent of an interview format, although it is not explicitly stated within its contents. The featured individual, Dr. Glenn Anderson, is depicted as having a notable background marked by numerous years serving in administrative and instructional capacities dedicated to supporting the Deaf community and deaf individuals. It is apparent that Dr. Anderson is acutely aware of his positionality within the field, and he appears to present himself with a sense of obligation to represent both Black and Deaf communities in a manner that could be characterized as earnest and professional. Although, regardless of Dr. Anderson's mindful positionality and professionalism, he exhibits several features of Black ASL: the use of two-handed signs, noncitation forms, repetition, and constructed action and constructed dialogue.

Dr. Anderson's preference of two-handed signs in six instances, albeit features of Black ASL, are greatly overshadowed by fifteen uses of one-handed signs. Just as well, the implementation of two-handed signs included two uses of THAT and one use of OPINION, TALK, TAKE, and MANY, which are traditionally produced with two hands; none of these signs are conditioned by the use of a two-handed sign preceding it. As such, the unconditioned signs include six two-handed and two one-handed signs. In terms of two-handed features, this preference of unconditioned signs are characteristic of a Black ASL dialect. Though, paradoxical to Dr. Anderson's projected and associated professionalism, McCaskill et al. (2011) indicated that the production of two-handed signs with only one hand is viewed as a more casual type of signing, while two-handed signing tends to be used in more formal discourse. Additionally, McCaskill et al. (2011) suggest that older signers who attended segregated schools are less likely to choose a one-handed variant than younger signers who attended school after integration. Having earned his first

undergraduate degree from Gallaudet College in 1968, it is unclear whether or not his primary education, segregated or integrated, influenced Dr. Anderson's production of more one-handed signs overall. However, the results of these signs indicate that he likely participated in more integrated educational settings.

There are eight productions of lowered, noncitation forms of signs for the words ACCOMPLISH, APPARENT, UNDERSTAND (two times), BLACK, FINALLY, and FOR (two times). As contact of the preceding sign with the head or the body influences the location of a target sign, this seems to not have a significant effect on Dr. Anderson's production of lowered forms, as each noncitation form is preceded by signs produced in front of the body within his signing space. While this may seem contradictory to the findings of McCaskill et al. (2011:96) who found that *southern* Black signers produce far fewer lowered variants than white signers, it was also found that *northern* Black signers produced slightly more lowered variants by roughly ten percent. It is unclear as to which region Dr. Anderson acquired sign language, thus his production of lowered variants may indicate a stylistic choice, ease of use, or it could be representative of his non-southern geographical location of early language acquisition and instruction.

Dr. Glenn Anderson's video also includes the production of three repeated signs: KNOW++, THERE++, and MOVE++. The multiple consecutive productions of THERE in its specific context is used as an illustrative method demonstrating the multiple similar situations that Dr. Anderson has experienced. Otherwise, KNOW and MOVE were both repetitions that follow the common function of focusing emphasis on the point being made. The repeated signs carry with them nuanced meanings and contextual nuances that are extending beyond mere lexical repetition. By incorporating repetition into their signing practices, signers of Black ASL may subtly signal their cultural affiliations, assert their identity within the community, and establish meaningful connections with other members of the Black Deaf community. This could be exemplified by Dr. Anderson's use of KNOW++; in this instance, he is reporting on his former administrative program treating him unfairly and assuming he lacks understanding of his financial aid resources. As he makes direct eye-contact with the camera while repeating the sign, Dr. Anderson establishes a sense of rapport and unspoken solidarity with the viewers. Despite having so

few instances of repetition included in this recording, the pragmatic functions of these repetitions confirm them as variables of Black ASL.

Lastly, we see Dr. Glenn Anderson include two productions of constructed action and one production of constructed dialogue. Both cases of constructed action are used to illustrate how the administration of his former program viewed him. Dr. Anderson repositions his upper body, raises his eyebrows, purses his lips, and uses the V-handshape as a classifier to demonstrate both the line of sight and the sentiment held by the administrative staff. While these constructed actions take place in rapid succession within his story, Dr. Glenn Anderson is able to use his constructed action to not only reveal the discriminatory attitudes held against him through a brief shift in embodiment, but his pursed lips also reveal his own feelings of exasperation towards this memory. In contrast to this, Dr. Glenn Anderson's constructed dialogue is used to emanate an entirely different character in his story, the chairperson of the special education department. Here, his eyes are raised as well but with a slight smirk on his face, informing the viewers of the benevolent disposition of his personified character and the eventual success that stemmed from the reported dialogue. This constructed dialogue is a pivotal shift within the narrative, parallelling the critical shift this interaction had on Dr. Glenn Anderson's life, as well. With multiple productions of constructed dialogue and action in such a short recording, it permits that these productions are to be seen as clear indicators of a Black ASL variety and, therefore, an example of his display of an intersectional Black and Deaf identity.

5.1.3 Video 3

In this recording, we are met with Emmanuel Eziashi, who is originally from Nigeria. He expresses his thoughts and advice on racism and freedom as a spotlighted guest on the YouTube channel Purple Communications (as in Video 2) for Black History month. He is similarly sat in front of a camera with an artificial background in what looks to be an interview format, and no additional information about Emmanuel is provided. Regardless of the brief length of his interview, Emmanuel exhibits features of Black

American Sign Language, including two-handed sign production, large signing space, repetition, and constructed action.

Only one use of a one-handed sign was produced by Emmanuel, HATE, which was conditioned with the one-handed signs preceding it; and he produced two two-handed signs. While his production of HATE follows the norm of utilizing one hand, it is still surprising to note retroactively, as Emmanuel later demonstrates intense emotions with a heightened level of expressiveness and animation. Later, we see the use of a two-handed sign with Emmanuel's production of THAT, which we have previously noted to commonly sign using both hands. However, his utilization of a two-handed sign SEE+++ in congruency with three repetitions reveals Emmanuel's profound emotional investment in the topic at hand. Through this expressive production of this repeated sign, he is underscoring the intensity of his feelings, emphasizing the significance and urgency of his message. Emmanuel's utilization of this BASL feature coupled with his intense emotional expression reinforces the salience of his Black identity within the discourse.

Other instances of repetition, aside from the previously mentioned SEE+++, include AGAIN+, HAPPEN++, and PROGRESS++. Both AGAIN+ and HAPPEN++, being repeated consecutively, occur during Emmanuel's discourse on the frequency of racial discrimination incidents he has witnessed in his life. Similarly, his repetition of PROGRESS++ is utilized as a means to illustrate the extensive history of racism. The choice of repeating these particular signs within the context of Emmanuel's account reveals his feelings surrounding the enduring nature of racial discrimination and oppression experienced by Black individuals. By repeating some of these signs consecutively, he is embodying the pervasive and recurrent nature of racism, emphasizing the urgent need for societal progress and change.

Furthermore, Emmanuel deliberately extends his signing space for the signs FREE (two times) and STOP. This, coupled with his repetition, serves as a significant index of his Black identity within the discourse. The expansive movements and repeated signs not only command attention, but also convey a sense of urgency and gravity to his message. By utilizing a larger signing space, Emmanuel effectively magnifies the impact of his gestures and the 'volume' of his 'speech'. His strategic persona style, involving the larger

signing space and repetition, not only amplifies the potency of his message, but also asserts his cultural and linguistic identity within the context of Black American Sign Language. Through this expressive and expansive persona, Emmanuel effectively embodies and communicates an understanding of shared experiences, values, and perspectives of the Black community, contributing to a broader discourse on racism, equality, and social change through the use of Black ASL.

Emmanuel's use of constructed action within the discourse adds another layer to the depth of his message, particularly with his portrayal of those who dwell on the long history of racism. Through a shift in persona style and the embodiment of an enregistered alternate persona, characterized by his eyes looking up blankly and his tongue sticking out, Emmanuel indexes his understanding of the perspectives and attitudes of individuals who he believes are hindered by a preoccupation with the past. With precise facial expression and signing, he adeptly conveys a sense of mockery towards those who he perceives as being held back by historical grievances. By embodying the facial expressions attitudes of how he views these individuals, he effectively critiques their mindset and challenges the notion that progress is impeded by historical injustices through an enregistered persona. Emmanuel not only communicates his own viewpoint but also engages in a nuanced dialogue with differing perspectives within the discourse.

5.1.4 Video 4

This recording features Laurenne Simms, a professor of education at Gallaudet University, who tells us about her two role models. This video was also uploaded to YouTube via the Purple Communications channel (as in Videos 2 and 3), highlighting Laurenne for Black History month. Laurenne is similarly faced forward towards the camera, sitting in front of an artificial background in an interview format. She mentions her mother as her first role model, recalling her mother's reaction to discovering a deaf school near their home for the first time. Laurenne then goes on to tell us about her second role model, Marva Collins, a hearing woman who dedicated her career and even her home to supporting and facilitating better education for Black deaf children. Here,

Laurenne exhibits several BASL features, including a preference for two-handed signs, a few instances of lowered signs, repetition, and constructed action and constructed dialogue.

Laurenne produces ten one-handed signs and fifteen two-handed signs, and of these, only three of the two-handed signs are not conditioned by the preceding sign. However, her persistent use of two-handed signs throughout the video serves as a notable feature of her signing style, indicative of a Black ASL dialect and her Black identity within the discourse. The prevalence of two-handed signs, particularly when compared to the fewer instances of one-handed signs, suggests a linguistic preference and cultural affiliation within the Black Deaf community through the production of Black ASL features. The specific contexts in which Laurenne employs two-handed signs could further reinforce their significance as markers of Black ASL. For example, the three instances of two-handed signs that were not conditioned by the preceding sign occur in differing contexts for the sign WANT, reflecting a moment of heightened emotion, emphasis, or importance in her narrative. Similarly, we see Laurenne repeat the production of a two-handed sign with FRUSTRATION+ while maintaining eye contact with the camera. In this specific context, she is referring to her memory of elementary school-age deaf children struggling to communicate. Her choice to repeat this two-handed sign with sincere concern and eye contact serves as a poignant illustration of the emotional depth and personal investment underlying her use of two-handed signs, effectively conveying the intensity of her emotions and the somber weight of the situation she describes. Moreover, Laurenne's choice to repeat the two-handed sign for FRUSTRATION+ highlights the intersectionality of her linguistic style with her Black identity and cultural background. As a member of the Black Deaf community, Laurenne brings to light the systematic barriers and inequalities experienced by Black deaf individuals, particularly in educational institutions. She is not only sharing her personal experiences but is also advocating for greater awareness and support for marginalized communities within the broader society.

Laurenne produces three signs in their lowered, noncitation form: BARELY, FOR, and DON'T-KNOW. These lowered forms in Black ASL are often associated with particular

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stylistic conventions and communicative functions that differ from those found in other sign languages, carrying additional pragmatic meanings or connotations and serving as markers of informality, intimacy, or cultural identity within the Black Deaf community. Here, it seems as though Laurenne is employing the lowered forms of signs as a potential indication of informality. It looks to be less likely that the lowered forms produced were to imply a sense of intimacy, given both the context of filming and the contexts within the discourse surrounding the lowered forms. Each instance of a lowered form is complemented with recollections of memories and rhetorical hypothetical situations, all of which could relate to a sense of informality rather than intimacy.

Nine productions of repetitions are used by Laurenne, including the signs MANY+, FIGHT+, FRUSTRATE++, SEE+, FRUSTRATION+, TEACH+, CONFLICT+, CONTINUE+, and SHOW++. In each instance, her repetition serves as a powerful marker of emphasis and sincerity towards the topic at hand. While the context of repeating MANY is used to stress the copious number of role models to choose from, the remaining repeated signs stress the sentiments behind the given discussion. For example, FIGHT+, FRUSTRATE++, SEE+, FRUSTRATION+, TEACH+, and CONFLICT+ are all repeated signs surrounding the topic of issues related to deaf educational experiences, some of which are her own experiences and some of which she became aware of later in life. Laurenne's repeated signs, clustered around the discussion of issues faced while being deaf in educational institutions, offer a pointed illustration of her intersectional identity as a Black deaf individual. Through the strategic use of repetition, with its notable association with Black ASL, Laurenne emphasizes the significance of addressing systematic issues within deaf educational contexts. Laurenne is expressing her intersectional identity both by underscoring the challenges faced by deaf individuals in educational contexts, signifying concern and solidarity with this group, and by incorporating features of Black American Sign Language. This linguistic strategy not only reflects her identity as a Black individual, but it also serves as a powerful tool for advocating for systemic change and promoting inclusivity within educational settings. In doing so, Laurenne exemplifies the complex interplay between race, deafness, and education, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of her intersectional identity.

Constructed action and constructed dialogue are both utilized by Laurenne in this recording, with four uses of CA, two uses of CD, and one use of CA/CD together. Excluding the single use of consecutive constructed action then constructed dialogue in the final moments of the recording, the remaining instances are produced to recreate and narrate her own previous memories and experiences. Laurenne employs constructed action as a powerful storytelling device within each given context. She vividly recreates past experiences and inner reflections, offering viewers a glimpse into her personal narrative and thought processes. For instance, in one use of constructed action, Laurenne seamlessly embodies herself in the past, reliving a memory of encountering a deaf school near her home. Further, Laurenne employs constructed dialogue to portray internal monologues, illustrating moments of introspection and self-questioning. By incorporating constructed action and constructed dialogue into her signing, Laurenne not only enhances the richness and depth of her storytelling but also fosters a deeper emotional connection with her audience. Through these linguistic devices, she invites viewers to empathize with her journey, facilitating greater understanding and appreciation of her intersectional identity as a Black Deaf individual. Because these uses of CA/CD are reflective of her own experiences, we see do not see much of a difference in her projected persona or signing style. However, in her last use of CA/CD, she embodies an alternate character:

SOME DAY PRO.2 ("you") KNOW SOMEONE PRO.2PL ("you all") PAST. **TAP (rs: tap on shoulder) PRO.2 ("you") REMEMBER PRO.1 ("me")?**

Here, we can see Laurenne shift into her constructed action with the sign TAP, as she furrows her eyebrows and purses her lips to embody a distinctly different character. Continuing with this character, she engages in a role shift, tapping on her own shoulder and signing "PRO.2 ("you") REMEMBER PRO.1 ("me")?" as the alternate character, with eyebrows raised, a wide grin, and a quick, excited cadence. This is where we are able to see Laurenne effectively change her persona style to illustrate her proposed hypothetical situation. This allows for our recognition of how these linguistic devices contribute to Laurenne's formation and expression of her unique linguistic persona. As Black deaf individual, her signing style embodies distinct cultural and linguistic features inherent to

Black ASL. Overall, Laurenne's use of constructed action and constructed dialogue not only enhances the narrative depth and emotional resonance of her signing but also reinforces her linguistic persona as a Black signer. Through her storytelling prowess and cultural authenticity, she exemplifies the intersectional nature of a Black and Deaf identity.

5.1.5 Video 5

Presented in this video is the Perry family, Brenda and Dean, from Charolette, North Carolina, who graciously share their stories of their first exposures to Black American Sign Language. Having undergone their formative educational experiences at the Governor Morehead School for the Deaf after moving from a white deaf school, the Perrys not only acquired scholastic knowledge but also immersed themselves in the intricate community of Black American Sign Language users, a dialect they view as reflective of their cultural milieu. The video's description discloses that, through an arduous trajectory spanning two decades marked by code-switching, their linguistic trajectory has undergone discernible evolution, with certain linguistic idiosyncrasies gradually fading into obsolescence. The video was uploaded to YouTube through the channel Coda Plug, managed by the daughter of the Perrys, Michelle, who herself is a Child of Deaf Adults (CODA). Coda Plug is a channel that dedicates its platform to connecting individuals with hearing loss to valuable resources and support, particularly focusing on preparing them for the workforce. Featuring content centered on job readiness, independence, and navigating the challenges associated with hearing loss, the channel provides a vital space for education, deaf awareness, and inclusivity within the Deaf community.

Brenda and Dean appear to be situated within a domestic setting at what looks to be their dining room table. The setting exudes an air of comfort and informality, suggestive of a relaxed conversational atmosphere conductive to open dialogue and candid exchange. This domestic tableau, bathed in soft, illuminating light, serves as a quintessential backdrop against which the interpersonal dynamics and narrative unfold, imbuing the discourse with a sense of intimacy and authenticity. I took from a portion of

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the seven-minute-long video, examining Brenda and Dean's responses to the proposed question, "With desegregation – How did that impact your language?"

Brenda responds first, exhibiting one-handed and two-handed signs, repetition, and constructed action and constructed dialogue. We observe Brenda's use of five one-handed signs and five two-handed signs. Of the one-handed signs, three of them were conditioned by the preceding sign; and of the two-handed signs, two of them were conditioned by the preceding sign. Thus, the ratio of one-handed to two-handed signs that were unconditioned would be two to three, revealing a preference for two-handed signs. The most notable use of two-handed signing is Brenda's production of the sign FORGET, which is nearly always conventionally signed with one hand swiping across the forehead. Brenda's production of FORGET takes place nearing the end of her response, as she drags her hand across the top of her forehead *and her mouth* with her eyes closed, expressing how much Black ASL she has regrettably forgotten. Brenda's choice to utilize two hands for the otherwise one-handed sign carries significant implications within the framework of Black identity. By employing this Black ASL feature, Brenda is both demonstrating her connection to Black ASL while highlighting the loss she perceives in her proficiency of this dialect. The act of emphasizing FORGET in this way serves as a reminder of the cultural and linguistic heritage that Brenda feels slipping away from her memory in a literal sense and from her speech metaphorically. In expressing the need to remember or preserve her "old Black sign language", Brenda articulates a profound sense of attachment to her linguistic roots and the broader Black Deaf community. This linguistic choice thus becomes a manifestation of Brenda's intersectional identity, reflecting her navigation of the complexities inherent in balancing multiple linguistic and cultural influences.

Brenda also employs eight uses of repetition in her account, including the signs TOUR+++, MOCK+++, MOCK+, LEARN+, STORY+++, and LEARN++. Pragmatically, these uses of repetition within their respective contexts are all used to illustrate the persistent nature or recurrence of the actions and experiences she narrates, suggesting the depicted actions occurred repeatedly or continued over time. This use of repetition aligns with the features observed in Black ASL, contributing to her expression of a Black identity and to

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the broader discourse surrounding Black deaf linguistic practices. However, it is noteworthy that while repetition itself signifies a feature of Black ASL and Black identity, the specific contexts in which Brenda employs repetition do not inherently reveal deeper insights. Instead, they serve to reinforce the stylistic norms and linguistic patterns characteristic of Black ASL usage, thereby highlighting Brenda's affiliation with this linguistic community.

Brenda's response contains one use of constructed action and one use of both constructed action and constructed dialogue simultaneously. Her utilization of these features supplies the viewers with insight into her own sentiments and thoughts as she recalls feelings of confusion and incomprehension while her peers use Black ASL in social interactions. Brenda embodies who she is in these moments of perplexity, with a furrowed brow and a puzzled expression as she leans forward. She creates a dynamic and immersive storytelling environment, allowing her to effectively convey the nuances and intricacies of her personal journey. Importantly, Brenda's use of constructed action and dialogue does not entail a shift in persona style; rather, her embodiment of previously felt sentiments enhances the authenticity and relatability of her narrative by maintaining consistency with her own linguistic and communicative preferences. Her use of CA/CD algins with established norms within Black ASL, reflecting a broader cultural emphasis on expressive storytelling and oral traditions within Black deaf communities. In this way, Brenda's narrative strategies not only facilitate effective communication but also serve to index her Black identity within the realm of ASL discourse. By leveraging constructed action and dialogue to articulate her experiences, Brenda reinforces her connection to the cultural and linguistic practices that define Black ASL, thereby affirming her identity within this intersectional linguistic community.

On the other hand, Dean exhibits only one feature of Black ASL: repetition. His seven uses of repetition include the signs KEEP+, FOLLOW++ (two times), FRUSTRATE++, EASY+, SIGN++, and FEEL+++. Dean's consistent use of repetition across various signs, particularly those related to his experiences with white sign language usage in his former educational institution, serves as a poignant reflection of his Black identity within the realm of ASL discourse. Through the repetition of signs such as FOLLOW, KEEP,

FRUSTRATE, and FEEL, Dean effectively conveys the depth of his emotions and the significance of his experiences. Of particular note is Dean's use of repetition to emphasize his feelings of frustration and discomfort associated with being compelled to conform to white sign language norms before entering the Governor Morehead School for the Deaf. The repeated use of signs such as FRUSTRATE and FEEL within their respective contexts underscores Dean's emotional response to the imposition of white sign language practices, highlighting the systematic challenges and injustices faced by Black deaf signers within educational settings. Furthermore, Dean's selective use of repetition within the context of his narrative suggests a deliberate effort to foreground his Black identity and lived experiences. By repeatedly emphasizing his feelings of frustration and dissent, Dean asserts his agency and resistance against hegemonic forces that seek to marginalize Black ASL and suppress Black linguistic and cultural expressions. In this way, Dean's strategic use of repetition not only serves as a linguistic marker of Black ASL but also functions as a powerful testament to the resilience and determination of Black Deaf individuals in asserting their cultural identities within predominantly white-dominated spaces.

5.1.6 Video 6

Video 6 features Felicia Williams as she delves into her educational journey and personal background, shedding light on her experiences as a Black Deaf signer navigating her educational career. Uploaded by the Intersectional Souls Project channel, a platform dedicated to fostering connections and empowerment among Black Deaf youth and role models, this video exemplifies the project's mission to provide a safe space for dialogue and learning for deaf individuals negotiating. With a vision centered on hosting retreats that encompass various creative domains such as media, music, arts, poetry, photography, dance, and film, the Intersectional Souls Project aims to facilitate meaningful exchanges and collaborations within the Black Deaf community. Through narratives like Felicia's, the project endeavors to amplify diverse voices and perspectives while fostering a sense of community and solidarity. This recording shows Felicia standing in front of a black backdrop, directly facing the camera. Various Black ASL

features contribute to Felicia's signing, including a significant preference for two-handed versus one-handed signs, lowered signs, repetition, and constructed action.

In Felicia's discourse, she employs a total of thirteen two-handed signs compared to only two one-handed signs. Interestingly, while both of the one-handed signs were conditioned by the preceding sign, indicating a contextual influence, only four of the two-handed signs were similarly conditioned. This disparity suggests that Felicia's preference for two-handed signs transcends mere contextual influence and is more inherently tied to her linguistic and cultural identity. By demonstrating a clear propensity towards two-handed signs, Felicia underscores her alignment with the linguistic practices characteristic of BASL, thereby affirming her connection to her Black identity within the Deaf community. Expanding on Felicia's use of unconditioned two-handed signs, such as FINISH, WANT, ENJOY, and INSPIRE, all of which are associated with emotional experiences, provides further insight into the nuanced ways in which her signing style reflects her intersectional identity and linguistic persona. Emotion-related vocabulary often carries deep personal significance, as it pertains to an individual's experiences, aspirations, and values. In Felicia's case, the unconditioned use of these signs suggests that her emotional expression transcends standard grammatical conventions and is instead rooted in her lived experiences as a Black Deaf individual. By prominently incorporating emotion-laden signs into her discourse, Felicia not only underscores the centrality of emotions within her identity but also highlights the interconnectedness of her Deaf and Black cultural heritage. This nuanced use of language serves as a poignant reminder of the complex interplay between linguistic expression, cultural identity, and personal experience within the Deaf community, further enriching our understanding of the intersectional nature of sign language use exemplified by Felicia.

In the recording, Felicia employs one use of repetition, a hallmark feature of Black ASL that intersects with her identity as a Black Deaf individual. The singular instance of repetition occurs with the sign for TEACH during a pivotal moment in her narrative as she recounts her educational journey. This repetition occurs as Felicia transitions from discussing her background to describing her current role in education. The repetition serves not only to underscore the significance of this aspect of her life

journey but also to emphasize her ongoing commitment to teaching. Within the context of Black discourse practices, repetition often functions as a means of emphasizing key points and reinforcing the speaker's authority or expertise. In this way, Felicia's use of repetition not only aligns with BASL features but also reflects broader patterns of discourse within the Black Deaf community while highlighting the importance of education and the role of teaching in her identity and lived experience.

In Felicia's account, she employs two lowered forms of signs, specifically for the signs HOPE and DEAF. These lowered forms are observed towards the conclusion of the video, as Felicia reflects on her role model, Dr. Nathie Marbury, and the profound inspiration she draws from her accomplishments. The lowered forms of HOPE and DEAF are both conditioned by the preceding sign INSPIRE, suggesting a nuanced linguistic gesture sparked by her emotional connection to her role model. This choice to lower the signs, indicative of emotional weight, personal connection, and intimacy underscores Felicia's deep admiration for Dr. Marbury and her aspirations for perpetuating inspiration within the Deaf community. Within the framework of Black ASL features and Black identity, the utilization of these lowered forms may be reflective of broader Black discourse practices, wherein emotional resonance and communal empowerment are often emphasized through subtle linguistic modifications.

Furthermore, Felicia demonstrates the use of constructed action in this recording, notably in a scene where she reenacts herself receiving an award. This constructed action serves as a powerful narrative tool, allowing Felicia to vividly convey her personal experience and achievement. Within the framework of intersectionality and Black identity, this reenactment acquires added significance, as it underscores Felicia's agency and resilience in navigating intersecting facets of her identity as a Black Deaf individual. Moreover, the use of constructed action reflects features of Black ASL, where visual storytelling and expressive gestures are valued forms of communication. By employing constructed action, Felicia engages in a linguistic persona shift, eyes bright and eyebrows lifted, embodying different facets of her identity and experiences, thereby enriching the narrative and inviting viewers to empathize with her journey.

5.1.7 Video 7

Next, we examine a video featuring an interview with "WaWa" Warren Snipe, a renowned deaf writer, rapper, actor, and performer. He briefly reflects on the challenges he has faced and overcome in the past and provides advice for viewers on how to achieve one's dream. This recording is uploaded to spotlight prominent individuals in the Deaf community as potential role models by the National Deaf Center YouTube channel, whose mission is to support postsecondary outcomes for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, deafdisabled, hard of hearing, or late deafened. Warren looks to be seated on a stage, with his back faced toward an empty audience. He exhibits several features of Black ASL, including two-handed signs, lowered forms, repetition, constructed action and constructed dialogue, and incorporation of African American English.

In analyzing Warren's signing patterns, it is evident that he employs a blend of one-handed and two-handed signs, reflecting a nuanced approach to communication influenced by both Black ASL features and his unique experiences within the broader Deaf community. He employs six one-handed signs, of which only one is not conditioned by the preceding sign, and five two-handed signs, of which three are not conditioned by the preceding sign. Warren's predominance of unconditioned two-handed signs, coupled with the conditioning of other certain signs, suggests an affinity toward Black ASL linguistic practices, often prioritizing the use of two-handed signs for emphasis and expression. This preference for two-handed signs may also be indicative of Warren's intersectional identity as a Black Deaf individual, navigating spaces where linguistic norms may vary based on cultural and racial dynamics. Moreover, the presence of unconditioned signs amidst predominantly conditioned ones implies moments where Warren asserts his linguistic agency, perhaps drawing from his experiences in environments where white signing norms prevailed. By negotiating these linguistic choices, Warren demonstrates a multifaceted style that reflect both his Black identity and his Deaf identity and his lived experiences within the predominantly white Deaf community and beyond.

Additionally, Warren incorporates lowered, noncitation forms into his discourse with the signs FOR and GOAL. When he uses the lowered form of FOR, expressing

sentiments along the lines of, "When someone says you cannot become something *for* the reason of being deaf..." he is not only contextualizing the challenges and obstacles faced by individuals who experience deafness, but also, he commits to a more intimate and informal persona style that facilitates a sense of empathy and closeness with the viewers. In this way, Warren is calling on his Deaf identity to relate and engage with his audience, skillfully negotiating and accentuating a particular aspect of his intersectional identity. Similarly, when Warren discusses achieving one's dreams, his lowered form of GOAL is imbued with a similar purpose. He not only provides practical advice to spark inspiration among the Deaf community but also saturates his narrative with compassion, familiarity, resilience, and determination. Warren Snipe's use of lowered, non-citation forms in his signing also serves to establish a sense of intimacy and connection with his Deaf audience. By employing these lowered forms, Warren directs attention to the experiences and perspectives of those who are Deaf, creating a sense of shared understanding and solidarity within the Deaf community. This intentional act of directing attention towards Deaf individuals not only fosters a sense of closeness but also underscores Warren's negotiation of both a Deaf identity and a Black identity. Through his discourse, Warren asserts his agency as a member of the Deaf community while simultaneously affirming his intersectional identity as a Black individual. In doing so, Warren navigates the complexities of his identity, reconciling his Deafness and his Blackness within the context of his linguistic and cultural practices.

Warren Snipe's utilization of repetition with the signs ON-PAPER and PROCESS serves as a multifaceted linguistic strategy within the context of his discourse on achieving one's dreams. Beyond simply emphasizing his point, this repetition aligns with common discourse practices found in African American English and Black American Sign Language discourses. In both AAE and BASL, repetition often functions as a rhetorical device to underscore key ideas, emphasize importance, and engage the audience. Within the context of Black identity, this use of repetition reflects broader cultural norms and communication styles prevalent within the Black community. By incorporating this linguistic feature into his discourse, Warren not only reinforces the significance of his advice but also draws upon linguistic practices that resonate with his

cultural identity. As a member of the Black Deaf community, Warren's linguistic choices are influenced by both his Deaf identity and his Black identity, highlighting the intersectionality of his lived experiences. Furthermore, the specific context surrounding these repetitions, wherein Warren provides step-by-step advice on achieving one's dreams, underscores the pragmatic function of repetition as a means of guiding and instructing the audience. By repeatedly emphasizing the importance of actions such as putting goals on paper and following a process, Warren not only communicates practical advice but also reinforces the significance of persistence and determination in pursuing one's aspirations. In doing so, Warren's linguistic choices not only reflect his cultural identity but also serve as a means of empowerment and encouragement for his audience, particularly within the context of achieving success despite societal barriers and challenges faced by Black and/or deaf individuals.

Warren's use of constructed action and constructed dialogue, particularly in the reenactment of encountering discouraging remarks about his ability to achieve his goals due to his deafness, is a compelling demonstration of his linguistic versatility and cultural identity. This use of CA/CD serves as a means of vividly portraying personal experiences and narratives within the Deaf community. Warren personifies an alternate persona with distinctive embodied variation in his signing style, involving exaggerated facial expressions, lifted eyebrows, direct positioning towards the camera, and a more regimented signing cadence, effectively conveying a character experiencing the emotional impact of societal attitudes and challenges faced by individuals with intersecting identities, such as being both Black and deaf. Through his portrayal of the character facing skepticism and doubt from others, Warren's use of constructed action and constructed dialogue reflects not only his linguistic proficiency but also his engagement with the lived experiences of marginalized communities. His embodied alternate persona serves to heighten the emotional resonance of the narrative, allowing the viewers to empathize with the character's struggles. Moreover, this reenactment highlights Warren's adeptness at embodying different personas and perspectives, showcasing his versatility as a performer and communicator. In terms of conveying his Black identity, Warren's use of constructed action and dialogue resonates with broader

cultural norms and storytelling traditions within the Black community. The expressive gestures and dramatic portrayal of interpersonal interactions align with the oral tradition of storytelling prevalent in many African American communities, where vivid imagery and emotive performances play a central role in conveying narratives and conveying cultural values. As such, Warren's use of constructed action and dialogue not only reflects his individual artistic expression but also draws upon shared cultural practices and storytelling conventions within the Black Deaf community.

Lastly, Warren Snipe's incorporation of African American English into his signing, particularly with the phrase "PRO.1 ("I") KNOW *DAMN #WELL*" serves as a multifaceted expression of his linguistic repertoire, cultural identity, and intersectionality as a Deaf Black individual. In the context of sign language discourse, this use of AAE reflects a broader phenomenon of code-switching and language blending commonly observed in diverse linguistic communities, including those within the Black Deaf community. The integration of AAE elements into sign language discourse is characteristic of the dynamic and fluid nature of language contact and adaptation. Just as BASL exhibits distinct grammatical and lexical features that distinguish it from standard American Sign Language, the incorporation of AAE phrases adds a layer of linguistic complexity and richness to Warren's signing style. This blending of linguistic elements reflects Warren's cultural and linguistic fluency, as well as his ability to navigate and negotiate diverse linguistic contexts. Warren's use of AAE in his signing underscores his Black identity and cultural belonging within the broader African American community. AAE is not only a linguistic marker but also a cultural identifier, deeply rooted in the historical experiences, expressive traditions, and cultural practices of African American communities. As a Deaf individual navigating predominantly hearing spaces and industries, Warren's use of AAE serves as a form of cultural affirmation, challenging linguistic norms and asserting his unique identity within the broader Deaf and Black communities. Overall, Warren Snipe's incorporation of African American English into his signing represents a nuanced expression of his intersectional identity, reflecting the complex interplay of language, culture, and identity in shaping his communicative practices. By seamlessly blending elements of AAE with BASL features, Warren not

only showcases his linguistic versatility but also reaffirms the richness and diversity of the Deaf Black experience.

5.1.8 Video 8

Our last video, uploaded by her own personal YouTube channel, features Andrea Sonnier Babin, a Black Deaf teacher, researcher, and founder of Critical Consciousness (CC) School. Her CC School is a community-based program that trains educators and other individuals to practice and promote healing, transformation, empathy, and freedom in classrooms and beyond. Andrea's establishment of her CC School was prompted by the issues, challenges, and concerns she faced as deaf student, teacher, and researcher in her educational experiences. Andrea looks to be seated at a desk in an office, and the camera seems to be connected to her computer as she faces it directly. She incorporates several features of BASL in her signing, including a preference for two-handed signs, the use of a larger signing space, repetition, and constructed action.

Andrea uses of both one-handed and two-handed signs in this recording, with a total of five one-handed signs, of which two were not conditioned by the previous sign, and a total of fourteen two-handed signs, of which seven were not conditioned by the previous sign. Her utilization of a greater proportion of unconditioned two-handed signs suggests a preference for this discourse strategy to convey nuanced meaning, emphasize key points, or express heightened emotion. Andrea's choice to incorporate a significant number of two-handed signs into her signing style can also be interpreted as a manifestation of her Black identity. By employing this feature characteristic of Black ASL, Andrea not only communicates linguistically but also asserts her cultural affiliation with the Black Deaf community.

Andrea's utilization of a larger signing space for nine signs in conveying significant concepts, such as FREEDOM, SOCIETY, and TRANSFORM, allows her to convey complex ideas with greater clarity and emphasis, amplifying the visual impact of communication. Her deliberate choice to employ a larger signing space for pivotal signs highlights the gravity and importance of the messages she wishes to convey, stressing

their significance within her discourse. Andrea's signing of these particular concepts within the context of advocating for societal transformation and the eradication of systematic discrimination speaks to her commitment to social justice and equity, aspects that are suggestively intertwined with her Black identity. By addressing issues of systemic discrimination and advocating for societal transformation, Andrea asserts her Black identity and solidarity with marginalized communities, positioning herself as an advocate for change within her intersectional identity. Likewise, Andrea's use of a larger signing space to express these transformative ideals underscores the intersectionality of her identity, weaving together her experiences as a Black woman and a member of the Deaf community. Through her signing, Andrea navigates the complexities of her identity, articulating her vision for a more inclusive and equitable society that acknowledges and embraces diverse cultures and beliefs.

With two incorporations of repetition in her signing, manifested with the signs DIFFERENT+ and LEARN++, continues Andrea's trend of amplifying the significance of her message. Her use of repetition with these signs affirms the vast diversity of individuals in need of support and the importance of continuous learning and education in addressing systemic oppression and supporting marginalized communities. Andrea's repetition also serves as a linguistic marker of Black identity within BASL discourse, reflecting cultural norms and communication styles prevalent within Black Deaf communities. Similarly, the use of repetition in Black discourse, both in signed and verbal languages, is deeply rooted in cultural traditions and communicative practices. In African American English and other forms of Black speech, repetition is often utilized for rhetorical effect, storytelling, and community engagement, serving as a means of emphasis, affirmation, and connection within the discourse community. Thus, within the context of Andrea's discourse, repetition serves as a powerful rhetorical device, underscoring the urgency and magnitude of the issues she addresses while aligning her message with broader patterns observed in Black discourse across linguistic modalities. Through her use of repetition, Andrea not only communicates her message effectively but also asserts her cultural and linguistic identity as a Black deaf individual.

Finally, we see Andrea exhibit one use of constructed action within the recording. Her employment of constructed action, particularly in the context of which she embodies an alternate character exhibiting disdain towards a student with disparate cultural affiliations, exemplifies a typical feature of Black ASL. Andrea's use of constructed action to embody a character, displaying disdain towards cultural diversity with furrowed eyebrows and pursed lips, reflects the narrative richness and expressive capabilities inherent in Black ASL discourse, highlighting the language's capacity for nuanced and evocative storytelling. Her use of constructed action to convey the rejection of cultural diversity aligns with broader themes of social justice and equity within Black discourse traditions. By embodying this character, Andrea not only critiques this problematic behavior but also asserts her commitment to advocating for inclusivity and cultural acceptance within educational settings. Additionally, Andrea's embodiment of an alternate persona through constructed action underscores her intersectional identity as a Black individual navigating complex linguistic practices, social dynamics, and power structures. Through her overall expressive signing style, characterized by spirited facial expressions and animated body movements, Andrea communicates not only the content of her message but also her lived experiences and perspectives as a member of the Black Deaf community to the viewers. Furthermore, Andrea's use of constructed action reflects her engagement with cultural and linguistic norms prevalent within Black Deaf communities, highlighting the interconnectedness of language, identity, and social experience. By embodying diverse characters and perspectives through constructed action, Andrea enriches the narrative texture of her discourse while asserting her unique intersectional identity within the broader context of standard ASL and Black signing traditions.

5.2 Results

In the analyses of various video recordings featuring members of the Black Deaf community, we have uncovered rich insights into the linguistic practices and cultural identity construction within Black American Sign Language. Through close examination of linguistic features such as two-handed signs, repetition, and lowered forms (see Table

5.1 & Figure 5.1), we observed how these elements are employed by individuals like Brenda, Felicia, and Warren to convey nuanced meanings and emphasize specific discourse points. For instance, the preference for two-handed signs, as evidenced by Felicia's usage, emerged as a distinctive feature of Black ASL and served as a marker of cultural identity within the Deaf community. The repetition of signs, as seen in Warren's discourse, not only underscored emphasis but also reflected a broader pattern of discourse practices observed in African American English, highlighting the intersectionality of linguistic and cultural identities. Furthermore, this analysis illuminated how constructed action, demonstrated vividly by Andrea in her signing, functions as a BASL feature that embodies alternate personas and conveys nuanced socio-cultural meanings. By embodying characters and enacting scenarios, signers like Andrea navigate and challenge societal norms and attitudes. Further, discourse analysis has revealed how Black ASL signers employ linguistic strategies to navigate and resist societal structures of oppression, asserting agency and advocating for necessary social change. Through these analyses, we not only gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic dynamics within the Black Deaf community but also recognize the profound intersectionality of identities and the role of language in shaping cultural narratives and social realities.

Overall, what has been revealed through this process is that the use of Black ASL features reflects the negotiation and construction of complex intersectional identities within the Black d/Deaf community. Each of our signers have demonstrated expected variation, supporting the idea that Black ASL is a diverse dialect, just as in spoken languages. This variation underscores the dynamic nature of Black ASL, challenging any monolithic perceptions of Black and African American linguistic characteristics. This study supports the claim that Black ASL signers embody their cultural and intersectional identities through their signing practices that convey shared cultural meanings and experiences within the Black Deaf community, and they express their own individual identities within this milieu through varied employment of indexical signs found in Black ASL.

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Table 5.1 Summary of Results for Observed BASL Features

	Video 1		Video 2	Video 3	Video 4	Video 5		Video 6	Video 7	Video 8
	Ericka	Christine	Glenn	Emannuel	Laurenne	Brenda	Dean	Felicia	Warren	Andrea
one-handed versus two-handed signs			15:6	1:2	10:15	5:5		3:12	6:4	5:13
			(2:6)	(0:1)	(0:3)	(2:3)		(0:9)	(1:3)	(2:7)
lowered, noncitation forms			8		3			2	2	
larger signing space	1	2		3						9
repetition	1	3	3	4	9	8	6	1	2	2
CA/CD			3	1	5	2		1	1	1
AAE incorporation		1							1	
lexical variation	4									

Note: Ratios listed are shown as [one-handed signs]:[two-handed signs]. The ratios within parentheses are depicted as ([*unconditioned* one-handed signs]:[*unconditioned* two-handed signs]).
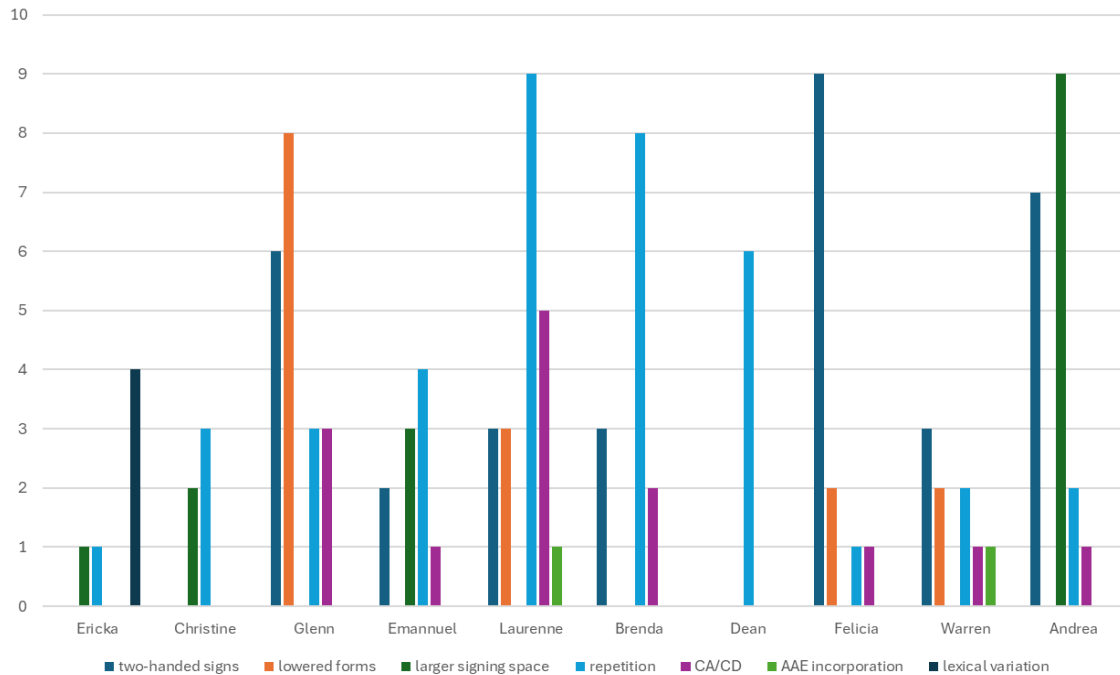
Figure 5.1 Summary of results for observed BASL features.

CHAPTER 6. ADVANTAGES, CHALLENGES, & FUTURE RESEARCH

In this chapter, we explore the multifaceted landscape of research on Black American Sign Language (BASL) and its intersection with Black identity within the Deaf community. We begin by examining the advantages of this line of inquiry, which lies in its capacity to deepen our understanding of language, culture, and identity among Black Deaf individuals. By delving into linguistic features and discourse strategies, we gain valuable insights into the intricate ways in which language reflects and shapes social identities within marginalized communities.

However, alongside these advantages come inherent challenges that must be carefully navigated. While YouTube-sourced data offers accessibility and abundance, ensuring data reliability, representativeness, and ethical considerations remain paramount. Moreover, while our research benefits from the richness of YouTube content, we acknowledge the need for cautious interpretation and consideration of potential biases inherent in online platforms.

As we look to the future, there is ample opportunity for further exploration and inquiry. Future research should aim to address these challenges while also expanding our understanding of BASL and Black Deaf identity through interdisciplinary approaches and community-engaged research methods. By embracing these opportunities and challenges, we can continue to advance our understanding of language, culture, and identity within the vibrant and diverse landscape of the Black Deaf community.

6.1 Data Collection and Participant Response Dynamics

The selection process for sourcing videos primarily relied on searches related to "Black American Sign Language," which inherently could have limited the diversity of the dataset. Furthermore, the majority of videos were purposefully curated to highlight Black individuals, often aligning with occasions such as Black History Month. This deliberate curation may have prompted participants to present themselves and use sign language in a manner that aligns with societal expectations or perceived norms associated

with Black identity. Consequently, there's a possibility that participants' natural signing styles or linguistic behaviors may have been influenced or modified to fit the context of the videos, potentially introducing biases or limitations in the interpretation of the data.

Additionally, the content of each video is subject to some sort of curation, meaning that the environment and the individuals shown within the view of the camera could very well be manipulated to project a particular image or identity. Thus, the trustworthiness of each video's content can only be taken at face-value. Similarly, as each video must have been taped using a recording device, this research is limited by the observer's paradox, as each individual makes a conscious choice in language use with the knowledge that they will be observed and recorded.

6.2 Using YouTube-sourced Data

In the digital age, researchers, such as myself, are increasingly turning to online platforms such as YouTube to gather data for various studies. The wealth of information and diverse content available on YouTube makes an attractive resource for researchers across disciplines. However, with this accessibility comes a range of ethical considerations that must be carefully navigated. Here, I intend to denote the ethical implications of utilizing YouTube as a data source, considering issues such as privacy, consent, reliability, and representation. By critically examining these ethical concerns, I aim to provide insights into the responsible use of YouTube data in research endeavors.

There are several advantages provided by Jang (2011) that validate YouTube as beneficial in the field of academic and scientific research. Firstly, and the main purpose of using this source for the current study, data collection via YouTube is exceptionally efficient. Given the lack of a substantial number of Black American Sign Language users in the geological location of this study, access to BASL users would have been impossibly costly and time-consuming. Bringing me to my second advantage: YouTube provides many different types of data that are free to researchers. Again, using this source has allowed me data and personal insights of my target linguistic group without the expenditure or the travel. However, this source was not used just for its cost-

effectiveness, but also for its vast and rich, user-generated content. While recognizing that this form of media is still one that can be manipulated by the content-creator, there is still a breadth of linguistic information that is provided – and often disregarded – in YouTube-sourced data. Additionally, YouTube is a user-friendly tool that is particularly productive in qualitative research such as this, as I have been able to access my target linguistic group remotely through videos that I can pause and restart at my own pace, which has been particularly helpful in the transcription process.

Though, where there are benefits, so too are there challenges and ethical considerations faced when collecting data from YouTube. Jang (2011) lists these challenges and concerns, the most evident and substantial being that anything in YouTube's public domain does not require consent of the content-creator(s). Some debates have ensued among researchers, asserting that posting public content online should imply consent for the use of that content, while others assert that, on the basis that research would pose little to no risk to the participants, the negotiation of consent would be impractical. I find this impracticality to be a relatable sentiment given my data collection process, as most of my data come from users who have not been active on YouTube for several years, some even over a decade. Jang (2011) states that there are no formalized requirements for seeking consent, and seeking consent seems to be a personal decision made by the researcher(s). I have chosen not to contact my participants for individual consent for the impractical aspect but also because each participant seemed to be fully aware that they were being filmed, with situations like looking at the camera and addressing the camera directly. It is for these reasons, and for the fact that I cannot fathom any way that this could cause danger or harm to my participants, that I have not sought the consent of my participants.

6.2 Future Research

Moving forward, future research in this domain could benefit from several methodological refinements to enhance the rigor and depth of analysis. Firstly, while the current study utilized a purposive sampling strategy to select YouTube videos, future

research could explore the feasibility and benefits of employing more diverse sampling techniques, such as snowball sampling or community-based participatory research approaches. This would facilitate a more comprehensive representation of the Black Deaf community and allow for the inclusion of voices that may be underrepresented in online spaces. Additionally, given the importance of cultural and linguistic nuances in the interpretation of sign language data, future studies should prioritize community collaboration and consultation throughout the data collection and analysis process. Engaging with members of the Deaf, Black, and Black Deaf communities would not only ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the transcriptions but also foster greater trust and inclusivity within the research process. Furthermore, future research could explore the potential integration of multimodal analysis techniques, such as facial expression recognition and body movement analysis, to provide a more holistic understanding of communication practices within the Black Deaf community.

By incorporating these methodological enhancements, future studies can contribute to a more nuanced and culturally responsive exploration of Black American Sign Language and its intersection with identity. Moreover, adopting an ethnographic approach, which involves immersive fieldwork and participant observation, could further enrich our understanding of the lived experiences, cultural practices, and social dynamics within the Black Deaf community, providing valuable insights into the contextual factors shaping language use and identity construction.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

The examination of Black American Sign Language (BASL) through video analyses provides valuable insights into the linguistic, cultural, and intersectional dimensions of communication within the Black Deaf community. Through the exploration of linguistic features such as two-handed signs, repetition, lowered forms, and constructed action, we have illuminated the complex ways in which language reflects and shapes Black identity and intersectionality. Our analyses revealed that Black ASL features, often intertwined with African American English discourse practices, serve as markers of cultural belonging and intersectional identity performance within the Deaf community.

One significant finding is the prevalence of two-handed signs among Black Deaf signers, reflecting a distinctive feature of BASL that distinguishes it from mainstream American Sign Language (ASL). This preference for two-handed signs is not only a linguistic characteristic but also a cultural identifier, reflecting the unique communication practices of the Black Deaf community. Moreover, the use of repetition emerged as a prominent discourse strategy, serving to emphasize key points, express intensity, and establish solidarity within conversations. This practice aligns with both Black ASL discourse norms and African American Ennglish rhetorical strategies, highlighting the intersectionality of linguistic and cultural identities among Black Deaf individuals.

However, our analyses also underscored the challenges of interpreting and analyzing signed discourse sourced from online platforms like YouTube. While these videos offer valuable insights into naturalistic communication practices, they also present limitations, including the absence of context, potential biases in content selection, and issues of authenticity and representativeness.

Moving forward, future research in this area could benefit from employing a more ethnographic approach, involving direct engagement with the Black Deaf community to gain deeper insights into their linguistic practices and cultural dynamics. Additionally, exploring the interaction between BASL and AAE in more nuanced ways could enrich

our understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and identity among Black Deaf individuals.

In summary, the analyses presented in this study contribute to the growing body of literature on BASL and highlight the importance of considering intersectional identities and cultural contexts in the study of signed languages. By contextualizing linguistic features within broader sociocultural frameworks, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse ways in which language reflects and shapes intersectional identities within marginalized yet beautifully diverse communities, such as the users of Black American Sign Language.

TRANSCRIPTIONS

Video 1 "Black ASL"

C: HELLO++++ PRO.1 ("I") AM C-H-R-I-S-T-I-N-E (name sign).

E: HELLO POSS.1 (my) NAME E-R-I-C-K-A (name sign).

C: PRO.2PL ("we") NOW TAKE COURSE WHAT? BLACK DEAF PEOPLE STUDY. WHO? D-R C-A-R-O-L-Y-N M-C-A-S-K-I-L-L (name sign). DISCUSS++ SIGN STANDARD A-S-L BLACK A-S-L (index-location). P-R-E-G-N-A-N-T PREGNANT.

E: SIGN WHAT? PREGNANT.

C: C-H-I-C-K-E-N CHICKEN.

E: PRO.1 ("I") SIGN WHAT? CHICKEN.

C: F-L-I-R-T FLIRT.

E: PRO.1 ("I") SIGN WHAT? FLIRT. (pause) THIRD W-H-A-T-S U-P.

C: WHAT'S-UP!

E: WHAT'S-UP. M-Y B-A-D.

C: MY-BAD+ (gesture) MY-BAD.

E: MY-BAD.

C: THANK-YOU!

E: THANK-YOU+.

Video 2 "Meet Glenn"

PRO.1 ("I") OFTEN TELL PEOPLE MUST HAVE #THICK SKIN (CL: thick skin). (pause) PEOPLE SENSITIVE HURT. (pause) (gesture) (shake head) THAT #WILL NOT BENEFIT PRO.2 ("you"). MUST HAVE #THICK (false start) (CL: thick skin). ALSO BEST TO #BE #AS #WELL INFORM CAN (gesture). #SO PRO.1 ("I") UNIVERSITY EXAMPLE. PRO.1 ("I") GO-TO TO HEARING COLLEGE (gesture) (pause). (gesture) RULE (false start) MUST ACCOMPLISH C #OR BETTER IN P SPEECH. (head shake no) PRO.1 ("I") NEVER TAKE COURSE SPEECH THAT (index-location) TIME. (PAUSE) #SO APPARENT POSS.1 ("my") PROGRAM PRO.3PL ("they") OPINION LOW (CL: eyes looking at me) (shake head). PRO.1 ("I") NOT HAVE GOOD TALK SKILL DEAF PRO.1 ("me"). #SO PRO.3 ("they") ENCOURAGE PRO.1 ("me") TO CHANGE DIFFERENT MAJOR #OR #WITHDRAW SCHOOL. PRO.1 ("I") STUBBORN. #SO SEND TO D-E-A-N STUDENT

UNDERSTAND. PRO.1 ("I") ALREADY KNOW POSS.1 ("my") FINANCIAL #AID PROGRAM. ALREADY KNOW++ PRO.1 ("me") (head nod). (index-location) #DEAN STUDENT DO? SUGGEST PRO.1 ("I") MUST #WITHDRAW FROM COLLEGE. GIVE-TO-ME POSS.1 ("my") MONEY #BACK FROM #DEAN. UNDERSTAND. PRO.1 ("I") ALREADY KNOW RULE REGARDING POSS.1 ("my") FINANCIAL #AID KNOW (index-location) WRONG AND NOT ONLY THAT OBVIOUS #HE HAVE (CL: eyes looking down) BLACK PEOPLE #WOULD TAKE MONEY RUN. PRO.1 ("I") (shake head) NOT # DO THAT. (gesture) PRO.1 ("I") NOT TAKE POSS.2 ("his") ADVICE. #END RESULT #OF ISSUE AGAIN STUBBORN PERSIST PRO.1 ("I") (false start) PRO.1 ("I") MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE (CL: sit over and over) THERE++ (CL: sit over and over). FINALLY MEET-WITH-ME CHAIR PERSON #DEPARTMENT #OF (false start) SPECIAL #ED. THAT PERSON DIFFERENT FROM PRO.3 ("them"). (index-location) PRO.2 ("she") HAVE HEAR GALLAUDET? (pause) POSS.2 ("her") SUPPORT FOR PRO.1 ("me") LEAD POSS.1 ("my") LATER TRANSFER-TO TO GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY AND ADVANCE POSS.1 ("my") PATH LIFE #CAREER PATH CHANGE FOR BETTER (gesture). MOST IMPORTANT NOT GIVE-UP #TOO EASY. SOMETIMES DOOR DOOR-CLOSE (index-location). MUST MOVE SEARCH FOR DIFFERENT DOOR. STILL DOOR-CLOSE KEEP MOVE++ TO FIND DOOR THAT DOOR-OPEN. THAT ONE PATH TO SUCCESS LIFE.

Video 3 "Meet Emmanuel"

R-A-C-I-S-M POS.1 ("I") HATE (head nod). AGAIN+ HAPPEN++ POS.1 ("I") SEE+++. HELP-ME NOT. TRAINING NOT. PRO.2PL ("we") NEED EQUALITY! REMEMBER #LAW AFFECT PASS THAT PRO.2PL ("we") MUST #TREAT ALL EQUAL AS-WELL FREE. FREE #RACISM. NOT PREOCCUPIED #RACISM PAST-PROGRESS++ YEAR TO WHY? (shake head) NOT IMPORTANT. PRO.2PL ("we") MUST STOP. CHANGE. MUST #TREAT AS-WELL EQUAL AS ONE.

Video 4 "Meet Laurene"

PRO.1 ("I") THINK-ABOUT MANY+ DIFFERENT WONDERFUL ROLE-MODEL (index-location). POSS.1 ("my") MOM ONE ROLE-MODEL. POSS.1 ("my") MOM FIGHT+ FOR PRO.1 ("me") POSS.1 ("my") #EDUCATION PRO.3 ("she") WOW PRO.3 ("she") MOM KNOW. PRO.1 ("I")

GROW-UP ORAL FRUSTRATE++ (rs: look around). DO? ONE-DAY DOWNTOWN (index-location) SEE (index-location) WOMAN PRO.3 ("she") CHILD SIGN. PRO.3PL ("they") COMMUNICATE. PRO.1 ("I") (rs: tap on shoulder) MOM COME SEE (CL: two walk over) MEET (gesture). FIND HAVE DEAF SCHOOL #INDIANA SCHOOL DEAF. BARELY FIVE #MILES NEAR POSS.1 ("my") HOME. MOM THAT DON'T-KNOW. REMEMBER PAST NOT HAVE KIND #OF SERVICE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN NONE (shake head). SERVICE INFORM TALK (gesture). (break). ANYWAY MOM FIND (index-location) DEAF SCHOOL. BRING-ME PRO.1 ("me") (index-location) DEAF SCHOOL. PRO.3 ("she") MAKE RIGHT DECISION PRO.3 ("she"). PRO.1 ("I") GLAD. GROW-UP GRADUATE (index-location). BUT AFTER THAT GRADUATE STILL CONTEMPLATE WANT TEACHER WANT. PRO.1 ("I") SEE+ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FRUSTRATION+ COMMUNICATE SIGN (gesture). PRO.1 ("I") (rs: look at that) PRO.1 ("I") WANT MAKE DIFFERENT. PRO.1 ("I") LOOK (rs: looking around). WHO POSS.1 ("my") ROLE-MODEL? (head nod) M-A-R-V-A C-O-L-L-I-N-S. PRO.3 ("she") #WELL KNOW BLACK TEACHER. PRO.3 ("she") HEARING. BUT PRO.1 ("I") SEE MOVIE SEE POSS.3 ("her") STORY LIFE. PRO.3 ("she") WOW. STRONG ADVOCATE BLACK CHILDREN PRO.3 ("she"). PRO.3 ("she") BEEN TEACH PUBLIC #PUBLC SCHOOL TEACH+ BUT CONFLICT+ POSS.3PL ("their") POLICY. SEE BLACK STUDENT SMALL EXPECTATION PRIORITY (index-location). SEE (CL: clashing back-and-forth conversations). PRO.3 ("she") DECIDE RADICAL ESTABLISH POSS.3 ("her") #OWN SCHOOL APARTMENT (gesture) #COMPLEX APARTMENT. PRO.3 ("she") NOT FOLLOW POSS.3PL ("their") FIRE #CODE #OR FOLLOW (false start) POLICY #CODE (gesture). PRO.3 ("she") PROCEED PROCESS TEACH STUDENT. PRO.3 ("she") INCREASE EXPECTATION. TEACH SHAKESPEARE AND ENGLISH WRITE. AMAZING WOW! PRO.1 ("I") SEE INSPIRE PRO.3 ("she") RADICAL. TRUE ENOUGH PRO.3PL ("they") STUDENT GROW-UP WOW LAWYER DOCTOR MANY ET-CETERA. #GOOGLE NAME LOOK IN INTERNET M-A-R-V-A C-O-L-L-I-N-S. PRO.3 ("she") POSS.1 ("my") SINCE SEE. PRO.1 ("I") NOW PRO.1 ("I") MIDDLE-SCHOOL TEACHER. PRO. ("I") WANT MAKE DIFFERENT IN POSS.1 ("MY") CLASS. PRO.1 ("I") #DID AND STILL #DO. NOW PRO.2PL ("we") RESPONSIBLE ALL YOUNG CONTINUE+ SHOW++. DOESN'T-MATTER PRO.2 ("you") FEEL PRO.3 ("it") WORTHLESS #HOPELESS NONE FUTURE. NO DON'T-KNOW. SOME DAY PRO.2 ("you") KNOW SOMEONE PRO.2PL ("you all") PAST TAP (rs: tap on shoulder) PRO.2 ("you") REMEMBER PRO.1 ("me")? IMPORTANT CONTINUE ADVISE PRO.3PL ("they") PEOPLE YOUNG NOT GIVE-UP.

Video 5 "Black ASL Black History Month Interview 2021"

Answering: Question 2 With desegregation – How did that impact your language? (2:00-4:48)

B: WHEN PRO.1 ("I") #WAS IN SCHOOL FINISH THEN (break) …TEACHER AND INFORM-US SAY-TO (rs: say to us) (index-location) PRO.2PL ("you all") MUST BLACK PEOPLE MUST MOVE TO MORGANTON SCHOOL (index-location). PRO.3PL ("they") ONE ON SATURDAY PRO.3PL ("they") GIRL DORM #ALL SCHOOL #BUS (CL: bus takes us) TO MORGANTON SCHOOL. TOUR+++ BUT (false start) DEAF BLACK SIGN+ BUT (index-location) WHITE PEOPLE MOCK+++. THAT SIGN? MOCK+ (break). NEXT FALL MOVE TO MORGANTON (index-location) SCHOOL. SOMETIMES BULLY (false start). WHITE AND BLACK SOMETIMES NOT GET-ALONG. #FEW MONTH LATER MUST LEARN COME-TOGETHER MUST LEARN MINGLE WITH FRIEND (index-location). AFTER THAT AFTER PRO.1 ("I") #WAS STAY IN MORGANTON WHITE SCHOOL THAT 4-YEAR. (break). SCHOOL MOVE TO MORGANTON (index-location) SCHOOL WHITE SCHOOL PRO.1 ("I") LEARN+ TO POSS.3 ("their") WHITE PEOPLE SIGN LANGUAGE CHANGE. BUT PRO.1 ("I") FORGET ABOUT OLD BLACK DEAF SIGN LANGUAGE DWINDLE-DOWN. AND PRO.1 ("I") FINISH TAKE 3-YEAR. SOMETIMES PRO.1 ("I") MEET-WITH DEAF PRO.1 ("I") TALK BLACK DEAF SIGN PRO.1 ("I") WHITE SCHOOL SIGN LANGUAGE (FALSE START) PRO.1 ("I") (rs: watching) STORY+++ (rs: thinking) PRO.1 ("I") REMEMBER. SOMETIMES PRO.1 ("I") (rs: looking confusingly) (gesture) PRO.1 ("I") (rs: tap on shoulder) WHAT THAT? PRO.1 ("I") LEARN++. NOW FORGET. BUT MUST KEEP OLD BLACK DEAF SIGN.

D: (false start)

B: #IF PRO.1 ("I") KEEP+ BLACK SIGN WHITE SCHOOL (gesture) NOT LEARN BLACK. MUST CHANGE TO (index-location) POSS.3PL ("their") WHITE SCHOOL SIGN.

D: PEOPLE (gesture) PRO.1 ("I") MUST FOLLOW (false start) FOLLOW++ KNOW. #IF (gesture). PRO.1 ("I") NOT FOLLOW WHITE PEOPLE MEANING PRO.1 ("I") (pause) FRUSTRATE++ PRO.1 ("me"). PRO.1 ("I") FRUSTRATE BUT PRO.1 ("I") PLAY FOOTBALL BASKETBALL. PRO.1 ("I") FOLLOW COACH. POSS.1 ("my") COACH NOT BLACK POSS.1 ("my") COACH WHITE COACH WHITE. PRO.2PL ("we") #ALL UNDERSTAND #ALL UNDERSTAND EASY+ (break). BLACK SIGN+++ (gesture) FORGET. WHEN PRO.1 ("I") MOVE WHITE SCHOOL WHITE SCHOOL PRO.1 ("I") FOLLOW+ NOT FOLLOW BLACK SCHOOL. PRO.1 ("I") (gesture) (shake head) PRO.1 ("I") FEEL+++ (shake head) ISSUE NOT RIGHT.

Video 6 "<u>Video Bio of Felicia Williams</u>"

 HELLO. PRO.1 ("I") F-E-L-I-C-I-A W-I-L-L-I-A-M-S. PRO.1 ("I") EXPOSE ABOUT MYSELF LITTLE-BIT. PRO.1 ("I") ENTER DEAF INSTITUTION 3. LATER TRAVEL MAINSTREAM DECIDE <unclear> INSTITUTION GRADUATE (head nod). 2005 FINISH GRADUATE (shake head) ADVANCE ENTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE MAJOR DEAF STUDY. ENGROSS LANGUAGE CULTURE LINGUISTIC INFORM INCLUDE. FINISH NOT-SATISFIED (shake head). DECIDE ENTER GALLAUDET MAJOR ASL MINOR DEAF STUDY LINGUISTIC. GRADUATE 2012 DECIDE HOW IMPROVE TEACH. DECIDE MAJOR M-A SIGN LANGUAGE TEACH. THAT NAME CHANGE M-A SIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION. GRADUATE GALLAUDET 2013. NOW POSS.1 ("my") WORK DO? PRO.1 ("I") FULL TIME TEACHER. WHERE? DEPARTMENT ASL DEAF STUDY. (index-location) GALLAUDET PRO.1 ("I") TEACH++. NOW CONTINUE. POSS.1 ("my") FAVORITE ENJOY FEELING WHAT? SHOPPING CHAT FRIEND EXPLORE POSS.1 ("MY") RESEARCH. FUTURE WHAT? CONCENTRATION #PHD WANT. CONNECT WITH DIVERSITY INTERSECTIONALITY BUT WANT RESEARCH MORE BLACK DEAF COMMUNITY (FALSE START) EXPERIENCE CULTURE LANGUAGE HISTORY INCLUDE WANT MORE RESEARCH ON <unknown> TOO. PRO.1 ("I") ONE FIRST PERSON AWARD FOR D-R N-A-T-H-I-E M-A-R-B-U-R-Y. POSS.2 ("her") AWARD (rs. getting award) RECEIVE AT GALLAUDET 2013. PRO.1 ("I") BIG HONOR WOW. NATHIE POSS.2 ("her") PASSION ENGROSS TEACH ASL INSPIRE. HOPE THAT POSS.1 ("her") CONTINUE INSPIRE DEAF OTHER TOO.

Video 7 "<u>Deaf Role Models: WaWa Warren Spine, Performing Artist</u>"

WHEN SAY PRO.2 ("you") CANNOT BECOME (index-location) FOR DEAF (break). (rs: saying to me) CANNOT #OKAY. FINE. CANNOT #JOB FIND ONLY THAT CAN HELP-ME GET ISSUE MONEY. IMPORTANT PAY-BILL #BILLS. (break). WHERE PASSION? WHERE POSS.2 ("your") (CL: dream)? FIRST MAN FAMILY WHAT? GO-TO COLLEGE. PRO.1 ("I") WORK TWO WORK ON COLLEGE. 18 TO 20 CREDIT HOUR WORK. TWO DANCE COMPANY ALSO. PRO.1 ("I") CRAZY BUT HUNGRY. PASSION. #SO NOW DO NOW HAVE #OWN COMPANY. (break). IDEA THAT WHERE START JOT-DOWN ON-PAPER++++. START TIME LINE. PROCESS+ HAPPEN. HELP NEAR+ POSS.2 ("your") GOAL. IF PRO.1 ("I") THAT PRO.1 ("I") KNOW DAMN #WELL PRO.2 ("you") CAN. DOESN'T-MATTER (shake head) COLOR PRO.2 ("you"). (shake head) DOESN'T-

MATTER BACKGROUND PRO. ("you") FROM (shake head). (break). PRO.1 ("I") SEE PEOPLE HAVE NOTHING BECOME SUCCESS. PRO.3PL ("they") START FROM BOTTOM. PEOPLE WILL MOCK. PRO.1 ("I") MOCK MANY YEAR. DOING ALMOST 30 YEAR. WHO LAUGH NOW? (wink).

Video 8 "<u>What is CC School? Part 1</u>"

HELLO! KNOW MEANING WHAT? C-R-I-T-I-C-A-L C-O-N-S-C-I-O-U-S-N-E-S-S ABBREVIATE C-C? THAT CONTINUE PROCESS SELF-REFLECTION ANALYZE-OTHER HOW PRO.2PL ("we") SUPPORT OPPRESSION. DIFFERENT KIND LIKE R-A-C-I-S-M S-E-X-I-S-M C-L-A-S-S-I-S-M C-O-L-O-R-I-S-M A-LOT. DEPEND PRO.2PL ("we") SELF-ANALYZE ANALYZE-OTHER HOW PRO.2PL ("we") CAN TELL ASK CREATE SUPPORT FREEDOM. (break). KNOW MANY PRO.2PL ("us") WOW READY MOVE-ON (CL: take off hand cuffs) SOCIETY TRANSFORM OPPRESSION NO-MORE. (gesture) FIRST MUST (index-location) SELF-REFLECTION MAKE SURE POSS.2PL ("your") ACTION RIGHT WORK ALIGN WITH INTENT MEANING GOAL POSS.2PL ("your") VALUE. (break). C-C PROCESS LOOK-LIKE WHAT? FIRST DO PRO.2PL ("we") NAME PROBLEM (gesture). EXAMPLE PRO.1 ("I") HAVE CONTAIN-WITHIN SEE (CL: look at student) FIND STUDENT WITH (gesture) DIFFERENT CULTURE CULTURE DIFFERENT FROM POSS.1 ("mine") (gesture). PRO.1 ("I") LOOK (gesture). PRO.1 ("I") DO? AGGRAVATE (index-location). (CL: look at it) DON'T-LIKE. FIND NAME IDENTIFY PROBLEM. THEN PRO.1 ("I") ANALYZE VIEWPOINT WHERE PRO.1 ("I") LEARN CONTAIN-WITHIN THAT SEE PERSON. WHO (gesture)? WHERE? WHEN (gesture)? SCHOOL (gesture)? COLLEGE (gesture)? HOME (index-location) (gesture)? TELEVISION (gesture)? THAT (index-location) WHERE? (CL: get feelings and opinions). PRO.1 ("I") STILL PRO.1 ("I") (rs: don't like them) LOOK. WHERE? NEXT PRO.1 ("I") DO KEEP HOW SOLVE TRANSFORM PROBLEM #SO PRO.1 ("I") NOT CONTINUE HARM PERSON #OR SUPPORT SYSTEM OPPRESSION. HOW PRO.2PL ("we") KNOW (gesture) PROBLEM? HOW KNOW SOLVE? (head nod) PRO.2PL ("we") HERE IN C-C SCHOOL WILL RELY ON POSS.2PL ("our") COMMUNITY BASED KNOWLEDGE. MANY DIFFERENT COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE <unknown> HAVE LONG HISTORY EDUCATION NEED PRO.2PL ("we") DEPEND (CL: all of it) LEARN++ CONTAIN-WITHIN TRANSFORM SERVICE SUPPORT PRO.3PL ("them") DIFFERENT+ PEOPLE. WHEN PRO.2PL ("we") PARTICIPATE NAME INTERROGATE ANALYZE TRANSFORM PRO.2PL ("we") CAN BETTER ESTABLISH SPACE MAKE DECISION THAT SURE

CREATE SUPPORT PRO.3PL ("they") STUDENT NEED POSS.3PL ("their") IDENTITY POSS.3PL ("their") CULTURE POSS.3PL ("their") BACKGROUND. (gesture) <unclear> AROUND STUDENT CAN BECAUSE DOESN'T-MATTER ANYONE PRO.2 ("you") WORK WITH.

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