



2016

## Managing Workers Who Are Deaf: A Phenomenological Investigation of Hearing Supervisors

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

MANAGING WORKERS WHO ARE DEAF:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF HEARING SUPERVISORS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK

BY  
HAYLEY STOKAR  
CHICAGO, IL  
AUGUST 2016

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my committee and to the faculty of the School of Social Work's doctoral program for their teaching and mentoring along the way. I would also be remiss not to thank my colleagues and superiors at JVS Chicago, who have been extraordinarily flexible and supportive in allowing me to pursue my degree. Much gratitude is owed to the Deaf and hearing restaurant workers who graciously lent me their time and shared their perspectives throughout the course of this study. Finally, very special thanks are owed to my cohort members: Michael, Kim and Sophia. Without you, I would have been lost.

For my parents, who cultivated a happy intellectual, and for  
Alex, who lovingly chose her.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the experience of hearing managers of Deaf employees in the restaurant sector, specifically as it relates to accommodation and social integration. Deaf workers who use American Sign Language differ from their hearing peers with regard to communication style, language choice, and need for accommodation. Responsibility for social integration and logistical accommodation falls largely on managers, who may be unfamiliar with the needs and capabilities of Deaf workers. The aim of this study is to generate knowledge about the accommodation and social integration experiences of managers with Deaf workers that can benefit those unfamiliar with these phenomena. The literature on employment issues for Deaf populations rarely includes the perspectives of hearing managers who supervise them. Managers are rarely equipped with the tools to help hearing and Deaf team members perform and integrate with others in optimal ways. Research on their experience is thus needed to inform the creation of such tools.

Using a phenomenological approach, this study applies stigma theory to frame issues of workplace accommodation and social integration. Hearing managers of various high-volume restaurants (N=6) and their Deaf employees (N=6), participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Site observation was also conducted at two of the restaurant locations from which data was collected. Data was analyzed through a systematic coding process, which both identified and compared themes in the experiences of managers and workers.

Managers displayed lack of knowledge about accommodation but did make concrete strides to facilitate social integration of Deaf workers. Managers often felt satisfaction with the performance of Deaf workers, though at times managers underestimated worker abilities. While minimal accommodation did occur regularly at restaurant sites, said accommodations were not considered optimal by Deaf employee participants. Regarding social integration and personal attitudes toward Deaf people, hearing managers reported almost no reluctance or interpersonal tension.

Despite minimal access to American Sign Language, Deaf workers expressed positive feelings toward both their managers and their places of employment, echoing, to some degree, the positive nature of the experience articulated by managers. Several expressed preference for different or more frequent accommodations (namely, American Sign Language interpretation), but results indicated few problems with social interaction or personal animosity.

Knowledge gained in this study has implications for current and prospective hearing managers, Deaf workers, and social workers/advocates who work in employment support. Managers can learn about accommodation needs and socialization patterns of Deaf workers through the experiences of managers who have been through the process. Deaf workers can gain a better understanding of the perspectives of managers as stakeholders, and service professionals can use information to design educational and supportive resources to help managers make changes and improvements in accommodation and social integration.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

To begin to understand issues of employment among Deaf adults in largely hearing settings, one must first become familiar with the national precedents established in recent decades by and for this population. Deaf adults have long struggled to secure and retain competitive employment in the United States. Disability has historically been equated with the inability to work or live independently (Hahn, 2005), and deaf people were viewed as objects of pity. This paradigm changed significantly, however, with the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's, which applied pressure to the federal government to create laws addressing barriers to entry in social and employment sectors for minority populations, including persons with disabilities. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and, most notably, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, were key pieces of subsequent legislation mandating accommodations in workplaces, educational institutions, and public settings.

While the focus of policy change and research is centered on deaf individuals themselves, hearing people who manage them as employees are not always included in the dialog. Reasonable accommodation is mandated, yet there is little formal guidance on what form accommodations take. Social integration is even more complex—nuanced attempts at effective interpersonal blending of deaf and hearing workers is not easily understood.

## Definitions

In order to understand fully the current circumstances and challenges of hearing managers and Deaf workers, it is important for clear definitions to be established. The following words will be used throughout the study and should be understood in the following ways:

“deaf”: The word deaf using a lowercase “d” denotes the audiological condition of not hearing, and is simply a physical descriptor (Padden & Humphries, 1988).

“Deaf”: The use of the word Deaf with a capital “D”, however, refers to a group of people who share both a culture and a language: American Sign Language (Christensen & Delgado, 1993; Padden & Humphries, 1988). Sheridan and White (2013) describe Deaf-identified individuals as people whose main social affiliations and loyalty networks lie within the Deaf community, and whose social identity has little to do with physiological hearing loss and everything to do with shared language and culture. Not all persons with hearing loss are members of the capital “D” Deaf community. Many persons with profound hearing loss, particularly those who lose their hearing later in life, do not use American Sign Language or espouse elements of Deaf culture.

“Hearing”: Hearing denotes the ability to perceive sound (merriam-webster.com, retrieved November 21, 2014), the absence of hearing loss. While individuals who are hearing do not necessarily share language or culture and do not note or value highly their common ability to hear sound, the label hearing is relevant in the context of deafness to distinguish such individuals from persons who are deaf and/or Deaf. With the exception of hearing people who have frequent social contact with American Sign Language users, such as friends, family, teachers, service providers, and occasionally coworkers, it is

uncommon for hearing people to know American Sign Language (Padden & Humphries, 1988).

“American Sign Language”: American Sign Language (ASL) is the official manual language used in the United States and Canada. Influenced by French educators in the late 18th Century, ASL was developed in the early 19th century. Though many believe it to be a simple collection of gestures or a manual code for the English language, ASL is a distinct language, with its own language, syntax and vocabulary (Padden & Humphries, 1988).

“Reasonable accommodation”: Reasonable accommodation is defined by Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) as: “modifications or adjustments to the work environment, or to the manner or circumstances under which the position held or desired is customarily performed, that enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of that position.” Accommodation is applicable to and important for many types of workers, not just Deaf individuals. This term will be further operationalized for the specific context of this study.

“Social integration”: Social integration as a formalized concept was first introduced by French sociologist Emile Durkheim. He defined it as the means through which people interact, validate, and accept each other within a community or specific social context (Durkheim, 1897). Modern social scientists (Link & Phelan, 1995; Berkman, Glass, Brissette & Seeman, 2000) consider social integration to be an integral part of mental health, both in and outside of the workplace. For the purposes of this study, *the workplace* may be considered a social community. As such, this term will also be further operationalized for the specific context of this study.

### **Study Purpose**

This study endeavors to understand issues of accommodation and integration in everyday working life for hearing managers of Deaf employees in high volume restaurants. The central research question of the proposed study is: What are the experiences of hearing restaurant managers supervising Deaf workers? The primary aims of the proposed study are:

- (a) To understand better the experiences of hearing managers of Deaf employees in the processes of accommodation and integration in general work life.
- (b) To compare the experiences of managers with those of Deaf employees in the process of accommodation and integration in general work life.
- (c) To incorporate knowledge and insights gained into the development of resources for hearing managers, Deaf workers, and social workers serving as advocates in this context.

Knowing more about the lived experiences of hearing managers of Deaf workers related to social integration and accommodation is the first step in the development of resources meant to improve these processes. Where workplace challenges in either area exist, it is critical for managers, employees, and social workers to have access to these resources for guidance. Added knowledge about managing members of this low-incidence population can make the experience less daunting, and can promote more and better inclusion of Deaf individuals in the American workforce.

## Study Overview

This is a qualitative study that aims to understand the accommodation and social experiences of hearing managers of Deaf workers. Research took place in the restaurant sector of the Chicago metropolitan area, which is known to employ entry level Deaf individuals. The central research question was considered from a constructivist standpoint, and was viewed through the lens of Stigma Theory. Empirical phenomenology was chosen as the investigative approach (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas 1994). Methodology and analysis adhered to the traditional components of this approach. The research design was reviewed and approved by the institutional review board at the researcher's university. Data collection took place between June 2015 and January 2016.

Confidential interviews with hearing managers (N=6) and Deaf workers (N=6) were conducted, though the focus of the study is centered on the experience of hearing managers. An interview protocol was developed with guidance from empirical literature and review of doctoral committee members. Recorded interviews with hearing managers were conducted and transcribed in English. Interviews with Deaf workers were conducted in their native language, American Sign Language, then translated and transcribed in English. Interviewing members of both populations allowed for a more dynamic examination of the management experience, and took into account inherent subjectivity of the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Husserl, 1925). Site observation was also employed as a method of data collection to triangulate data (Creswell, 1998).

Data analysis entailed open and axial coding that occurred concurrently with data collection, as prescribed by Colaizzi (1978). First, codes were developed progressively as initial interviews were transcribed, and when they arose from later interviews, the

researcher returned to previously coded transcripts to incorporate new codes. A second cycle of axial coding was also performed to connect themes that arose in interconnected codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Clusters of meaning were developed from identified themes. After data collection was complete, the researcher had an auditor familiar with qualitative methodologies recode two transcript samples for inter-rater reliability. Discussion and implications were drawn and presented to reflect on the research and propose recommendation for further research.

The role of the researcher was carefully considered. The researcher is at once a hearing person and an advocate of Deaf individuals, which brings strengths and limitations to the study design. Although her professional role gives her greater access to the sample population, it also fosters inherent biases. Subjective differences between Deaf and hearing worldviews, as well as the researcher's role with both identity groups, were addressed throughout as needed.

### **Organizational Outline**

The following study is organized into eight chapters: Introduction, Background and Significance, Review of the Literature, Methods, Analysis and Findings, Discussion, Limitations, and Implications and Suggestions for Future Research. After a discussion of current employment issues for Deaf individuals, a critical review of relevant studies and current gaps in the literature will provide a context for current research. Theoretical frameworks will be presented and methods of sampling, collecting, and managing data will be articulated. Processes of coding, analysis, reliability testing, and key findings will be shared. Finally, findings, limitations, and suggestions for further research will be discussed.



## CHAPTER TWO

### BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The United States bears a legacy of discrimination against persons with disabilities and persons who are Deaf that has brought about notable disadvantages in the area of employment. The following section discusses labor statistics relating to these populations and the emerging need for progress in the area of inclusion. Lack of employer knowledge about accommodation as a means of inclusion is highlighted as a notable variable impacting progress.

#### **Disability and Employment**

Approximately 56.7 million people — 19% of the U.S. population — identified as having some sort of disability in 2010, with more than half of them reporting severe disability, according to a comprehensive report on this population released by the US Census Bureau in 2012. The U.S. Department of Labor reported that as of 2016, unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 10.8%, compared with 4.9% for nondisabled individuals. Anything from physical limitations to sensory impairment to cognitive, developmental, or learning deficits can be considered a disability. Chronic medical and psychiatric conditions can also now be legally categorized as disabilities (Social Security Administration, 2014).

Most contemporary conceptions of deafness as disability acknowledge that there is a physical component to limitations in addition to a social/interpersonal one. Beyond the actual disability, there is a reaction of nondisabled individuals to that disability

grounded in the context of a social environment (Ajzen, 2005; Backenroth, 1995; Copeland, 2007; Gething & Wheeler, 1992; Ju, Robert, & Zhang, 2013; Nikolarazi, 2005). As such, a 2012 United Nations report defined disability as “the result of the interaction between the individual functioning and environment when linked to a health condition” (ECLAC, 2012).

All disabilities have potential to elicit misunderstandings or unfavorable social responses, including deafness. While often considered members of a larger disabled population due to inability to hear, people who are culturally Deaf consider deafness to be a natural, normal characteristic (Padden & Humphries, 1988) and assert that the only thing rendering them “disabled” is difficulty of interaction in a predominantly hearing society. Though the promotion of Deaf culture as separate from disability has enhanced the esteem and identity of Deaf and hard of hearing people, there are complications with separating deafness from disability entirely, as many Deaf individuals still depend on disability-based legal entitlements (Shapiro, 1993). While this complex overlap has a bearing on large-scale employment policy, it is mentioned in this context merely for definitional purposes.

### **Deafness and Employment**

The total population of persons with hearing loss is difficult to measure. The Center for Disease Control’s National Health Interview Survey (2014) estimates that 15.8% of Americans have “hearing trouble.” According to 2013 Census data, there are an estimated of 11,097,417 individuals in the United States who have difficulty hearing. According to the Gallaudet Research Institute (2014), however, only 552,000 Americans cannot hear or understand speech, and only a fraction of this population uses American

Sign Language as their native and primary language. By virtue of being a small minority, few Deaf adults work in contexts where managers themselves are Deaf and/or use American Sign Language. Most work in settings where they are minorities amidst a hearing majority (Backenroth, 1997; Foster & MacLeod, 2003).

Even with legislation mandating accommodation, significant unemployment of deaf individuals and problems with employment in hearing settings remain. As of 2011, only 47.9% of deaf adults were employed, compared with a 70% employment rate for hearing adults (United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2011). The average income of deaf adults was \$4,000 less than the general population (ibid.). It can be reasonably argued that the ADA has fallen short of its aims of parity through accommodation (Maroto & Pettinicchio, 2014), and Deaf/deaf populations are aware of the deficit. In September of 2015, Deaf protestors marched on the capitol in Washington, D.C., asserting that 2015 unemployment rates for deaf individuals were even higher than reported, and were fueled by discrimination and marginalization that violated ADA legislation (Callis, 2015).

### **Deaf Workers Under Hearing Management**

Despite good intentions of companies and their managers, the needs of Deaf workers are not always met. Insufficient accommodation and inappropriate treatment of workers with disabilities may stem from a pervasive lack of knowledge on the part of employers (Mishra, 1995). Foster (1992, 2003) has noted that even those employers who understand laws about accommodating deafness may be selective in their adherence to them, making accommodations that are inexpensive and most similar to the

communication modes of hearing people, while avoiding accommodations that seem more different, expensive, and daunting. Discrimination complaints against hearing employers by Deaf workers abound (Bowe, McMahon, Chang, & Louvi, 2005), perpetuating the problem.

For these and other reasons, there is a need to investigate the experiences and perspectives of hearing managers of Deaf workers, who comprise half of the working relationship. While a great deal of research examines the direct experiences of people who are Deaf (Backenroth, 1997; Bowe et al., 2005; Hua, Anderzén-Carlsson, Widén, Möller, & Lyxell, 2015; Moore, 2011; Rosengreen & Saladin, 2010), the current study is unique because it addresses an under-researched area: the experiences of hearing managers working with Deaf people in the culinary workplace.

### **The Need for Advancement of Knowledge**

As managers make up the other side of a worker-manager relationship, often creating the market of opportunities for Deaf workers, an understanding of the work environment is incomplete without their perspectives (Ju et al., 2013). Perceptions of hearing loss have been shown to impact hiring policies and employment rates on the macro level (Bowe et al., 2005; McFarlin, Song & Sonntag, 1991; Robert & Harlan, 2006), and are just as important on the mezzo level. In order to fill the gap in the literature and gain insight on workplace supervision dynamics, exploration of the accommodation and social integration experiences of hearing managers of Deaf workers is warranted.

Knowledge gained from this investigation has implications for hearing managers, Deaf workers, and social work professionals tasked with linking these two groups.

Through understanding the benefits and challenges experienced by hearing employers, changes in workplace structure and dynamics can be made to enhance effectiveness of work, improve relationships, increase ADA adherence on both local, state, and federal levels, and influence other hearing employers who are considering hiring Deaf workers.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Workplaces can be valuable arenas for the study of social interaction and power structures, particularly when diverse combinations of persons (i.e., Deaf and hearing individuals) are involved. Research in the area of hearing managers of Deaf workers in recent years has been sparse. The following chapter reviews discusses the theoretical framework chosen for this study. Next, the chapter reviews current published studies on the subject matter studies on general behaviors of restaurant managers, management of diverse workforces, and manager attitudes toward disability and deafness, and employer attitudes toward disability and deafness. Finally, gaps in extant literature are identified.

#### **Theory in Research**

Though various theories may reasonably be considered applicable to the central questions of this study (see Appendix C), this project uses *stigma theory* (Goffman 1963; Link & Phelan, 2001) to inform methods and analysis. Through identification and analysis of personal narratives about perception and interaction with populations marked by difference, the study also maintains the openness and subjectivity characteristic of the constructivist framework.

### **Meta-theoretical Framework**

The central research question was viewed through a constructivist lens: What are the experiences of hearing restaurant managers supervising Deaf workers?

Constructivism asserts that reality is a co-creation of the individual person and the external stimuli the person perceives (Granvold, 1996). It assumes there are no universal truths or neutral facts and that there are “as many realities as there are perceivers of reality” (Cooper & Lesser, 2008, p. 177). The constructivist framework is an ontological and epistemological tool for understanding social phenomena (Silverman, 2006). This framework is useful for examining interpersonal relationships—agreements and disagreements, uniformity and diversity, harmony and struggle. Constructivism asserts that people experience the world differently and as such will behave differently from each other in most situations. Following such a rationale, hearing people may not—and often do not—understand the perceptions and lived realities of people who are Deaf.

### **Stigma Theory**

Stigma is the relegation of people with perceptible differences as deviant, or “other” (Goffman, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2001). While ‘perceptive differences’ often manifest as physical characteristics, stigma itself is purely socio-cultural, and above all, interpretive (Major & O’Brien, 2005; Yang et al., 2007). For example, in relation to persons who are Deaf, there is nothing *inherently* strange or deviant about the condition of hearing loss unless the person with the condition is surrounded by a social world that uses speech and hearing to communicate. A group of Deaf people who share the characteristic of deafness do not stigmatize each other; the characteristic becomes stigmatic only when it becomes distinct and strange in a hearing person milieu. People

have a predisposition to avoid people who are different, or to make judgments based on limited information (Gergen, McNamee, & Barrett, 2001). Prejudicial thinking lends itself to categorization, which is then used for discrimination.

Disability is a common target for stigmatization (Robert & Harlan, 2006; Southall, 2011). Persons with disabilities have physical, cognitive, sensory, or social characteristics that are not typical—characteristics that are not considered “normal”. Before nondisabled people have the opportunity to assess and assimilate how they relate to people with disabilities, they default to their automatic cognitive processes (Gething & Wheeler, 1992; Hewstone, 1989).

This type of attributional discrimination occurs in social and professional contexts. In the employment sector, application, interview, and training processes tend to be brief—an employer meets a candidate, assesses her characteristics, then meets more candidates. A manager delegates responsibilities to her employees, explaining tasks under the constraint of time limits, urgency for results, or in the case of Deaf workers, communication barriers. In these circumstances, open-minded consideration of worker potential may be challenging—decisions need to be made with immediacy, and over-simplified assumptions are the most available tool for decision-making (Arrow, 1971; Hewstone, 1989; Link & Phelan, 2001).

Disability scholars distill the aforementioned phenomena by asserting that persons without disabilities have fundamental trouble understanding the experience of persons with disabilities (Shapiro, 1994). Applied to Deaf populations, this idea raises significant questions about the treatment of Deaf workers by non-Deaf managers in the workplace. Theorists studying stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001; Southall, 2011) assert that persons with



hearing loss or disabilities are conscious of stereotypes and may feel devalued in the workplace. In a case study of workplace treatment and bullying of disabled workers (Vickers, 2009) several participants stated that stereotypes about disability, despite little evidence supporting them, continued to influence how they were treated by coworkers without disabilities.

As deafness is a low-prevalence disability with which most hearing people have little experience, people with low levels of previous contact with disabled persons are more likely to experience discomfort when they do encounter them (Gething & Wheeler, 1992). Low-incidence characteristics such as deafness are thus understood in terms of how they are different from high-incidence characteristics, namely, the ability to hear. Stigma theory allows the researcher to explore how each group perceives the other.

Generally, and in the workplace, the phenomena of *accommodation* and *social integration* can be understood through the lens of stigma theory. Accommodation is more of a straightforward action than a nuanced social interaction, but it nonetheless involves members of a majority (i.e., hearing managers) making decisions on behalf of low-incidence minority individuals (i.e., Deaf workers) based on what they understand. Managers may use stereotypes or assumptions in ascertaining communication needs and abilities (Altieri, Pisoni & Townsend, 2011). For example, they may assume a worker reads lips and does not require an ASL interpreter for a one-on-one meeting when that is not the case. Managers may also over-accommodate based on stigma and preconceived ideas. Based on the common but unfortunate assumption that Deaf persons are inherently less capable of certain tasks, managers may limit the scope of a worker's responsibilities,

giving more hours and duties to a hearing colleague who is not as different or ‘deviant’ from the manager herself/himself.

Stigma theory can also help to explain social integration and the challenges that accompany it. Most stigma scholars regard stigma as a social construction, a way to grapple with and comprehend the complexities inherent in groups (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Like an ethnic group, the Deaf community uses a different language and ascribes to different cultural norms. As such, social integration challenges between Deaf and hearing workers may resemble social integration challenges between racial or ethnic groups. Due to both feelings of affinity and wariness of discrimination, people have a tendency to separate themselves organically by identity groups in school and work settings (Ramiah, Schmid, Hewstone, & Floe, 2015; Roberts, 2010; Tatum, 1997). If they feel invalidated for any reason (i.e., a breakdown of communication through language or social cues), they will turn to those who understand their unique perspective. The obverse of identifying with people who are similar is identifying dissimilar people as ‘other’.

### **Causal Attribution Theory**

One branch of stigma theory is causal attribution theory (Cox & Beier, 2014; Hewstone, 1989; White, 1989), which is helpful in understanding how non-disabled people perceive and understand people with disabilities. Initially explained by Fritz Heider (1944), causal attribution theory deals fully with the perception of the behavior of other people. It asserts that the meaning of one human attribute arbitrarily colors another human attribute. This process is largely cognitive, relating to the natural, expeditious way the human brain processes information. Kelley (1973) notes that causal attribution theory centers on the information people use to make inferences and answer causal questions.

That information can be drawn from both common and stigmatized characteristics. Observable features such a smile or a staggering limp indeed conveys information, but is not always interpreted accurately by the observer. Benign in its motivation—to make sense of the world (Reeder, 2013)—attribution can lead to unnecessary social discrimination.

A prime area where inferential processing leads to inaccurate attributional assumptions is disability. While people may have a disability and a deficit in a certain area, causal attribution posits that people assume the former is *responsible* for the latter (White, 1989). For example, Cox and Beier (2014) had supervisors in various industries (N=203) complete evaluations for older workers with items measuring causal attribution tendencies, and found that poor performance was largely attributed to age, rather than other relevant characteristics. A ‘reason’ for behavior was given based on what was the most observable.

Causal attribution theory is particularly helpful in understanding the dynamics between people with notably different levels of social power (Overbeck, Tiedens, & Brion, 2006). Members of a more powerful majority attribute stereotypical traits of a minority group as dispositional; i.e., that behavioral trait is just the ‘nature’ of all members of the minority group (Sekaquaptewa & Espinoza, 2004). The cognitive tendency toward causal attribution takes situational/environmental variables out of the picture, and leads persons in power to assume and reinforce minority stereotypes.

Causal attribution can occur on interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, and societal levels (Hewstone, 1989). It explains the way biases and assumptions permeate social relationships between two people, and also between two socially distinct groups.

Because of its effective application on both micro and mezzo levels, it is helpful for viewing and describing the interactions both of Deaf people in a larger, hearing society, and for describing interactions between a Deaf individual and a hearing individual unfamiliar with the physical and cultural elements of Deafness.

In the context of this study, managers and workers have different social roles and different amounts of social power. An employer evaluating an employee with a hearing aid may assume that the person does not possess the communication abilities necessary to perform a job function. Causal attribution uses the perception of one disability to create a cognitive shortcut to the conclusion that a person is unable to perform tasks unrelated to that disability.

### **A Review of Previous Research**

The following sections will review relevant literature from recent years, before providing a critique of said literature and identifying gaps.

Hua et al. (2015) published a recent study examining working life among workers with mild-moderate aided hearing impairment. This population differs significantly from Deaf populations both in their culture and their ability to use/understand spoken English. There is, nonetheless, clear relevance to the current study. Workers from various sectors with mild-moderate hearing loss (n=15) participated in phenomenologically designed oral interviews on their conceptions of difficulties at work, communication strategies, work facilitation, and impacts on daily life. Results indicated that hearing loss indeed causes significant challenges in the work environment such as difficulty with group interactions, trouble working in places with ambient noise, constant guessing and errors in speechreading, and the tendency to avoid challenging listening situations, whether social

or task-based. Interestingly, strategies and solutions proposed by the authors focus on assistive technology and auditory rehabilitation for workers themselves, rather than modifications or accommodations on the part of workplace managers.

Susan Foster's study, *Working with deaf people: Accessibility and accommodation in the workplace* (1992), stands out as a singular example of literature focusing on the lived experiences of hearing managers supervising Deaf workers. In Foster's study, interviews (N=20) were conducted with hearing managers of Deaf professionals who graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. To balance and contextualize the perspectives of the managers, research also included a discussion group of three Deaf college graduates who had at one point been the only Deaf members of their company. The goals of the study are four-fold: (1) To let managers of Deaf workers know they are not alone, (2) to provide strategies for overcoming communication barriers, (3) to help hearing managers understand the perspectives of deaf and Deaf persons, and (4) to provide information about available resources.

While Foster's study (1992) focused on office professionals with similar levels of education, it has direct implications for the current study of restaurant managers and workers, as it is hypothesized that many of the same social phenomena occur with hearing and Deaf persons in the restaurant context. The spirit of the current study is well-represented by the following excerpt from Foster's book:

There is often a wide gap between the ideal and the real...supervisors may have good intentions, but may be unaware of how to proceed. They may have never met a deaf person before, let alone worked with a deaf person. If they are to develop a positive and productive working relationship with deaf employees, they need information and support. (p. 4)

As with Foster's research, the hope is that a primary outgrowth of the current study will be knowledge and resources for managers unfamiliar with Deaf populations, and for social workers brokering relationships between hearing managers and Deaf workers. Resources can be disseminated not only through academic publications, but through specifically tailored literature and training for workers in relevant sectors.

Studies about managerial attitudes toward disability are largely quantitative and hiring-stage focused (Capella, 2003; Copeland, 2007; Southall, Jennings, & Gagné, 2011), and also do not focus on Deaf individuals specifically. Additionally, few of the studies mentioned focused on managers as individuals with opinions and knowledge gaps separate from those of the larger company or restaurant chain that employs them. Hearing managers, like their Deaf employees, are individuals rather than extensions of corporate policies; thus, it is important to study their daily lived experiences.

### **Perspectives and Decision Making Among Restaurant Managers**

In literature from the hospitality industry, as well as vocational and social science fields, specific research has been conducted on the perspectives and behaviors of restaurant managers (Hayes & Weathington, 2007; Larsen, Ogaard, & Marnburg, 2005, Sy, Tram & O'Hara, 2006).

Enz (2004) used grounded theory in an exploration of the top most troubling problems for contemporary restaurant managers. Open-ended surveys (N=448) were distributed to members of the National Restaurant Association. By a significant margin, the most significantly reported problems were issues of human resource management. Managers felt that finding qualified, dependable, skilled staff who will not quit shortly

after hire is the biggest challenge. Enz proposed both redesigning jobs and providing training for managers as potential strategies for addressing restaurant staffing needs.

The perspectives of managers and their employees are at times inter-related. Dipietro and Pizam (2008) measured feelings of work alienation among both managers and hourly employees at 595 quick service restaurants in the Midwestern United States. Using mailed surveys, the researchers statistically analyzed variables relating to role and feelings of social isolation and found that reports of isolation among hourly employees are higher than those of managers, though managers also report feeling isolated. Controlling for technology, time worked, and nature of position (i.e., kitchen, wait staff, host, etc.), management styles and practices were the most significant variables impacting alienation among hourly workers.

### **Restaurant Managers and Diverse Workforces**

Research in the field of hospitality has seen an uptick in studies on dynamics between managers and workers with diverse backgrounds. Differences based on ethnicity and differences based on disability status can often bring about the same challenges. Wright (2007) interviewed 50 ethnic minority and immigrant workers in England about their experiences working in the restaurant industry. In addition to comments about low wages and long hours, many participants cited race and language discrimination as significant problems. A waitress from Korea noted that the head chef of her restaurant demonstrated impatience and anger with servers who didn't speak English well. The researcher noted, however, that immigrant workers tend to demonstrate a pragmatic acceptance of the details of their job (p. 82), not using discrimination as a reason to leave their positions.

Abdullah, Ingram, and Welsh (2009) examined Indian immigrant restaurant managers' perceptions of workers, giving specific attention to the influence of culture and socialization in how they feel their workers help the restaurant function. Site observation, job shadowing, and manager interviews were conducted at 18 Indian restaurants in Edinburgh, Scotland. Researchers aimed to learn how managers "act, see, perceive, interpret, experience and construct meaning into their working lives" (p. 118). Managers typically preferred workers from their home country to non-Indian workers, or even to the British-aculturated children of Indian immigrants. They felt that others from their home country understood the culture of top-down management better, and perceived these immigrants as harder workers. Managers did not like the time and monetary costs of training persons unfamiliar with the operations of traditional Indian restaurants. The authors connect this to a general lack of willingness to train—yet ready willingness to stigmatize—staff from different backgrounds.

Barrett (2006) completed a linguistic anthropological study at a Mexican restaurant in Texas, studying the function of Spanish in an Anglo-owned and run establishment. As a participant observer (bartender), he noted frequent instances of non-Spanish speaking managers using mock Spanish or English with employees who spoke only Spanish, expecting the employees to understand. If a communication breakdown occurred, the Spanish speakers were usually held responsible. Managers did not seem aware of the shortfalls in communication they were perpetuating with Spanish speaking workers. The workers themselves, however, employed effective coping mechanisms, including asking for more extensive training, seeking clarification from senior Spanish speaking employees, and enlisting the assistance of bilingual coworkers.



A common thread among these study findings is the idea that, whether or not it is intentional, identity differences impact work life. Ethnicity and language, in these cases, was overt. Similarly, Deaf culture and American Sign Language can impact work life, but are associated with an even lower-incidence population. More research is needed to explore the Deaf community within the context of a diverse workforce. While some social needs may mirror those of ethnic minorities, others may more closely resemble the social needs of disabled populations, and some issues in the workplace may even be unique to Deafness.

### **Restaurant Managers and Attitudes Toward Disability**

During the first 10 years after the ADA was enacted, approximately 8,936 allegations of employment discrimination were filed by individuals with hearing loss (Bowe et al., 2005), serving as one of many reminders that legislation is not a panacea for social inequities. Discrimination, in these cases, took place on the micro level—allegedly impacting individual workers. Prior to the ADA, the general sentiment about workers with disabilities was that they presented diminished work capacity coupled with added time commitments and costs. Research aimed at changing this perception was still in its beginning stages, and is still an ongoing endeavor today. Gruenhagen (1982) hypothesized that fast food restaurant managers' attitudes toward intellectually disabled workers would improve with increased workplace exposure to this type of employee. Fast food settings were considered an ideal arena for both disability employment and research on disability employment, as the work is entry level, standardized, and repetitive.

Surveys were distributed to managers at 12 locations of six different fast food chain restaurants, and in-person interviews with managers were also conducted. Results

indicated that (a) most managers had had minimal contact with people with intellectual disabilities, (b) these managers felt people with intellectually disabilities should be employed competitively, yet (c) despite this opinion, the same managers were uncertain about whether they themselves would hire intellectually disabled workers. To test the original hypothesis, respondents were divided into three groups: Those that had hired intellectually disabled workers, those who simply knew intellectually disabled workers, and those who had no professional exposure to intellectually disabled workers. It was found that those who had more exposure to disabled employees had more positive perceptions of them, confirming the initial hypothesis. The study has potential implications for other disability populations impacted by stigma.

In the same year as the passing of the ADA, Sylvia (1990) promoted workers with disabilities as “the restaurant industry’s answer to high turnover” (p. 14). Her observations suggested that these employees work harder and bring an element of enthusiasm to the workplace. This notion was confirmed by several national studies published shortly after the ADA’s passing (Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, & Levy, 1991; Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, & Levy, 1992; McFarlin et al., 1991). Dispelling the idea that workers with disabilities present a liability or require expensive accommodations, Sylvia asserted that most accommodations are a matter of creativity rather than of monetary expense. Though over a decade has passed since these studies were completed, the idea of disabled workers as advantageous has not permeated mainstream work culture, nor have contemporary studies been asking the questions of the post-ADA passage years.

Several studies in more recent years have examined manager attitudes toward employees with disabilities in the restaurant and hospitality sector. Paez (2010) examined

management knowledge about training issues for employees with disabilities. Using survey and interview data, the study assessed both general knowledge and attitudes toward people with disabilities and training methods and topics used with employees with disabilities. In general, managers had neutral positions toward workers with disabilities, though there were significant concerns about increased costs for training. Interestingly, while managers presumed there would be challenges and costs associated with training employees with disabilities, almost no participants made any mention of the ADA.

An Australian study by Smith, Webber, Graffam and Wilson (2004) assessed employer satisfaction with disabled and non-disabled employees. Variables included speed of work, accuracy of work, and workplace climate. Hospitality managers comprised 13.7% of the total sample (N=656), all of whom employed at least one person with a disability. In general, managers felt less satisfied with employees with disabilities based on each of the three performance variables. This study did not allow for greater detail to be provided through open-ended questions, observation, or interviewing, but speaks to speed and accuracy as notable areas of concern for restaurant managers.

Geng-qing and Qu (2003) looked at the integration process of persons with disabilities into the food service workplace. Seeking to examine the relationship between attitudes toward disability and hiring, they administered a questionnaire to members of the Oklahoma Restaurant Association (N=70). Eighty-five percent of the respondents had hired persons with disabilities, and eight of the 10 respondents who had never done disability hiring asserted they had never had a person with a disability apply. This study found manager attitudes toward workers with disabilities to be generally positive. A positive, significant relationship was also found between the probability of hiring persons

with disabilities and positive feelings toward their work performance and accommodations.

### **Restaurants and Management of Deaf Workers**

Only two studies on restaurant management perceptions of deaf workers were identified. Zahari, Yusoff, Jamaluddin, Radzi, and Othman (2010) collected survey data from deaf and hard of hearing graduates of the hospitality certificate program at the Polytechnic Johor Bahru, in Malaysia (N=123). Despite holding a certificate, fewer than 36% of the participants were actually employed in the hospitality industry, and were primarily in back-of-house or cleaning positions. This study points out not just unemployment issues, but also *under*-employment issues—another challenge for Deaf workers. The general sentiment of the deaf and hard of hearing participants was one of rejection and exclusion in their industry on account of communication challenges.

In Friedner's (2013) ethnographic study of Deaf workers at a popular Indian coffee chain called Café Coffee Day, both managers and workers were interviewed and observed in the workplace. Managers and business representatives lauded Deaf workers for their level of focus, and also their stability and loyalty. They also noted that the presence of diverse staff conveys a caring image for the company. In contrast, however, Deaf workers stated that they felt stagnant in their roles, with little hope of promotion. They also noted that there is typically only one Deaf worker at each café, which can lead to feelings of isolation.

### **Employer Attitudes Toward Disability**

If there is one thing upon which all literature on disability and employment can agree, it is that people with disabilities are under-represented in the workforce. The

resulting problem with this under-representation is that non-disabled employers are under-exposed to workers with disabilities. Gething and Wheeler (1992) found that people with lower levels of previous contact with people with disabilities are more likely to experience discomfort when they do encounter them. The authors developed and validated the Interaction with Disabled Persons (IDP) Scale, suggesting that some factors influencing individuals' discomfort include fear of the unknown, guilt about one's own lack of a disability, and general aversion to weakness. It is no wonder, then, that employers with no exposure to people with disabilities have nothing to blunt the effect of the factors listed above, and will use what they "understand" about disability to shape their hiring and management decisions.

Blackburn (2002) surveyed human resources personnel in Houston, Texas (N=71) to examine the relationships between employers' attitude toward people with disabilities, awareness of ADA, and willingness to comply with accommodation laws. It was found that these factors were highly correlated with each other; namely, increased knowledge about disability and the ADA leads to more positive attitudes toward candidates with disabilities. This study focused on the hiring stage, rather than regular employment, however, and did not include managers and supervisors.

Jasper and Waldhardt (2013) conducted a secondary analysis of employment statistics in the American hospitality industry and found pre-existing beliefs among employers to be the most significant barrier to hire. Chan et al. (2010) also found that demand-side factors like management attitudes and expectations accounted for a significant portion of the variance in employment of people with disabilities. This study surveyed 138 line managers and human resource workers, and found that, while

managers have neutral to positive views about people with disabilities, they feel hesitant about hiring them. Participants indicated that limited knowledge about disability and the level of productivity of disabled workers was a key factor in their reticence. Copeland's (2007) survey-based study in Colorado Springs on the same issue (N=178) reinforced the same conclusion: Employers express positive attitudes toward people with disabilities, but when pressed about actual hiring, withdraw their enthusiasm.

Despite this common stance from employers, there is little empirical evidence supporting the notion that workers with disabilities have lower work performance. A 30-year study from DuPont found that employees with disabilities exhibited above-average records in job performance, attendance, and safety (Davies Kent, 2003). Hernandez et al. (2008) state that despite the fact that workers with disabilities are on par with non-disabled workers in most categories for job performance evaluation, they still maintain lower rates of hiring and job retention.

### **Employer Attitudes Toward Deafness**

The issues encountered by the larger disability community do not necessarily overlap with the unique challenges faced by workers who are Deaf. Particularly because they do not typically use speech, there is a tendency for people to assume Deaf people have a more serious deficit that precludes them from being able to work (Backenroth, 1995; Bowe, 2005). Whereas accommodation for other workers with disabilities, such as those using wheelchairs, may seem obvious to employers, a meta-analysis by Dowler and Walls (1996) demonstrated that not only are employers largely unaware of assistive technologies for Deaf workers, Deaf people themselves are uninformed about devices and other accommodations that could help them perform their jobs. Even when assistive

technologies such as amplified telephones, videophone relay, and flashing doorbells are known about by employers, small businesses with fewer than 15 employees can justify the cost of purchasing them as “unreasonable” (Geyer & Shroedel, 1999) under the Hardship Clause (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990).

Social integration is another significant challenge for workers who are Deaf. Susan Foster conducted several qualitative analyses (1992, 2003) of barriers faced by Deaf workers in primarily hearing workplaces. In the analysis of her interview-based research, she emphasizes the importance of passive learning during life experiences in equipping persons to understand the delicate cues of workplace culture, noting that Deaf people are often cut off from these learning experiences. She also notes that barriers to spoken communication deprive Deaf workers of an understanding of the subtleties of workplace culture, as well as the camaraderie (i.e., shared lunches and breaks, workplace games and competitions, etc.) essential for quality workplace integration (Foster, 1992).

Foster and MacLeod (2003) conducted a study of Deaf professionals (N=15), using semi-structured in-depth interviews among graduates of Rochester Institute of Technology. Deaf individuals in office environments, as well as their hearing managers, were asked about work experiences. Themes arising were almost all related to strategies for and feelings about communication with hearing supervisors and coworkers in the workplace. Another prominent trope was the impression participants got directly from their supervisors that promotion within the organization would be impossible for them given their non-traditional communication needs.

Although workers may be able to perform work-related tasks as well as other employees, they may be consistently—often unintentionally—excluded from ‘in-group’

status in terms of the workplace culture. Insiders are not simply persons who perform a function at a place of employment; they are people who know the “customs and rituals that symbolize membership” (Hagner & DiLeo, 1993, p. 37). If these customs and rituals are not effectively communicated to a deaf worker, the level of true integration of the workplace is called into question. This social phenomenon harkens back to what many deaf individuals identify as “dinner table syndrome” (Hauser, O’Hearn, McKee, Steider, & Thew, 2010; Hopper, 2011)—although the core functions of a social scenario are taking place, Deaf people in hearing environments miss out on all nuance because they do not know what people around them are saying.

Fear of stigmatization by peers and supervisors can lead some workers to conceal hearing loss to avoid anticipated social problems (Southall, 2001). A study focusing on health professionals with hearing loss employed grounded theory to understand the daily life of work with hearing peers (Matt, 2008). Hard of hearing nurses (N=11) described challenges in bonding with hearing nurses and felt they were perceived as an inconvenience due to their hearing loss. One participant even stated it took 13 months of employment before she felt well-integrated with the staff.

Relationships with managers are of high import, and are often problematic for Deaf employees supervised by hearing people. Rosengreen (2010) conducted interviews with 24 deaf workers, finding that daily communication between worker and manager was infrequent, and may have been a contributor to loss of work productivity. Backenroth (1997) explored workplace dynamics using both a questionnaire and in-depth interviews with Deaf workers on all-Deaf work teams and Deaf workers in all-hearing environments. Deaf employees' empowerment, skill mastery, and social satisfaction were



significantly higher in work groups using American Sign Language, but participants reported much less managerial support and constructive feedback from hearing employers. Deaf employees on all-hearing work teams struggled in a number of areas, but received more attention from supervisors, likely related to accommodation needs.

Dabos and Rousseau (2004) took employer-employee relations to a further level of analysis by examining (non-disabled) dyads of employers and employees. The study focused on the central issues of mutuality, defined as shared understanding, and reciprocity, defined as balanced contributions workers offer one another. They analyzed survey data from 80 dyads at 16 different university research centers in Latin America. Psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1995) framed the research, exploring the factors that impact worker and employer beliefs and expectations. Though some gaps existed between reported beliefs and expectations of employees and reported beliefs and expectations of employers, the study confirmed generally that mutuality and parity of understandings were high.

### **Gaps in Existing Literature**

The literature related to management of Deaf and disabled workers are limited in scope, focus, and recentness of publication. Though current literature includes ample studies on employer attitudes toward disability *hiring*, very few focus on the *daily lived experiences* of employers. Recruitment and hiring are precursors to the topic of interest, but should not be conflated with issues of active employment. Similarly, statistics about quits, terminations, and suits filed through the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) regarding discrimination are important in their own right, but not necessarily representative of experiences on the job.

In the literature on disability and employment, there is a dearth of studies centered on employers of Deaf workers, rather than workers themselves. Furthermore, only a few studies (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Foster, 1992; Friedner, 2013; Porter, Pearce, Tripoli, & Lewis, 1998) engage both employers and disabled employees to form a basis of comparison. Studies focusing on workers with hearing loss may also fit problematically into a category with Deaf individuals who use ASL and espouse Deaf culture. Hearing loss in the medical sense is used as a criterion for inclusion in certain studies—sometimes work-related conductive hearing loss—while other samples populations are drawn from the cultural Deaf community. Lack of distinction in terminology makes valid comparison difficult and makes implications hard to draw.

Though many studies have looked at disability as a factor in hiring and retaining employment (Blackburn, 2002; Capella, 2003; Chan et al., 2010, Copeland, 2007) few have posed exploratory questions about personal experiences, and the studies do not examine quality of work life, which may not be related at all to hiring and retention. Several studies examine issues of deaf individuals working in hearing environments (Backenroth, 1997; Wells, 2008), but only a few explicitly take into account the perspectives of hearing managers who supervise deaf employees (Domzal, 2008; Fraser, Ajzen, Johnson, Hebert, & Chan, 2011; Gustavson, Peralta & Danermark, 2013).

A simple observation about the cannon of literature is that many of the studies about employment of Deaf people are over 10 years old, and newer studies relate less directly to the topic of the current study. Accommodation and social integration have changed greatly in the last decade, owing particularly to changes in technology and

heightened awareness of diversity. More research is needed to explore the management phenomenon in an age of increasingly diverse workplaces that include Deaf individuals.

Studies that address management issues explicitly focus on “attitudes” of employers “toward” persons who are deaf or have disabilities (Unger, 2002), often based on deaf workers’ perceptions, establishing a unidirectional dynamic. The content of the studies, however, seems to suggest that Deaf-hearing relationships are multi-directional transactions. As such, further research into the issue should collect information from both populations, even if the explicit focus of the study is just one population.

One of the aims of the proposed study is to fill this gap in the literature, specifically: the lack of contemporary diversity that marks the American workplace of today, the lack of focus on experience as opposed to attitude, and the lack of inclusion of both worker and manager voices in the same study. A phenomenological approach (Husserl, 1931; Moustakas, 1994) was employed to begin exploration of this understudied topic via self-report of the lived experiences of both hearing managers and the deaf workers they supervise.

CHAPTER FOUR  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

**Research Questions**

The current study will address the following research questions:

1. What are hearing restaurant managers' experiences of the *accommodation* process?
2. What are hearing restaurant managers' experiences of the *social integration* process?
3. How do the viewpoints of hearing managers compare with those of Deaf employees regarding *accommodation*?
4. How do the viewpoints of hearing managers compare with those of Deaf employees regarding *social integration*?

**Study Methods**

With a dearth of qualitative literature focusing specifically on the experience of hearing manager of Deaf workers, this study employed a phenomenological lens to examine accommodation and social integration vis-à-vis the subjective experiences of those managers and workers. The researcher presupposes that stigma leads people to judge each other based on lack of familiarity (Gergen et al., 2001), and contributes significantly to differentials in understanding of integration and accommodation.

This study fills a gap in the literature by using methods that focus on daily lived experience through extended description, rather than looking at metrics on hiring statistics or using standardized survey instruments to assess general attitude. The interviewing of employers as well as employees in a single study is another feature of the

methodology uncommon in the literature. Methods also included an element of environmental observation which, while common in phenomenological studies, is rare in the literature on Deaf employment arenas.

### **Investigator Perspective**

No knowledge, wrote Michel Foucault (1980), is innocent. In the case of this study, the researcher, too, has a constructed understanding of the experiences of Deaf workers and hearing managers. She is a hearing person and an employment specialist and advocate for Deaf workers, what Adler and Adler (1987) would label an “active member researcher,” centrally involved with the population being studied but not necessarily identifying with all member values and characteristics. While there is no consensus about researcher insider or outside status being universally better or worse, being a member or peripheral member of the community one is studying can lead to participant openness and trust (Adler & Adler, 1987; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). One of the most important factors in qualitative research is simply being aware of and reflexive about one’s own position as researcher (Creswell, 2007; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Moustakas, 2004).

The researcher has spent nearly six years working with hearing employers and Deaf workers in the job placement process. Educated at a Deaf university but trained at a hearing vocational agency, she has worked directly with various restaurant management companies and independent restaurants to facilitate the direct placement and training of Deaf adults. While these factors render her unavoidably subjective regarding certain facets of the research process, the same factors situate her as one of few persons with expertise in this context that may enrich the analysis.

### **Phenomenological Approach**

Phenomenology is an effective research approach for understanding social experiences. Phenomenological studies focus on a concept or phenomenon, such as the psychological meaning of an interaction (Creswell, 1998). The approach strives to create a fair research process by preserving subjective perspectives (Clarkson & Aviram, 1995). As this study seeks to understand the phenomena of workplace integration and accommodation from the viewpoint of hearing managers (contextualized by those of Deaf employees) it examined first-person accounts to create knowledge about the structure of these phenomena.

With the premise that all individuals are unique in their psyche and worldview, Edmund Husserl (1925) introduced the method of *phenomenological reduction* as a pragmatic route to describing social interactions and addressing “multi-layered meaning” in specific instances of human interaction (p. 173). The process of reduction in phenomenological methodology involves concentrated listening, intentional reflection, and thoughtful interpretation when processing a narrative told by an individual describing a specific social phenomenon (Keen, 1982). Though the technique is designed to facilitate depth in understanding and description, leading theorists (Heidegger, 1927; Merlau-Ponty, 1962) make clear that, because a researcher possesses a worldview fundamentally different from that of a participant, complete reduction is impossible. The goal of empirical phenomenological research is to provide the most thorough description of a social experience while acknowledging inherent subjectivity and bias.

Moustakas (1994) explains that phenomenology involves “a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective

structural analysis” (p. 15), toward the goal of understanding the essence of that experience. Guba and Lincoln (2001) assert that meaning is derived from theoretical coherence rather than by positivistically-derived facts. Phenomenological approaches often examine a social phenomenon from multiple vantage points, triangulating data collected through interview and observation (Creswell, 2007; Moore, 2011).

### **Empirical Phenomenology**

The current study employs an empirical phenomenological approach. While based in philosophical writings, empirical—or descriptive—phenomenology differs from other types of phenomenology in that its aim is to *describe*, rather than to link phenomena to larger ontological ideas (Aspers, 2009). Empirical approaches make ready use of observation, interviews, and other means of collecting data in ways that resemble ethnography (Schutz, 1976). Because the current study is built upon minimal literature with close relevance to the research questions, it better serves the area of inquiry to create a knowledge base on which to build. Probing deeply into ontological or philosophical questions about accommodation and social integration between hearing managers and Deaf workers can be problematic if exploratory, descriptive research on these phenomena has not yet been conducted.

### **Interpretive Phenomenology**

Whereas the aim of empirical phenomenology is to describe, interpretive phenomenology delves more deeply into time, space, and interpersonal situation (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixsmith, 2013). An outgrowth of Husserlian empirical phenomenology (1931), the development of interpretive phenomenology is often associated with Husserl’s student Martin Heidegger (1962). Interpretive phenomenology

centers on the German concept of “dasein,” translated loosely to “being in the world” (Ciborra, 2009; Reed & Ground, 1997). Often employed with research in the fields of nursing and psychology, interpretive phenomenology strives to explore deeper meaning of lived experience—not just what it looks or feels like, but what existential meaning it has in the social world.

Interpretive phenomenology is thought of as a research tradition involving *hermeneutics*, a systematic way of organizing and understanding meaning in life experiences (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Like Husserl, Heidegger (1962) acknowledged that a researcher can never free the mind of preconceived understandings and perceptions. Compared with empirical phenomenology, however, the interpretive phenomenological researcher is much more embedded in the research, and goes beyond simply reflecting on her own biases (van Manen & Adams, 2010). Interpretive phenomenology, in its search for philosophical meaning, renders the researcher’s perspectives inextricably enmeshed with those of research subjects (Reed & Ground, 1997). Thus, the goal of this type of research approach arguably extends far beyond description.

### **Choosing an Approach**

Empirical and interpretive phenomenological approaches differ not just in their data collection imperatives, but in their goals. While the former aims to capture a distilled description of social phenomena taking into account the bracketed judgements of the researcher, the latter seeks an understanding of what phenomena mean in the context of social life.

The researcher must choose a phenomenological approach based on study aims. In the case of this particular study, very little exists in the way of previous research on the



phenomena being studied. Interpretive approaches call for an exploration of history to establish context (Smith, 1987), and in this case, the body of literature provides a very limited base on which to do so.

In selecting an approach for a research study, the research questions must be carefully considered. The current study asks: what are the experiences of hearing managers with accommodation and social integration? The breadth of the study does not incorporate exploration of the meaning of those experiences. Empirical phenomenology takes into consideration philosophical traditions but acknowledges the need for pragmatism in research (Aspers, 2009). It is more empirical than philosophical, thus integrating theory and practice in a grounded way.

Another logistic that contributed to the decision to use empirical phenomenology was the researcher's dual role. Because she had high levels of access to Deaf participants, what Floersch, Longhofer and Schwallie (2009) call "a unique kind of entrée" (p. 159), her closeness to the subject area far exceeds that of many researchers endeavoring to understand social phenomena. Over-involvement, however, can be precarious (Creswell, 2007; Husserl, 1931). In order to manage the dual nature of her role, bracketing was determined to be necessary and appropriate. For interpretive phenomenological research, McConnell-Henry, Chapman, and Francis (2009) argue that bracketing may be unwelcome, because the researcher is fully part of the research. Thus, empirical phenomenology was more in line with the ethical and analytical demands of the current study.

Empirical phenomenology, like all approaches, has limitations. In seeking description without interpreting the meaning of participant experience, it is possible for

implications of the research to go undiscovered (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Heidegger (1962) asserted that multiple interpretations can be derived from the study of a single phenomenon. As such, a study that does not take a hermeneutic route to understanding phenomena may be lacking in depth. The rich descriptive findings of the current study, however, may serve as a platform for more interpretive, multi-faceted research to be conducted in the future.

### **Research Design**

The research employed an empirical phenomenological approach that involved two data collection stages. The first was a brief site study using observation within two restaurant sites of non-participant workers and managers, at both busy and slow times. Mertens (2005) emphasized the usefulness of observation in familiarizing oneself with the processes being studied (i.e., staff interaction, scope of work tasks to be performed with or without accommodation, etc.). Foster (1992), who conducted a study with very similar goals to the current study, emphasized the need to consider ecological models (p. 14) in understanding a workplace. While an ecological theoretical lens was not employed in the current study, the researcher perceives environment and context as critical factors shaping the experience of participants, and should therefore be examined in detail.

Observation is a data collection method that captures not only physical environmental details, but also social context. It is a helpful element of research that is exploratory in nature (Silverman, 2006). By adopting a complete observer role (Gold, 1958), the researcher chooses not to engage with those she is observing in the social setting so as not to influence their behavior (Lee, 2009). The benefit of research anonymity is the authenticity of the interpersonal interactions observed. Observation as a

research method is limited, however, in that it captures only a superficial viewpoint (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Information gained through observation is only one part of broad qualitative research (Silverman, 2006), and while it does provide information that cannot be obtained through direct questioning of participants, it cannot stand on its own.

The second, more extensive, stage involved in-depth interviews with six hearing managers and six deaf workers who work with them directly. Interviews place the interviewer in the role of learner, and the interviewee in the role of expert (Foster, 1992), which is consistent with the objectives of a phenomenological approach. Semi-structured interviews allow for both greater directness and greater flexibility than many other methods of data collection (Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2008). They are a means of drawing out participants' stories describing their understanding of reality (Hiles & Cermak, 2008), helping to construct authentic depictions of how phenomena are experienced.

Interviewing as a method of data collection has inherent limitations. Sheridan and Chamberlain (2011) note the performative nature of talk, particularly when participants are discussing a certain social role they hold (i.e., manager, employee, etc.). Particularly as it relates to relationships between people with and without disabilities, participants may wish to present a more positive picture of social interaction (Kim, Lu, & Estrada-Hernandez, 2015). While the benefits of face to face interviewing are directness and depth, they may also bring added pressure for participants to represent themselves in ways they feel best match researcher expectations. Details of both facets of methodology are articulated in the following section.

Collecting data by multiple means to address the same research questions is known as triangulation (Creswell, 2007; Moore, 2011; Morse, 2015). Combined with the use of theory and the context of relevant literature, observation and interview are techniques are different enough to constitute two distinct lenses. Often used in ethnographic research, triangulation expands understanding (Morse, 2015) and strengthens the analysis of qualitative data through the use of multiple tools that can be combined and compared (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). It is particularly helpful when studying low-incidence or hard to reach populations, such as the culturally Deaf community, as information about these populations is not as public and accessible (Hunter, 2013).

### **Stage 1: Site Study of Workers and Management in the Restaurant Environment**

Beyond direct interaction with stakeholders, it can be useful to collect data through participant observation to contextualize interview content (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Observation is useful in phenomenological studies because it allows the researcher to gather firsthand data about circumstance and behaviors beyond the perspectives shared by participants (Mertens, 2005).

The first stage of the investigation involved site observation at two of the selected research sites in Metropolitan Chicago. Two one-hour observation sessions were conducted—one at a peak business hour for the restaurant, and another during a time when the restaurant is typically not busy. The researcher took hand-written notes discretely, and put forth every effort not to disturb the activities she was observing. Silverman (2006) recommends the creation of broad descriptive categories (i.e., physical space, foot traffic, ambience, communication with customers, employee body language,

manager-employee exchanges, etc.), but with the caveat that data can be placed in multiple categories. Data that does not fit within any predetermined categories can still be evaluated, as overly strict adherence to categories can deflect attention away from other notable observations (Atkinson, 1992).

The site observation stage did not involve the participants in the study; rather, it was an examination of the work environment in general. The researcher observed the physical setting, the pace of the work, and the general communications between staff members. Possessing a greater understanding of the research setting allowed for greater contextualization in interpretation. It also provided the researcher with bases for comparison—for example, observation may note patterns of communication, camaraderie, and procedure among non-deaf employees not mentioned in interviews with hearing managers and deaf employees.

### **Research in a Restaurant Setting**

Research studies conducted in the restaurant setting differ in design and focus depending on whether customers or employees are the focus. Studying customers, Chen, Peng, and Hung (2015) used qualitative and quantitative methods to examine diners' loyalty and emotion toward luxury restaurants in Taiwan, with a focus on how other diners affected participants within the social space. The authors noted that high levels of regulation, cleanliness, and consistent expectations from regular patrons made luxury restaurants a suitable environment for their research.

Restaurants can also be used effectively for research on employees. Kim (2012) conducted three years of ethnographic research while working as a server in a Korean restaurant, observing and interacting with a restaurant owner and her undocumented

workers. Time spent in the physical space allowed Kim to “see the workplace through the owner’s eyes” (p. 171) while also getting worker perspectives. Barrett (2006) also used participant observation in his ethnography of a Mexican restaurant, and asserted that where the researcher physically locates himself affords different vantage points for seeing and understanding the experiences of diners and workers. While in the back-of-house (the kitchen), Barrett observed more interactions between managers and workers. In the front-of-house (dining and bar area), however, a researcher gets a better sense of the pace and social atmosphere of the workplace.

In the current study, the researcher wished to remain anonymous while collecting data so as not to influence the natural state of the restaurant environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). Anonymous observation in kitchen settings can only be performed by researchers who are also employees, but a great deal of observational data can nonetheless be collected by a researcher in the front of the restaurant.

### **Background on the Proposed Research Setting**

Restaurants were chosen as the designated arenas for study because they employ high numbers of entry level workers, many of whom do not have direct contact with customers—an advantageous setup for individuals who do not use speech. All restaurants participating in the study belong to either regional, national, or international restaurant groups. As high-volume restaurants, each sells a diverse range of dishes, employs over 30 workers per restaurant on both full-time and part-time bases, and hires workers at entry level. Participating restaurants all have at least one location in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. Three of the restaurants in the study could be described as fast casual dining, while the remaining three are better described as upscale casual.

## **Stage 2: Participant Interviews—Hearing Managers and Deaf Employees**

The crux of a phenomenological investigation is a greater understanding of participant perspectives (Mertens, 2005), which is consistent with the constructivist paradigm. Semi-structured, individual interviews were conducted, entailing peer-reviewed questions from an interview protocol containing both open-ended and directed questions. Though an empirical phenomenological study, the style of interviewing closely resembled interviewing prescribed for Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, or IPA (Smith et al., 2009). IPA involves the collection of “rich” data, meaning that participants can share their narratives, develop ideas, and express views, primarily through the medium of individual interviews. Interviewing aligned with IPA establishes comfortable rapport, and is guided conversation that can, like clinical interviewing, be characterized by openness, warmth, and intentionality (Murphy & Dillon, 2003). The researcher also engaged in bracketed journaling during the interview data collection process, to enhance reflexivity (Smith et al., 2009). Demographic questions were asked of participants, followed by 14 inter-related, open-ended questions, which were combined or distinguished based on the direction of the participant’s narrative.

An ordered interview protocol (See Appendices A and B) was employed; however, the researcher recognized that participant response at time necessitated a change in order of questions and the addition of follow-up questions (Smith et al., 2009). Face to face interviewing allowed the researcher to obtain subjective, firsthand information (Mertens, 2005) and comprehend participant experiences and perceptions (Moustakas, 1994). According to Patton (2002), loose structure and conversational style

allow for the greatest comfort and flexibility for participants, and were thus employed in this study.

### **Interview Questions**

Interview questions were created in the form of a protocol, after reviewing relevant phenomenological literature (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). One protocol was created for hearing managers, and one for Deaf workers, though the questions were eliciting the same information (ex: “What has been your experience with *training* by hearing managers?” vs. “What has been your experience with *training* Deaf workers?”). Full versions of the protocols can be found in Appendices A and B.

The protocol consisted of both closed (demographic and employment status) and open-ended (experiential) questions. Questions were developed based on the kinds of information sought by the research questions, and relied both on anecdotal experience of the researcher in her other role as Deaf employment specialist as well as research protocols found in the literature. Demographic questions and basic questions were followed by questions about more complex social experiences (Creswell, 2007; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The protocols were reviewed by two hearing scholars and one Deaf scholar and revised before being used for data collection.

### **Interview Technique**

The researcher worked to create a comfortable social dynamic with participants, adhering to interview technique guiding principles prescribed by qualitative methodology researcher David Silverman (2006). Silverman asserts that no specialized skills are required of interviewers beyond those used in natural—albeit guided—conversation. Interviews were considered collaborative endeavors, with interviewees as active



participants. Interviews took place either in quiet sections of the participants' restaurant buildings or nearby establishments (i.e., coffee shops) based on the comfort and preference of each participant.

### **Interview Logistics**

Interviews with hearing managers and interviews with Deaf workers took place separately. All interviews were approximately 60 to 80 minutes in length. Interviews with managers were conducted in English and were audio-recorded on a digital device. Interviews with Deaf employees were conducted in American Sign Language and were video-recorded.

All interviews were transcribed shortly after data collection. The coding process was progressive (Colaizzi, 1973) meaning that it began with the transcript of the first interview, before other interviews took place. Additional interviews were coded as they were completed/transcribed. Responses of managers were compared with responses of Deaf workers to evaluate similarities and differences in the subjective experiences of shared social phenomena.

### **Interview Objectives**

The interviews comprising the second stage of the study sought to understand the phenomenon from the viewpoint of the people experiencing it, on both *structural* and *semiotic* levels (Moustakas, 1994). Structural elements included scheduling, direct instruction, procedures for accommodation, and general mechanics of communication between Deaf and hearing individuals. Semiotic examination delved more into the social beliefs of each participant—how they are perceived, how social integration or isolation causes involved parties to feel, and how frustrations and successes are experienced

socially and emotionally (Smith et al., 2009). Both structural and semiotic perspectives comprise the everyday lived experiences of hearing managers and their Deaf workers, and are inextricable from each other.

### **Initial Bracketing**

As a hearing person and a specialist in Deaf employment, the researcher made all efforts to ‘bracket’ (Creswell, 2007), or set aside, prejudice prior to interviewing (Polkinghorne, 1989) in addition to bracketing during analysis. An important task for the qualitative researcher was to obtain a full understanding of her own person experience of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This task is particularly relevant for the researcher of this study who, while not having had prior contact with hearing managers, worked with all Deaf worker participants in a social service capacity previous to beginning the study. Tufford and Newman (2010) describe how bracketing is necessary in situations of this kind:

Given the sometimes close relationship between the researcher and the research topic that may both precede and develop during the process of qualitative research, bracketing is also a method to protect the researcher from the cumulative effects of examining what may be emotionally challenging material. (p. 81)

For enhanced reflexivity and to mitigate bias throughout the data collection process, the researcher used a process of journaling. She researcher typically made journal entries shortly after completing each interview, at or after a site observation, and at times, after a phone or text correspondence with a participant that elicited a personal internal response. Journal entries described the experience of interviewing, personal reactions to participant responses, general opinions about participants and observed

phenomena, and other thoughts related to the research process. An example of bracketed journal entries can be found in Appendix F.

### **Sampling**

Purposive sampling methods are most commonly employed in phenomenological studies (Smith et al., 2009). With the goal being a better understanding of the subjective experience of specific individuals in specific experiential contexts, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) prescribe seeking populations and settings where the phenomenon being studied most likely occurs. This is typically done through referrals, via one's own connections or through referrals from initial participants (Smith et al., 2009). Participants can be from a single site or multiple sites (Creswell, 1998); in this investigation, participants were recruited from restaurants in the Chicago Metropolitan Area, provided they meet inclusion criteria.

The sampling frame for this study involves two sub-frames. The first includes hearing, non-signing managers of Deaf workers in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. This frame excludes managers who use American Sign Language or have strong familiarity with Deaf populations. Members of this frame were not identified through publicly available lists or sources, but rather through previous knowledge of the researcher gain through her position as an employment specialist at a service agency. The second sub-frame includes Deaf-identified restaurant employees in the Chicago Metropolitan area. This frame excludes workers who, despite hearing loss, use speech as a primary means of communication. As with the first sub-frame, members were not identifiable through public sources and were specifically contacted as a result of their participation in job placement services with the researcher's agency.

Sampling for this investigation was purposive sampling, as deafness is a relatively low-incidence disability (Padden & Humphries, 1988), and employment rates for Deaf and disabled individuals is lower than for individuals without impairment (Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). With Deaf populations, there is no centralized list of members for the minority group, so purposive, snowball, and target sampling methods are almost always used (Eckhardt & Anastas, 2007). Access issues are of great import. Because the Deaf population is small, it was most practical and appropriate for this study to obtain participants who are identifiable and easily accessible (Creswell, 1998).

Purposive sampling involves researchers using prior knowledge to identify prospective participants who best serve the goals of the study (Monette et al., 2008). It is typically employed when other types of sampling are unsuitable. Purposive sampling requires careful and critical consideration on the part of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Although the strength of purposive sampling is the greater likelihood that all participants adhere well to all of the characteristics of the sampling frame, it does not come without limitations. Generalizability is notably difficult, considering that members of the sampled population are not comprehensively or publicly known (Johnson & Kaye, 2014; Silverman, 2006).

The researcher started the recruitment process by identifying past clients she had helped find restaurant employment through the Deaf job placement program at the non-profit agency where she was employed. With permission, the researcher first contacted the Deaf employees to see if they would be interested in participating in the study. She

then contacted management at these restaurants, most relevantly the direct supervisors of Deaf workers for study recruitment.

### **Research with Deaf Participants**

Research is always historically and culturally situated (Eckhardt & Anastas, 2008), particularly when the identity group of the participant and has a legacy of oppression by the identity group of the researcher McCray (2013). The research relationship is based in broader social relationships, which “build firm distinctions between the researcher and the researched” (Jones & Pullen, 1992, p. 189). Thus, close attention should be paid to the socio-cultural context of research with Deaf persons.

Ethical situations involving participants who are Deaf is also more complex. Culturally Deaf people are subject to an imposed bilingualism--ASL is their primary language, yet they are almost always required to use some amount of English when interacting with hearing individuals (Parasnis, 1996). Hearing people are often unaware of Deaf culture as it encompasses both identity and language preference, so Deaf perspectives are often insufficiently contextualized. The Deaf community has much in common with other marginalized populations, a reality that must be taken into account by researchers to retain ethical integrity. As Smith and Bienvenu (2007) explain, “Deaf peoples’ efforts to name and describe themselves and, in so doing, to end their oppression, while unique, are also akin to parallel efforts made by members of other subordinated groups” (p. 58).

In research studies involving participants with limited English proficiency, dilemmas can occur beginning at the stage of informed consent, which is typically a written document explaining the risks and benefits of a study. Understanding what to

expect in terms of a time commitment may also be challenging. The Deaf community is a prime example of a minority group for whom written consent may not be valid due to lower English literacy rates (Eckhardt & Anastas, 2007), thus consent must be accompanied by explanation in their native language of American Sign Language (ASL), which has no written form.

For this study, English consent forms were given to all 12 participants at the start of the interview. Before each interview with Deaf participants, the researcher also translated each line of the document into ASL to assure that Deaf participants had adequate informed consent. Additionally, an ASL translation of the consent form was video recorded by the researcher and stored securely on an internet site. A link to the video was typed in bold across the top of all consent forms, and participants were told they could revisit the site at any time to review the consent content. This step enhanced both the rigor and the accuracy of the consent process.

### **Participants**

Participants for this study included hearing managers of Deaf employees and Deaf employees themselves. The demographic characteristics of age, race, gender, and length of work experience were included in the analysis. Six of the participants were full-time managers at restaurant locations in the Chicago Metropolitan Area, and were responsible for direct management/supervision of at least one Deaf worker. Six of the participants were Deaf workers employed under said managers. Both groups (workers and managers) were aware that the other was participating in the study, but were never interviewed on the same day or in the presence of the other party. No participant had any access whatsoever to the interview content of other participants.

### **Number of Participants**

The dataset for the study consisted of six hearing restaurant managers and six Deaf restaurant workers. This number was chosen through review of comparable studies and through careful consideration of guidelines prescribed by leaders in the field of phenomenological research (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994; Moustakas; 1994; Smith et al., 2009). There is no strong consensus among qualitative researchers on the number of interviews needed to achieve theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Creswell (1998) states that the range tends to fall between five and 25—a wide range provides little in the way of guidance for study design. As the phenomenological approach has developed over the past 50 years, sample sizes are typically coming down (Smith et al., 2009). The premise of phenomenology, after all, is to examine depth rather than breadth. The number of interviews typically included in phenomenological dissertation studies averages between four and ten.

Morse (1994) recommends at least six participants for phenomenological studies, though the participants may be interviewed more than once. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) conducted a quantitative analysis of a study involving 60 in-depth interviews in an attempt to operationalize the concept of saturation. They determined that saturation occurred within the first 12 interviews, although most of the prominent themes were present as early as the first six interviews.

For empirical phenomenological studies similar to this one involving the comparison of leaders and subordinates in specific environments, (Allison, 2012; Clarkson & Aviram, 1995), between six and 11 interviews were conducted with participants obtained through purposive sampling, and authors were able to draw ample

information for comparative analysis and social implications. Six managers and six workers were interviewed for this study, amounting to 12 initial in-person interviews, with follow-up communication as needed. Purposeful sampling necessarily involved identification of Deaf participants, which precluded the creation of a representative sample in terms of race and gender.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

All management participants in the study possess the following characteristics: (1) Works as a current supervisor or manager in a high-volume restaurant setting, (2) Identifies physically and culturally as a hearing person, (3) Has a direct work relationship with at least one Deaf employee (4) Possessed limited or no knowledge of American Sign Language.

All Deaf employee participants in the study possess the following characteristics: (1) Works as a non-manager in high-volume restaurant settings (2) Uses American Sign Language as a primary language (3) Does not use speech and speech reading as a primary mode of communication.

### **Demographics**

Four male workers and two female managers comprised the manager sample. Manager mean age was 36.5, ranging between 23 and 48. Three managers finished their education at high school graduation, one had some college experience, and two had Bachelor's Degrees. Managers had a mean of 15.5 years of restaurant experience, ranging from four to 29 years.



Table 1. Names and Profiles of Participants

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>RACE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>JOB TITLE</b>	<b>RESTAURANT EXPERIENCE</b>
<b>Manager 1</b>	44	Caucasian	Male	Some College	Director of Housekeeping	29 years
<b>Manager 2</b>	36	Caucasian	Female	High School Grad	Front of House Manager	16 years
<b>Manager 3</b>	24	Undisclosed	Male	High School Grad	Service Manager	11 years
<b>Manager 4</b>	44	American	Male	High School Grad	General Manager	28 years
<b>Manager 5</b>	23	Caucasian	Male	Bachelors	Manager	5 years
<b>Manager 6</b>	48	Mexican American	Female	Bachelors	Kitchen Director/Manager	4 years
<b>Worker 1</b>	36	Romanian	Female	Some High School	Housekeeper	1.5 years
<b>Worker 2</b>	41	American Indian	Male	Some College	Dishwasher/Utility	2 years
<b>Worker 3</b>	44	Undisclosed	Female	Some College	Silverware Roller	1.5 years
<b>Worker 4</b>	27	Latino	Female	Some College	General Utility	<1 year (6mo.)
<b>Worker 5</b>	30	Black	Male	Some College	Dishwasher	<1 year (4 mo.)
<b>Worker 6</b>	47	Mexican	Male	AAS Degree	Kitchen Team	2 years

Three female workers and three male workers were included in the study. Workers had a mean age of 37.5 years, ranging between age 27 and age 47. One worker had less than a high school diploma, four workers had completed some college, and one possessed an Associate's Degree. Compared with the managers involved in the study, workers had notably less work experience in a restaurant setting ( $\mu = 1.31$  years). All identified as Deaf and used American Sign Language, their primary language, to complete the interview.

### **Measures**

In order to gain a sense of other variables contributing to participant perspectives, demographic information was requested. Stigma theory suggests that how people differentiate their characteristics from those of other people weighs strongly on their worldview and behavior (Link & Phelan, 2001). The following demographic characteristics were reported: age, gender, race/ethnicity, hearing status, level of education, and years of work experience.

To assure consistency in the formulation interview questions, the collection of data, and the coding of the data, the concepts of (1) Management, (2) Accommodation, and (3) Social Integration are operationalized and explained in this section. The researcher employed her professional knowledge and a review of related literature to create operational definitions for (1) and (3). The definition for accommodation (2) is taken from Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

“Management” as a concept includes several specific processes in the context of the data collection sites for this study. Among the processes identified as management duties for all restaurant workers are training, establishing expectations, communicating

rules and policies, relaying daily tasks, providing feedback to workers, addressing worker concerns, discussing scheduling, managing health and safety, and providing opportunities for learning and growth. Management of Deaf workers requires additional processes, including assessing the need for accommodation, identifying accommodation resources, implementing accommodations, understanding the legalities of accommodation, understanding Deaf communication, and understanding Deaf Culture. Examples of these items can be found in Table 2.

“Accommodation” as a concept includes several specific components for all American workplaces, including the data collection sites for this study. The term is specifically defined in Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Examples of these components can be found in Table 3.

“Social integration” as a concept includes several specific components in the context of the data collection sites for this study. Among the components of social integration for Deaf restaurant workers are cohesion with hearing workers, inclusion in group decision making, opportunities to participate in workplace culture, and opportunities to participate in things not directly related to tasks. Examples of these components can be found in Table 4.

Table 2. Management

THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS FOR ALL WORKERS	
TASKS	EXAMPLES
Training for work duties	Standard restaurant/kitchen operating procedures, stocking and cleaning protocols, emergency responses
Establishing expectations for roles and duties	Knowing whom to report to and when
Communicating daily duties	Knowing which items need to be washed/stocked and where
Providing feedback about performance	Informing employee about how well a task was done
Addressing manager's concerns with worker	Showing disapproval of late arrival
Addressing worker's concerns with manager or workplace	Discussing tensions between worker and her superiors or peers, and trying to reach resolution
Communicating workplace information and policies	Instructing employees on how to manage irate or inappropriate customers
Scheduling	Deciding shifts, start times, and vacation days with workers
Managing health and safety	Assuring that employees with signs of illness or injury are attended to properly
Providing opportunities for learning and growth	Bringing in guest facilitators for workshops
ADDITIONAL MANAGEMENT PROCESSES FOR DEAF WORKERS	
TASKS	EXAMPLES
Assessing the need for accommodation	Determining the communication preference of the worker, be it American Sign Language, writing, gesture, speech, or a combination thereof
Identifying resources to implement accommodation	Knowing how to contact an American Sign Language interpreting agency
Implementing accommodation	Setting up notebooks and dry-erase boards for writing at deaf employee work stations
Understanding legalities surrounding accommodation	Learning the stipulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
Understanding deaf communication	Learning how to get someone's attention respectfully without employing sound
Understanding Deaf culture	Learning the social significance of using American Sign Language

Table 3. Accommodation (Defined by ADA Title I)

1	Modifications or adjustments to the work environment, or to the manner or circumstances under which the position held or desired is customarily performed, that enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of that position –OR– modifications or adjustments that enable a covered entity's employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment as are enjoyed by its other similarly situated employees without disabilities.
2	Making existing facilities accessible
3	Job restructuring
4	Part-time or modified work schedules
5	Acquiring or modifying equipment
6	Changing tests, training materials, or policies
7	Providing qualified readers or interpreters
8	Reassignment to a vacant position

Table 4. Social Integration

SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN THE WORKPLACE	
TASKS	EXAMPLES
Social cohesion with hearing workers	Assuring that holiday events are inclusive
Inclusion in group decision making	Assuring that participation in meetings is equitable
Opportunities to participate in workplace culture	Assuring that deaf workers have access to staff jokes, games, and style of engagement with changes in work life
Opportunities to participate in communication/action not directly related to tasks	Writing or signing stories or anecdotes shared verbally between team members

### Recording and Storage

In-person interviews were conducted from June 2015 through January 2016.

Interviews took place at the convenience of participants. Interviews with managers were conducted in English and audio recorded with permission of participants to ensure

accuracy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Interviews with employees were video recorded with permission of participants, as American Sign Language is a visual language and can only be recorded in this manner.

### **Transcription**

Video and recordings were translated to English from ASL, and all recorders were transcribed in English. Data was immediately de-identified (meaning all names of participants and references to/overt descriptors of participating stores were removed), transcribed and coded during the collection process. A de-identified transcription was peer-reviewed by a bilingual Deaf professional early in the collection stage for both accuracy and linguistic member checking. Once transcriptions were completed, de-identified, and checked, recordings were immediately removed from electronic recording devices, but saved on an external hard drive locked in a secure location of the researcher's home (Silverman, 2006). De-identified transcriptions were uploaded into NVivo software, and also backed up on the external hard drive.

### **Bi-lingual Research**

For this study, spoken English was used to interview hearing managers, and American Sign Language was used to interview Deaf workers. The bilingual researcher has a unique power in interview-based endeavors, and needs to be open to the opinions of others. She must also be exceptionally diligent in "bracketing" her personal perspectives and opinions (Shkarlov, 2007).

Because the research report is written in English, transcription necessarily involved translation. Translation in research, according to Shkarlov (2007), has the potential to impact both ethics and research outcomes, and therefore should be reviewed

by an outside, bilingual individual to prevent inaccuracy and bias. As stated earlier, a Deaf, bilingual researcher reviewed an early transcription of a randomly-chosen participant interview to assure that the researcher had the capacity of precise and accurate translation.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The following chapter describes the process of coding and analysis, discussing the data management and evaluation processes used by the researcher as well as specific software tools and bracketing techniques employed. It describes the re-coding process as a measure of rigor and inter-rater reliability. Next, the findings of the analysis are shared. A description of the information gathered through observation is provided. Analyzed content from participant interviews is then presented. Interview findings are organized into sections by their relevance to the four research questions. Each section begins with a summary of themes, and contains testimony from many participants.

#### **Analysis**

Traceability of codes and themes is important as a means of fortifying assertions made (Heinze, 2009). Phenomenological investigation is particularly focused on researcher interpretation, defined as an “articulation of meanings as they emerge in the phenomenon when considered as a phenomenon” (Keen, 1982, p. 39). Interpretation can only be done through the thoughtful organization and analysis of large amounts of firsthand data (interviews and observations), contextualized by theory and literature.

Analysis for this study followed the Colaizzi Protocol (1978), often seen in phenomenological studies in the fields of psychology and nursing (Jacobs, 2002; Doody, 2012). The primary goal is to obtain a fundamental description (Colaizzi, 1973) of the phenomenon studied, while acknowledging the impossibility of distilling it to an



objective reality uncolored by the researcher's perception. Colaizzi's (1978) procedural steps are briefly summarized and articulated as follows:

Table 5. Colaizzi's (1978) Procedural Steps

<b>Colaizzi's Procedural Steps for Phenomenologically Analyzing Written Protocols in the Operation of the Empirical Phenomenological Reflection</b>	
1. Description	Read and acquire a feeling from transcriptions
2. Extract Significant Statements	Separate out notable text related to the phenomenon
3. Formulate meaning	Interpret significant statements
4. Cluster themes	Form clusters from "aggregated" significant statements, validating themes by returning to findings in earlier transcripts, paying close attention to researcher bias
5. Description	Write an extensive description of the phenomenon
6. Write statement of phenomenon's structure	Draw content together to comment on the fundamental structure of a phenomenon
7. Return to subjects for validation	Include any relevant new data

It should be noted that Step 7 of the protocol was not used for this study; contact post-interview in this case was used rarely and only for clarification. Member checking, also referred to as respondent validation when the members of the population are the actual participants interviewed, adds significant confirmation that one's findings are accurate. It serves not only to correct potential errors in transcripts, but also to assess whether something found meaningful by the researcher was not found to be meaningful by the participant (Mero-Jaffe, 2001). Incorporating the reflections of participants post-analysis adds to rigor and also reinforces adherence to research ethics by acknowledging the power differential between investigators and participants (Harding, 2004; Jones & Pullen, 1992).

Member checking can be difficult with Deaf populations. As mentioned in the previous section, English literacy is variable and was relatively low among several participants in the current study. It is a convention of formal research studies to employ an elevated version of English, rendering transcripts and research reports linguistically inaccessible to populations with low literacy (Eckhardt & Anastas, 2007). While the researcher herself or a Deaf bilingual researcher could back-translate content into American Sign Language, this process would remove objectivity and bring with it formidable time commitments. Although English was the primary language of hearing manager participants in the current study, the researcher made a determination, based on the prominent theme of time constraint that arose from the data, that returning to manager participants to review research findings could be burdensome.

Research that demonstrates rigor through triangulation and other strategies still retains value without the inclusion of member checking (Silverman, 2006). Because qualitative research in social sciences acknowledges the impossibility of deriving absolute truths through any methods, it is imprudent to disregard what is included while fixating on what is not (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). McConnell-Henry et al. (2011) go as far as to assert that respondent validation is inconsistent with the tenets of phenomenology:

phenomenological research is to develop a comprehension of what it is like to live experiences...By definition, an interpretation can alter, depending on the context in which it is viewed. Our overarching question – and hence concern with member-checking –is therefore how the researcher will know when the ‘right’ interpretation has surfaced. (p. 30)

While member checking is strongly endorsed by Colaizzi and others engaged in best practice for analysis of coded data, it should be acknowledged that there are many ways of viewing and understanding social phenomena.

A codebook was developed progressively within NVivo throughout the data analysis stage. With large amounts of qualitative data, a codebook serves not only to index and describe emergent codes, but also to organize the evolution of codes (Saldaña, 2013). Ultimately, 18 parent codes, 18 sub-codes, and one sub-code containing its own three sub-codes emerged. Parent codes were general, broader thematic designations, while sub-codes, or “child codes” (Gibbs, 2007), were more specific.

Though many of the codes developed with the analysis of the first six interviews, four were added during the analysis of the final three interviews. The researcher then returned to the transcripts that had already been coded to analyze them for the influence of the final four emergent codes. This re-examination of transcripts is a component of second cycle coding, which may also include the elimination or merging of codes (Lewins & Silver, 2007). Although several codes were found to arise infrequently in later transcripts, they remained in the codebook, as the researcher did not deem any codes irrelevant to the study. An example of the codebook can be found in Appendix E.

### **Coding**

Saldaña (2013) asserts that coding is *one* way of analyzing qualitative data, but may not be appropriate in all studies depending on design. While coding is a clearly organized way to link data collection and the explanation of meaning (Charmaz, 2001), it is important to acknowledge that qualitative research makes no assertions of positivistic truths. When a researcher is the sole coder of the data set, it is recommended that coding

be subject to audit by other reviewers, a process that was undertaken to a moderate degree in the current study.

Once data was collected from the first interview, analysis began. First, each statement or hermeneutic unit (Moustakas, 1994) in the transcribed text was carefully considered. Next, all meaningful statements related to research questions were cached in a designated code folder using NVivo software. Hermeneutic units were frequently associated with more than one code. This process was repeated after each subsequent interview.

Codes and sub-codes were revised as more data is collected. Two major levels of coding, open coding and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), were employed. The open coding process identified major concepts and patterns from the raw data, sorting sections of dialog into thematic categories (codes). A single section of text could be placed under one or several codes at once, serving both to unpack the text and to facilitate axial coding later on in the process.

Open coding was integral to the creation of parent codes, called “nodes” in NVivo, corresponding with (a) environmental observations, (b) major themes addressed in interview protocol questions, and (c) major themes that organically arise in manager or worker interviews unrelated to questions ask. Codes were labeled for clear recognition and easy retrieval by the researcher.

Raw data of interest was placed into parent nodes in accordance with thematic categories. When specific content presented as significant or appeared more than once within the raw data, child codes, or sub-codes, were created within the program for narrower categorization, storage, and access. Child nodes were also labeled explicitly for

easy organization and retrieval. Information that fit appropriately within more than one code was duplicated and stored in as many codes that the researcher deems necessary.

Axial coding was the chosen method of second cycle analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2013). It involved looking through coded cluster to draw connections that may exist between codes. The researcher sorted through each categorized section of text, labeling it with all of the codes to which it related, and also making references to its similarity to another piece of text (e.g., ‘this statement echoes that of these two other participants). Various software techniques were employed to tease out other major ideas, such as text search queries (the software can scan all of the stored data to identify where specific words, phrases, or concepts appear). It is important to note that no organizational functions or queries were meant to replace close analysis of data. Sorting and labeling of data was always used to assure that meaningful content is identified and represented in the discussion of findings.

Once all the data was coded, the following step involved the interpretation of statements to determine meaning, which will lead to the clustering meaningful themes as related to the research questions. Clusters were eventually synthesized and used to compose general descriptions of the phenomena studied. Actual quotations from participant testimony were used in reporting whenever possible. The resulting themes created a baseline for description of major structures of studied phenomena articulated in the discussion section, demonstrating relationships between themes in the data (Smith, 2007).

The progression of Colaizzi-style analysis (1978) also incorporated steps prescribed by Smith et al. (2009). After reading the first transcript, initial notes and

comments were taken by the researcher. Separate journal entries were also written by the researcher to bracket (Colaizzi, 1973; Husserl 1931) personal biases on account of the researcher's dual role. Notes were used to add perspective and additional observation about emergent themes, which helped the researcher draw connections and explore ideas. The eventual goal was the identification of patterns that arise in several interview transcripts.

During the coding process, the researcher consulted with scholars on her doctoral committee to discuss any complexities that might benefit from outside perspective. These advisors helped the research maintain *quality*, described by Yardley (2000) as sensitivity, rigor, coherence, and impact/importance. Trustworthiness and reliability were assessed through content review, or audit by outside readers (Silverman, 2006). As recommended by Yin (1989), transcripts and notes from before the coding process were made available for auditors who wished to trace the connection between collected data and written interpretations.

### **Inter-rater Reliability**

After the researcher completed her analysis process, she had an outside auditor trained in qualitative research and coding using NVivo software review portions of two interview transcripts to establish inter-rater reliability. One manager transcript and one Deaf worker transcript were selected randomly. The primary researcher trained the auditor in the use of the codebook she had created, and then allowed her to code the sample of interviews independently. The following section will discuss trustworthiness and rigor in qualitative research as it applies to the use of inter-rater reliability in analysis.

*Reliability* is the dependability of data collection and interpretation such that either process could be repeated and obtain consistent results (Miller, 2008). Trustworthiness in qualitative research can be described as “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (Morse, 2015, p. 1213). Particularly using phenomenology, where much emphasis is placed on the researcher’s inherent bias and subjectivity, it is important for the researcher’s work to be reviewed. As previously stated, the researcher’s transcription and translation of interviews conducted in American Sign Language were reviewed independently by a Deaf, bilingual auditor, who confirmed that translation was accurate and trustworthy. During analysis, outside review is also critical.

Inter-rater reliability is a measure of agreement between two or more independent coders of the same dataset (Gibbs, 2007; Hallgren, 2012). Some scholars feel this assessment is necessary for rigor in qualitative analysis, while others consider it more relevant in quantitative studies (Northey, Tepperman, & Albanese, 2012). However it is accomplished, the choice to have multiple persons analyze a single set of qualitative data can only enhance the thoroughness of analysis.

Where time and resources allow, an entire dataset may be coded by several individuals, but a designated percentage of the dataset may also be selected for analysis by multiple coders to assess reliability. Adding an auditing phase for data that has already been coded by the primary researcher counteracts the tendency to view analysis as complete, and interrogate it further by refining analysis and considering potential researcher biases (Barbour, 2014).

Inter-rater reliability has been emphasized in several recent studies involving hearing researcher interpretation of deaf communication and behavior (Nicholas, Geers, & Rollins, 1999; Wilkinson & Brinton, 2003) Wilkinson & Brinton used the measure to assess the speech intelligibility of deaf children with cochlear implants. All raters/auditors used in their 2003 study were hearing, but the field of Deaf studies has also produced literature where Deaf and hearing researchers conduct qualitative research together. Jones and Pullen (1992) use cross-linguistic and cross-cultural approaches of co-analyzing narrative data about the communication choices of Deaf people in Whales. Their research report highlights identifiable differences between Deaf and hearing perspectives, as well as the importance of researcher reflexivity.

The current study uses only hearing researchers for coding. It focuses on the experiences of hearing people but uses the experience of Deaf individuals as a means for comparison and contextualization. Burla et al. (2008) assert that consistency in coding is particularly important when two different populations are compared, as coding patterns used repeatedly for one group can inadvertently bias a researcher using the same codes to analyze data from a different group. Though it requires additional time and resources, discussion between two distinct coders of data about any areas of low agreement results in a more trustworthy and robust analysis and discussion.

A goal of enhancing reliability of analysis is ultimately to strengthen the rigor of a study. Armour, Rivaux, and Bell (2009) describe rigor as upholding standards of inquiry such that the credibility of a study be both embraced and challenged. These standards apply to the design, methods, and analysis of any study. While the broad field of qualitative research has no specific requirements that ensure or measure rigor, studies that



are highly systematized and include multiple layers of analysis and audit (including inter-rater reliability) can be said described as rigorous (Creswell, 2008). Because qualitative research may employ a notably wide range of strategies for data collection and analysis that evolve even at later stages of research (i.e., studies using Grounded Theory, Glaser & Strauss, 1967) the rigor of a study must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The current study employed triangulation in data collection and axial coding, and external audit (inter-rater reliability) in analysis to enhance rigor. Other methods, including member checking, would have also been appropriate but were not used. Despite this limitation, re-coding by an outside auditor for inter-rater reliability in conjunction with other elements of the study design demonstrate the study's intention to meet the expectations for rigor held by researchers in the field of social work.

### **Bracketing During Analysis**

As was done before data collection, the researcher employed bracketing (Husserl, 1925) throughout the process of data analysis. This process involved setting aside natural attitudes and preconceived notions about populations or phenomena (Keen, 1975). As phenomenological research has an inherent element of subjectivity because it involves interpretation, the researcher acknowledges that there is no way of totally eradicating foreknowledge (Heidegger, 1962) or preconceptions, even with the conscious use of bracketing. It would be unrealistic for an employment specialist in the Deaf community to have no thoughts on the subject of this study, and the phenomenological frame of this study's methods reflects this idea. Hamill and Sinclair (2010) provide the helpful suggestions such as referring back to bracketing notes taken before data collection to re-engage with one's own biases, staying aware of the influence of the literature review on

data collection and consulting with readers throughout the process to keep biases in check.

### **Use of Technology**

Transcription of all interviews was done using Microsoft Word and uploaded into NVivo software for coding, storage, and analysis. Software was used to add rigor and efficiency the researcher felt could not be provided through manual coding, as affirmed by Bringer, Johnston, and Brackenridge (2004). All data was saved both on a password protected computer and an external backup hard drive. The equipment, along with all original recordings and notes, was stored securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home.

### **Findings**

The following section lays out the findings of the study. Site observations about restaurant environment features that contextualize the experiences of workers are shared. Next, major themes arising from manager interviews are explained. Themes were drawn directly from the data from initial interviews, and were expanded upon as analysis and data collection simultaneously progressed, in accordance with the Colaizzi Protocol (1978). These themes are contextualized by and compared to testimony from the managers' Deaf employees. Findings are organized according to the research questions to which they correspond, and are summarized in table form at the start of each research question-based section.

### **Site Observations**

Before engaging with participants about their workplaces experiences of accommodation and social integration, the researcher conducted site observations to learn

about the workplace milieu. Observations can help with the interpretation of nonverbal expressions and general atmosphere of a study site (Schmuck, 1997). Learning about the physical space (Silverman, 2006), employee exchanges, customer interactions, and pace helped establish a context for analysis.

Observations were conducted at Restaurant 1 and Restaurant 4, during one peak, or meal, time and one slow, or off-peak, time per site (Chen & Berean, 2004). Restaurant 1 was most similar to Restaurants 2 and Restaurant 5 as somewhat higher-end dining establishments, while Restaurant 4 shared similarities with Restaurant 3 and Restaurant 6 as more casual eateries. While each restaurant is different and many of their characteristics cannot be generalized, Restaurants 1 and 4 were representative of others in basic ways such as size, pace, aesthetic, and personnel roles. The following section on observation findings yields directly from the verbatim of the researcher's field notes. The actions and communications of individuals in the restaurant settings are paraphrased, not quoted directly. The observation report is empirical in nature, rather than interpretive.

#### **Observation: Restaurant 1**

**Physical environment.** The restaurant/market was very well-lit, well organized, and contemporary, with a great deal of white surfaces and stainless steel. Decoration and product placement was immaculate, and the restroom was very clean. Even at lower-traffic times, the setting was loud due to the number of people, but not so visually frenetic due to the layout. The establishment was impressively large, occupying two stories, and seemed necessarily to require a large number of personnel for upkeep and dining services.

**Staff interactions.** A strong customer service orientation was observed immediately. The researcher was greeted at the door, and was well-attended to by wait staff. She observed that, particularly during the slow times, workers from different stations in the restaurant interacted with each other in a friendly, lighthearted manner. A cashier was observed joking with a back-of-house employee (identified by uniform). She already knew his to-go coffee order, and reminded him to take his receipt, even though she did not give the researcher her own receipt when she purchased a small coffee. The cashier was nonetheless high-energy and friendly, like many observed front of house staff members.

Two other host/cashiers were observed joking with one another, and a floating employee from another area of the restaurant came to converse with them in a casual social manner. Front of house staff members were seemingly diverse in race, gender, and age, though all back-of-house employees appeared to be persons of color.

It should be noted that, during the peak business hour, socialization among employees decreased dramatically. Everyone was working hard and quickly. There were business communications, but no joking or camaraderie was observed. In both slow and busy times, the researcher did not observe any manager-worker interactions. It is likely that these interactions were not observed because they took place in the back of the house areas to which restaurant patrons do not have access (Barrett, 2006). It is possible that the researcher was not aware of the manager status of certain members of the personnel. It is also possible that restaurant managers chose not to instruct, reprimand, compliment or socialize with their employees in view of restaurant patrons.

**Pace and procedures.** There were many employees at this establishment, each with a specific role. Different uniforms denoted different jobs. At the less busy time, I observed approximately two staff members for every three customers. During slow times, the staff seemed relaxed, but still attended very quickly to tasks such as bussing tables and cleaning floors. The staff were all engaged—no one standing idly by—and they seemed to know what they were doing.

Restaurant 1 is a highly organized as a sit-down restaurant. Orders were put in electronically at a computer. Credit cards of patrons could be swiped at the very same computers. The host staff wanted to seat the researcher at the bar because she was alone, but when she said she wanted to people-watch, she was given a small, 2-person table. She did not mention observation for study purposes, and no restaurant managers were aware of her presence. They hardly had the room to spare. The food came very quickly despite a large number of customers. They seem to turn tables fairly quickly—perhaps algorithmically.

#### **Observation: Restaurant 4**

**Physical environment.** Restaurant 4 was more casual than Restaurant 1. The place was generally clean, but some of the furniture was damaged. Popular 70s, 80s, and 90s songs were playing in the background, but not too loudly. The aesthetic was simple, and the tables were spaced evenly. Despite not being a small building, there seemed to be no break room—all observed staff helped themselves to plates of food and sat among customers in the dining area.

The clientele was observably diverse in race and age. Though there were few children, many of the lunch patrons were elderly or had disabilities, perhaps suggesting a fixed income.

There was a wide variety of foods offered on the menu, hailing from different ethnic traditions and demographics. Many of the guests seemed familiar with both the menu and the staff working in the restaurant.

**Staff interactions.** Compared with Restaurant 1, the staff to customer ratio was wide. There was a bare bones staff, who primarily spoke to each other in Spanish. Three Spanish speaking women sat together at a table in the dining area while on their break. Two male Latino staffers joined them apparently in friendly camaraderie. While performing work tasks, however, the staff members did not often talk to one another.

The front of house staff communicated frequently with restaurant customers, however, whom they recognized upon entry. One server even hugged an elderly patron as she seated him. During the peak business hour, there were two managers on duty, but only two servers. One general manager went around to each table asking people how their meals were, and also distributed warm cookies (chocolate chip and oatmeal raisin). She recognized many regulars, and also hugged a four-year-old boy she just met. Simultaneously, the other manager instructed a woman in Spanish on how to use the oven.

**Pace and procedures.** Restaurant 4 is, in many ways, a place of regularity. Many menu items are constant, and many of the customers are regulars. There were four people waiting for the exact moment of opening. The staff appeared to know their roles (each designated by a slightly different uniform), but worked at a relatively slow pace. Plates

were bussed and drink refills were offered regularly, however, demonstrating a strong customer service orientation.

### **Participant Interviews**

The major themes emerging from the data related to ad hoc methods of communication, limited but amiable social interactions and specific challenges related to more in-depth task-related and social discourse on the job. These issues comprise the descriptions of the lived experience phenomena studied herein, namely, accommodation and social integration. Themes about communication were germane to both phenomena.

Findings are as follows:

Table 6. What are hearing restaurant managers' experiences of the *accommodation* process?

THEME	MANAGER RESPONSE
A learning curve is involved	Managers were willing to accommodate but did not initially know how
Accommodations in practice	Primarily writing and gesturing, seconded by speech reading, with the occasional use of ASL (direct or through an interpreter)
Task communications	Gesture, writing only if time permits
Addressing concerns/Giving feedback	Managers state they are open, but Deaf workers rarely come with concerns
Underestimation	Managers feel Deaf individuals are good workers but perceive them as having more limited abilities
Health & Safety	Managers are protective, caring, attentive
Growth & Promotion	Managers are open to the possibility of Deaf promotion but somewhat reticent and skeptical about it really happening
Perceptions of Deaf performance	Managers attest Deaf workers are equal to or better than hearing workers in terms of focus and work ethic

## Learning Curve

One notable feature of each of the manager experiences was a learning process. At the time of their interviews, all reported having learned about accommodation through employing a deaf worker; implementing policies and practices they had never used before. Manager one (M1) shared the example of when he asked a hearing staff member who happened to know American Sign Language to interpret a staff meeting:

*M1: [The deaf worker] said, “No, you have to have a real interpreter.” I’m like, “well what’s a real interpreter?...Er, I don’t understand. So, legally—that’s what she wrote out—legally, you have to have a certified interpreter. I said, “well I didn’t know that”. So then I talked to HR and we just made sure ...I mean it would have been nice to know I needed an interpreter all the time, ‘cause if I did I think I would have got that a little bit quicker.*

Site One actually made use of Video Relay Interpreting (VRI), a system in which one connects with a Sign Language Interpreter at a call center using an internet-enabled device (in this case, an iPad), and the interpreter listens remotely to speech in a meeting and signs it for a deaf viewer. A representative from a VRI interpreting agency, contacted by the researcher when the deaf worker began at Site One, taught the manager to use the technology. Excited about the prospect of using technological tools to facilitate communication, M1 shared other ideas:

*M1: If there was some free app that they developed where it could be, you know, a talking person would be able to, you know, do the video relay for free... it’d be nice to have something where I can say it, and then it would, it would automatically sign.*

Manager Two (M2) noted that not only had she never had a Deaf employee, she had never in 16 years of restaurant work had to make a reasonable accommodation for any employee. When asked what the ADA was, she referred merely to the section of the written job postings that verify that people are able to do physical parts of the job.



*M2: [Accommodation] was a new experience for me. Um, I wish I knew Sign Language. It's, it's on my list of things, um, I definitely would like to be able to um, you know, interact with [the Deaf worker] in that regard. Um, but yeah, no it's...it was a new, new challenge.*

The lack of experience, she said, did not intimidate her. To learn what to do in accommodation scenarios, M2 looked up the chain of command about corporate procedures:

*M2: I'm gonna look to my general manager... if need be, we definitely, I know we would accommodate...He [the GM] would guide me in whatever steps I would need to take next.*

Manager Three (M3) and Manager Five (M5) echoed this idea repeatedly about consulting with their restaurants' corporate headquarters to get resources and information about accommodation:

*M3: I would just call our headquarters. And then they would transfer me, or I'd call the department I needed to talk to. Or I'd call, talk to my general manager, or my director, or my vice president of so many of our restaurants, or...I mean, there's hundreds of people I could call [laughs].*

M5 noted that this was not only his first experience managing a Deaf worker, but the first time he had even known a Deaf person. He knew accommodations like interpreters would be needed, but asked the worker to provide it on his own, which the worker did with the help of the researcher's agency. He describes the overall experience as positive.

*M5: In the past, like for the paperwork, I just told—or asked [the worker] can you bring your interpreter on this day and time? And he said, 'not a problem'. This is the first deaf person I've really had interaction with on a daily basis. To, to be honest, it just hasn't really come up, it never really came across in school, growing up, I never had, you know, a deaf student in, in one of my classes...I, I feel like I'm definitely more accepting of [deafness]. It wasn't that I wasn't accepting of it originally, obviously, because of hiring [the worker], um, but that being said, um, for lack of a better term, you're skeptical to see how it's gonna work in your environment, bringing in one deaf worker. The fact that it's gone so well and almost flawlessly, I would not be hesitant at all to hire another deaf worker, um, based on the great experience I've had with this one.*

Manager Six (M6), like M5, knew from her limited past experience that accommodations were needed, but also asked the worker to provide his own interpreter:

*M6: I knew a little bit of the special needs and accommodations that we have to provide for an individual. Um there has to—there cannot be a discrimination, and things like that, for sure, that you have to...I think I brought it and just incorporated, but I did not know, um, there was something like [the ADA] ...if we're making any radical changes in the restaurant, we will meet. So if that were to happen, I'd probably, more likely I would tell him like, we need an interpreter.*

Managers willingly shared that their knowledge had limits initially, but that working with Deaf individuals moved them along their own learning curves.

### **Accommodations Currently in Practice**

M1 used Video Relay Interpreting regularly, and M2, M3, M4, M5 and M6 described having American Sign Language interpreters present only for interviews and initial brief training. The overwhelmingly popular forms of accommodation used at all sites, however, were gesture, demonstration, writing, and the periodic reliance on speech-reading (lip-reading). American Sign Language was used by a hearing, signing coworker at Site 1, and the occasional sign was learned by hearing workers and managers to communicate with Deaf workers. Managers describe their basic stances with accommodation:

*M1: Generally, what I'll do is I'll, I'll actually bring them over to the area that needs to be taken care of. Or whatever the case is...Because it's easier to, it's just easier, because this place is so big.*

*M2: If he's you know gesturing or trying to sign and I'm not sure, I'll just go, you know [waves her hand in a beckoning motion] let's go get a pen and paper if I don't have one with me, and he'll write it down, and I just write it back... if we're in the kitchen and he needs to show me something...typically we can kind of work out, you know, the point he wants to get across. And you know, we do 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs down' [laughs].*

*M3: It just depends on the situation. How accommodating do we have to be. 'Cause we are a corporation, so if one of us does it, every single person in our company can do it.*

*M5: Part of our training is definitely being aware of the ADA. Um, and every, I want to say it's annually, um, we do get an email or some, like a touch-base from corporate to make sure that all of our jobs, um, all of our positions do have ADA job description... We definitely have a little extra spending cash put aside for situations like that...we are extremely accommodating as long as, you know, it pertains to the job...we would definitely not have a problem paying for that. Um, whatever we can do to help him not only perform his job, but excel.*

Manager Six (M6) describes going beyond gesture, writing and speech reading, emphasizing the need to creativity:

*M6: I took pictures with my phone of the restaurant, and I was able use them that way. I just went ahead and created it myself. But I, I'm very creative. Like, I can come up with ideas really easy.*

### **Task Communication Adaptations**

Gesture, demonstrating, writing, and speech-reading were employed to teach and request work duties. M1, M2, M5 and M6 all described using text messaging on mobile devices to communicate both on-site and remotely. American Sign Language was employed from time to time, mostly with simple words learned by team members (taught by the Deaf workers), and at Site 1, a hearing coworker used conversational American Sign Language:

*M1: Sometimes we'll um...like at night, there's a girl ... who signs to [the Deaf worker] all the time. And they, they talk back and forth, and if she doesn't understand anything, the other girl tries to explain it to her...I think she knew a little bit [of ASL], and I think she's picked up some.*

Gesture and writing, however, were the prominent go-to strategies for all sites:

*M1: Generally, if I'm in my office, um, when they walk in the door, they, they, they [laughs] you know, uh, sign like "writing" [makes gesture of a pen writing in the air] and then I pull out a sheet of paper and a pen, and then we'll start, you know, we'll start going back and forth.*

*M2: the way we communicate is either, you know, texting, you know, or we go ahead and, you know, write things down just to make sure—you know, there's some things I know—he reads lips so that's great. Um, but if there's more detail, and everything, it's making sure he gets that text, that you're writing it down just so that everything is, you know, it's clear.*

M2 describes a scenario in which non-verbal communication was used successfully:

*M2: [the Deaf worker] was here, so you know, I just brought the schedule book over, um, showed him the date, and uh, did a, you know, a [points to calendar day and gestures a "cut" sign at her neck while shaking her head] don't have to work this day, and I said—and pointed to the, the one he wasn't scheduled for, and gave him the thumbs up, like [gestures 'thumbs up' and nods her head] "can you work" and he's like, "yes, I can do it." [laughs]*

M3 noted that writing was initially very effective, but the Deaf worker gradually tired of it:

*M3: Team members started asking me "why isn't she talking to me?" [laughs] I'm like, well, she is deaf; you should write a note to her. Write her name. And then after that it just started kickin' off like a wildfire. It was awesome. But [toward the end] it was just hard for us to communicate, and I don't think [the Deaf worker] liked writing.*

M4 employed writing, but described it as inconvenient or infeasible at times:

*M4: Sometimes I have the notes, um, I carry my paper but sometimes I don't open it up 'cause there's other notes that you have on there that you don't want—'cause you need to keep that paper...so I won't write on it, and I'll write on my phone, or on a dry-erase board or show 'em, versus using that paper, 'cause I don't wanna write over it...In the restaurant business, unfortunately, the verbal is key only because of the speed of which you have to do it sometimes. [So] we'll try talking, if they don't get it from, you know, reading the lips, we'll write it down. And then we'll show.*

While M6 used it from time to time, M2 and M4 were the only managers who described speech reading as a primary mode of conveying task instructions:

*M2: If there's you know, let's say, a cleaning project or something, and we're looking for [the Deaf worker] to do that, um, my first thing, something like that, I would definitely try to communicate with him just by talking to him. Um, you know, if I want to make sure, I'll bring him maybe over to the area and make sure*

*we're on the same page, you know. So yeah, I definitely try to, to speak to him first.*

M1, M3, and M5 made good use of carrying a pen and paper on their person for communication:

*M5: Really the only adjustments I've had to make was I carry a notebook around with me, um, just to make it a little bit more easy to communicate. Um, but other than that, it, it was actually a lot smoother of a transition than, um, we as a management team were anticipating.*

*M5: We had tried a few things at first just to kind of feel it out, um, so we printed out like a diagram that had pictures of the tasks that a dishwasher would do, like mop the floor, clean the plates... [then] we realized that the best one was just writing things out or literally just, our—using our hands.*

Gesture and showing was an organic practice:

*M5: It was a pretty easy adjustment period, about, I wanna say about a week of [the Deaf worker] just shadowing and kind of learning, watching off the other dishwashers. And that was the best way, to then mimic that behavior or activity.*

*M6: When he doesn't understand, and I'm trying to do, like, some words, or pointing out, then he'll get the pad out...most of the time he has [the notebook], so wherever he writes it, I write it right, like right underneath where we're writing. You know, um, simple things... I never have really separated him like a different employee. I've treated him the same as every, any other employee. And giving him the same challenges, and he's met the challenges. The only thing would be just the way we communicate, both of us with a notepad and the pencil, piece of paper.*

Findings indicate that gesture, showing, and writing were not only the most prevalent forms of on-site communication, but also the ones preferred by managers. Some noted that they expected communication with writing and gesturing to be more difficult than it actually was. Willingness to communicate with Deaf workers was evidenced by the fact that nearly all managers kept paper and writing utensils with them at all times. Several noted that Deaf workers found it tiresome, or at times did not understand, but ultimately indicated that these modes of communication were functional.

### Addressing Concerns/Giving Feedback

Asked about how feedback was exchanged and concerns were shared between hearing managers and Deaf workers, the managers (with the exception of M4) generally felt that communication in this arena was sufficient, owing to their own openness and also to the viability of writing and other modified communication strategies. Most feedback occurred casually and organically in the workplace. Only M2 and M5 had formal evaluation meetings with their workers at milestone times (six months, 12 months, etc.).

*M1: If they have issues, or they have complaints, or they have problems, there--I have a very open-door policy. I'm a very laid-back person, and uh, you know, they generally write me notes and, you know, talk to me and, you know, 'this person's giving me this problem,' or 'I have an issue with this person' and, or, whatever the case is. So we—and then we sit 'em down and we try to work it out.*

Hired after the first evaluation of the Deaf worker at her restaurant, M2 expressed apprehension and lack of knowledge about how things would be done:

*M2: I'm going to have to find out when we go to do his review. Um, how do you communicate that in the best way... I'm not sure what they've done in the past. I'm sure they would—they would kind of just piggyback off of what, what worked best, you know, in the past scenarios.*

*M3: I mean you don't really have to, but it would be nice for the boss to know what you're going through in a sense, to try to work with you to make your job easier, or get you to where you need to be. Like I'm—we have an open-door policy, so I'm that person that like...With dealing with just the people, and it, it makes me feel like I have a place with them because I am so understanding.*

*M4: It's tough in the industry as it is. Um, it's a little tougher, um, only because it's, you're, you're, you're communicating it...you don't wanna over-communicate sometimes, you just wanna explain it, you know?*

*M5: We do a six-month review. So it's a semi-annually, and then annually. So he should be due in, I want to say, the next month or so. Um, and that's done with um—that's probably one of those opportunities where we will ask for an interpreter, just to make sure the message gets across. Um, but it's also a pretty*

*easy, um, it's a, you know, it's a one through five scoring scale. Um, and he does know how to read, so it definitely makes that easier as well.*

*M5: I feel like he'd definitely be comfortable, um, approaching either of us, just 'cause of—I'm talking about me and the chef—just 'cause we have been accommodating.*

*M6: No, I have not—never seen [the Deaf worker] frustrated. At least not here at the restaurant. And the staff would have pointed it out, and they would have told me...I think if I were to see him frustrated, I would be like a time out. Like let's sit down and talk.*

M6 shared a specific example of when the worker was performing a job incorrectly, and she had to communicate a corrective action:

*M6: One of the examples was, um, I had taught him how to filet, but he wasn't fileting correctly. I do remember that time...So I had to, even before I brought him back into the fileting table, I sat down and, again, writing. I said, "let's talk about fileting." I said, I know you're doing it but let me show you, you need to do it correctly. So I would bring him back, and I said, "I'm gonna show you the right way." And then I was physically demonstrating: this is the proper way of doing it.*

### **Under-estimation**

A theme that emerged in manager responses that can be explained through the lens of Stigma theory (Goffman, 1963) was the general under-estimation of Deaf workers' skills and abilities. Their intentions seemed good—to support the workers by giving them work they felt they could manage—but implicit assumptions were made that they could not perform at a level equal to that of hearing staff members.

Enthusiastic about bringing her on board, but unconfident that she could work as a dishwasher, the manager at Restaurant 3 describes hiring the worker for a simpler role:

*M3: She did apply for another position, but we thought we were gonna be a higher volume restaurant, we needed a silverware roller so we could focus more on our guests.*

*M4: [I schedule the deaf worker] in the positions where they can be fully, fully uh...fully live up to the potential of the position...without too many different*

*accommodations made, and have the ability to compete on the same level as anybody else...I don't think there's any...accommodations we can put in the kitchen area that would be able to accommodate, you know.*

*M4: Unfortunately, when you're dealing with hearing impaired, they don't always understand it. When you go back through here, you gotta be cautious, 'cause they're saying, "Hot!" There is someone if they say "Hot!" everybody stops...And it's for, for their own good, but they don't always understand that.*

M4 truly felt concerned about safety, but did not have knowledge or experience to substantiate the assumption that a Deaf person cannot understand to be careful around people moving with hot food. He definitely is correct that Deaf workers cannot hear someone saying 'hot!' behind them, but he did not seem to realize that spatial accommodations and non-verbal signaling to Deaf persons' heightened visual acuity could be—and frequently are—employed in restaurant settings.

*M6: The team has really embraced them, and they know, you know, there's—they cannot expect, you know, what I would say, a regular employee can do.*

Other managers earnestly framed their perceptions of limitations on Deaf capacity as caring protectiveness. M1 described being protective own his worker when she got into a car accident. He expressed concern that her insurance company ripped her off, and was dissatisfied with what the worker's husband had done to take care of the insurance situation. M3 also noted that his staff watch out for the worker to “keep her safe”—as if it were their responsibility.

*M3: They would make sure she was okay at all times.*

Another perception found among hearing managers that can be interpreted as a type of underestimation was their tendency to conflate deafness with more severe cognitive and developmental disabilities. In several instances, M4 spoke about using the same accommodations and expectations for “hearing impaired” and “mentally



challenged” workers. M6 spoke at length about tools like picture books and texture stimulation tools like Velcro that she used with students with autism spectrum disorders in a previous job. She informed the researcher that, in fact, these things are not needed when working with Deaf individuals. Having had such limited past experiences with Deaf individuals, however, it would not be reasonable to expect them to be highly knowledgeable about hearing loss. While stigma can influence non-disabled individuals to make inaccurate assumptions, continued experience with Deaf workers may allow managers to differentiate them from those with other, more prominent disabilities.

### **Accommodation of Health and Safety**

All managers provided responses regarding safety accommodations, though they generally (with the exception of M4) did not perceive their restaurant environments as dangerous for Deaf individuals. The interview process seemed to prompt them to consider potential health and safety concerns/needs for accommodation:

*M1: I never even thought about the forklifts. Um, generally the forklift is out by the dock, and the only, the only thing the [Deaf] girls do is they take the, they take the, the round garbage cans full of garbage, and they bring it to the dock. And usually the dock worker throws everything in the garbage.*

*M3: There's people over there flyin' stuff everywhere, and there's stuff on the floor that she can trip. That would be my only concern.*

M3 and M4 noted that they and their staff members looked out for the Deaf workers in particular with a sort of protectiveness and paternalism. M4 specifically said he assigned the Deaf worker to maintenance because he thought there were fewer safety risks:

*M3: It was more of like we kept her safe, so we didn't have to worry about her not being safe.*

*M4: [The Deaf worker] does maintenance 'cause of the communication in restaurants people are carrying knives, hot pans, and if they're doing the*

*maintenance in the morning, usually it's a very limited time they're back there...they have to be more cautious than everybody else as far as looking around. Because even though they're working with people and they understand, people tend to stick to their routines and their habits.*

M2 and M5, however, held an opposite perspective on the matter, and constantly placed their Deaf workers near knives and hot food:

*M2: He's very aware back there. There's never been an issue, and I honestly don't feel, um, more concerned for him than anyone else...it's fast-paced regardless of what position you're working in. So um, he keeps right up.*

*M5: It has yet to be an issue. Um, I've seen, we usually like will tap him on the back before we walk by. Um, but I also think that [the Deaf worker] has learned to be aware of his surroundings...he kind of sees it coming before we're even coming around the corner.*

M6 related the story of when the Deaf worker was actually injured on the job, and how she and the other staff members addressed the situation:

*M6: He slammed his hand on one of the doors...when the incident happened, he came in and he told one of the prep ladies that it was hurting. So, they could see the finger, how it was. So, my operator and her were automatically, they did like a cast and took care of it...when I walked in, I saw him and I kinda talked to him about taking him to the urgent care. And I knew it was, you know, it's covered by us...so I said, I told him, like, [enunciating slowly] I WILL DRIVE YOU. And he was okay. He told me 'okay'. And then, um, we left to the urgent care when I was there. I kinda wrote on a pad, "do you want me to call your dad?" He said yes, so he gave me his phone, and we called him from the urgent care.*

### **Accommodations for Growth and Promotion**

While the general consensus among managers was that Deaf workers were more than able to perform their entry level jobs effectively, opinions about advancing within the restaurant were mixed. None of the managers had ever worked in a setting where a Deaf individual was promoted. Their thoughts about accommodating professional growth shed light on both their optimism and their relative inexperience and wariness.

At Restaurant 1, employees have the opportunity to take free staff classes to train for different positions in food preparation. The classes must be attended when the employee is not on a work shift. When asked whether the restaurant would pay for accommodation if a Deaf worker were interested in taking a class, M1 responded:

*M1: We, we would have to get the iPad...the video interpreter, but mm hmm, we [would provide it].*

Though open-minded about potential future promotion for the Deaf worker, M2 expressed nervousness about communication abilities:

*M2: I would be curious to see how that would work. I mean, there's a lot going on in the front of the house, um, you know if it were to be front of the house, there is a lot of communication that goes on with um, you know, the customers and everything. So, I don't know how that would work.*

M3 and M5 viewed the experience of accommodating growth for their Deaf workers as an adventure, and were prepared to throw themselves into the task should it arise:

*M3: Definitely it depends on the [Deaf] person. Um, it would be—there would be challenges. For sure. However, if there's not challenges, you're usually not doing something right. I just think like, if I'm not being challenged, why am I here?*

*M5: I think [promotion] would be a pretty, uh, easy transition if that's something that he was interested in doing... there's probably a challenge with a lot of things. But there's no doubt that I think that, that as a team we'd be able to work through it for him, as well as people underneath him. Um, but yeah, I feel like um, he's probably grown accustomed to those challenges and has probably found a way to get through them his whole life, so. I don't see it as being a derailing obstacle.*

M6 reported feeling confident about her Deaf worker's independent skills, but slightly reticent about him training others. She mentioned that she once had the worker model his method for slicing lemons to a new employee, but noted that supervising a new employee—though possible—might be more complex:

*M6: I can see him, like, being dedicated, and you know, and on time...I don't know so much training someone else, but it can happen. With his skills of writing,*

*he could show someone else what to do, for sure. Um there is that potential for sure.*

Out of all the participating managers, M4 was the only one who expressed that promoting a Deaf worker would not be possible. Due to what he assumed about their limited ability to avoid dangerous elements (e.g., hot trays and plates carried by others) he explained that his Deaf worker was occupying the only position in the restaurant feasible for her on account of her deafness.

*M4: There's not too much other roles they [Deaf] can work at. Um...I've had 'em like do other little assignments...see, even in the dish room, moving somebody into that area, it would only be safe when there's nobody else around in there.*

### **Over-all Perception of Deaf Work Performance**

All hearing managers had positive things to say about the actual labor undertaken by their Deaf workers. Performance and work ethic were described not simply as equal to that of their hearing peers, but better in many cases. The praise they offered was unequivocal and unanimous:

*M1: They're [Deaf workers] all really attentive, they're all really proud of what they do, and they make sure to do a good job, and follow through...so far they're, the work ethics of them are actually higher, um, for the most part, then, then most of the other staff.*

*M2: You know [the Deaf worker] is gonna show up. He's on time. He's here to work. You know? He does his job; he does a great job...if I were just walking through the kitchen and, and I had no idea he was deaf, I would have no idea. He just fits right in.*

*M3: She is usually early, actually, which I love. It's always, fifteen minutes early you're on time; if you're on time, you're late.*

*M4: There's jobs you can give 'em, they can do better than some other people...they're actually less distracted than some other people in some respects.*

*M5: [The chef] made a joke, like, "if anything, you know, I don't have to worry about him, you know, running his mouth and spreading gossip" or, you know,*

*talking when he's working...The fact that you are able to communicate with other people constantly through talking and hearing, that sometimes [others] get sidetracked from doing their job. Whereas, [the Deaf worker] rarely gets sidetracked from doing his job. He's able to, for lack of a better term you know, block out that outside noise and just go to work.*

*M6: I would say that he's very eager to work, he has that energy that even—I would say, that a regular employee can work and they don't have the speed. He has that speed. Like, he has all the qualities of an awesome employee. You know, it's just, his hearing.*

Table 7. What are hearing restaurant managers' experiences of the *social integration* process?

THEME	MANAGER RESPONSE
Manager heart & ethos	Managers all considered themselves to be good, fair people
Social Communication	Communication is constant and friendly, but limited
Interacting with hearing coworkers	Deaf and hearing use writing, gesture, and signs to interact on shift, but do not socialize outside of the workplace

### **Manager Heart and Ethos**

When asked about social integration, managers reflected both on how they themselves felt about bringing Deaf workers into the fold, and also on how they saw the Deaf and hearing employees interacting with each other. They all identified character and personal ethos as elements of their effectiveness in managing and retaining workers who were Deaf. Each felt that their willingness to accommodate deafness with an open mind set them apart from managers who may potentially discriminate against a worker with special needs:

*M1: I'm a different type of manager. I believe that you know, we're put on this planet to help each other, not just to, you know, it's not just work, it's also trying to mentor.*

*M2: I honestly feel at such a disadvantage not knowing Sign Language, and you know I feel actually, you know I wish I could meet that expectation for him, to be honest.*

*M3: I can do whatever I need to do to make my team members, or my guests, or whoever I'm pleasing in that moment in time happy, or accommodate them. I mean, I'll do whatever I have to... Cause there's so many talks about people discriminating and doing like, things to other people in the world...we're all human, no matter what you are. Small, fat, short, skinny, black, white, purple, I mean I don't care!... I love having disability people here, just because I don't think a disability, um, stops anybody.*

*M4: When you're dealing with different...diversity with ethnic groups, ages, you tend to deal with different things and you learn different ways of how to handle people all day long.*

*M5: People come from different backgrounds and, you know, they have different strengths and weaknesses...I hate to think that [past employers] were passing on him just because he was deaf. Um, and you know, you give someone a shot like that, and he's been, you know, beating expectations. So you just never, you never know...if a manager, another manager came up and, you know, asked me how it was, I would highly recommend hiring the person, giving them a shot.*

*M6: Just have the patience to work with adults with special needs, for sure. To make them a—better environment for them, for sure. And make them feel valued, because I feel that's what you have to make them feel. It's just—there's so much potential in them, but I feel-- you know, but like, a lot of managements or employers do not give themselves an opportunity. But I think it—you have to have the heart for it, too. You know, and a lot of people don't have the heart.*

### **Social Communication**

In any workplace, communication involves more than just exchanges about tasks and duties. The workplace is an arena for socialization, rendered more complex by differentiated languages and communication modes. With the unique addition of workers who did not hear or use speech, four of the managers described social communication as successful and naturally occurring, though not without challenges:

*M1: We do communicate on, you know, on a daily basis, and, and, you know, like I said, if there was some kind of...some kind of [technology] to communicate a*

*little bit easier every day to make it more, maybe make more conversation between, you know, um, everyone. That would be nice.*

*M2: It's been a positive experience on my end..., there's no, no difference, really. Um, everything's the same. Yeah, the communication style's gonna be a little different, but that's ok. [Laughs]. I don't really feel like you need to be intimidated by it.*

*M3: We would sit down and write notes back to each other. That's the only thing that was a hard time, was writing notes and feeling, seeing how they felt. 'Cause there's no emotions in notes or texting, so it's hard to feel the emotions and how they're feeling in that moment in time.*

*M5: We've learned some hand gestures through [the Deaf worker], so it's definitely a full circle, you know, learning how to communicate... I think it's a fun challenge, too. You know, people do want to learn, whether it's, you know, specific to their job, they're learning a different language.*

### **Interacting with hearing coworkers**

Hearing managers and Deaf workers are merely a few of the people comprising staff teams in high-volume restaurants. Managers shared their experiences of observing Deaf workers' interaction with their peers:

*M1: Let's look at it two ways. One is how much do the talking staff communicate with each other? Um, and then how much do...the deaf people communicate with the talking staff. Um, I would say there's definitely not as much communication. Um, but do I think that people completely don't talk, don't talk to them or try not to communicate with them at all? That's—I don't think that happens. I'd say there is, there is definitely less, um, interaction just because of the, of the language barrier.*

Sometimes, direct experience was required to activate communication between Deaf and hearing staff:

*M1: [Hearing staff are] just nervous because uh, it's, they're not, they're not used to it...I don't even know if "afraid" was the right word, but they would definitely be, you know, more standoffish than, than normal...[but] now they know what to do, and it's, they—they just needed some directions or guidance.*

To preempt potential nervousness about working with a Deaf individual, M2 described the experience of staff debriefing:

*M2: when we hire, um, you know, someone new, we do like to, you know, give everyone the heads up so you know, they're, they're aware... you know introduce them. And let them know that, you know, [the Deaf worker] is Deaf. If you need to communicate, you know, these are the best ways. Just make sure you're, you know, you're looking directly at him, he can read lips, and you know, things like that. So, so everyone can just flow right in and do what they need to do.*

She described the cohesiveness of the small dishwashing team, which contains one Deaf staff member and one hearing Spanish speaker who knows virtually no English. From her perspective, the team members' proximity to each other has brought about an organic, non-verbal social cohesion:

*M2: The guys that are back there, you know, throughout the whole shift with [the Deaf worker], you know, day in and day out, um, they definitely communicate. They're able to communicate I think a little easier, you know, they have their—they kind of built their, their way. Um, no one...knows Sign Language here... but they definitely have their ways of communicating with each other. They're always, you know, um, laughing, you know, joking. I mean, it's a—we have a really nice crew back there and, um, everyone's supportive. No one has ever, like, shied away from him or felt like, "I, how do I, you know, work with him? How do we get this job done?" Um, it's, it's not an issue. ...Everyone really tries to, um, communicate. I've never seen him, you know, left out or alienated or anything like that. They're always—he's always back there, you know, he's right in the mix.*

M3 described a similar dynamic in his restaurant. Though he noted that the Deaf worker did not socialize with hearing peers outside of work, they inexplicably developed nonverbal rapport—and even friendship—on the job:

*M3: The team actually caught on to her really quick. She had, she had some inside jokes with other people, which was funny... Um, they would laugh, or they would like, um, do like little gestures, like...I don't even know how...they were, I mean, friends at work, but I don't think they would've chilled outside of work.*

M3 also recounted a unique social occurrence that dealt with restaurant customers, which he feels could never have happened without the Deaf worker:



*M3: We had a deaf table come in. And...it was one of their birthdays. So I asked her to come out and sing happy birthday. Every time there was a deaf customer in the restaurant, I definitely had her come out and explain things or talk with them. 'Cause I wanted her to be a part of the whole thing, too. I mean, why not? She was so happy. Yeah, she was very happy.*

M4 and M5 described observing Deaf and hearing staff members communicating with each other through mobile devices, sharing text messages and photos:

*M4: I've seen my workers talking. Communicating through their phone.... [but]I think that [a shared language] would be also some of the friendship and bonding between some of the people. 'Cause it's easier for them to communicate.*

*M5: I know that he has made a few friends here...I have seen him communicate in, um, in a friendly manner with some of the front of the house staff—he's really into art...so he shows a lot of the other employees his artwork, and they kind of interact with that...I think every day that they work together, I see that they're getting more comfortable.*

M6 has a positive outlook on communication with the Deaf worker, though she noted that interactions tend to be surface-level:

*M6: I kinda greet everybody. Like, "how's your day?", "How's school?" Like I kind of check on the whole staff... I'll have like a quick chat with him, like, "how's your day? How's your dad?...I have not—never seen him frustrated. At least not here at the restaurant. And the staff would have pointed it out, and they would have told me...none of them have ever brought up any situation going on.*

Despite her perception that the Deaf worker got along smoothly with other employees, she did understand the value of socialization through Sign Language. As a reward for their performance, the restaurant chain gave her franchise location a free team trip to a local amusement par. M6 was asked by her Deaf worker if he could bring a Deaf friend with him, as the trip was a full day. She obliged him, provided that the Deaf friend pay for his own ticket. M6 mentioned, however, that hearing workers still interacted with the Deaf individuals at lunch time and while waiting in line for rides. She perceived her Deaf worker as having a good time with both Deaf and hearing companionship.

Table 8. How do the viewpoints of hearing managers compare with those of Deaf employees regarding *accommodation*?

THEME	DEAF WORKER RESPONSE
A learning curve is involved	Managers try, but sometimes do not know what they need to be doing
Accommodations in practice	Writing and gesture work, but Deaf workers' true preference is ASL
Task communications	Writing and gesture is fine, speech reading is frustrating and is used more than Deaf workers would like
Addressing concerns/Giving feedback	No major concerns, but Deaf workers tend to keep minor concerns to themselves
Underestimation	Accustomed to hearing assumptions, Deaf workers feel the need to prove themselves
Health & Safety	Deaf workers feel manager and coworkers generally look out for their health and safety.
Growth & Promotion	Deaf workers would like to move up at their restaurants, but admit it might be too difficult because of communication
Perceptions of Deaf performance	Deaf workers are aware that their managers think highly of them

### Learning Curve

Deaf workers interviewed had much to say about the adaptation process for their managers. Contrary with what was initially hypothesized; Deaf workers were much more embracing of alternative methods of accommodation, even if they did not consider them optimal. All but W3 expressed a great deal of patience, but did point out some challenges associated with their managers' acclimation to working with Deaf individuals. They describe how accommodations are put in place for them, but not the types of accommodations they expressly prefer—namely, American Sign Language via an interpreter.

*W1: I understand the communication, but I feel I still [the manager] has to do things. He should understand he needs to use his phone, or write things down... [At meetings] I read the paper [agenda] and understand it, but what people are saying as far as complaints, what all the different people are saying, it's so awkward. I just sit there. I can't ask a question. There's no interpreter. I need one to help me say things, tell them things...The manager is lousy, and also HR is lousy. Because you know I'm here...I'm deaf, and I need an interpreter. You know better.*

*W3: The manager and the boss are supposed to—they're responsible, if there's an event or a meeting, to have it with an interpreter. But they don't. They know, no excuse, they know. They know that I'm here.*

W4 cited technology as a valuable tool for communication, easily accessible with her manager's mobile device, but not often used:

*W4: You can use a phone to text back and forth. It's important to text with your boss, back and forth, or use instant messenger for special types of interactions, back and forth, back and forth at work. Telling each other what you need, all different kinds of things. That's a good idea.*

She, along with W5 and W6, described the expectation that managers learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), legislation that all workers were familiar with but managers less so:

*W4: I think the ADA could help people understand what to do with workers like me. To teach them what to do to improve communication.*

When asked if he believed his manager knew about the ADA, W6 said he did, but during her private interview, she told the researcher she did not. Deaf Culture was another thing mentioned by W5 and W6 which they felt hearing people took a long time to get used to. Part of American Sign Language involves exaggerated face movement, which can be misinterpreted:

*W5: I do know that they were put off by my facial expression—they think I'm angry when I'm not. But they'll eventually get that it's a part of Deaf culture.*

### **Accommodations Currently in Practice**

Each of the Deaf workers reported that their training and day-to-day task communication at their restaurants is accomplished, in part, through gesture and demonstration from peers (not typically managers). Like their managers, all describe this strategy as working effectively, but not necessarily as their optimal accommodation of choice. W1 expressed a preference for previous Video Relay Interpreting, but now learns through gesture. In her case, unlike at other sites, the manager was aware of the availability and preference for American Sign Language access, but began opting for an accommodation that was less expensive:

*W1: Before, [another Deaf worker] was working with me in the mornings. And we would sit together at meetings for the interpreter. But they refuse to pay for the interpreter for me anymore. When she moved to second shift...The reason why? Because they say they can't afford it...When learning the second floor duties, [my hearing coworker] said she would come with me the first time...I shadowed her, the first time. I learned, and she helped me do everything, I learned the whole process. When it was finished, she said now do it yourself. She said, "you're doing it by yourself tomorrow."*

W1 did note, however, that she and her manager used technology to communicate—a function called talk-to-text on the manager's mobile device. The manager would press a button, talk into his phone, and a transcription would appear on the screen, which he would then show the worker.

W2, W3, and W5 describe similar successes through observing demonstrated tasks:

*W2: I learned on my own. I learned from other dishwashers. Some of them taught me how to use different things. I shadowed them, I observed that's all, and in a short time I learned. Just like that. I got used to it. That's it.*

*W3: They showed me the big bowls for family-style. They had a black line and a red line on the bowl, to fill up to a certain level, not too much over the line, you*

*had to look. I said, "Oh, thank you very much for helping me." They taught me how to do that. It was nice of them to teach me.*

*W5: I was shown how to do it and could do it in a really short amount of time, get it done.*

W2 said that, although American Sign Language would be optimal, training and task communication did go smoothly simply through gesture and writing:

*W2: Communication is a more challenging experience for us [Deaf people], to get through. So—just being active. Acting, and other people knowing body language. Some people know how. Some hearing people don't. [With them] I've learned to write, sometimes text.*

When asked if she felt satisfied with accommodation from managers, however, W3 had a different perspective. She explained that, though she held her manager personally in positive regard and felt he was kind, she did not feel satisfied with accommodation. In fact, it was one of the reasons she left the restaurant during the time of data collection for the present study:

*W3: all the time, [the managers] were busy. I felt frustrated, myself. So that's when I decided that I would resign. I told them many times, I want an interpreter to discuss things.*

W6 echoed W3's sentiment about having a kind manager who simply did not have enough time on shift to demonstrate and communicate using writing:

*W6: She was hurrying and really busy. There wasn't time, we ran out of time. For her to write when she's hurrying, in a hurry, there's not enough time.*

After W6 returned from a several week medical leave, he expressed disappointment that his manager forgot to fill him in on changes that had taken place in his absence:

*W6: After I came back, a lot had changed. New things had been put up, and they didn't tell me. I missed it, and the supervisor forgot to let me know. She forgot to let me know. She taught and explained to all the others, but forgot me, with the new things that changed.*

W4, like her peers, expressed a preference for written and gestured communication, but was more frequently made to read lips for communication on her shift. Interestingly, her manager hardly mentioned using speech reading when describing their task communication. W4's account paints a picture of a primarily speech-reading environment, in contrast to what her manager described. She recounted a time when she was verbally scolded for a work error, and she had to struggle to understand the details of what she had done wrong:

*W4: He just, like, got really mad, like "you're not using the right thing! That's soap! Should be a different soap. This!" Just said all that and stormed out.... I read lips, I understood. But I just looked at him like, that was really rude! He was just talking at me. But I kept quiet, just watched him.*

She said she would occasionally call her manager from her home videophone through a Sign Language relay interpreter in lieu of trying to talk to her manager on site, namely because it was difficult to read his lips.:

*W4: I think gesture and writing are better than speech reading. Because it depends on who I'm speech reading. Some are really clear, but some are not, they talk with tight lips, so I miss things, or I don't know if—because a lot of words look the same.*

### **Addressing Concerns/Giving Feedback**

Deaf workers, like their managers, did not describe overwhelming breakdowns of communication with each other regarding feedback and addressing concerns:

*W2: I have no complaints. No need to freak out. Period. It's important to think positive, and get along. The managers see it and is impressed before long.*

Workers did note, however, that when minor challenges arose, they tended to keep it to themselves, so as not to create waves:

*W4: If he's not willing, sometimes I just drop it. Leave him alone. I just find a way and just get back to doing my work. Just got to leave him be, and just think positive, and go on doing my work.*

*W6: I felt nervous while cutting, nervous. She said "I see you're nervous," she understood, but didn't say anything. And then I got used to things. It was just a process to get used to it.*

For example, W1 had a particular concern about having to work in the dark for a part of the third shift when the restaurant's lights shut off on a timer:

*W1: I didn't say anything, I just tried to think positive...I don't complain or get mad...[but] I want explanation more in-depth, I need it to understand... [Contacting a lawyer] would be problems, worries, things would get messed up and I'd end up with no job...I feel like this issue...I feel like they're too busy. [My manager] is busy. I told HR, I've called and called, it's always an answering machine. So many times, they're busy. A lot.*

As mentioned earlier, only Restaurants 2 and 5 had formal evaluation processes. While M2 did not know how the Deaf worker was evaluated before she started managing him, she assumed she would need to bring in a Sign Language interpreter. W2, however, described the process with his old manager, which involved no Sign Language at all:

*W2: We texted back and forth, and it went smoothly...Mostly the review was on a form. There was a list of things, proper uniform, dishwashing skills, and so on, were you very good and responsible, did you have good attendance, did you skip work, did you text if there was an emergency, if there was snow, and so on. And he wrote from a scale, 'average', 'good'...it depended...it depended, like, 'poor', 'good', 'average', like that. And then, we just got through it, I signed off, that was it, I folded it up and took it with me.*

W5 noted that his manager was a consistent source of support for his concerns, even when he was experiencing challenges with his peers:

*W5: I asked [another dishwasher], and he tried to explain but it was hard to communicate. He was pointing out all these things, but in Spanish, and I didn't understand. So I emailed my manager, and he wrote everything out for me, and I read it and was all clear on it.*

## Under-estimation

When managers made statements that could be characterized as under-estimation of deaf individuals and their skills, it seemed to come from a place of not knowing—lack of exposure. Deaf workers are all too used to hearing people’s assumptions, and while the participants were not angered about their managers’ perceived misjudgments, they did notice, and they did have something to say.

*W1: “It’s like they’re nervous because they’ve never seen a deaf person before. They’re used to just going around and talking to everyone. Right? But then for the first time there’s someone like me. Someone will explain that that person [me] is deaf, but it doesn’t matter, she understands things. I interact with hearing and deaf.*

W2 felt successful in showing his manager and peers his level of competence, and did not report awkward responses to his deafness:

*W2: I try to have—to break through. So they can see how, facing a challenge, deaf people can be successful. They see that deaf are capable... so far everything’s been comfortable.*

W6 described being deeply offended by an assumption his restaurant’s general manager made. When his direct manager told her superior that the client was going to drive to another location, the general manager asked her how that was possible, as W6 is Deaf.

*W6: He thought deaf people can’t drive cars, I’m thinking, noooo. I have a car! The supervisor was like, whoa, whoa, deaf people can drive.*

Reflecting on her experience in the restaurant, W3 articulated eloquently her perspectives on stigmatization and undervaluation of Deaf workers:

*W3: Hearing people need to learn and understand what Deaf people want, what they wish for in a job...what we want is for more Deaf people to be hired for jobs. To work. Because Deaf [people] know how hearing people do it. Please help Deaf people, bring them on for jobs, help them. And Deaf people can teach sign language and hearing can interpret, and use finger spelling, both will be happy to be part of the team. Work will be fun...Can Deaf [people] do it? Yes, Deaf can do*



*that, yeah. I've heard that Deaf people are [working] in many places all over the world. It doesn't matter what it is, Deaf can do it. This work. We can do it. Come on, don't play.*

### **Accommodation of Health and Safety**

Neither managers nor workers felt that workplaces were unsafe for a person who cannot hear. Only Manager 4 mentioned concerns about his Deaf worker's ability to stay safe in the kitchen. Several workers, however, mentioned health or safety concerns *unrelated* to deafness of which their managers did not seem to be aware:

*W1: I'm not comfortable when the lights go out [automatically at night], Because I could hurt myself, it's dangerous, I could slip and fall...all of the other workers complained, too, to the supervisor. They complained, "why are the lights going out?" To save money. Because the bills are high... I feel frustrated.*

*W2: [did someone teach you first aid?] Nah, we just use the box with the...doctor, hospital or whatever...you know the box with the cross on it on the wall (First Aid Kit). Pull open the door, get treatment from inside, apply it to the area, that's it. Finished, go back to work. I'm used to it; we know what's inside the kit.*

*W4: Bleach impacts my health somewhat, because I'm allergic to bleach. Like it causes me to feel like, woozy, like I'm going to faint, but I just have to tolerate it, get through it... I asked [for a mask], said that I was allergic to bleach, but he said I can't—one can smell it, but it can't get me sick. Even though I get dizzy easily... it seemed like he did not care. But I'm like, forget it.*

W2, W5, and W6 mentioned that they feel safe in their environments because they have historically gotten help from their managers and coworkers:

*W2: [The manager] knows I'm deaf, and if there's an emergency and everyone is reacting, she knows it's important to let me know. To help... [In the past] There was an alarm that went off, and I was tapped on the shoulder and told to go out. And I was like, 'what's happening? Fire?' Oh, fine, so I followed all the people out...All the people know me, know I'm Deaf, of course. They know; they would never leave me there.*

*W5: With my being deaf, they keep a distance to make sure I'm safe...they keep a safe distance, or they will tap me and let me know if something is hot. Some have even learned the sign "hot". When they put something down that's hot. One guy*

*learned it on his own! He would gesture/wave like “hot”, and then he learned [the sign] hot. Learned it on his own, I was really surprised.*

*W6: [My manager] told me before, with the lettuce, the tool to chop, she said don't cut yourself. No no no. You can cut yourself on the mechanism that comes down. I know to keep away from it. Don't touch it. She pointed out the red dot. Don't touch that. Waved her finger, “no, no”.*

### **Accommodations for Growth and Promotion**

When asked whether they could see Deaf workers getting promoted, the attitude of most managers could be described as cautiously optimistic. Because Deaf workers lauded their own skills and abilities to perform their job, the researcher expected that they would feel confident in their ability to grow and acquire more responsibility at their restaurants. Their responses, however, suggested hesitance:

*W1: Me? Become a manager? I don't feel that would happen. Because how would I communicate? Gesturing—I would need, with hearing—I wish I could be a manager, but—a manager or a supervisor, or whatever, I wish I could but communicating would be hard. They'd need to be responsible for bringing in an interpreter. It would be hard for me... I feel I'm capable, ready, motivated. The one problem is communication; that's the one problem. Communication. That's tough.*

*W2: [Having a Deaf manager?]. It's mostly positive with a hearing [manager], but it would be somewhat positive another way. It's just, if hearing [people] can't...communicate. They need interpreters, it's easier for the managers to have interpreters come. I think for me it would be easier to converse [with a deaf manager], it would work out more smoothly.*

*W4: [Promotion?] I think it depends on if the flow leads me. I want to try to finish my college major from before, but I want to become a manager in the restaurant or in general with the food industry.*

*W5: Well so far, I've been here a pretty long time, if I asked could I become a runner, I don't know. Good question. I would try, and I would hope that it would work. My [hearing] friend, he's a dish runner, setting tables and all that, and I get ideas about how I as a deaf person could communicate, you know what I mean? I wonder. I'm curious if a deaf person would be able to do it...I see my current manager, he's so friendly...I've never seen a deaf manager before. If it were in real life, and they could bring in a deaf manager, I don't know.*

*W6: In my experience, having a deaf manager in a restaurant would be so stressful, with all the communication.*

### **Overall Perceptions of Deaf Performance**

In full agreement with their managers, all of the Deaf workers felt that their performance was at least as strong as their hearing peers in the restaurant environment. For some, deafness is actually seen as a work advantage. This idea is known in contemporary Deaf Studies as *Deaf Gain* (Bauman & Murray, 2009). Deaf Gain is the reframing of hearing loss as an asset—rather than a deficit—in certain circumstances (i.e. freedom from auditory distraction, enhanced visual acuity, etc.). W1 and W2 even suggested that hearing workers can be lazy, while they never see this characteristic in Deaf workers:

*W1: [My boss] says, “she’s the best, number one, she smiles at everyone and says hello to people, and is good and respectful, and willing to help.” I say, I’m willing, of course! He notices that, but with the other workers, eh, I don’t know.*

*W2: Most of the time she’s satisfied with me, I think. Sees deaf can do it. I think of other workers who are lazy, different other people...I keep working hard, to prove myself. I see some of the other hearing [workers], some are a bit of trouble. Some are lazy sometimes, a little...I’m focused. I think the other people, they’re always talking. But deaf [people] don’t chat. They are focused, just keep busy until they’re finished, and when they’re done, they go home. And that’s it.*

In some respects, it seemed to the researcher at times that the Deaf workers were using their interviews as platforms to inform the hearing population about their competency. Despite having notably less access to natural communication in the workplace, they believe—as do the managers—that they can perform on the same level as their peers with communication advantages:

*W2: I look forward to them seeing that many deaf can do it. Look and be like, wow. Why not --I think they could hire more Deaf in the future. You never know. That sure would be nice, anyway.*

*W3: We can do it. And I want—wish the hearing people could understand what deaf people can work, like restaurants, janitorial, any stocking, anything in a restaurant. Because they're cooking, they're serving their good food to the people. Deaf people can cook and other people with serve those people. I would appreciate that. Sameness.*

*W6: The manager said that everyone should work with me. Why? Because I'm a hard worker.*

Table 9. How do the viewpoints of hearing managers compare with those of Deaf employees regarding *social integration*?

THEME	DEAF WORKER RESPONSE
Manager heart & ethos	Though sometimes disappointed, Deaf workers held managers in positive regard
Social Communication	It is difficult, but creative ways are found
Interacting with hearing coworkers	Teaching ASL, sharing technology, and gesture serve to bring Deaf and hearing workers together
Deaf culture	Hearing managers do not understand how important ASL and Deaf culture are for workers

### **Manager Heart and Ethos**

In concordance with the reports of their managers, Deaf workers did express that they felt their hearing managers—and peers—to be good people. Only W4 noted personal disappointment with her direct manager's general character and behavior, and W3 felt that one supervisor person in her large restaurant and one coworker had antagonistic intentions (though her direct manager and the general manager were warm and kind). Their unanimous preference for signed communication did not negatively color how they viewed the ethical intentions of their managers.

*W2: That would be pretty good, a little sign. Some, that would be nice, a good thing. But some managers they never sign, some others, they know some sign, they're nice people.*

*W3: [My manager] he does good. He helps me a lot. Like at the same time, the other, higher-level boss also helps. The two of them help me more with what they need me to do with that team, be supportive. And that's good. Fine. It makes me feel comfortable with them, the manager and the boss... [The third manager}, All the time he would get mad; every morning, it would bother people, make them stressed. He had a hard time working with people.*

*W4: Actually, there are three general managers. My boss and two others. The top one...he's ok, but it depends on his mood. I try to interact with him in a nice way, because he seems kind of bitter. So I, you know, whatever. The second and the third [managers] are perfectly fine; I just go ahead and communicate well with them. They voice, or write things down for me, but the first one, no. It's tough. I had thought he was only mad at me, that I was alone, but I asked my coworker, I said he always, always tends to be mad at me, and she said no, he tends to be mad at all of us for no reason.*

*W5: My manager, he's so friendly. I ask him if we can talk, and he's like, "sure, sure" and he writes in the notebook. And the chef, if I ask if we can talk, he's like "sure!" and he writes. Do you need help? Are you ok? Both of them, they're great.*

Interestingly, though W6 spent much of the interview criticizing his manager for having limited time to communicate with him, he texted the researcher shortly after their interview concluded, stating:

*W6: I forgot to tell you, my manager hugs me, she hugs coworker, manager and supervisor too. She seems nice and friendly me and everyone. That's it.*

### **Social Communication**

Workers had a great deal to say about their social interactions with people in the workplace. Like their managers, they generally noted that modified communication through writing, speech reading, gesture, and some signing, was functional. Unlike their hearing managers, however, they placed emphasis on the difficulty inherent in these types of communications for Deaf workers:

*W1: Hearing with Deaf is...it's trying, it's hard.*

*W4: I feel maybe it's a challenge to communicate with people. If I want to write something down, they refuse. Some are willing to write back, but some just talk at me. People will be talking and looking away in another direction. And I feel like, so frustrated, but I have to keep it to myself and be patient.*

*W5: Sometimes it's hard to communicate with me being Deaf*

*W6: Hearing can understand. They hear all the chatter around them and understand. For Deaf people, it's hard.*

As noted by managers at Restaurant 3 and Restaurant 5, the Deaf staff members teach American Sign Language vocabulary to their hearing peers as a means of social interaction.

*W1: She [my friend] knows, she is used to signing. She learned here. She knew the signed alphabet before, and she would fingerspell. Then she progressed...she still fingerspells, and I also teach her and encourage her...She helps me, we help each other. [laughs] she says "arrgghh, sign it again but slowly!" So I sign really slowly. And bit by bit, and then she knows... she's signing, she's slowly improving, not bad. She's learning, and she's happy about it.*

*W2: I've taught one of-one, um, he's a waiter. I've taught him to use some signs, to say 'thank you', 'excuse me', different things...he's nice, he's a good guy.*

*W3: A manager who wanted to learn, he was motivated and wanted to learn more sign, so I was teaching him to sign. Writing, signing, I was teaching him and he was improving pretty good... Yes, some signs they learned, they picked up, they would ask me to show them what—this, how would you say it in Sign Language? So I would teach them. What would you say, how would you say...good, how do you say good morning, how...do you say, um, how do you say 'what do you want to drink', 'what do you want to eat'...meat...a lot of things. They'd learn more, a lot. Pretty good. Sometimes they'd forget and I would help, teach them. It was fun.*

*W5: [Coworkers] actually know some Sign Language. They do it, they're fascinated...I show them. Like how to sign "cook", "what", "cool", "brother", "how are you", and "what's up?" ... Then out on the cooking line, I'll say, do you want to learn signs? Cooking signs? They are curious and I'll go over and I'll show them like, "meat".*

Beyond learning American Sign Language, some hearing and Deaf workers had other creative ways of socializing:

*W4: They use like, tissues—like napkins, they write on them with pens and give them to me. Sometimes I look and then I'll type on my phone back to them. But they answer back with writing on napkins. It is funny. They write on napkins and show me... one guy writes like, "nice to see you." It's cool.*

*W5: I've shown people [my art], like my manager and some of my line cook friends. Because it's my major at school. They're like, wow, that's cool...And my daughter, with her [Girl Scout] cookies, I asked for some support in the group, and they all pitched in, bought the cookies, and when I brought [the money] home she was so excited.*

When asked whether they thought their Deaf workers socialized outside of the work environment, most reported that people seemed friendly on the job, but that they had no idea if they actually saw each other in their free time. Workers attested to the fact that they never saw hearing peers outside of their restaurants, with one exception:

*W5: Someone invited me to drink juice. Said—well there is this 24-hour diner...I was willing to go. He is a nice guy. We used Facebook, communicating, just showing each other pictures, I showed him pictures of my art. And he said how should he communicate with deaf people, and I wrote, and showed him.*

Several provided explanations for why they simply did not socialize, mostly related to communication style. W1 stated that all workers, Deaf and hearing, were simply too tired after their shifts were over. Others had different reports:

*W2: They're with other friends, with a hearing group. They go. But me, I don't join, forget it. I'm deaf, I'd just be sitting there, they'd interact, but me, I'm lost. Forget it... I'm not hearing. They can't communicate with a deaf person; I'm the only one. They're a group, I'm singled out. With a group of deaf people, fine. Perfect. I can interact perfectly. But otherwise, no. I just let them go.*

*W3: One [hearing] guy made me uncomfortable, made fun, when I couldn't talk. But I read his lips. And I'm like, 'you think I'm blind? No, I can read your lips, what you're saying about me.' So, he was shocked... I tried to be nice, I teach you nice signs, for what? For you to make fun of me? But in general the other people supported me. So they would say [to him] "stop talking about other people."*

*W6: Well...I like this one woman, she's nice and I like her. I want to be friends and communicate, but eh...is hard...she's pretty, she's cute, I like her, I want to*

*communicate with her... but she just walks by and goes to talk to the Mexicans. I'm like, darn! I wish I could talk.*

Recalling the account from M6 about the ‘bonus’ addition of a Deaf companion to the company trip enhancing what she felt was already a team with adequate hearing-Deaf communication, W6’s memory of the day was very different. He dreaded the idea of an all-day outing with only hearing coworkers, and felt pressured to do so:

*W6: We did good business so we won a free gift of a trip to [AMUSEMENT PARK], they gave it away. But if you didn't want to go to the amusement park, they'd take it out of your check... So I said, ok, ok. But I was willing to bear with it and go, ...I didn't want to go, communicating with hearing people... [The manager asked] “you want to bring a deaf person? Ok, fine”. Phew. For chatting.*

It seems that, despite his manager’s flexibility and good intentions, W6 did not feel that a long recreational day with hearing coworkers would be sufficient for socialization.

### **Practical Interaction with Hearing Coworkers**

Deaf workers also shared their perspectives on logistical exchanges that take place between Deaf and hearing individuals at their workplaces. These accounts were generally in line with what was shared by managers:

*W1: With people, if people come up and start talking to me, I gesture [points to ears] and say, “I can't hear.” And they're like, “ohhhhh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.” I say, “it's okay! It's okay.” But then they go away. It can be hard with hearing people...it's like they're nervous because they've never seen a deaf person before. They're used to just going around and talking to everyone. Right? But then for the first time there's someone like me.*

W1 also provided a surmised explanation of why some of the less social hearing workers at her restaurant choose not to interact with her:

*W1: Because the others are snobby, it's just “Hi”, really we just pass each other. They're jealous of what I'm doing, if I'm doing a good job. I'm great; I'm focused.*



W2 and W4 describe the pitfalls of speech reading that they encounter on a daily basis, as well as their efforts to promote texted communication:

*W2: Sometimes I understand [lip-reading], sometimes no. But it's easy to try to use texting, that's easy and I understand right away. It's easy, saves time.*

*W4: I will text to THEM, but then they speak back with their voices. And I'm like (sighs). I do understand clearly but I'm—I keep my thoughts about it to myself. Sometimes I miss part of it, a word here or there, and then I ask them to repeat it, and sometimes they have an attitude about it...I can't hear you, I'm Deaf. To fully lip-read, you have to look straight at me so I can see your lips better, instead of you looking in another direction and talking. I miss a bunch of things that way because the information is far away, the words are far away. I don't know what you're telling me to do over there.*

## **Deaf Culture**

One theme that arose among Deaf workers that was never mentioned by managers was Deaf culture, which encompasses American Sign Language (directly or through interpreters) and a Deaf worldview. It is likely that managers were not aware that such a cultural identity exists. Because they reported knowing so few—if any—Deaf people before their current workers, deafness easily may have been understood as nothing more than a physical deficit.

*W2: A lot of deaf people are motivated and learn many different jobs...by themselves. Some of them can't by themselves, they have to learn with an interpreter...I don't need to depend on an interpreter. I just learn as I go along.*

*W3: [The manager] was good communicating with me. He understood what the deaf feel...But they knew how I felt I had to resign ...you have to accept Deaf culture, you have to accept having interpreters.*

*W6: Signing, my language. I told her it was important to communicate with signs, meaning ASL, signs. And she was just like, whatever. But my hands are precious, you know what I mean? Sign language. It's my life...the point with being deaf, it's different. How I feel, and my experience, they're not the same as hearing.*

While managers certainly recognized that ASL was the native language of their workers, the language's tie to Deaf identity was less clear. Because using ASL and providing interpreters were undeniably the most difficult and costly accommodations to make, logistics and socialization were that much for distanced from worker culture.

### **Emergent, Indirect Themes**

Two themes arose repeatedly in interviews with both hearing managers and Deaf workers: Time and Spanish. The following section will describe the contexts in which each of these themes arose, and discuss potential impacts.

#### **Time**

More often when discussing accommodation and less often when discussing social integration, participants mentioned time as a limitation in daily working life:

*W1: if I need help or have a problem...I text the manager. But sometimes when I go looking for him then I'm like, forget it. So I tap another worker and ask do they mind calling the supervisor to ask him to come to me.*

M6 reported that she would write to her Deaf worker unless it was getting close to the lunch rush. At that point, she leaned more on gesture and speech reading. W6 attested the same:

*W6: There wasn't enough time. She was hurrying and really busy. There wasn't time, we ran out of time. For her to write when she's hurrying, in a hurry, there's not enough time. One minute, two minutes, that's all.*

M3 and M4 reinforced M6's notion that the fast pace of a restaurant is sometimes not conducive to styles of communication that take longer, such as writing.

*M4: When you're talking to a language barrier or deaf, you want to get a little bit more specific, but like I said, in the restaurant business, sometimes you got that 10 seconds.*

*M3: I don't think they would...have the time [to communicate with the Deaf worker], or they wouldn't want to deal with trying to teach her. I think it was more of like, they personally didn't wanna have to deal with teaching her something new.*

It is possible that the same time constraint had an impact on Deaf -hearing social integration, though it wasn't mentioned overtly at most sites;

*M6: Deaf and hearing socialize, but it's just, I don't think, you don't have the time, I feel like. She said only the kids that go to school together seem to socialize outside the restaurant.*

## **Spanish**

In 2011, the United States Department of Labor estimated that people of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity represented 15% of the U.S. labor force, and will likely comprise 19% of the labor force by 2020 ([www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)). The majority of these individuals are Spanish speakers, and unsurprisingly, each of the restaurants included in the sample had Spanish speaking kitchen employees. The language and its users, however, were perceived differently. In some cases, English as a second language was a commonality between Deaf and Latino workers. In others, it was a source of tension. For some participants (managers and workers), communication strategies with Spanish-only employees bore similarities to those used with Deaf workers.

*M1: Like the "I translate" [app]. And this, you can speak in English, and it will translate to Spanish, or you can, um, there's like 15 different languages...so they can speak in Spanish and it interprets to English, or you can type it, and it will do it...I would love—it'd be nice to have something where I can say it, and then it would, it would automatically sign.*

*M2: I do know that if we needed any, um, an interpreter for you know, anyone who you know, speaks Spanish, and comes in, that would—is something that we do. I would only venture to say that anything else is like that.*

*M5: Originally I thought it'd be a little bit more difficult than it was, um, but the fact that, um, our back of the house is predominantly, um, Spanish speaking, um, I*

*do not know much Spanish at all, um, so a lot of that communication is already kind of by hand gestures, um, and kind of leading by example. Um, and it's interesting how much that, you know, that correlates to having an employee that's deaf...with the back-of-house employees that predominantly speak Spanish, they are used to, um, trying to communicate with us in the same type of manner. They actually communicate with him, I would say, better than I communicate with him.*

For others, the fact that a hearing coworker did not use English writing worsened communication with Deaf individuals in the workplace. M5, whose manager lauded the nonverbal communication in the kitchen and who himself felt comfortable with his Spanish-speaking team, noted that there were, indeed, instances when his fellow kitchen staff would, in fact, write notes, but there wasn't enough English for him to understand, and he resorted to asking his English-speaking manager. M3 also noted the issue:

*M3: I also have a lot of people that speak Spanish. They might not feel comfortable as well, speaking to a deaf person if they only speak Spanish, or vice versa, 'cause they can't write English. So that might have been a problem, too.*

### **Summary of Results**

The results of this study suggests more commonalities than differences in the experience of accommodation and social integration in restaurants where hearing managers employ Deaf workers. More themes arose around the issue of task accommodation than social integration. Managers generally reported that although the experience of managing Deaf workers was new and unusual, they felt satisfaction with both the performance of the Deaf worker and the strategies used for accommodation and integration. Ignorance about accommodation procedures and possible stigmatization of Deaf workers produced accommodation climates that were functional but not optimal. Regarding social integration and personal attitudes toward Deaf people, however, almost no reluctance or interpersonal tension was reported.

Despite almost no access to American Sign Language, Deaf workers expressed positive feelings toward both their managers and their places of employment, echoing, to some degree, the positive nature of the experience articulated by managers. Several expressed a preference for different or more frequent accommodations, but results indicated there is very little to suggest problems with social interaction or personal animosity.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand accommodation and integration in everyday working life for hearing managers of Deaf workers. Guided by literature about deafness and disability in the employment sector, the study used a constructivist lens and stigma theory for contextualization. Using an empirical phenomenological approach, data was collected through observation and interviews with hearing managers (N=6) and Deaf workers (N=6) at restaurants throughout the Chicago Metropolitan area. Preliminary and axial coding assisted by computer software drew out major themes and notable findings. These findings address the research question in numerous ways, providing a baseline for understanding the key phenomena of the study. The following section will provide a discussion of findings.

The personal perspectives of managers in high volume restaurants were collected, and the viewpoints of their Deaf employees were included to add depth and context to the analysis. Often, managers and workers held common views of the accommodation and integration experiences. In certain instances, discrepancies illuminated issues on which attention should be focused to create resources and education for managers to improve accommodation and integration processes. This chapter discusses the results of the study through a critical, analytical lens, drawing conclusions and implications. Study limitations and recommendations for future research are also articulated.

## Discussion of Results

### Functional, not Optimal, Circumstances

One pattern emerging from analysis is that existing accommodations are functional, and while not optimal for Deaf workers (i.e., use of ASL), allow working life to function in a manner that is satisfactory to both managers and workers. Both sets of participants indicated satisfaction but made suggestions for improvement. Managers expressed a desire for more resources, such as knowledge of American Sign Language and technology, and workers expressed a desire for American Sign Language to be used in lieu of and/or in addition to common practices such as writing, gesturing, demonstrating, and speech reading. As M2 summarized:

*M2: You know, not that it's, it's tough, it's just, it could be a little easier, you know, if you knew, if you were educated more on [ASL].*

What can be illustrated here is that managers wonder open-endedly about things that may enhance accommodation and integration. Deaf workers are much more specific about what they would like to be added to the work environment. The challenge at many of the sites was that, either through lack of opportunity/access or through personal choice, these preferences were not shared with managers.

Because workers do not state their complaints, managers do not know about accommodation and integration deficits in their own workplace. Motivations for not complaining to managers (while expressing complaints to the researcher) warrant further investigation. In Southall et al.'s (2011) study about reticence among employees to disclose hearing loss, employees felt there may be repercussions if their managers knew, and also expressed the desire not to add a communication burden to the work dynamic. In

the current study, managers know the workers are Deaf, but workers may say nothing when they desire better communication because they do not want to burden their managers, or even seem incapable and risk discipline/termination.

In this study, the managers express positive regard for Deaf workers and hope to retain them. The Deaf workers like their managers and hope to stay at their jobs. Accommodation and social integration are slightly more simple and successful than hearing managers reportedly expected, while slightly less ideal than Deaf workers reportedly desire. Results suggest that Deaf employment in hearing settings is functional but with room for improvement.

### **General Communication**

This study served as a prime example of surmounting communication barriers by making use of available, non-spoken forms of communication. Almost all on-site transactions between Deaf workers and their managers took place through gesture, with occasional writing on paper or texting sentences on mobile devices. Remote communication was conducted primarily through email and text message. After the initial interview and orientation stages of employment, American Sign Language interpreters were only used at one restaurant included in the study. Both the workers and the managers expressed that this arrangement was acceptable, but not ideal. The one challenge occasionally encountered was managers speaking to clients and presuming they could read lips.

The success of speech reading, or lip-reading, in obtaining accurate information varies significantly among persons with hearing loss (Altieri et al., 2011). Under the best of conditions, only about 40% of the English language is distinguishable visibly on the



mouth and lips (cdc.gov). Although less common at the work sites than other modes of communication, speech reading was disliked by Deaf workers and did not prove effective. Hearing managers were not aware initially of the level of difficulty involved in speech reading, but did learn through experience that it was not what Deaf workers preferred. Workers and managers felt the writing, showing, and gesturing tactics they became accustomed to with each other sufficed for communication of daily work tasks.

### **Accommodation**

Managers and workers at all sites experienced the process of disability accommodation, but rarely through modifications that required additional funds. Two of the sites purchased dry-erase boards for writing in the kitchen, and one site periodically paid for video remote interpreting (done through a computer screen with an off-site American Sign Language interpreter). In addition to the use of these accommodation tools, workers and managers concurred that writing, gesturing, and demonstrating tasks did allow workers to perform their jobs effectively. While four of the six managers expressed a desire to learn some American Sign Language, others felt satisfied with the status quo. All Deaf participants noted that they would like American Sign Language as an accommodation more often (whether through an interpreter or from hearing managers directly), but only one participant expressed a strong sense of injustice about having to work without it.

W1 reported holding her manager in positive regard, but noted that she often cannot find him or effectively get his attention by texting from another part of the restaurant. She often relied on a hearing coworker to call him from her cellphone. Though

texting technology was available, the manager only used his mobile device for voice phone calls. This example suggests the need for improved accommodation logistics.

Another actively used accommodation—the use of an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter for interviews, trainings, and formal evaluation—indicated a significant gap in knowledge on the part of managers. Although they were familiar with how ASL interpreters worked and were comfortable using them, managers were not aware of how interpreters were hired. Several studies have pointed out the sobering disconnect that persists between the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and employer—especially small and mid-size employer—knowledge of its mandates (Blackburn, 2002; Bruyère, Erickson & Van Looy, 2006; Mishra, 1995). Three out of six managers mentioned that the worker brought an interpreter with him/her at the interview and when subsequently asked during his/her employ, but they did not know where these interpreters came or who paid for them.

In the case of all Deaf workers who participated in this study, ASL interpreters were provided by the researcher's agency and paid for with monies through the Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services. Because managers were never before asked to take responsibility for interpreter coordination, they did not know how it was done. No managers knew how and when ASL interpreters were paid for their services. Hiring and paying interpreters is a protocol that can be easily taught to managers by human resource professionals, outside advocates, or even Deaf employees. Until their current situation, however, five out of six managers had never worked with a Deaf individual, and all six managers reported that their Deaf employees were, for various reasons, not assertive in making requests.

## **Social Integration**

Social integration between Deaf workers and hearing managers/staff looked largely the same at all sites studied. People were friendly and got along during their restaurant shifts. Neither hearing managers nor Deaf workers reported any personal nervousness or apprehension about working with each other, despite that fact that it was a first experience for all managers except one. This is notable, considering that workers without disabilities often express apprehension or judgement toward coworkers that receive differentiated treatment due to disability (Gething & Wheeler, 1992; McLaughlin, Bell, & Stringer, 2004). Hearing managers and coworkers at the research sites expressed willingness to engage with Deaf workers and help them feel comfortable, even when they had little knowledge about how to do so. The level of success of social integration aside, manager attitudes toward integration were generally positive.

Only one Deaf worker interviewed expressed personal resentment toward her manager; all other managers and workers in the study held each other unambiguously in positive regard. It should be noted, however, that the participant said her hearing peers also held unfavorable views of this particular manager. The researcher herself noted in bracketed journaling that the manager in question was abrasive. Even with limited communication, both hearing managers and Deaf workers spoke at length about having a comfortable, trusting rapport with each other. Participant-described “friendships” were at-work only. All of the managers reported limited knowledge of what their employees do outside of work. With one exception, none of the Deaf workers reported socializing with hearing workers outside of the restaurants.

W4 expressed frustration about social interactions with both her direct manager and several coworkers. She felt comfortable expressing to the researcher that she felt she was treated poorly, yet she never attempted to address her concerns with her supervisor, peers, or central human resource representative. She even thanked the researcher for “picking her for the study” and allowing her to express her feelings. It should be noted that adult work life is not the only arena in which Deaf people feel socially disconnected from hearing peers (Shaw & Robertson, 2013; Wilkins & Hehir, 2008). Whether or not they have a desire to socialize with those who do not know ASL, they are accustomed to social separation. It is not likely that the unanimous description of Deaf and hearing workers interacting socially only on shift is a result of any hostility inherent in the restaurant environment.

The restaurant environment is a microcosm of the larger social world, which reflects separateness based on language and culture. Particularly through immigration, restaurant staff teams are increasingly multi-cultural, and evolve in both their ethnic immersion and ethnic distinction (Gvion & Trostler, 2008). Restaurants and their offerings are representative of cultural changes in the country. Hearing managers who work with Deaf people gain two experiences: the ability to interact with members of an unfamiliar cultural group, as well as the observation of Deaf people’s periodic preference of their own in-group. The latter echoes patterns the managers likely see with familiar cultural groups, such as Mexican restaurant professionals, who may mingle in English at times, but at other times speak Spanish privately with other Mexican workers.

## Theoretical Implications

### Constructivism

Constructivism asserts that each individual perceives reality differently (Cooper & Lesser, 2008; Granvold, 1996). Analysis of participant responses reinforces the value of this meta-theoretical framework. As with any study, people expressed diverse viewpoints, with some commonalities and some contrasting elements. Thick description of the very same phenomenon (i.e., task communication through accommodation) experienced in a completely different way was a notable discovery. Managers assumed they were clear when they were not. Workers assumed they were socially devalued through lack of writing and signing efforts, when in fact their managers and coworkers thought highly of them.

It is important to note that the researcher herself perceived some aspects of managers' everyday working life through a different lens than the managers themselves. Informed by years of advocacy work with hearing managers and Deaf workers, she perceived many of the accommodation and integration scenarios described by managers to be challenging or stressful, while the managers said they experienced relative ease with these processes. They also felt more satisfied with functional—but not optimal—accommodations like writing and gesturing, while the researcher felt that better modifications should be provided for Deaf workers. For this reason, it is critical that researchers bracket their opinions and recognize reflexively that all people have different lived realities.

## Stigma

Though stigma theory (Goffman, 1963) would suggest social judgment and distancing on account of worker deafness, the current study illustrated that stigmatization was more relevant to accommodation than social integration. More specifically, undervaluation of Deaf abilities was the only prevalent example of managers stigmatizing workers. Managers held workers in high social regard, but expressed uncertainty about whether they could perform certain tasks. They surmised in several instances that, although workers were successful in their current roles, there were things in the restaurant they would not be able to do. In no instance were these suppositions based on evidence through trial and error or on previous experience with Deaf individuals.

Theorists studying stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001; Southall, 2011) assert that persons with hearing loss or disabilities are conscious of stereotypes and may feel devalued in the workplace. In the current study, workers felt that things like promotion would not be possible given the social hierarchy established by supervisory staff. In some cases, they doubted their *own* abilities. Future research could examine whether the origin of these personal doubts is a consequence of stigmatization.

Relating to social integration, the results of this study contradicted common expectations for stigmatization among people in the workplace. Goffman (1963) asserted that persons marked by difference, in this case deafness, are typically isolated from the mainstream population. All managers in the current study, however, described an active acceptance of alternative social communication with Deaf workers. Social acceptance in the restaurant environment may be due to the close proximity with which back-of-house staff members are required to work. Prior research (Gething & Wheeler, 1992; Olkin &

Howson, 1994) has shown that favorable attitudes toward people with disabilities increase with added social exposure. All managers and all workers described a level of friendliness and camaraderie that supports this idea. Whether they were being completely forthright or not, managers and workers both reported feeling comfortable interacting with each other, especially after the initial stage.

### **Stigma and Accommodation**

As mentioned in the previous section, while stigma was less of a variable in social integration, it appeared to have an impact on the perception of viable accommodations. Just as was the case in Foster and McLeod's (2003) study, managers lacked confidence that workers could be accommodated if they were promoted. Some were cautiously optimistic about the idea (M2, M6), while others felt certain it could not be done (M4). In this way, accommodation is viewed through a lens of unfamiliarity and pessimism, possibly owing to stigma or attribution (Hewstone, 1989)—the presumption that if a person is disabled in one area of functioning, she is also unable to perform other functions.

One area where stigma and accommodation did not appear to overlap in this study was interaction between Deaf and hearing coworkers. According to McLaughlin (2004), accommodation in the workplace has the potential to view disability negatively, depending on how much they believe they (nondisabled workers) will need to sacrifice for accommodation (i.e., changing schedules, taking on more difficult tasks, etc.). In this case, however, none of the participant reports indicate that coworkers or managers felt resentment of Deaf workers for needing accommodation. While they may not always

have had the time or ability to make an accommodation, there was no evidence that the *need* for accommodation was stigmatized.

This perception of Deaf workers is supported in the literature—several studies have suggested that managers and coworkers are more judgmental and stigmatizing when accommodations are due to addiction or mental health than to sensory impairments or physical disabilities (Goldstein & Blackman, 1975, Harasymiw, Home, & Lewis, 1976). Coworkers are more sympathetic to disabilities they feel are out of a person’s control, and as a result are more willing to make accommodations.

### **Willingness to Accommodate vs. Using the Easiest Accommodation**

Hearing managers asserted that they made accommodations for their Deaf workers, and Deaf workers consistently corroborated this assertion. It is the type of accommodation used; however, that brings complexity to the shared phenomenon of accommodation. Foster (1992) wrote that managers may selectively adhere to accommodation practices, or choose accommodations that are least expensive or most comfortable for hearing people. While it is true that both managers and workers in the current study reported using accommodations that were effective but less than optimal, context must be considered. Firstly, the majority of managers were unfamiliar with any kind of accommodations for Deaf workers, let alone those preferred by Deaf workers. Secondly, the accommodation preferred by Deaf workers—the use of ASL—is the most expensive and difficult to implement. Thirdly, as was discussed in the previous chapter delineating emergent themes, time limitations often constricted possibilities in the restaurant accommodation arena. Managers seemed to do the best with what they had,



and workers—though not without some complaint—were accepting of the limitations of their work environment.

### **Communication and Social Integration**

Although surface-level amity between Deaf and hearing staff was reported by all participants, managers supposed—and Deaf workers confirmed—that friendships did not typically extend beyond the work shift. While managers and workers speculated that hearing employees either socialized sporadically or had unknown social habits after their shifts, all participants were confident that Deaf and hearing workers did not fraternize outside of the workplace. Participants owed this limitation to language differences. With the exception of Restaurant 1, each site had only one Deaf worker, and the second Deaf worker did not share a shift with W1 at the time of data collection. Workers expressed satisfaction with the social climate but did desire to communicate in their own language, American Sign Language. The use of periodic ASL signs by hearing workers was readily welcomed, and the majority of the managers who participated expressed a desire to learn ASL.

Even when language barriers were bridged, however, hearing managers could never fully identify with the Deaf culture of their workers. W3 and W6 made statements about feeling isolated due to managers not understanding Deaf culture. In some ways, the current study has parallels with Friedner's (2013) ethnography of Café Coffee Day in India, where individuals expressed isolation on account of being the only Deaf workers at their restaurant locations. As with any minority culture, however, it is difficult for stakeholders with power (i.e., managers) to support cultural and linguistic preferences with severely limited knowledge and education. Managers at most sites did make an

effort to help Deaf workers feel included, but did not get sufficient feedback from workers or outside sources about how this could be done effectively.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### LIMITATIONS

There are four major areas of limitations to this study, which are discussed in the following section.

#### **Reliability**

Though triangulation of data was achieved through multiple methods of data collection, member checking was not employed. Member checking is an effective way to establish accuracy and confirm that participants and researchers are in agreement about interview content ((Mero-Jaffe, 2001; Saldaña, 2013). Due to time constraints on the part of managers and linguistic barriers on the part of Deaf workers, the decision was made not to conduct member checking.

Additionally, the current study employed on researcher who completed all coding of transcripts independently. To examine inter-coder reliability, a second reader coded approximately one half of a randomly chosen manager interview and one half of a randomly chosen worker interview. Using NVivo software, percentage agreement and unweighted Cohen's kappa were calculated. While total percentage agreement was very high (97.71% for managers and 96.71% for workers), the kappa coefficients were low for managers (.16) and fair for workers (.28) (Altman, 1991). These results suggest that, in the random sample, both coders assigned importance to the same nodes but identified different sections of the transcript as relating to said nodes. Because kappa values are highly dependent on both number of codes and number of coders (Feinstein, 1990), and

the current study has only two coders and a relatively low number of codes, more statistical analysis is recommended to assess the inter-coder reliability. The absence of extensive reliability testing for the researcher's coding is a significant limitation of the study.

### **Sample**

First, though the sample size was deemed appropriate for a qualitative study (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994), it was nonetheless small (N=12) and is thus not highly generalizable or representative of Deaf or hearing populations at large. Though relatively diverse in terms of race, age, and gender, it focused only on restaurant managers and back-of-house restaurant workers, and thus has limits in its implications for other types of vocations and work settings (for both managers and line staff).

Secondly, the researcher had a previous professional relationship with the Deaf workers, who comprise half of the sample. Purposive sampling in this study embodied general limitations of purposive sampling in qualitative research. Though the researcher had no previous contact with any of the managers, the need for purposive sampling and finding managers vis-à-vis their workers adds an unavoidable bias to the study and limits generalizability. It should be noted, however, that the researcher was well-informed on research ethics with samples of this nature, and the study was subjected to approval by the researcher's institutional review board. Supervision by her committee and checking of transcriptions by a Deaf scholar further served to mitigate bias.

Third, because participants were identified through previous professional contact with the researcher, and the researcher is an employment specialist, all restaurants sites included in this study have Deaf members of the workforce as a result of outside, third-

party advocacy. As such, the population studied lacks the perspectives of managers and workers who have never benefitted from support and accommodation assistance.

### **Social Desirability**

No one wishes to be seen as a person who discriminates against Deaf people. Kim et al. (2015) write that individuals tend to hold positive images of themselves with respect to interactions with persons with disabilities. In quantitative or mixed-method studies involving surveys, The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS, 1960) can be used to control for this tendency in participants. With qualitative inquiry, it is difficult to control for social desirability. In the United States, there is both social and legal precedent that dissuades individuals from expressing negative or discriminatory attitudes toward people with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990; Colella, 1994).

Deaf participants in the study may also have been influenced by social desirability. They may have wanted to show to the researcher they were capable, and had strong abilities to communicate with hearing managers without Sign Language, de-emphasizing some of the challenges they had. The purpose of including Deaf worker interviews was to mitigate one-sided understanding from managers, who may wish to present their management style as more accommodating and integrative than it is. Yet social desirability was a factor that impacted both populations studied. Interviews with Deaf workers took place separately and confidentially, so managers had no knowledge of worker accounts or vice versa.

### **Scope**

While Deaf worker testimonies were used to supply an alternate perspective to the managers' experiences with accommodation and social integration of Deaf workers, the dynamic between hearing managers and hearing workers was not examined, nor was it used for comparison. It is possible that some of the phenomena described by managers are not exclusive to the act of accommodating and integrating Deaf people, but rather are pieces of the general experience with logistical and social management of all restaurant workers. Restaurant work as a whole was not the focus of the study; rather, only accommodation and social integration were evaluated.

Additionally, because all of the participants in the study were in the Chicago Metropolitan area, viewpoints may not necessarily be representative of other regions or nations. While few phenomenological studies can purport to represent, with depth and specificity, the experiences of a wide geographic and demographic range of people, the particularities of the current study should nonetheless be noted.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

#### **Implications**

Taking into account some variance, this study illustrates that improving accommodation (and education about accommodation) is an expressed need among the sample studied. Social integration, entailing friendly interactions and lack of isolating social patterns, is not shown to be in need of as much help. This distinction is significant in terms of focusing the development of new resources on accommodation support rather than Deaf-hearing socialization strategies. Indeed, hearing individuals in the restaurant setting may be less apprehensive about interacting with Deaf people than other studies have supposed. Given tools to effectively and appropriately provide task-related accommodations could improve workplaces for all parties involved. Such improvements may have a bearing not only on restaurants that currently employ Deaf workers, but also on talent recruitment and management in the restaurant industry in general.

The findings have strong implications for four general populations:

- (1) Current restaurant employees: Hearing managers and Deaf workers can see that, despite challenges, integrative hearing/Deaf restaurant employment can be not only viable but thriving.
- (2) Inexperienced hearing restaurant managers: Those who have never hired Deaf workers now have a strong example of everyday working life. This snapshot of the

- phenomenon of managing Deaf workers may influence more hearing managers to do so despite previous trepidation.
- (3) Deaf community members: Both Deaf individuals who have worked/are working in restaurants and those who have/are not may be exposed to the challenges and successes of their peers from this study in ways that allow them to think differently about employment opportunities.
- (4) Advocates: Social workers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, and human resource development professionals seeking to improve upon social conditions and accessibility for Deaf workers now have information to guide the creation of training, education, and support resources that help managers learn about accommodation and socialization.

The benefit shared by all of these stakeholders is exposure. Clear examples of functional Deaf-hearing work environments are infrequent, and their absence keeps them out of the consciousness of employers. Worse, the absence of examples may suggest to both managers and Deaf job seekers that these environments do not exist. The more exposure hearing workers have to Deaf workers, the greater levels of acceptance (Colella, 1994; McLaughlin et al., 2004) become. Stronger acceptance may pave the way for stronger accommodation and social integration.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The results of this study inspire recommendations for further research in three areas. First, replication of this study design with other sectors where Deaf people work is suggested. It would be important to know if there is something singular or special about high volume restaurants that impacts accommodation and social integration, or if similar



patterns would be found, for example, in other sectors like retail or logistics. Secondly, more research is needed on effective ways for hearing managers to learn about accommodation. It remains to be seen how much accommodation could improve were managers to have actual knowledge what to do and tools for how to do it. Lastly, addressing the fact the many Deaf workers in the current study did not express their concerns about accommodation and integration to their hearing managers or coworkers, further study is recommended to examine the underlying reasons for this figurative silence. The more that is known about reluctance to self-advocate, the more that can be done to provide strategies for empowerment.

Much has been done in recent decades to improve employment opportunities for people who are Deaf, but there is still a long way to go. As poet Charles Baudelaire (1951) wrote, “nothing can be done except little by little.” Opportunities for exposure and resources for education are little things. They are doable things; they are often inexpensive things. Exposure and education are tools that, when used individually but by many, have a chance at making a difference.

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR HEARING EMPLOYERS

1. What is your current role in the restaurant?
2. Have you had past roles in the restaurant?
3. How long have you been employed by the company?
4. How many years of total work experience do you have?
5. What is your highest level of education obtained?
6. What is your age?
7. With what gender do you identify?
8. With what race/ethnicity do you identify?
9. Describe a typical work shift
10. What are your general thoughts about managing a deaf employee?
11. What has been your experience with training deaf workers?
12. What has been your experience with establishing expectations with deaf workers?
13. What has been your experience with communicating daily tasks with deaf workers?
14. What has been your experience with providing feedback about performance?
15. What has been your experience with addressing concerns with deaf workers?
16. What has been your experience with scheduling deaf workers?
17. What has been your experience with managing health and safety?
18. What has been your experience with providing opportunities for learning and growth?
19. Describe your experience with the *accommodation* process
20. Describe your experience with the *social integration* process
21. Are deaf employees different than hearing employees? If so, how?
22. Are there things that might change the experience of managing deaf workers? If so, what are they?

23. Is there anything else you wish to share about your daily experience managing deaf workers?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR DEAF WORKERS

1. What is your current role in the restaurant?
2. Have you had past roles in the restaurant?
3. How long have you been employed by the company?
4. How many years of total work experience do you have?
5. What is your highest level of education obtained?
6. What is your age?
7. With what gender do you identify?
8. With what race/ethnicity do you identify?
9. Describe a typical work shift
10. What are your general thoughts about working with a hearing manager?
11. What has been your experience with training by hearing managers?
12. What has been your experience with establishing expectations with hearing managers?
13. What has been your experience with communicating daily tasks with hearing managers?
14. What has been your experience with getting performance feedback from managers?
15. What has been your experience with addressing concerns with hearing managers?
16. What has been your experience with scheduling hearing managers?
17. What has been your experience with addressing health and safety issues with hearing managers?
18. What has been your experience with getting opportunities for learning and growth through hearing managers?
19. Describe your experience with the *accommodation* process
20. Describe your experience with the *social integration* process
21. Are deaf managers different than hearing managers? If so, how?

22. Are there things that might change the experience of working under a hearing manager?

If so, what are they?

23. Is there anything else you wish to share about your daily experience as a deaf worker?

APPENDIX C  
RELEVANT THEORIES



<b>Theory</b>	<b>Scholars</b>	<b>Relevance</b>
Stigma Theory	Goffman, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2001	Stigma is the cognitive designation of persons with perceptible differences as deviant or <i>other</i> , which often carries with it negative connotations Cognitive designations are innate, and almost automatic for the human psyche Low-incidence characteristics, such as disability, are understood in terms of how they are different from high-incidence characteristics Assumptions about other-ness can lead to social exclusion and discrimination
Standpoint Theory	Collins, 1986; Harding, 1991	Less powerful members of a social world experience a different reality than more powerful members of a social world Social contexts as large as US society and as small as an individual workplace as ‘matrices of domination’ framed and reinforced by individual subjectivity. When considering social roles, researchers need to take into account the worldview/standpoint of the person occupying that role
Causal Attribution Theory	Hewstone, 1989	Extension of stigma theory. Describes how people perceive and understand others in relation to disability. Essentially, the meaning of one characteristic or attribute arbitrarily colors/contaminates meaning of another attribute.
Critical Disability Theory	Shapiro, 1994; Charlton, 1998	Disability is not inherent; it is a result of lack of goodness of fit with existing, normative structural and social environments. Ex: If there were no stairs, wheelchair users would not be considered disabled in public places Ex. If all people communicated using Sign Language, deaf individuals would not be rendered ‘handicapped’ Critical disability prescribes assessment

		of social and physical environments in lieu or assessing inherent human conditions to re-define 'disability'.
Theory of Discrimination	Arrow, 1971	<p>Focuses specifically on labor markets</p> <p>Inequality manifests between demographic groups even when "rational" economic agents (consumers, workers, employers, etc.) claim a non-prejudiced system.</p> <p>In the absence of direct information about a certain candidate's abilities, a manager or recruiter might use generalizations about a <i>group</i> of people to make decisions.</p>

APPENDIX D  
SAMPLING APPROACHES

<b>Sampling Approach</b>	<b>Past usage</b>	<b>Benefits and limitations</b>
Snowball	Foster, S. (1992)	Benefits: access to participants one might not otherwise be able to locate Limitation: participants brought in by other participants may be more willing or personally motivated to participate, making generalizability more challenging.
Purposive	Moore, E. (2011)	Benefits: participants are sure to meet specific inclusion criteria Limitation: previous knowledge of or relationships with participants often includes pre-existing social ties which may bias responses.
Randomized	Schartz, H.A., Hendricks, D.J., & Blanck, P. (2006)	Benefits: more objective than other types of sampling. Limitation: not usually feasible with phenomenology in that the likeliness of using random means to contact potential participants
Convenience	Rosengreen, K.M., & Saladin, S.P. (2010).	Benefits: easy access to appropriate participants for the study Limitation: Less generalizable, as the sample is usually localized or specific.

APPENDIX E  
CODEBOOK SAMPLE

Accommodation	Change made to the work task or environment, specifically as corresponds with ADA
Addressing concerns	When a worker or manager has a worry at work for any job-related reason
▪ Keeping it to oneself	The decision not to share a concern with a worker/manager
Demographics	Specific identity feature of a participant that may be of note in analysis
Differences: Hearing v. Deaf	Notable differences in identity, perspective, or way one performs work
Establishing expectations	Conveying what tasks or attitudes are expected in the workplace
Expanding and growth	Learning something new or taking on more or different responsibilities
▪ Promotion	Formally moving from one job role to another – options and barriers
Future	Ideas or speculations about what work-things are desired or may happen in future
▪ Manager goals	What managers desire or predict for future in the workplace
▪ Worker goals	What the researcher may do in the future with information gained in this study
▪ Researcher goals	What workers desire or predict for future in the workplace
Giving/Receiving feedback	Formal communication exchange related to work performance, both real-time or delayed
▪ Mood	How the emotional state of any stakeholder impacts feedback communication
Health and safety	Any relevant content related to health or safety ON the job
▪ Manager perspective	Manager views about health or safety ON the job
▪ Worker perspective	Worker views about health or safety ON the job

APPENDIX F  
EXAMPLES OF BRACKETING IN JOURNAL ENTRIES

6/1/2015

*Manager XXXXX was not aware that I was familiar with the facility. Though he knew I knew the Deaf workers at his site, his responses to my questions seemed to indicate that he thought I knew less about them than I did. I made sure not to add information suggesting that I already knew information he told me. I said as little to him as possible about the workers, so as not to color his description of them.*

7/2/2015

*Nearly two years ago, I assisted Worker XXXXX in obtaining the position. We have had almost no contact since he finished his 3-month mark at the job. One thing that caught my attention was that he identified as full Native American when asked demographic questions. I recalled that when I opened his case at the agency, he identified as Latino and White. I did not, of course, say anything regarding this change. I also remember the worker as being exceptionally confident, having a 'bravado', and never admitting to needing assistance. He described his work as going extremely well, with no problems whatsoever. I will accept his account and his worldview, and leave my 'wondering if he's over-estimating or saying this to seem impressive' thoughts here in the journal.*

8/15/2015

*The kitchen manager at Site XXXXX has been tough to get ahold of. Last we were on the phone, he said to text him. Now he has sent 2 texts that seem social in nature "Hey Hayley, how's it going" yet evade the question of what time/date will work for him for the interview. Part of me thinks he is flaky, but I also get a strange vibe that his communication/behavior is flirtatious, though he has never met me. I have made a concerted effort not to be ambiguous in my own communications with him, and to bracket my personal experience with scheduling him in attempt to keep it separate from my experience of hearing his perspectives on working with a Deaf individual.*

9/10/2015

*I was perturbed when Manger XXXX was saying Deaf workers should only do certain jobs because of safety, even though he did state they were capable of doing any restaurant job. I often get the 'safety' excuse in my work at [my service agency], but with this manager, I think he really DID think it was a huge concern... I did not tell him that I have seen deaf people work in many tight kitchens in cooking or other capacities with no problem.*

12/8/2015

*I get a paranoid vibe off of this participant. Always have felt [the participant's] version of reality is quite different... A bit angry about a version of reality that differs from mine and also differs from the managers.*



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## VITA

Hayley Stokar is a practicing social worker serving the Deaf community. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, she earned a Bachelor of Arts from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut and a Master of Social Work from Gallaudet University in Washington, DC.

While at Loyola, Hayley worked as a researcher in the areas of employment, disability, and relationship safety for at-risk youth. She continued to serve as an employment specialist for Deaf and hard-of-hearing job seekers through JVS Chicago. In 2012, she was the recipient of the Emerging Leader Award from the Illinois Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. Hayley will be joining the Behavioral Sciences faculty at Purdue University Northwest in August 2016 as an Assistant Professor of Social Work.

