Deaf Culture, Associational Inclusion, and Ending Waste in Education

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that forms of access to schools were insufficient to meeting the challenge of an airborne pathogen.

The many forms of accommodation needed as a result of this pandemic have reinvigorated interest in what it might mean to consider forms of Universal Design and equity in learning situations. Such conversations, whether in the media, informal discussion, or academic publications, act as reminders that schools have yet to fully ensure that students of all capacities, languages, and other forms of difference have equitable access to information, communication, and opportunities for flourishing through learning.

Such conversations, too, act as reminders that, while schools may gesture towards welcoming pluralism, they nonetheless lag on robust inclusion of all differences. This paper focuses on how schools exclude a particular group within Deaf communities that shares a set of similar beliefs, values, and practices, which is known as Deaf culture, and shares a common signed language—American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is a complete, natural language and has its own grammatical system, independent of English.

Dewey provides some conceptual tools that can help explore the importance of Deaf education in relationship to the development of ASL, Deaf Culture, and pluralist democratic culture in general. Much of the excellent work done by contemporary philosophers of education eager to extend Dewey's work to disability studies has thus far centered on intellectual inclusivity and inclusion on the basis of individual intellectual diversities.[1] This work has helped push educators to understand the breadth of diversities in pluralistic democracy and shifted the ways we think and educate around intellectual diversities and disabilities, focusing on how school practices and variations in forms of education-related flourishing should also be considered from the perspective of robust (if individual) differences.

While we build on this important work, we begin to push more toward thinking about associations within and between cultures as another task of anti-ableist Deweyan innovation. Deaf culture and ASL pose a different challenge to inclusivity, as they both advocate for a critical examination and mitigation of exclusions from public schools—and challenge pluralistic democracy to recognize and respect minoritized languages and cultures within pluralism.

At the heart of our argument is an engagement with Dewey's cautions against how waste is structured into educational institutions.[2] While his focus is on the kind of waste the separating structures and functions of educational institutions create, we focus on the different ways oppressive exclusions work to create conditions of

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[1] See R. Mullins, "Using Dewey's Conception of Democracy to Problematize the Notion of Disability in Public Education," *Journal of Culture and Values in Education* 2, no. 1 (2019), 1-17; Ashley Taylor, "Theorizing Ability as Capability in Philosophy of Education," in *International Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, ed. Paul Smeyers (New York, NY: Springer, 2018); S. Danforth, "John

Dewey's Contribution to an Educational Philosophy of Intellectual Disability," *Educational Theory* 58, no.1 (2008), 45-62.

[2] John Dewey, "Waste in Education," in *The Child and the Curriculum, The School and Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 63.

educational waste for Deaf students and, further, waste opportunities to educate about Deaf culture and language.

Critiquing Waste

The current practices of inclusion for Deaf students are more wasteful than useful.

Deaf students have come to school with a whole mind and a whole body but leave school with a half mind and a less healthy body.[3] While there have been legal moves to guard against this waste, many educational institutions have yet to fully understand how limited approaches to "inclusion" render inequitable access and hinder the cultivation of Deaf culture and ASL. Inclusion of disabled students in public schools increased when the federal law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), was enacted in 1990. IDEA requires schools to ensure that disabled students are educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE). In the context of Deaf students, most Deaf students are placed in public schools where spoken English is the only medium of instruction and the majority of students and teachers are abled, nondeaf, and not proficient in a signed language.[4]

In order to make the most restrictive environment less restrictive, most public schools have provided access and support services, such as interpreting, tutoring, and notetaking services. Some have provided direct instruction in sign language. Despite those provisions of services, Deaf students reported numerous issues with public schools.[5] Deaf students had experienced no or limited access to sign language, the absence of Deaf role models or peers, unqualified interpreters, and isolation.[6] No or limited access to sign language means Deaf students are unable to acquire, build, and use their native language.[7] Not having a peer or teacher who shares a similar biocultural status affects Deaf students' sense of belonging, language and identity development, and understanding of their world. The presence of sign language interpreters in the classroom does not automatically render equality because there are reported problems with interpreters' language skills, professionalism, and intercultural competence.[8] Deaf students experience isolation as a result of not having the opportunity to learn and build their native language, to interact with peers and teachers with similar backgrounds, and to participate fully and equally via an interpreting service. Deaf students' lived experiences show that public schools' practices work against true inclusion by ignoring the

[3] John Dewey, *School and Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1907).

[4] John Pirone, "Equity Literacy Offers a Way to Reduce Language Deprivation by Combating Audism and Linguicism," *Deaf Studies Digital Journal* (forthcoming).

[5] See B. J. Bahan, H. D. Bauman, & F. Montenegro, *Audism Unveiled* (San Diego, CA: Dawn Sign Press, 2008) and F. Bowe, "Language Development in Deaf Children, *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 3, no. 1 (1998), 73-77.

[6] See S. Foster, "Reflections of a Group of Deaf Adults on their Experiences in Mainstream and Residential School Programs in the United States," *Disability, Handicap & Society* 4, no. 1 (1989), 37-56; G. A. Oliva, *Alone in the Mainstream: A Deaf Woman Remembers Public School* (Vol. 1) (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2004);

G.A. Oliva & L. Lytle, *Turning the Tide: Making Life Better for Deaf and Hard of Hearing School Children*, (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2014); M. Stinson & Y. Liu, "Participation of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students in Classes with Hearing Students," *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 4, no. 3 (1999), 191-202; John Pirone, J. Henner, & W. Hall, "American Sign Language Interpreting in a Mainstream College Setting: Performance Quality and its Impact on Classroom Participation Equity," in *Deaf Eyes on Interpreting,* ed. H.K. Holcomb and D.H. Smith (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2018), 45-57.

[7] Pirone, "Equity Literacy."

[8] Pirone, Henner, and Hall, "American Sign Language Interpreting."

key forms of communication necessary to build and sustain democratic pluralist culture.

Public schools need to examine their own ideologies, policies, and practices that are rooted in audism, linguicism, and phonocentrism, each of which create inequity. Audism is a form of bias that maintains the superiority of hearing ability,[9] linguicism insists on the superiority of language,[10] and phonocentrism on the superiority of speech.[11] Deaf students have experienced these forms of oppression in most public schools whose policies and practices barely recognize and make sign language a part of the medium of their instruction and communication (linguicism), seldomly embrace or celebrate being Deaf/Deaf culture (audism), and hardly include visual-kinetic modality (phonocentrism). Also, the majority of educational professionals in charge of making decisions on placements and services as well as evaluating the quality of services, are abled, hearing, and English speakers, and that gives rise to linguicism and audism.[12]

To mitigate this, educational professionals and administrators might take a training on equity literacy in the hopes that it will provide them with the knowledge and skills "to become a threat to the existence of inequity in their spheres of influence."[13]

Addressing Waste

This Deweyan inspired critique of waste adds to already existing work on Dewey and disability, and connects as well to Dewey's discussion of the key aspect of communication in education.

Where others have reasonably focused on how ableist culture needs to include intellectual diversities, we develop a Deweyan approach to how to make Deaf Culture/ASL a part of an inclusive civil education in schools and spaces where audist and linguicist ideologies, practices, and policies waste opportunities.

The first step for educators to reduce the waste is to change their center of knowledge when they interact with Deaf students. In public schools, where 88 percent of all Deaf learners attend, the majority of nondeaf educators and peers have a different center of knowledge and experiences through aural/oral orientation. [14] They have little or no concept of Deaf ways and that has an impact on Deaf students and their educative experiences. Educators need to recognize, embrace, and utilize common practices and knowledges of Deaf students. In other words, educators need to recognize how Deaf epistemology is used by Deaf people.[15]

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[9] See T. Humphries, *Audism: The Making of a Word* (unpublished essay, 1975); R.C. Eckert & A.J. Rowley, "Audism: A Theory and Practice of Audiocentric Privilege," *Humanity & Society* 37, no. 2 (2013), 101–130; H. Lane, "Ethnicity, Ethics, and the Deaf-World," *Journal of Deaf Studies and Education* 10, no. 3 (2005), 291-310; H.D.L. Bauman, "Audism: Exploring the Metaphysics of Oppression," *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 9, no. 2, (year), 239-246.

[10] Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, "Linguicism," in *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, ed. C.A. Chapelle (online, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1460.

[11] Bauman, "Audism."

[12] Pirone, "Equity Literacy;" W.C. Hall, "What You Don't Know Can Hurt You: The Risk of Language Deprivation by Impairing Sign Language Development in

Deaf Children," *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 21, no. 5 (2017), 961-965.

[13] Paul Gorski, "Rethinking the Role of "Culture" in Educational Equity: From Cultural Competence to Equity Literacy," *Multicultural perspectives* 18, no. 4 (2016), 221-226, 226.

[14] National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2018 (Washington, D.C.:* U.S. Department of Education, *2019)*.

[15] See P.C. Hauser, A. O'Hearn, M. McKee, A. Steider, & D. Thew, "Deaf Epistemology: Deafhood and Deafness," *American Annals of the Deaf* 154, no. 5 (2010), 486-492; T.K. Holcomb, "Deaf Epistemology: The Deaf Way of Knowing," *American Annals of the Deaf* 154, no. 5 (2010), 471-478; O.E. Robinson & J. Henner,"The Personal is Political in The Deaf Mute Howls: Deaf Epistemology Seeks Disability Justice," *Disability & Society* 32,

Deaf people have "a different center of knowledge and experiences than non-deaf people" because they acquire knowledge and experience using their visual modality as they navigate through the world that relies primarily on audition.[16] Deaf epistemology is important in that it offers "an opportunity for people to understand Deaf ways of being in the world, of conceiving that world and their own place within it, both in actuality and in potentiality."[17]

De Clerck adds that there are multiple epistemologies within Deaf communities because Deaf people's knowledge and experiences are not homogenous; they have diverse identities, such as Black Deaf and DeafBlind, all of which shape their knowledge and experiences.[18] For associative learning to occur, educators de-center their aural/oral-based knowledge and incorporate/apply practices that promote Deaf ways of learning, interacting, and communicating.

For instance, during the pandemic, many Deaf students have struggled to engage in remote learning because most educators' center of knowledge did not alert them that their remote teaching methods and choices of online platform (i.e., Microsoft Teams) would render inequity due to their heavy reliance on sound. To de-center their knowledge, they might reach out to Deaf experts for consultation and observe/learn how Deaf teachers conduct remote learning (and in-person learning as well).

An observation like this will provide educators with valuable information, such as the use of nonverbal cues and eye gaze and how they promote relationality and associational learning. Smith and Ramsey found that knowing how to use nonverbal cues to direct Deaf students' attention is key to their learning and this practice is often used by Deaf parents to Deaf children.[19] In her phenomenological account of, among other things, leaving her hearing aids home, Teresa Blankmeyer Burke explores the "reciprocality" of "intimacy of the gaze" underscoring the associational function of a language structured and lived in ways that hearing and spoken language are not.[20] She suggests that while all children bond with their mothers, when hearing children begin to use language the "intensity" of the gaze shifts.[21] While she is clear that this is speculative and also that children who bond in ways other than through sight are not taken into this speculative account, her point is to raise questions about how an intense visual language brings particular qualities to relationality. Those examples represent the quotidian ways in which Deaf epistemology shapes experience and relationality. Such epistemologies ought not be wasted by educators' limited understanding.

The second step for educators to diminish the waste further is to dismantle their audist ideology that being Deaf is abnormal. The idea of normalcy emerged back in the nineteenth century when a group of scientists created a statistical measurement tool to identify an individual's ability, achievement, behavior, and intelligence compared to the average.[22] This tool produced

no. 9 (2017), 1416-1436; K.R. Cue, K.K. Pudans-Smith, J.L.A. Wolsey, S.J. Wright, & M.D. Clark, "The Odyssey of Deaf Epistemology," *American Annals of the Deaf* 164, no. 3 (2019), 395-422.

[16] Robinson & Henner,"The Personal is Political," 2; C.A. Padden & T. Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[17] Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2003), 19.

[18] G.A. De Clerck, "Deaf Epistemologies as a Critique and Alternative to the Practice of Science: An Anthropological Perspective," *American Annals of the Deaf* 154, no. 5 (2010), 435-446.

[19] D.H. Smith & C.L. Ramsey, "Classroom Discourse Practices of a Deaf Teacher Using American Sign Language," *Sign Language Studies* 5, no. 1 (2004), 39-62.

[20] Teresa Blankmeyer Burke, "Armchairs and Stares: On the Privation of Deafness," in *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity*, ed. H.L. Bauman and J.J. Murray (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press), 13.

[21] Burke, "Armchairs and Stares," 15.

[22] S. A. Annamma, A.L. Boelé, B.A. Moore, & J. Klingner, "Challenging the Ideology of Normal in

profound effects such that the public saw (and still see) people with disabilities, including being Deaf, as a deviance from the norm.[23] In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, educators working with Deaf students shared a similar perspective: "To be human was to speak. To sign was a step downward in the scale of being".[24]

This perspective still pervades today's education, but perhaps in a more subtle manner. Despite some subtle changes in bias, though, educators need to discontinue perceiving Deaf people as deficient and instead understand deafness as an aspect of biocultural diversity.[25] Biocultural diversity is a "system of interrelated and interdependent diversities: biological, cultural, and linguistic."[26] Being Deaf, sign language, and Deaf culture fit this construct. Deaf people are bioculturally diverse in that they have unique knowledge, worldviews, and cultural practices that are rooted in being Deaf and sign language—especially when they live in a world that relies on oral/aural ways of living. Learning about distinctive ways of living through a visual-kinetic lens will not only improve the quality of life, but also enhance one's understanding of what it means to be human.[27]

Once professionals recognize the biocultural status, they will take a step forward and start to recognize and learn how ASL and Deaf culture bring Deaf people together. Viewed through a Deweyan lens, Deaf Culture and ASL focus on associational ties among members of its own culture and language—thereby following Dewey's stress on education's role in developing and sustaining ties among people through learning. By understanding Deaf Culture and ASL, a bridge is created that formulates conjoint experience in a way that both reflects the experiences of the persons communicating and provides an invitation to associate through ASL. Consider again this Deweyan idea, now viewed through the example of communicating with a Deaf student or colleague: "To formulate requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see it, considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be got into such form that he can appreciate its meaning."[28]

Language development, reflection, and relationality, then, are key to understanding how educative associations are created and experienced. As Dewey puts it, social groups are preserved through transmission which "occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger."[29] We need to caution that hiring an ASL interpreter does not serve as a substitute for teachers who are able to build and facilitate associational ties. An ASL interpreter's main task is to facilitate communication between hearing teachers and Deaf pupils. If a teacher's approach is audist, linguicist, and/or phonocentric, then there's nothing the interpreter can do about it, because it is not the interpreter's job to redress the teacher's oppressive action. Also, it's not the interpreter's job to teach or create an environment that makes educative associations possible for Deaf pupils. This kind of task is actually for teachers, and they need formulated experience to understand what modifications they need to make in order to

Schools," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 17, no. 12 (2013), 1278-1294; Bauman and Murray, *Deaf Gain.*

[23] L.J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London, UK: Verso, 1995).

[24] Bauman, "Audism," 55.

[25] Bauman and Murray, *Deaf Gain.*

[26] Luisa Maffi, "Biocultural Diversity: The True Web of Life," in *Biocultural Diversity Toolkit*, ed. L. Maffi and O. Dilts (Salt Spring Island, Canada: Terralingua, 2014): 8.

[27] Maffi, "Biocultural Diversity;" Bauman and Murray, "Deaf Gain."

[28] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1923).

[29] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 5.

minimize any possible triggers of audism, linguicism, and phonocentrism.

By building on the connection among ASL/Deaf Culture, disability studies, and Deweyan philosophy, we stress the key role of language and culture in building educative associations and encouraging schools to understand the importance of Deaf Gain. We explore Dewey's contention that the best form of education works against the waste of isolation caused by institutional divisions and communicative limitations. We are particularly interested in how spaces and practices in schools create disabling conditions that a Deweyan approach can help justify.

Inclusion of ASL and Deaf Culture into Deweyan theorizing about disability can mitigate the individualized sense of waste others have discussed and also extend to mitigating the more social and political loss entailed by audist, linguicist, and phonocentric exclusions. In other words, by situating inclusion as inclusion of communication, culture, and association, we shift the conversation away from individualized inclusion to both a broadening of dominant culture's inclusivity *and* the cultivation of ASL and Deaf Culture as well as solidarities among diverse forms of embodiment. Creating both the opportunities for Deaf students to engage in associational learning in Deaf Culture/ASL and in dominant culture *and* providing non-Deaf students with opportunities to learn about Deaf Culture and learn through ASL can help bolster a more associational sense of Dewey's potential contributions to equitable and inclusive education.

Dewey opens the way to think about a diverse society needing its members to engage in acts of translation for one another in a reciprocal and respectful way that also recognizes differences will continue to exist—and as we'll explore in our conclusion, differences simply are.

Translation is not only the act of moving from one language to another but is also a way of situating one's sense of meaning in conversation with another person of the same language. So, for instance, centering Deaf students' education within Deaf culture also encourages acts of translation as Deaf students, in their native language, think about what they want to say to one another.

Dewey discusses how communication can connect people living at a distance and this may provide a way to think about communication connecting people across different forms of connection. He pushes consideration of the role of reflection in communication, noting the difference between face-to-face speech, letter-writing, or other technologically-mediated communication within a language (or the change of meanings over time and distance from experience).[30] His emphasis on understanding communication as a site of reflection and translation indicates that not only can communication be accomplished in divergent ways, it suggests as well the need for students to understand multiple modes of communication.

Rote learning of language, Dewey cautions, does not provide students with the ability to enable language use to grow beyond its initial instantiation.[31] Students need to know their native language in order to fully express their experiences to others in that language. In this sense, all language use is the act of translating. We do caution that there are different scales of such translation. Multilingualism, for instance, poses potentially different translational challenges than communication within a culture even though both acts of communication are accomplished with more effectiveness if speakers consider their audiences as they communicate.

However, nondeaf people, who learn ASL, do not know nor understand the lived experience of being Deaf, and so there are limitations

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[30] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 86.

[31] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 41.

to what translates across lived experiences can accomplish. Still, ensuring schools address linguistic diversity may nonetheless provide ways to establish respectful associate ties that understand that languages are sites of lived difference. The potential that this transmission is imperfect may help signal, too, that we expect to be associating across differences that we cannot bridge completely.

Dewey suggests this is something like a fusion of horizons: even if both parties do not fully change the deep context of their own individual experiences, they find some shift in the need to communicate across difference. This shift in understanding happens whether one is communicating with someone in one's culture or someone in another:

> To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience. One shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified. Nor is the one who communicates left unaffected. Try the experiment of communicating, with fullness and accuracy, some experience to another, especially if it be somewhat complicated, and you will find your own attitude toward your experience changing; otherwise you resort to expletives and ejaculations. The experience has to be formulated in order to be communicated. To formulate requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see it, considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be got into such form that he can appreciate its meaning.[32]

In short, insufficient attention to the communicative core of democracy creates the wasteful conditions that invite ableism, audism, and linguicism and eventually create exclusionary educational institutions. Preventing this waste requires looking at how assumptions about normative language use pervade schools.

So, one way to prevent this waste is to teach about and through linguistic diversity, encouraging schools to address Deaf students in their native language to continue the existence of Deaf culture as part of pluralist democracy. Dewey notes this necessary connection between communication and society, "Society not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication."[33] Thinking about disability in relationship to culture and language adds a cultural component to how educators frame associational inclusion, that is, forms of inclusion that bring pre-existing associations and cultures, like Deaf Culture, into school communities.

Deaf Gains

As a mode of conjoined experience, then, ASL/Deaf Culture, especially in the context of an audist-dominant culture and school system, has to: advocate for the centrality of communication, remind audist- and linguicist-dominant institutions that they exclude necessary forms of communication, and point out wasted opportunities to add to the flourishing of Deaf Culture/ASL.

Not only can Deaf people formulate experience once they have access to their own culture and language, but they can also capitalize upon their bio-culturally diverse qualities (of being Deaf) to make significant contributions to a larger society. This is known as Deaf Gain.[34]

Deaf Gain is an ontological/epistemological framework that recognizes being Deaf as a human gain and challenges the notion of normalcy that defines deafness as a hearing loss.[35] Being

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[32] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 6-7.
[33] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 6.

[34] Bauman & Murray, *Deaf Gain*.
[35] Bauman & Murray, *Deaf Gain*.

Deaf does not lead one to medical problems, social isolation, or incapability, but, rather, offers unique and valuable ways of being in the world. In addition, the Deaf have certain qualities that are superior to those of their nondeaf counterparts. There are numerous phenomena where Deaf people's qualities and ways have helped elevate humanity. This is the core of Deaf Gain.

There are three dimensions of Deaf Gain: Benefit, Contribute, and Ahead.[36] *Benefit* refers to what Deaf people gain from being Deaf. There are studies showing that being Deaf has several superior qualities in several domains such as cognition (visual processing, recognition, and memory), social psychology (human connections with people), and even mindfulness.[37] *Contribute* refers to what Deaf people offer to help elevate humanity. Sign language is one of these important phenomena—one that has a profound impact on the world. It provides linguists with a better understanding of the meaning of human languages (i.e., speech is no longer the sole form of human language), and it also creates an opportunity for nondeaf parents to communicate with their nondeaf babies at a much earlier age.[38] *Ahead* refers to such occurrences where being Deaf itself helps innovate the ways of living. Technologies (i.e., TV and Internet), architecture, literary expression, and the use of gesture are examples of *Ahead*.[39] These examples signify the gainfulness of being Deaf and ways of being in the world. This concept fits well with Dewey's understanding of the importance of associational ties in education and the key role that language plays in helping to name experience and reflect on it with others.

Stressing the need for associational inclusion of ASL/Deaf culture means recognizing both

that educational institutions must take responsibility for supporting the flourishing of students in ASL/Deaf culture (and thus ASL/Deaf culture itself)—and recognizing and encouraging, without any interference, students' experiences of Deaf Gain. In other words, schools need to not waste opportunities for Deaf students to understand who they are, what they are capable of, and how they can become a contributing citizen in their own right.

Further, shifting away from the wasteful practices in relationship to ASL/Deaf culture highlights what students bring to associative and educative processes. This kind of critical democratic pluralism recognizes being Deaf/Deaf Ways in terms of Deaf Gain—seeing both the biocultural factual capacities of Deaf people and seeing, too, that rethinking how people are valued in relationship to exclusionary norms is simply wasteful. Such critical associative communication opens possibilities for recognizing and valuing other forms of Deaf Gain embedded in intersectional differences within Deaf cultures.

For example, exploring and understanding differences in signed languages, including Black ASL[40] or queer ASL,[41] expand not only the analysis of communicative possibilities, but they also trace exclusions within communities. This could lead to new forms of Deaf Gain as a result. Moges, for instance, analyzes how the assimilationist shift to oralism away from manualism (sign language) was an attempt to push white Deaf students to pass—but as racist educators were disinterested in what was happening in Black Deaf schools, those schools continued to teach

[36] Bauman & Murray, *Deaf Gain*, 20.

[37] Bauman & Murray, *Deaf Gain*, 22.

[38] Bauman & Murray, *Deaf Gain*, 25.

[39] Bauman & Murray, *Deaf Gain*, 26-27.

[40] R.T. Moges, "'From White Deaf People's Adversity to Black Deaf Gain': A Proposal for a New Lens of Black Deaf Educational History," *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity* 6, no. 1 (2020), 69-99.

[41] N. DiMarco & M. Chella, "Nyle DiMaro & Chella Man Teach Us Queer Sign Language/Them" YouTube video, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HX0HGa-pok.

and develop sign language.[42] Black Deaf Gain, contends Moges, was enabled due to the exclusions of white supremacy as white Deaf schools moved towards assimilationist oralist practices. While Black Deaf school suffered from underfunding, in another sense they flourished outside of the constraints of white ableist assimilationism and were able to build distinctive Black ASL. As Moges puts it, "the paradox of disempowerment essentially nourished Black Deaf Gain."[43]

Sustaining Deaf Gain

In this final section, we call on schools to understand that they do not only need to provide, but also support, the sustainability of Deaf cultures, signed languages, and embodied knowledges for Deaf Gain to occur.

This means that schools need to create and sustain an environment where Deaf students learn and build on their natural languages, cultures, and ways of being in the world. With full and equal access to their languages, cultures, and Deaf epistemologies, they will begin to experience Deaf Gain. So, this suggests that Deaf Gain needs educators to facilitate, in the best Deweyan tradition, the growth of Deaf students in the context of such gain.

When Dewey theorized the need for growth in education, he suggested that students need to have experiences that will encourage them to develop more interactions with educative results. For Deaf students, this means they will need an ASL-centric and Deaf-centric space within public schools for their educative experiences to occur. We see this call as essentially associational in nature: we ask schools to understand that their cultures need to embrace Deaf ways/Deaf epistemologies; we ask that Deaf students are

educated in a manner that shows to them the importance of their role in school culture and that helps with the growth and flourishing of Deaf culture; and we hope that with attention to those necessary associations and forms of growth that come from the particular biocultural aspects of being Deaf, schools will understand the need to engage in more robust associations across and through difference.

While our discussion of sustaining Deaf Gain will necessarily focus on Deaf students, part of our call here is to see the necessity for a flourishing Deaf culture to help sustain those students who are already participating in that culture. If schools are intent on creating associational ties among its community members and creating ties to other communities, they need to first recognize that students come to schools already immersed in community-based practices. When schools waste the chance to recognize students' host community, and when they further waste the chance to embrace that cultural membership for educative purposes, Deaf students and students from other minoritized communities can easily see the school as distant, indifferent, and unempathetic. For those already culturally-identified Deaf students, this lack of recognition is part of long traditions of dismissing their home language as not a real language, and long traditions, too, of assuming Deaf people are not bringing resources to the school.

By making ASL and Deaf culture part of schools, schools need to create an ASL/Deaf-centric space that makes Deaf students, who are not yet part of the culture, feel welcomed to practice traditions to which they have not yet fully connected. Also, schools need to consider their redistribution of material, cultural, and social access and opportunity.[44] The foundation of this concept of redistribution is that every group

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[42] Moges, "From White Deaf People's Adversity to Black Deaf Gain."
[43] Moges, "From White People's Adversity," 83.

[44] P. Gorski, "Avoiding Racial Equity Detours," *Educational Leadership* 76, no. 7 (2019), 56-61.

should receive an equal amount of access and opportunity, with no one group getting more than others.

Gorski underscores that schools cannot base their redistributions on what they *have*—instead, they need to take a close look at what they *choose* to distribute.[45] In terms of Deaf culture in public schools, schools redistribute their access and opportunity by providing Deaf culture/ASL materials and instruction,[46] hiring Deaf educators as cultural/language models,[47] and creating a space for Deaf students to build on their language skills and socialize with Deaf peers.

It is important to recognize the significant distinction between access to an ASL-centric space and access to an ASL interpreting service. The former allows Deaf students to learn and build on their language skills while the latter is for Deaf students to engage in communication with nondeaf teachers and peers who do not know ASL. A space is considered ASL-centric when students learn ASL directly, communicate fully in ASL, and receive direct instructions on various subject matters in ASL. This is where the richness of associational learning occurs as "language also helps us develop the ability to find, formulate, and connect relationships between concepts, ideas, and things."[48] Without such spaces, Deaf students experience exclusions and costly wastes.

While there has been some discussion in political theory and philosophy of education about whether some schools ought to prioritize one form of culture over another[49] and whether certain cultures might fade with technological interventions like cochlear implants—as Walter Feinberg has argued[50]—this kind of assessment, maybe even unintentionally, signals the potential for liberal institutions to consider laying cultures to waste. Such arguments rely on an understanding of majority culture *not* being a constellation of many diverse cultures and associations and they also rely on schools as institutions *not* gaining from consideration of how participation in and knowledge of such cultures foster growth for everyone.

Though very reasonably concerned with the necessity of a right to exit from cultures that damage particular members, liberal theorists do understand the gains that cultures provide. To be more specific, when Feinberg considers Deaf culture and children, he specifies those born to hearing parents and thus those potentially disconnected from Deaf culture. So rather than arguing that they would benefit from contact with Deaf culture, which is our argument, he considers them not analogous to other forms of generationally-consistent identities. We think the conversation has shifted somewhat by now, although there remain debates over Deaf culture because of the potential for generational-inconsistency—for example, there is a tendency to link disability-related formation with queerness and other subjugated knowledges and communities.[51] But as Lane points out, there are many justifications for seeing Deaf culture as an

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[45] P. Gorski, "Avoiding Racial Equity Detours."

[46] Eckert & Rowley, "Audism."

[47] L. Simms, M. Rusher, J. F. Andrews, & J. Coryell, "Apartheid in Deaf Education: Examining Workforce Diversity," *American Annals of the Deaf* 153, no. 4 (2008), 384-395.

[48] J. Henner, "The Relationship Between American Sign Language Vocabulary and the Development of Language-based Reasoning Skills in Deaf Children" (EdD diss., Boston University, 2016); M. Coppola & J. Henner, "Language Is Good for Non-Verbal Reasoning, but Not Enough: Homesigners and Unschooled Spanish Speakers

on the Raven's Progressive Matrices" (Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut, nd).

[49] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[50] Walter Feinberg, *Common Schools, Uncommon Identities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[51] Harlan Lane, "Ethnicity, Ethics, and the Deaf-World," *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 10, no. 3 (2005), 291-310; L. Davis, "Postdeafness" presentation, Deaf Studies Think Tank at Gallaudet University, (2002).

ethnicity—even if some of its members are not able to fully participate in traditions and languages until they reach schools.[52] The crux of the matter is whether Deaf students have access to schools in which they can do so.

Solidarity of common experience and deeper understanding of long traditions of creativity in the face of exclusion can provide a way to build associational ties, both for those who have experienced exclusion and those with whom they tangentially share exclusions. In other words, the traditions of Deaf culture provide one model for thinking about biocultural membership and for making connections of solidarity with other students also navigating disabling institutions.

As Tara Yosso has pointed out in the context of race, communities bring wealth to schools and it is in the best interests of all to understand how those diverse forms of community wealth sustain students.[53] By providing Deaf students with a deeper understanding of their gains, moreover, they are encouraged to build their culture further and to recognize how the intersections of race and other diversities have also shaped that culture.[54]

Like Dewey's point about communication creating a situation in which one reflects upon what one is saying and considers, too, one's audience, this relationship between communication and cultural flourishing provides other kinds of gains. By communicating within one's culture, one understands more deeply what that membership means, with all the kinds of gains the culture helps transmit. Deaf Gain offers a sustainable strategy away from waste because it reassures students, even if they face disabling conditions and inequities in schools, that their Deaf forms of attentiveness to movement, face, and other details provide them with skills that nondeaf people lack—that their culture has

developed and continues to develop understandings of connection, creativity, and continuity.

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[52] Lane, "Ethnicity."

[53] Tara Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth," *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* 8, no. 1 (2005), 69-91.

[54] Moges, "From White People's Adversity."

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