

The d/Deaf Social Worker Body as Multiplicity:
A Feminist Poststructural Autoethnography of Deafness and Hearing

by

Meghan Maria Jadwiga Jezewski
B.S.W., University of Victoria, 2004

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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As a feminist poststructural autoethnography of deafness in social work workplaces, this thesis sets out to map d/Deafness as a cracked subjectivity. Using the work of Rosi Braidotti and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, I draw out configurations of d/Deafness as lack or cultural minority and split them apart. By positioning d/Deafness on a plane of immanence and employing specificity, I explore d/Deafness as a subjectivity constituted through space, place, time and encounters with other bodies. I argue that the constitution of material and cultural experiences of d/Deafness as specific allows for the articulation of spaces in between Deafness and hearing, disability and ability as spaces in and of themselves in order to think the new as well as to crack up fixed binaries informing traditional notions of what specific bodies can do.

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Dedication

To Judy Simser, Jean Knowles, and Ann Jezewski, three teachers who believed I could do what I have done and have yet to do.

Chapter 1: Not the Beginning, but an Entry Point

I came to graduate school, and to this thesis, with a hazy idea of contributing to a literature of deafness that I couldn't really find. In my research, a polarized image of what a d/Deaf body can do emerged: Deaf bodies belong to a linguistic and social minority and speak with their whole bodies, not just their hands. Hard of hearing, hearing impaired and deaf bodies do not belong to the hearing world they 'should' belong to, nor do they belong to the Deaf World. They speak with their mouths and rely on speech reading, hearing aids and cochlear implants to hear. Due to my own experiences inhabiting a deaf body, alongside those of others who do not hear as the majority does, contesting discursive constructions of d/Deafness as a dichotomy has produced an understanding of d/deafness (and experiences of d/Deafness) as constituted through multiple factors. I do not position my deaf subjectivity within a dichotomy, nor do I understand deafness in general as situated this way.

In my life and writing I seek to avoid perpetuating hard and fast categories of hearing and deafness. Yet the industry serving deaf and hard of hearing people provides a somewhat useful baseline: *deaf* is the audiological term usually denoting someone who hears very little or not all without the assistance of hearing aids and or cochlear implants. *Deaf*, most often with a capitalized D, implies *cultural* Deafness, a belonging to the Deaf World, which often means the use of visual language, a particular etiquette and an embrace of a Deaf identity. *Hard of hearing*, sometimes interchangeable with *hearing impaired*, identifies someone who is hearing but can't hear as well as the majority; they might wear hearing aids, might have a cochlear implant with their aids, and they might

have neither. Each of these labels is loaded with multiple understandings, histories and assumptions.

d/Deafness is conceptualized as either an embodied, social lack (as an bodily impairment) and/or a linguistic, cultural minority. Both conceptualizations inform medicine and rehabilitation, the education of children, identity politics, and disability identity. d/Deafness is most often used as a dichotomous understanding of a distinction between hearing but deaf, hearing but Deaf, or deaf and Deaf. The discursive and material strength of this split, an either/or or a but/and subjectivity, fuels my journey through theory. Informed by feminist interrogations of power, the body and difference, I think towards an inhabitation of deafness as *and*, rather than as a dichotomy of *either* Deaf *or* hearing. In recognition of a need for clarity in stating my position vis-à-vis the positions of others, I will use *d/Deaf* to convey the diversity of experiences obscured by prescriptive labels Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, hearing impaired, and any other labels for hearing loss that may apply, and *deaf* to reflect the multiplicities of my specific and unfixed spatio-temporal landscape.

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a conceptual framework for identifying what has already become, and is still becoming; a strategic inhabitation of the *in-between*, a life lived between deaf and hearing, disabled and able-bodied. Staking the in-between as home is a philosophical and political strategy, and also a material reality, informed by years of attempting and not quite managing to belong to the hearing culture in which I live, work and go to school. I realize that belonging fully as an appropriate, correct

hearing and speaking subject is not likely.¹ Also not likely is the event of belonging to the Deaf World as an appropriate, correct seeing and signing subject.

In this chapter, I situate the discursive dichotomy of d/Deafness, as identified above, within the literature. This is a step toward engaging poststructuralist autoethnography as a means of interrogating the in-between spaces of d/Deafness. This will provide the basis alongside which I juxtapose what I have experienced as a deaf worker and how I make materially discursive sense of it.

The theory chapter maps my route through different approaches to contesting fixed subjectivity. I begin with hybridity and explain what the concept has contributed to my thinking of and about the fractured, partial subject. From hybridity, I trace the line of thought through feminist poststructural negotiations of embodied experiences of disability, and through these works, I enter a realm where poststructural feminists use the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to think the new. Here I introduce the concepts I engage with via autoethnography in the analysis chapter.

Next, in the methodology chapter, I discuss the process of challenging and resisting the authority of personal experience. Joan Wallach Scott contributes insightful and concise critique of how experience is granted status as truth, as it is measured against and through master narratives of ability and masculinity, for example, and charges feminist theorists with the task of:

changing the focus and the philosophy of our history, from one bent on naturalizing “experience” through a belief in the unmediated relationship

¹ I recognize that this choice of words privileges sight in the Deaf World. This is not my intention but it does come from the awareness of discursive constructions of appropriate Deaf bodies relying on sight as well as movement for communication. Sight is crucial to the communication I can do well—speech-reading and reading and writing.

between words and things, to one that takes all categories of analysis as contextual, contested, and contingent. (1992, 36)

I then discuss the issues inherent in writing “contextual, contested, and contingent” autoethnography of my experiences as a deaf worker and student (Moss 2001, 15). The methods I used to write autoethnographically are adapted from researchers outside the poststructural turn. I discuss why their methods prove useful in the face of a realization that whatever I document is mutually constituted with whatever stories the reader may bring to the table, particularly if the reader is a co-worker or client. Negotiating institutionalized standards of ethics against poststructural arguments that experience is so fluid and changes even in the telling of experiential stories, that ethics are also contingent, in an academic setting proves complicated. In fact, writing autoethnography for a project to be assessed academically proves complicated, especially as the product is positioned as incomplete and unfixed, characteristics at odds with academic productivity.

Following the methodology chapter, I read through the vignettes constructed from the autoethnography of my experiences. I read these vignettes and by conceptualizing the collisions between my body at work and the bodies of others in my workplaces, alongside accepted practices and policies, think new ways of inhabiting d/Deafness. I think the new by positioning d/Deafness—and the different embodiments of d/Deafness—and affirm a materially contingent and fractured subjectivity as a residence of intention.

Then, in the last chapter, I discuss the relationships between the research—data and theorizing—and potential directions in thinking new routes to inhabiting workplaces and to inhabiting deaf embodiment. I propose ways in which this thesis may inform the larger project of interrogating understandings of d/Deafness (in any subjective form). Finally, I seek to further complicate and make useful understandings of how we inhabit difference,

how we negotiate communication as a signifier of difference, and how these can be productive instead of negative.

Returning to this chapter, as an introduction to this thesis, the literature describing and theorizing deafness at work views deafness through the lenses of: resilience and success; community; deaf epistemology; and camaraderie. As I discuss works in the literature, I provide summaries of how the author(s) defines each lens. But first, I preface this survey with a generalized placing of disabled workers in the historical present by tracing the multiply marginal history of the d/Deaf in light of the onset and development of western capitalism.

The d/Deaf as Disabled Workers in late Capitalism

The subjectivity of d/Deaf as disabled workers has shifted over time and across space. Today's subjectivity can be traced to the ways in which disabled workers, including the d/Deaf, have entered and been part of the labour force. Brendan Gleeson and Harlan Hahn each use Marxist concepts to describe how these shifts have occurred. Gleeson (1999) maps a historical-geographical terrain of disabled bodies in workplaces from feudal times to late capitalism in Britain. He describes processes through which modes of production shifted through time from a rural, community-based structure distributing tasks and roles among bodies, to a predominately urban-based structure in which the workers adapted to mechanization, urbanized buildings and neighbourhoods, and a 'productive' pace to earn a wage.

Hahn (1997) discusses the "industrial reserve army," which, as western capitalism developed, grew its ranks with disabled and other differently embodied people who found they had less and less of a place as *productive* workers (172). He argues that as the

influence of popular media in the United States grew in force and speed, the Victorian notion of a good first impression became the standard bearer of acceptable, appropriate, productive bodies. These bodies were (and most often still are) white, able-bodied, English-speaking and clean (Hahn 1997).

Though Gleeson and Hahn are discussing the western historical position of disabled workers in general, I think their arguments are relevant to the more specific experience of d/Deafness in a largely hearing employment culture today. Their spatial historical analyses provide a large-scale framework of the cultural and material practices and policies d/Deaf workers negotiate today. Shifts in how d/Deaf workers are framed in hearing workspaces and places become apparent in the literature, particularly between articles written in the late 1980s and articles written in the last decade.

In late capitalism, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, neoliberal technologies have pervaded the governance of the way work is done. Bronwyn Davies (2009) describes the impact of neoliberal controls in, for example, education: “[I]n pedagogical spaces, neoliberal managerialism has taken externally driven regulation to such extremes that the new is at risk of being shut down—with only the already-known being recirculated inside its tightly regulated relations of power” (3). Outside education, neoliberalism enacts control over workplaces through the circulation of the known within tight labour relations that work hard to keep out the new, in large part “at the systemic level by being tied to government funding, and at the individual level, to job tenure and the mechanisms for assessing professional performance” (ibid.).

Diversity and difference in workplaces are part of this element of the new mentioned by Davies (2009) continually being restricted and shut down. Writing about

racism and diversity in academic workplaces, Sara Ahmed (2009) describes the work universities in Britain do to brand themselves as good places to work. Instead of reducing the numbers of white hires, university management teams create specific teaching and administration positions to target specified quotas of racialized hires. In Ahmed's examples, these positions are dedicated to diversity, that is, racialized hires teach courses about racialized subjects and administer programs relating to diversity on campus. Thus, the new circulates as the new in tightly circumscribed loops. In turn, similar practices apply to the hiring and management of disabled bodies in workplaces; these workers are expected to fit in and demonstrate a particular competence that has nothing to do with the tasks at hand, but much to do with their ability to inhabit a recognizable, sociable working body.

Job fairs, interview preparation workshops, how-to-find-a-job-in-your-field-after-graduation blogs – each is an avenue for a job seeker to learn how to provide a good first impression. Part of making a good first impression is communicating in a correct way: one must speak coherently, make the right amount of eye contact and, often, be able to speak and hear in socially acceptable ways. An appropriate first impression can make or break the prospective employer's idea of whether an applicant can do the job they are applying for, regardless of whether their tasks would include extensive verbal communication and telephone work. Though they are not addressing the workplace solely, Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine (2010) ask whether the internet promotes false hope for d/Deaf adults as they pass as hearing online, only to reiterate disruptive first impressions in person. They argue that the Internet actually serves “the maintenance and normalization of hearing hegemony” through growing access to Internet literacy

education targeted to d/Deaf people (Skelton and Valentine 2010, 95). The experiences of their informants have me considering whether the possibility of passing as 'hearing' through omission of disclosure really shifts the experience of d/Deaf people engaging with a predominately hearing world. I would suggest that as long as the faulty logic of assessing a person's capabilities based on how they look and sound (or read, as online) is widely practiced, the potential for the Internet to shift the autonomy and participation of d/Deaf people who are audibly and visibly not hearing is poor.

Deaf Belonging and Non-belonging

As I discuss the literature, my intention is to challenge any idea that d/Deafness is a singular identity or lone material experience. The following works perpetuate ontological understandings of d/Deaf as necessarily belonging to either the Deaf *or* the hearing worlds. These works are located in discourses of psychology, education, social work and medicine and as such continually position d/Deafness in a binary opposition against hearing, especially in relation to: what kind of work d/Deaf social workers should do (Sheridan, White, and Mouny 2010); the notion of multiple epistemologies, specifically a Deaf epistemology (Hauser et al. 2010); the value of camaraderie between Deaf and hearing workers (Wells, Bhattacharya and Morgan 2009); characteristics of Deaf adults who are deemed professionally and materially successful in the hearing world (Luckner and Stewart 2003); intrapersonal aspects of resilience unique to Deaf adults (Rogers, Muir and Evenson 2003); the assessment of self esteem among Deaf, bi-culturally d/Deaf and hearing-identified deaf adults (Bat-Chava 2000); and strategies for deafened social workers in hearing workplaces (Beck 1989). George Taylor (1996) challenges the prevalent narrative of either/or, and describes d/Deafness as subjective to encounters with

social, bureaucratic and educational institutions as well as past lived experience by describing informants' accounts of the ways in which they worked with and against fixed ideas of their deafness in classrooms, academic administration and field placements.

Susan Foster (1989) studies the life histories of 25 d/Deaf adults affiliated with the Rochester Technical Institute for the Deaf in New York. Her informants describe workplace experiences of social alienation, isolation and loneliness. Foster concludes that d/Deaf people do better when they work with others like them. As I read her article, I thought about the difference between discourses circulating in 1989 and those in the present. Disability is now more commonly discussed in workplace policy, accommodation legislation and disability activist literature, as an element of difference among many other sites. Yet I found myself thinking about how d/Deafness gets positioned against hearing—and disability—without really interrogating d/Deaf subjectivities. Reading Foster, I thought of how little *and* how far perceptions of d/Deaf lives seem to have come, regarding how we talk about and where we see and hear d/Deafness.

Another contemporary of Foster's, R. L. Beck (1989), describes the experiences of late-deafened social workers acclimating to their acquired hearing loss. Late-deafened social workers are culturally hearing workers who had begun their employment as hearing and later in their employment career became deaf. He discusses potential burdens for clients of these social workers, and for their coworkers and employers. Making suggestions for how newly hearing-impaired social workers can make it easier for their clients, coworkers and employers, Beck does not contest the primacy of hearing culture

and places the onus of adaptation squarely on the social worker. Beck's work is a product of his time; his advice to d/Deaf workers in a hearing workplace, while dated, has not yet been replaced by an improved set of practices.

The focus on deafness in studies about social workers shifted from the worker to the client in the mid-1990s. For example, Helen S. Luey, Laurel Glass, and Holly Elliot (1995) argue that social workers need to put in the time to learn the contingent and multiply different ways in which d/Deaf clients identify and relate to their deafness.² They conclude that service providers need to make space for understanding d/Deaf experience as complex and highly subjective. There is no mention of the late-deafened social worker or the d/Deaf social worker as service providers: service providers are not different, clients are.

Yael Bat-Chava's (2000) study of interviews with 56 d/Deaf adults in New York, informed by social identity theory, suggests that culturally Deaf and bi-culturally Deaf and hearing adults have higher self esteem than deaf adults self-identifying as culturally hearing. While this conclusion may, on the surface, make sense because it appears to be about belonging, and those who sign and move easily in Deaf culture definitely belong to a community, while those who do not sign but work to keep up or pass in hearing culture are less likely to belong to the Hearing. What concerns me with this article and the research it summarizes is the idea that self esteem is wholly impacted by how one hears and communicates and not by other layers of a given person's identity, such as disability, sexuality, gender, racialization, citizenship and country of origin.

² The shift to focusing on deaf identity could be linked to the larger critical trend in the 1990s that saw many political and social theorists contesting the primacy of universality over difference, especially in relation to theorizing justice for marginalized people and populations (Young 1990).

John Luckner and Jason Stewart (2003) seek to disrupt the approach of using an individual or community's d/Deafness as the lens through which all aspects of their experience is viewed—as exemplified by Bat-Chava (2000). They describe the lessons of interviews with 14 d/Deaf adults they deem successful: completing post-secondary education; employed; annual income greater than \$30 000 US; participating in a social life; and expressing self-confidence (Luckner and Stewart 2003, 246). One informant does remind employers that, “all hearing people aren't the same, so why should anyone think that all deaf people are the same” (Luckner and Stewart 2003, 248). How Luckner and Stewart were challenging the research paradigm they identified is not evident, other than the fact that they look at multiple factors for success. In fact, I thought that their reliance on middle class standards of success belied an understanding of success as meaning “keeping up with the hearing.”

Thus far, the literature reviewed here has been framed either as keeping up with the hearing or rejecting hearing culture completely as the standard for evaluation and comparison. It makes me wonder why this is the case. Is that the only way to find an audience among the Hearing, particularly those setting policy and funding agendas? But such questions reproduce the either/or dichotomy that I seek to get around in my thinking.

Two articles are particularly problematic with regard to this type of framing because they encourage thinking about d/Deafness solely as an either/or proposition. In the first, interviewing four d/Deaf employees to learn how they experience hearing workplaces, Anita G. Wells, Kakali Bhattacharya and Diane D. Morgan (2009) suggest that camaraderie is difficult with hearing colleagues and easier with d/Deaf colleagues.

For culturally Deaf workers this may be unsurprising. But what of less bicultural or oral d/Deaf workers, especially those who do not sign fluently? In the second, Peter C. Hauser et al. (2010) theorize a Deaf epistemology, based on comparative studies of the cognitive development d/Deaf children raised in Deaf homes and culture and d/Deaf children raised by hearing parents in hearing culture. The authors argue that those being raised in homes where sign language is prioritized learn to communicate and comprehend the world around them—including risks and dangers—more quickly than d/Deaf children in the homes of hearing parents because communication without barriers means casual information gets picked up (Hauser, et al., 2010). I was left unsure, as I read Hauser et al.'s argument, where the experiences of those d/Deaf people I know fit in this particular epistemology.

From these two articles, readers are drawn to the conclusions that hearing workers do not welcome their d/Deaf coworkers and d/Deaf children raised by hearing parents are less successful and are set up for danger. This dichotomy presents d/Deaf workers with a choice and parents of d/Deaf children with a choice, but the d/Deaf worker or d/Deaf child actually has no choice—they are already ensconced in the full assimilation or a full cultural embrace of the culture of a linguistic minority. But it is not just these two articles that set up the d/Deaf without real choices. All the literature I reviewed relied on similar arguments—and they all left me frustrated. I want to know about d/Deaf workers and the factors that shape their working environments.

Moving Beyond this Literature

I grew up with the legacy of Alexander Graham Bell who devoted himself to the cause of assimilation of deaf children and adults into the hearing world through education

and technology. His program of assimilation included systemic attempts to erase Deaf culture, including residential schools and the banning of sign language. Bell's legacy includes generations of children and adults who deny their deafness, or understand themselves as lacking as hearing people, always in need of bettering. On the other, it appears that the constitution of Deaf culture relies on segregation of a new kind, or a reversal of the systemic repression by hearing authorities on d/Deafness. It is a tricky issue to talk about, as if saying that d/Deaf people have a place in the hearing world and the Deaf world can never be wholly removed from the hearing world is an act of betrayal.

d/Deaf American social workers that have graduated from master's level social work programs, according to Martha A. Sheridan, Barbara J. White and Judith L. Mounty (2010), exist in low numbers. Those who are working work primarily for agencies providing dedicated services to d/Deaf clients. They argue for increasing the numbers of d/Deaf social workers serving d/Deaf clients. The assumption here seems to be that only d/Deaf social workers should serve d/Deaf people, and d/Deaf social workers should only serve d/Deaf people. Such an assumption further perpetuates segregationist ideas and practices based on identity, an opposition of sorts to the Bell paradigm.

Sue Jones (2004) explores the material and ethical considerations for d/Deaf social work students researching d/Deaf issues using British Sign Language (BSL). Here, the question left untouched is: are d/Deaf social work students and researchers only presented with new ethical and considerations when they communicate with sign language? Part of why I wanted to write this thesis was the fact that when looking at ethics and practices in research, there was a specific kind of body doing social research and it did not hear like mine. Yet, in the recently growing literature of d/Deaf experiences in the academy and in

community research and in social work practice, the recognizable d/Deaf body becomes the signing body, the body belonging to Deaf culture.

Instead of describing one d/Deaf image as he tracks the experiences of six d/Deaf students of post-secondary social work and community social service programs in the UK through the use of surveys and interviews, George Taylor (1996) presents a range of d/Deaf subjectivities. He captures some of the systemic battles students experience accessing education, and describes the differences among respondents according to their ability to navigate hearing institutions, and the responsiveness of universities and practicum sites to the needs of d/Deaf students and practitioners. By describing barriers that students encountered, Taylor contributes to the potential of research to include an understanding of the hearing world as constituted through exclusion. There is more room for difference in Taylor's (ibid.) approach to his participants and the data they generate.

For me that room is the very real in-between.

A Map to Theory

I ended the previous section at the in-between because it is the materialist theorizing of the in-between I pursue in the next chapter. Before reaching the in-between, I discussed literatures historicizing and placing disabled workers in late capitalism, and linked this to the place of d/Deaf workers in the historical and spatial present. Then, I read through notions of d/Deaf belonging and non-belonging and how different authors invested their work into the d/Deaf/hearing dichotomy. Finally, I moved beyond literature positioning d/Deafness as either/or and turned towards literature complicating subjectivities and experiences of d/Deafness.

In Chapter 2 I leave the largely positivist literature positioning d/Deafness as a conflict between belonging and non-belonging to trouble any notion of fixity in the socially constituted, material experience of d/Deafness. This troubling is informed by feminist interrogations of disability and deafness; the leaky body; poststructuralist theorizing of difference; and, finally, a way into conceptualizing the new, in relation to multiple deaf and hearing subjectivities.

Chapter 2: Fracturing d/Deafness

This chapter maps theoretical routes generated through a review of explanations for the academic and professional absence and/or marginalization of d/Deaf social workers. I first define theory as a conceptual practice of thinking the new. I negotiate concepts of hybridity and passing that I engaged early on in this project. In my descriptions I critique the work of authors who approach the between-ness of d/Deafness and disability in workplaces and in theories of subjectivity. As I explore ways in which knowledge is exposed as tenuous, partial and subjective, I link insights from the literature to how I approach d/Deafness. I next introduce poststructural theory as the philosophical home I inhabit for this project, and situate this home within critical disability and feminist thought. Specifically I review the feminists thinking through Deleuzian and Guattarian (1987) concepts. I close with the contribution of Braidotti's (2006) work to my conceptualizing of d/Deafness.

Introducing Notions of a Messy Subjectivity

Understanding that knowledge is partial and always changing presents a challenge when declaring one's theoretical argument. However, having read what sociologists, psychologists, geographers and philosophers say about what it is to be d/Deaf, I find the idea that their arguments are constituted through specific moments, spaces and events reassuring. What I argue, then, is that d/Deafness is cracked, a permeable collection of potentialities impacted by bodies, machines, support networks, families, geographies and histories. Instead of framing d/Deafness as a singular identity—belonging to a linguistic and cultural minority (DeafWorld) or belonging (but not quite) to the hearing world—I propose conceptualizing d/Deafness as a messy, porous body of space, place, time, and

materiality, through which multiple experiences of d/Deafness shift and morph, creating unforeseen possibilities.

My analytical approach to deafness is most influenced by feminist philosophers using the concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to engage with ideas of subjectivity, the body and power (q.v. Braidotti 2011; Grosz 2010; Olkowski 2009; Lorraine 2008; Colebrook 2000; Shildrick 2000). To summarize briefly a starting point: Deleuze and Guattari (1994) propose that a concept is a means of thinking new ideas and material relations. Thought is productive and concepts change in encounter with other concepts and material limits. What the listed feminist philosophers share in common is a desire to think new notions of the body as inscribed discursively *and* inhabited as corporeal, and unfix the traditionally fixed feminine, or majoritarian,³ subject. Deleuze and Guattari, and the feminist philosophers inspired by their work, circumvent a prevalent understanding of postmodernism as exploring discourses and ideas removed from material existence. These thinkers have taught me the possibility of taking a partial and specific grasp of everyday experience to trace the tangle of politics, technologies, and geographies constituting—and constituted by—said experience and recognizing that someone—something?—new is unfolding. With this idea of destabilizing fixity and working through the everyday materiality of life as a deaf body at work (in the workplace), I follow their lead and attempt to use theory to think new ideas about d/Deafness and the material relations constituting

³*Majoritarian*: Deleuze and Guattari use this term to denote power (*pouvoir*) of constancy and dominance. The English-speaking, white, abled male is a majoritarian entity, despite being in the numerical minority globally. I refer to the *fixed feminine subject* as majoritarian here because it implies that feminine subjectivity is a singular inhabitation defined in relation to the English-speaking, white, abled male. (See Verena Conley in Parr 2005, 164-165).

d/Deafness. I begin my engagement by thinking subjectivity as mobile and fractured in space and time.⁴

In the rest of this chapter, I discuss articles relating to deafness and disability as an *and* rather than a dichotomy of *either/or*, the emotional work that disabled workers, including those who are deaf, do while doing the tasks of their job descriptions, and poststructural negotiations of deafness. Moving through deafness, I work towards more generalized discussions of unfixed subjectivity, poststructural bodies of difference, the ways in which researchers are transformed through their work, and the idea of interdependence replacing the dependency paradigm. To destabilize deafness as a static and finite subjectivity and elaborate on creative possibilities engendered through deafness, I read deafness through notions of difference as ontology and a feminist, Deleuzean, ethics of affirmation.

Unhomeliness and Untimeliness

The traditional d/Deafness literature, reviewed in the previous chapter, presents few in-between spaces. Feminist and postcolonial theories of in-between-ness provide an entry point for theorizing a deafness that is neither hearing nor Deaf but includes both. Engaging with feminist writers who came before her, Trinh T. Minh-ha suggests taking their proposals and using them as a diving board from which to jump into new subjectivities beyond that of the Other. Difference is all we have. Trinh (1989) maintains that the purpose of an intentional project of thinking, writing and doing is “... patiently to dismantle the very notion of core (be it static or not) and identity” (96). Rather than cataloguing what makes you different from and the same to me, and holding onto these

⁴ I will address some Deleuzean and Guattarian feminist ideas in greater detail later in the chapter.

signifiers resolutely, against change, she urges us to recognize and revel in the differences, none of which must carry a predestined hierarchical value.

By “revel in the differences,” I mean to follow Trinh’s attempt to sidestep a discussion of identity politics resting on fixity in the subject and the fixity of the subject. I understand d/Deaf subjectivity as necessarily cracked, fissured along different ways of moving in the d/Deaf and hearing worlds, and different kinds of communicability, as well as along different categories of recognition such as class, race, gender and sexuality. Access to education, health care, political participation, and employment demand a reiteration of a specific and fixed signifier of deafness: “I hear this way, I can communicate this way, I cannot do that, and I need for you to do this.” Such reiterations do not always reflect the reality of d/Deaf experience in that how we communicate relies on specific encounters with specific bodies in specific moments in space and time.

In my work in this thesis, I strive to disrupt institutional understandings of deafness as fixed and trace the paths between deafness and hearing, deafness and Deafness, deafness and ability, and deafness and disability as they feed my encounters in/with/through social service workplaces. By reviewing the following feminist notions of specificity, hybridity, and difference, I will think through how my conception of myself as hearing impaired, almost hearing and Deaf, cracked.

I draw on the work of Pamela Moss (2005) who proposes *specificity* as a point through which to enter feminist research in geography. By specificity she means theorizing power through specific bodies, “whether conceived as something to be held, exerted, deployed, mobilized, sought after, or refused, or as something structural and inevitable, despotic and concentrated, or dispersed and everywhere” (Moss 2005, 42). My

bodily presence in the workplaces where I have been employed provides such an entry point for feminist analysis. Technologies, routines, tasks and culture had to shift in order for me to do my job. And when shifts did not occur, I was less able to do the work. Daily work included ensuring that technologies, routines and tasks were not barriers to my being useful and competent.

At work, I negotiated what could be characterized as hybridity. Homi K. Bhabha (2008) defines hybridity as a product of colonialism, an experience of being “at once inside and outside, the insider’s outsidedness” (20). In the specific context of my experiences as a deaf body in a hearing world, I would identify hybridity as a product of assimilation. At work, I was a professional social worker, middle class and educated, white and straight. At work I also inhabited the “in-between” and found myself, as a deaf worker, falling through cracks between policies and practices, expectations and outcomes, thus experiencing a sense of “unhomeliness” (Bhabha 2008, 19). Mikko Tukhanen (2009) discusses Gloria Anzaldúa’s conception of hybridity as something different from Bhabha’s. For Anzaldúa, queer hybridity, or *mestizaje*, is a new way of knowing and becoming in the world and simultaneously encompasses belonging and unbelonging, and is always changing. Her hybridity is “untimeliness” between racialized, gendered and sexual polarities (Tukhanen 2009, 103). Reading Bhabha alongside Anzaldúa (1986), I found words describing what I had once struggled to articulate: a continuous sense of unhomeliness and untimeliness.

Engaging hybridity via feminist postcoloniality, Sara Ahmed (1999) discusses passing. She understands hybridization as “the very temporality of passing through and between identity itself without origin or arrival” (Ahmed 1999, 188). Ahmed argues

against understanding passing as transcendence of race or gender—and, I would add, deafness or disability. Instead, she asks what the toll of passing is on the subject who passes (ibid. 189). Passing is deemed to be a process of unfixing the subject while simultaneously re-fixing it in another way, as it is framed by difference. Hybridity should not be framed as a loss of fixed identity, belonging or easy recognition, for this is an invitation to further govern fixed ideas of who we are if we belong to the socio-political majority (ibid.). Assimilation of d/Deaf people into hearing, oral culture is a form of aspirational passing—at least this is how I've understood the motivations of the industry serving oral deaf people. Hybridity, in this sense, proved useful for framing how d/Deaf people move in the world but in the end, the concept reiterates a particular inhabitation of difference instead of providing a way out of repeating difference against the same.

Emerging Crackdwellers

Activist and academic work in/on/with the Deaf community has largely enforced a separatist notion against hearing culture, fuelled in part by identifications of Deaf people as a postcolonial, ethnic and linguistic minority (e.g. Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996; Ladd 2003; and Bauman, Nelson and Rose 2005). Lennard J. Davis (2007) challenges this trend. As an American hearing academic and child of d/Deaf parents, he interrogates the binary split between Deaf and hearing worlds and the use of postcolonial discourse for Deaf emancipation. He expresses concern that this conception of a linguistic minority with a history of linguistic and socioeconomic violence enacted by hearing education, medical and cultural institutions is in turn stigmatizing d/Deaf people who speak English and engage with the hearing world (Davis 2007). For Davis (ibid.),

and I agree, a risk of the ethnic conception of d/Deafness is that it could be a route to institutionalized ideas and practices of cultural and linguistic purity and profiling. The risk of embracing such ideas as intentional, transformative cultural practice is the potential erasure of specifically marked and contested bodies constituting radical race, gender and sexuality discourse and postcolonial thought, as well as the de-racing, de-classing and un-gendering of d/Deafness. To reiterate, a singular Deafness, a singular community and a singular communication as means of claiming power simply reinforces ableist rhetoric and practice.

Reflecting the impact of poststructural philosophy on theoretical understandings of subjectivity in the last two decades, Brenda Jo Brueggemann (2009) suggests that d/Deaf writers are “crackdwellers” in between many cultural norms of the body, speech, language and community (16). These crackdwellers, to varying degrees, can move in the Deaf world, especially if they sign, and also in the hearing world if they write and/or speak like hearing people do. They also inhabit a no-man’s-land (*sic*) because they can do both but cannot fully belong to either. Brueggemann also cautions activists and academics intent on developing a Deaf literature, culture, community, and minority political status to remember the negative potentiality of closing ranks on bicultural and hearing d/Deaf people (*ibid.* 12). Following Davis and Brueggemann, I consider how useful conceptualizations of hybridity, informed by postcolonial, racialized and queer politics have influenced my thinking through my own experience as a white deaf woman. Yet I am aware that hybridity has been developed as a concept in response to specific socio-political experiences not my own. Co-opting the language of struggle of other marginalized groups has the effect, as Davis (2007) points out, of whitening and

assimilating particular experiences and knowledges into a dominant narrative and erasing privileged experiences of race, gender, sexuality, and class. In the d/Deafness literature, there is little discussion of how d/Deafness is constituted alongside other markers of marginalization or privilege. This repeated erasure lends the literature a wholly white, Eurocentric, middle-class, masculinist perspective.

Several works exist in the literature that conceptualize d/Deafness as an experience constituted through encounters with hearing culture in specific spaces and moments. An academic with long-term hearing loss who eventually got a cochlear implant, Rebecca Raphael (2006) discusses the dearth of post-PhD d/Deaf academics in American universities. She describes how academic culture in the US has been built as a hearing culture by sharing her experiences as a d/Deaf graduate student and, later, as a faculty member, negotiating accommodation and assumptions about all deafness being one kind of Deafness. Raphael (2006) explains that “people often judge someone’s intelligence and friendliness based on that person’s ability to respond to spoken conversation,” and this can be assessed as a “lack of collegiality” by hiring committees (n.p.). Much of what can be taken for granted in a room of mostly hearing colleagues becomes work to keep up, fit in, and find allies for those who hear much less than the accepted norm. I am curious, reading Raphael, about what it means to be able participate to a degree—to be eminently qualified—in hearing educational and workplace culture but to also never quite make it, to always be close, but remaining not quite.

Whereas Raphael writes about d/Deaf bodies in academic work, Robert Wilton (2008) writes a social geography of emotion work required by disabled service workers in Hamilton, Ontario. He documents the additional work they have to do to survive in

able-bodied working environments. He found that disabled workers, perhaps most specifically those with sensorial and/or invisible disabilities, do more emotional work than the average able-bodied worker. Emotion work includes “feeling out” colleagues and superiors to see how they may respond to a disclosure of a not immediately evident disability or request for accommodation; dealing with the negative emotions of colleagues and superiors; and maintaining appropriate emotional response to avoid becoming a “problem worker” (Wilton 2008, n.p.).

Both Raphael and Wilton look at the experiences of being d/Deaf in the hearing workplace without defining the pathology of d/Deaf workers. Instead their work examines what goes into upholding hearing standards in workplace culture, especially the work done by those who do not hear the way they are expected to. Their contributions address the other side of the work that the qualitative literature of d/Deafness reviewed in the first chapter, for the most part, requires of d/Deaf workers.

Seeking additional analyses of multiple d/Deaf working lives, I turn to theoretical explorations of d/Deafness to make sense of what I have experienced and seen others experience around me (Stocker 2001). Weaving a narrative from the stories of three oralist-educated women who have become Deaf-identified in adulthood, Rachele Hole (2007) highlights the “deaf enough” standard her informants bump up against as they transition from hearing to Deaf culture. The women Hole interviews seem to conclude that to belong anywhere means belonging to the Deaf world though they also express reluctance to completely shed their oral upbringing. Hole (ibid.) theorizes their experiences as exemplary of Judith Butler’s arguments destabilizing fixed gender categories of materiality and socialization, referencing d/Deafness rather than gender. To

belong, they need to demonstrate, repeatedly, that they are “deaf enough,” even while they may hold onto other ways of being in the world. They really are in-between, however problematic this may be for belonging—anywhere.

Sensibility and *will to speech* are potentially useful concepts for thinking through d/Deafness—as metaphors and a means of engaging personal experience and a historical narrative of d/Deafness. Mairian Corker (2001) argues against an essentialist and universalizing notion of disability and d/Deafness. She privileges sensibility as a conceptual metaphor of embodiment for those seeing and hearing the world differently than is normal (Corker 2001, 36). Corker responds to debates in disability discourse on the material and social split defining disability by suggesting that, rather than either/or, d/Deafness is a relationship of mutuality between the material, embodied experience of difference and the socio-political scripts of difference a person travels through (ibid.). Corker’s contribution to my thinking through d/Deafness is her approach of asking several questions—not necessarily answerable—and her suggestion of the fluidity of subjectivity depending on space, place and time.

Alexa Schriempf (2009) focuses on speech to conceptualize d/Deafness. Engaging Aristotle’s *will to speech*, she first thinks through her own experience of d/Deafness and the history of oralist⁵ education in the United States. She traces the development of an idealized white male American whose articulate speech and patriotism set the template for what d/Deaf children and adults needed—and still need—to achieve in order to become American subjects (Schriempf 2009, 280). Second, Schriempf challenges the

⁵ The cultural approach of educating hard of hearing to profoundly deaf children to hear (with technological assistance and speech reading) and speak as hearing people do is also called *audist*, particularly in the Deaf community (Hauser et al. 2010, 486).

distinction she finds between voice and speech—having a voice includes Sign Languages and other means of communicating beyond speech—but speech is the ability to articulate and participate in a specific, normalized way. Schriempf's explicit mapping of Bell's legacy, as she has experienced it, is familiar. Audiology tests may provide visual evidence of residual hearing in profoundly deaf people, but it is how we communicate, how we *talk*, that makes or breaks our membership in the hearing or Deaf mainstream.

The way d/Deaf people communicate—the way we are with hearing and Deaf people—establishes belonging, however tenuous this belonging may be. Cassandra Loeser and Vicki Crowley (2009) analyze their interviews with one working class d/Deaf man in his twenties. They argue that it is through his playing bass guitar in bands with hearing musicians that he becomes masculine and heterosexual. This masculinity is inscribed over the negative possibilities of his d/Deaf behaviours, such as standing closer than is considered appropriate to a male speaker and staring too intently in order to read his lips. The informant describes himself as better at playing music because he can feel the music more intently than his hearing band mates; in his band, he leads and performs a masculine subjectivity otherwise diminished. For Loeser and Crowley's informant, he is most appropriate as a straight man when he plays music and takes leadership of the band. Their analysis provides yet another example of a d/Deaf adult who moves between spaces of belonging and inhabiting a correct body, and spaces of exclusion and incorrectness. Further, conceptualizing d/Deafness through other aspects of subjectivity is rare, and Loeser and Crowley's (2009) and Loeser's

(2010) emphasis on the mangle⁶ of gender, hearing and deafness is an exciting contribution to a changing literature.

Multiple and Messy Bodies

Shifting from the d/Deafness literature reviewed in the previous section, I engage notions of subjectivity as permeable and always changing. Here, I review feminist authors who think through multiple and messy bodies; socially, politically, spatially, temporally and materially embodied. Everyday experience, lived through the body, is a theoretical entry point (after Moss 2005). Annmarie Mol (2002) writes a philosophical and pragmatic ethnography of the constitution of arteriosclerosis through sensation, diagnosis and treatment. She attempts to capture multiple meanings and practices, proposing, to medical practitioners and philosophers both, “[I]f practice becomes our entrance into the world, ontology is no longer a monist whole. Ontology-in-practice is multiple” (Mol 2002, 157). Mol is describing how institutional knowledge in medicine is unfixed and reformulated by encounters among multiple bodies—physical, intellectual, disciplinary, chemical—always. For her, knowledge is specifically constituted, always shifting, and creates and is created by power relations. This informs my approach to d/Deafness as a concept. Continuing to think through subjectivity and its relational transformations, Mol (2008) argues for self-situating philosophers as they think through theory. She makes her case by describing what happens as she eats an apple and thinks through geography, economics, local history and digestive processes. Mapping herself eating an apple and the places her mind—and material body—go, Mol amply illustrates

⁶Pickering’s mangle is a conceptual understanding of how scientific practice is constituted. Humans, culture, prior scientific knowledge, and how all these generate each other and the new, are a mangle. See Hekman (2010, 22-23) and Pickering (1995).

how theory is generated in highly subjective encounters. As I delve into theoretical modes of understanding my experiences of workplaces through d/Deaf disruptions I am doing so from the perspective of one body (an assemblage of many) in a series of specific spaces and places without making a representational argument for anything outside this immediacy.

Considering the disabled subject, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002) proposes that disability as a theoretical standpoint frames the subject as fluid. She argues for recognition of critical disability studies as a cultural studies area on par with women's, gender and race studies (Garland-Thomson 2002, 20). Her contribution here is the notion of stepping out of the disabled/abled medical/social dichotomies, and into the messier reality of the multiple and complex experiences of disability and politics. With some exceptions, feminist discussions of the body are becoming increasingly material but still exclude disability as an important site of theorizing or, worse, use disability as a metaphor for forms of feminine deviance. In her review of several poststructuralist books on disability published in the last decade, Janet Price (2007) argues that the newer generation of disability thought is not about educating able-bodied people about the experience of disability nor is it about "policing the borders of disability. It is about rebalancing the exclusion of disabled people and disability from critical thinking, talking, writing, and teaching" (79).

Susan Wendell (1999; 2001) and Moss (2000) provide brief ethnographies of their own experiences as working academics while chronically ill and sometimes disabled. Wendell (1999) places her embodied experience within the social and cultural contexts framing illness and disability in order to disrupt the separation of the lived

body from theorizing about the lived body; the body is neither just a social construct, nor entirely self-evident biology (325). Moss (2000) examines what happens when her chronic illness does not fit within definitions and parameters set by sick and disability leave packages by the university administration; she seeks a way to theorize and address bodies that are simultaneously abled and disabled (292). What their works share is the recognition of erasure of chronic illness in mainstream, majoritarian conceptions of disability, via different theoretical approaches. Isabel Dyck (1999) discusses the experiences of women negotiating chronic illness and their workspaces and places. Thinking through chronic illness, episodic and/or contested disability and their continually changing residence in between a multiplicity of subjectivities has helped me to think through d/Deafness and hearing outside of cultural belonging and pathology. And, most importantly, these authors have provided models for stepping outside traditional patterns of thinking disability while maintaining embodied, everyday experiences as a standpoint.

Feminisms of the Body after Deleuze

The feminists engaged in this section have found poststructural concepts useful for conceptualizing the fluid body in their research. Discussing moments when researchers are transformed through their work, Turid Markussen (2005) reports that feminist methodologies are becoming fixed as legitimate, mainstream approaches to research. She describes the experiences of researchers documenting sex work in northern Norway. Doing this research shifted how the researchers understood their own material and discursive subjectivities. Markussen (2005) is arguing for adoption of an understanding in feminist research that methodologies evolve through the process of

our own becoming as we use them; they are not static systems of gathering data and formulating knowledge. Even in doing the work of this project, how I do autoethnography and poststructural analysis has shifted as the ways in which different authors have used them to engage bodies and encounters are absorbed in my thinking and through my writing.

Making sense of my experiences as a deaf social worker has continually shifted as I have explored theory. The act of theorizing has also shifted how I remember and inhabit my experiences—I will explain this further in the methodology chapter. Here I begin tracing *difference* as the concept informing subjectivity, in-betweenness, the body and other ways through which poststructuralist feminist thinkers—and some others—engage Deleuze and Guattari. Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price's (1996) discussion of how disability is assembled through encounters with specific bodies has really opened a door to possibilities in my thinking through deafness and hearing. After Judith Butler (1991), they think of the disabled body as a fluid set of tensions, discourses, physical encounters, temporality and spaces; and a disabled body performs differently depending on the historicity, space and place constituting its subjectivity. Shildrick (2000) continues theorizing disabled bodies and articulates the treatment of the material disabled body as contagious in feminist and other philosophical disciplines (19). She argues that approaching “vulnerability as the possibility of becoming”—a means of acting and thinking in and through difference differently—is a means of inhabiting an understanding of knowledge as constituted (Shildrick 2000, abstract). Asking “What does disability teach us about the limits of independence,” Barbara E. Gibson (2006) pursues a Deleuzean proposal of becoming through disability (193). She suggests, through

exemplary anecdotes of disabled people becoming through their interdependence with respiratory machines, Seeing Eye dogs, and personal care workers, that disability contributes to positive possibilities beyond what the norm of independent, contained adulthood can provide. These authors have used poststructuralist and Deleuzian theory to enact new ways of being a researcher body and a disabled body. As they write, they each describe possibilities arising when embodied research and productive thought are pursued in a new way, and they attempt to enact the potential as they write.

Deleuze's thinking has been influenced by intensive studies of the work of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson, among others. In various ways, these three philosophers rejected traditional academic approaches to thought (Hardt 1993; Rajchman 2000). Via his engagement with their work, Deleuze understands problems to be creative, producing and productive of thought—which is different than the general understanding of western modern philosophy which approaches problems as things to be solved (Marrati 2006). The trouble with approaching problems as things needing resolution is that such activity represses creative thinking of the new and instead reinforces that which we already know, by solving a problem of thought to fit in with the language and concepts already understood. An early proponent of Deleuze and Guattari's utility to feminist philosophy, Elizabeth Grosz (2010) suggests that the less we interrogate the concepts we think and "know" through, the more we reterritorialize majoritarian, mainstream, masculinist ways of thinking and practicing (96). Instead of cutting a path through thought by refuting the philosophies, problems, concepts and proposals of those who have come before (the western modern philosophical tradition), Grosz proposes a *critical ethics of affirmation*

(Konttouri and Tiainen 2007, 249). New thought is produced through tensions as life aggravates and is aggravated by concepts and something else is introduced. The affirmative aspect of such critique is the production of the new, rather than the destruction of the old.

Other feminist philosophers thinking the new through Deleuze and Guattari include Claire Colebrook (2002; 2008) and Patricia MacCormack (2009). Colebrook (2008) proposes “the necessity of thinking the feminist philosopher as conceptual persona: it is she who asks *whose* discourse, whose statement, whose subjection, performance, passion or negativity is expressed in this or that specific dissonance” (6). MacCormack (2009) argues that “[i]t is the ‘strange’ in strange bedfellows that is privileged and the very alterity of the relationship is what produces thought” (88). She argues for an approach to theory and activism that embraces the productivity of difference, along multiple lines such as gender, sexuality, and embodiment (ibid.). They describe the event of awkwardness, strangeness and disruption in a concept, identifying moments of creating new thought. I suggest that disability and d/Deafness, given their inherent awkwardness in encounters with majoritarian bodies and institutions, can be understood as embodied disruptions, offering possibilities of new thought.

For my thinking of disability, ability, hearing and deafness, Rosalyn Diprose’s (2000) use of Deleuze and Guattari is useful for conceptualizing how differentiated, or anomalous, bodies and subjectivities are diminished and repressed. She argues, “a woman philosopher’s experience within a plane of immanence that embodies traces of interests of men directly prompts the opening of those paths of thinking that we call feminist” (Diprose 2000, 120-121). Deafness and disability disrupt the plane of immanence

embodying normalcy, producing new concepts, practices and becoming—affirming Moira Gatens’ (2000) understanding of the plane of immanence as a site of productive difference.

Teresa De Lauretis (1990) is not philosophically Deleuzian but her work does challenge reproductions of masculinist fixity in identity. She engages with what Deleuze and Guattari call *faciality* when she disrupts feminist practices of identity politics as a means of becoming a more just society. Honouring Audre Lorde’s (1982) autobiomythography of American Black lesbianism, De Lauretis (1990) repeats her words: “It was a while before we came to realize that our place was the very house of difference rather [than] the security of any one particular difference” (30). This house of difference becomes the plane of immanence⁷ through which I recalibrate d/Deafness. Diane Currier (2003), using Deleuze, posits identity as “a product of historical circumstance” (33). Colebrook (2008) argues that as long as the act of theorizing consists of figuring out identity, then we reiterate fixed residence in the spatio-temporal present (20). Shildrick (2006) articulates the monstrous disabled subject as one occupying borderlands between acceptable, normative points (42). Strategically inhabiting a specific site of recognition is a part of survival, I argue, but to claim fixed residence as all there is erases potential for change.

As a means of inhibiting productive thought, Deleuze and Guattari’s *faciality* can be understood as the ways in which we participate in reiterating identities, limiting who we can become and what we can do to that which is immediately recognizable to our

⁷ A plane of immanence is an historical specificity occupied by concepts at play within it (See Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 39).

others (Hickey-Moody and Rasmussen 2009; Lorraine 2008; Malins 2004).

To assist in thinking the new alongside and outside identity politics I find Tamsin Lorraine's (2000) explanation of *writing imperceptible* helpful: the act is "not about relinquishing the desire for visibility and political empowerment, but rather about an alternative model for achieving visibility" (182). The use of identity politics as an approach to confronting institutionalized injustice has been an important aspect of feminist, postcolonial and antiracist thought. However, as Lorraine (ibid.) and Colebrook (2009a) caution, entrenching identity politics as the only approach carries risks. Writing about law and Australian postcoloniality through Deleuze, Colebrook (2009a) suggests that rights discourse, which is informed by identity politics, becomes a tool for self-regulation in part by assimilating differentiated bodies into the normative body politic. Proposing a means of disrupting this self-regulation, she echoes Lorraine's writing *imperceptible* and tracks the increase in documenting "histories in actuality not as they have already been narrated" in court cases and national media discourses for both Aboriginal and White Australians (Colebrook 2009a, 15). Writing *imperceptible* means drawing a map of multiple histories and presents and cracking up dominant histories and narratives of how things are and will be. Writing *d/Deafness imperceptible* traces different histories of *d/Deafness* and multiple presents, disrupting normative narratives of hearing and normalcy.

Situating the disabled subject in global spatio-historical presents, Shildrick (2009a) adopts Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's (2000) Deleuzian analysis of globalization in *Empire*. She expands their narrative by constituting the disabled subject through assemblages of visible and less visible technologies and relations (Shildrick *ibid.*

150). In doing so, Shildrick argues that though disabled bodies are visibly interdependent on these global networks, all bodies become through multiple international assemblages. If we shift how we think about independence and recognize the global relations we enact every day, prostheses, support services, personal care, and accommodation can be understood as new becomings and not a means of assimilation through restoring normativity (Shildrick *ibid.* 155). Anti-globalization narratives have, for example, deconstructed how our clothes are produced by migrant labour across continents. Such analyses can be adapted to map how our interdependence is produced through multiple assemblages across several levels of everyday life, from cell phones, computers, the furniture we use, the foods we eat, the clothes we wear, the information we consume, and, of course, the support we rely upon to get through the day.

Continuing to think of the milieu we become through and with—other people, animals, technologies, social norms, infrastructures, economies—I return to the work of Deleuze and Guattari. A locus of their thought is the understanding of difference as multiplying by degrees rather than kind (Deleuze 1994). In a given spatio-temporal moment one is different, and made up of an assemblage of differences, ones that are different than the previous moment or the next. Change a part of the multiplicity, or assemblage, and it becomes something else, or similar to what it was/is but different. This can be in an organ, in a body, in a person, in a house, in a neighbourhood, in a vehicle, in a plant, in the air, in the soil.

Understanding difference as a substance of degrees in relation to—rather than a divergence from a singular, dominant conception of the Same—allows for recognition that each d/Deaf person sees, hears and feels d/Deafness differently. Dismantling the

privileged position of the way most people hear, and situating it along a plane of immanence with deafness and the differences of degrees within hearing and deafness gives it new value. To be deaf does not mean to be lacking in hearing nor does it mean belonging to a linguistic and cultural minority in the Deaf world. Instead, an embodied d/Deafness is a “haecceity”—thisness and nowness—in specific moments with specific bodies, spaces and practices (Kaufmann 2010; Deleuze and Guattari 1994). How d/Deafness is affected through these interactions and how others are affected in kind becomes something else through each encounter and event.

Residing on the Crack, after Braidotti

Braidotti (1996) started out as an academic philosopher in Paris in the 1970s and 1980s, when poststructuralist Continental philosophy was first being taught and created in the academy. Her feminist, nomadic subjectivity is heavily informed by Deleuzian philosophy. For my project, Braidotti’s use of Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari, is helpful as she engages critics of their work as well as her own criticisms of how they negotiate gender, sex, marginality and difference as European white male academics (even as they work to supplant such privileged subjectivity). One of Deleuze’s contributions to feminist theorizing of the politics of location and subjectivity, Braidotti (ibid.) proposes, is his contestation of *experience* as a monolithic last word in political thought; instead he traces the material subject through becoming, as it/she/he is always mutating (307). A trap of feminist and other politics situated in the margins is to hold onto fixed subjectivities of being different than the mainstream, or majority (not necessarily a majority in number, but in the social, material and political constitution of power). An inexhaustive list of examples of this political habit of activism includes:

drawing lines and constructing hierarchies of race, disability, relationships between biology and gender, and class. A risk of falling into this trap is that doing so further solidifies chasms between different communities constituted through marginality and difference. Such traps diminish opportunities to grow and witness differences as they proliferate, and diminish the power of multiple individuals, communities, and neighbourhoods to enact effective assemblages of force and bring about change. Instead, what happens is a re-embedding or reterritorialization of the master narrative and its hierarchies within marginalized bodies individual and social.

In attempting to disrupt such conceptual and political habits of reterritorialization, Braidotti (2009) prefers “to look instead for ways in which otherness prompts, mobilises and allows for flows of affirmation of values and forces which are not yet sustained by the current conditions” (49). Deleuze and Parnet (2002) posit the act of writing as “the means to a more than personal life,” a way to push the limits of a given life and push through to creativity (51). Instead of understanding life as a finite quality to be protected against pain, suffering and death, Braidotti (2009), after Deleuze, understands life as a “generative force” (48). She looks to pain to find out what pain can tell us, and finds that life, and subjectivity, is about affecting and “being affected” (Braidotti 2009, 51). How is it that bodies can “endure” so much, and how is this creative (ibid.)? To formulate a nomadic, affirmative ethics, Braidotti suggests we look to those who have already endured and cracked up and suffered to map the productive forces of such encounters (ibid.). As nomadic subjects push the limits of their material existence, “[t]he house protects and nurtures the sensitive enfolded subject like an outer skin that sustains the impact with life forces” (Braidotti 2006, 218). Developing a nomadic, affirmative ethics

is not an exclusively philosophical project, as it requires practice and this practice needs to be carried out by material, embodied subjects. The house may be built on the crack, which is the “line of unsustainability,” the point at which a subject cannot take it anymore, has reached her wall, does not know what can come next, but the house provides, in a positive sense, boundaries and shelter (ibid.).

Mapping the Route to Methodology

My journey through the theoretical literature to conceptualize d/Deafness as messy means that d/Deafness is an unfixed, permeable plane of immanence, inhabited by multiplicities of bodies, spaces, places, moments and machines, from which untold possible futures may grow out of encounters and events. Feminist notions of specificity, difference, and leakiness contribute to theorizing possible futures embedded in and transformed by material realities in the present. By reading how others theorize the body in its messy permeability, I learned to reframe, contest and destabilize the fixity of material d/Deaf subjectivity. ‘Thinking the new’ is the theoretical tool developed through the literature review and conceptual section.

The literature review has provided an overview of what has been said about disabled and d/Deaf bodies in western able-bodied and hearing working culture. I engaged the d/Deafness literature regarding d/Deaf workers, d/Deafness and hearing, deaf and Deaf, as well as experiences of d/Deaf social workers at school and in the field. Hybridity and passing, concepts I came across as I began this project, are worked through and ultimately set to the side, though they influence how I come to the concepts engaged subsequently. Next, I explored in-betweenness and what several authors have written about subjectivity. Knowledge has been established as partial and constituted through

multiple encounters and events, particularly in feminist and poststructuralist theory, framing the theoretical approach to d/Deafness. Last, I discussed feminist uses of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts and focused on Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity and affirmative residence on the crack. Affirmatively inhabiting d/Deafness as a cracked and permeable subjectivity means a never-ending folding and unfolding of multiple fissures: hearing, Deafness, belonging, unbelonging, ability, disability, embodiment, culture and place. I read how the theorists in this chapter contest fixed subjectivities; how they figure out what to do next; and how their texts perform this task. In the Methodology chapter I will be theorizing some experiential aspects of knowledge production, as informed by feminist poststructuralist engagements with knowledge. Inhabiting the conceptual framing of deafness as a way into researching my own deafness, I turn to autoethnography informed by the unfixed permeability of an emerging plane of immanence.

Chapter 3: Producing Contested Knowledge

Having established in the previous chapter that the subject is fluid, partial and always becoming, I approach *experience* with the same feminist poststructuralist understanding. Experience is constituted in bodies, time, space and place, and it is continually reconstituted through acts of description, writing and performance (Butler 2005; Scott 1992). Judith Butler (2005) argues, “when the ‘I’ seeks to give an account of itself, an account that must include the conditions of its own emergence, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a social theorist” (8). In giving an account of my deaf body at work in social service workplaces and at school, I set out to read my experiences as they have been formed and shifted through my interactions with my surroundings, the people around me, and the larger social space I moved through.

To begin, I define and situate autoethnography as research methodology in its historical context. Next, I explain that my data are generated through autoethnography from my experiences as a deaf social worker and graduate student. I describe how I limited the field of experience in data collection. Then, I provide two tables of questions I adapted from researchers studying the experience of deafness and disability in the workplace and describe the process of shaping the data into the vignettes making up the analysis chapter. In closing, I introduce the analysis as a route into the next chapter.

Autoethnography: a Tool against History’s Winners?

Traditionally, autobiography has provided grand narratives of winners, mostly men, mostly white, mostly straight, mostly wealthy and mostly powerful (see Gannon 2006; Moss 2001). These traditional autobiographies have usually described a rational, disembodied masculine subject as he progressed from youth to old age and accrued

logical wisdom, along with wealth, imperial conquest, and social standing (Smith 1993, 6-9). Smith (1993) traces the modern autobiographical subject as one constituted as masculine, white, bourgeois and contained, against feminine, non-white and colonial, poor and messy objects (17). As with any generalized rule or tradition, there have been exceptions, narrating protagonists of marginalized constitution; those feminine, non-white and colonial, poor and messy objects (see Smith and Watson 2010; Smith and Watson 1998; Smith 1993; Stanley 1992; Stanley and Morley 1988; Lorde 1983; Kingston 1977). Autobiographies of historical and present-day Others have contributed to the project of reconstituting the subject as messy, multiple and unfixed by exploding the western narrative of logical and disembodied wisdom, imperialism and bourgeois social standing as universal.

In the case of analytical autobiography and autoethnography in the academy, there is a burgeoning trend of turning to personal experience to make meaning of the larger cultural, spatial and political world we move in (e.g. Spry 2011; Muncey 2006). Use of autoethnography as a research methodology is growing across multiple disciplines, particularly in the social sciences (Freshwater et al. 2010; Pollock 2007; Campbell and Harbord 2002; Moss 1999; Visweswaran 1994; Denzin 1989). Despite the increasing use—and, in turn, increasing legitimacy—of autoethnography in research, it remains a misunderstood and contested methodology (Leon Anderson 2006; Ellis 2004; Probyn 1989). Academic autobiography and autoethnography are sometimes misunderstood as indistinguishable from popular memoirs published for general audiences. Additionally, Elspeth Probyn (1989) highlights tensions between writing an “I” as an emancipatory project against dominant narratives of subjectivity; even as a writer enacts her subaltern

“I,” she risks reiterating dominant discourses of stories worth telling and who should do the telling (18-19). Doing autoethnography means, in brief, using one’s embodied experience to explore social relations with other bodies, individual, multiple and institutional, as they are constituted through space, place and time. Autoethnography is one way of practicing Moss’ (2005) conceptualization of *specificity*. Specificity as praxis entails approaching autoethnographic narratives as constituted through specific space, place and time; power is threaded through specific encounters and bodies, producing material and cultural effects. *Poststructural* autoethnography attempts to subvert its authority, “knowing that it is impossible to do so” (Visweswaran 1994, 79). With contestation and specificity of autoethnography in mind, I now shift to the material aspect of doing autoethnography as data collection.

Knowing that my experience is partial and unfinished and constituted through multiple factors, I struggled when it came time to decide on actually putting it into written words. I have always had a hard time getting started, but starting in this instance with the idea that there is no one way to remember things I have been through, I really did not know where to begin. If I approached writing my experience as a writer “who radically questions the world through the questioning of how-to-write,” how was I to do this (Trinh 1989, 17)? First, I put the theoretical framework aside and thought about what kind of writing could be done. Then I went back to the d/Deafness literature and looked for articles where the author(s) made their research methods explicit. Two articles provided concise interview guides. With these tools in hand, I began to write ethnographically about my experiences at work. Yet as I wrote ethnographically about the mundane routines making up my workdays, I never stopped theorizing at the back of

my mind, running the ethnographic data through poststructuralist feminisms framing the analysis to come.

Memories are Made of This ... and That

In writing autoethnographically, much like Jodi Kaufmann (2011), I attempt to capture moments of haecceity⁸ as they become between two points and reflect the fallacy in forcing a worker in a deaf and hearing body to inhabit an either/or subjectivity of d/Deaf or Hearing. Here, I am drawing “cartographies of the present” to illustrate possible becomings out of and beyond binary understandings of deafness, disability, hearing and subjectivity-at-work (Braidotti 2006, 78). My inhabitation of deafness has become through: A vehement denial of deafness and disability; an attempt to pass as hearing through recognizing Deafness as a possible “home;” an understanding of strategic occupations of disability; a point of realization that it is always changing and never static; and, always, a question of what will come next. Even as I trace memories of the past, they are framed through the present with an eye to the future. Rosi Braidotti (2006) quotes a theatrical production, *Mnemonic*, to explain how memory and the imagination are understood in Deleuzean and Guattarian terms:

We can think of memory as a pattern, a map. But not a stable neatly printed ordnance-survey map, but one that is constantly changing and developing. . . . Remembering is essentially not only an act of retrieval but a creative thing, it happens in the moment. (165, ellipses are author’s)

My memory is filtered through many different understandings of what has gone on, whether what is being remembered happened yesterday, last week, or a year ago. How I make sense of something that has occurred shifts through engagements with other

⁸ A haecceity, in Deleuzean terms, is the event of relations constituting a subject; for example, “A cloud of locusts carried in by the wind at five in the evening” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 262).

experiences logged in my map of memory. As I sat down to write my experiences as a social worker, and as I became more disciplined in the practice of remembering, the memories would develop and flesh out, gaining colour and texture. Writing memory began as a brief and often harsh indictment of a problematic encounter and would, as I revisited what I had written, grow into a tableau of sorts. I would see my body in a space in the moment of encounter, and memories—of other bodies, sounds, smells, and speeds—would gather until I had multi-dimensional map. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) conceive the “concept” as a toolbox, in which concepts “pack a potential in the way a crowbar in a willing hand envelops an energy of prying” (xv). To create new possibilities of how d/Deafness may become, I opened their toolbox.

Coalescing in the pages of my autoethnography, the organized memories of workplace encounters form a *plane of immanence*. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) describe a plane of immanence as a historical specificity occupied by concepts at play within it (39). The plane of immanence “secures conceptual linkages with ever increasing connections, and it is concepts that secure the populating of the plane on an always renewed and variable curve” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 37). The plane of immanence of d/Deafness in my workplace is a plane inhabited by elements such as appropriate bodies doing helping work, neo-liberalism, health care as a human right for all, “different” sexual practices, sexual identities and genders as a human right, Eurocentric colonial legacies and secular charity. Elements on this plane of immanence include my body, the individual, social, spatial and institutional assemblages it encounters at work, personal histories of those in given encounters, relationships, moods, and so on.

Within this plane of immanence, “certain assemblages of power (*pouvoir*) require

the production of a face,” as Deleuze and Guattari suggest when discussing the idea of *faciality* (1987, 175). Faciality contributes in part to one of their overarching projects of dismantling the Western philosophical notion of the fixed subject and of creating alternative ways of inhabiting, framing, holding, shifting and reformulating power. In the plane of immanence I used for my writing, I describe the faces I am expected to produce at work: professional, capable, unruffled—ones expected in any workplace, I would imagine. Other faces expected at work: able-bodied, hearing, and verbally articulate. An inability to “slide” into such a face causes a tear or crack in the body I am expected to present (ibid. 177). This disrupts the service to be provided or the relationship to be fostered. And so, tracing this crack excavates the difference between the reality of what my body can do in the encounter and the expectant, territorialized face it cannot quite slide into.

Even as I understand and portray what my body can do in that moment as a “real” experience, cracks litter my body as my deafness collides with a professional social worker body. They fold in on each other, repulsing each other and at the same time creating “a set of relations which are not separable from each other,” a multiplicity (Deleuze and Parnet 2002, viii). Deleuze and Parnet (2002) continue pursuing the *in between*, exhorting, “You should not try to find whether an idea is just or correct. You should look for a completely different idea, elsewhere, in another area, so that something passes between the two which is neither in one nor the other” (10). Pursuing a useful, effective and compassionate professional social worker body that provides services to groups of people in need of housing, food and connection while also deaf, disabled and otherwise different traces a line of possibility between points, ideas, concepts, identities

and politics.

Michael Hardt (1993) and Rosi Braidotti (2009) argue that Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari, attempt a practice of critique aimed towards *affirmative* potential. So, to frame a line of flight through deafness that is not hearing and pathology, nor a communal and ethnic membership, for example, is to understand negation as opening up the field of affirmation (Hardt 1993, 116). Critically engaging other bodies, ideas, and spaces creates – with the body/ies of the philosopher, the geographer, the social worker – new bodies of ideas, spaces and practices. To engage in this kind of critique does not mean to tear down existing bodies, ideas and spaces. Rather, by passing through these accepted concepts, the philosopher can do something new outside of what has happened before and is happening now. The new is not positioned as a reaction against the existent, but as created out of, in part by, and with, the existent and its interactions with other ideas, disciplines, practices and bodies. In practicing affirmative critique, we are learning to think differently about ourselves (Braidotti 2009, 44-45).

Analytical Method through Memory

Every act of looking back into memory shapes and reshapes the memory, each remembrance. In the act of remembrance, the past, the present and possible futures fold into each other producing multiple versions of the past and multiple possible futures. Looking back into memory with an affirmatively critical eye is an act of merging what has happened, in its contestability, with what can happen next, through the act of remembering. Every time I set down in writing what I remembered about events that had happened, given the structure of the method I chose, and the space to really inhabit the memories—smells, surfaces, light, place, sound, people—something new presented in the

memory. And every time I went through this process, I learned something new about my role in making these memories.

These memories came out as snippets and short sentences that captured a memory, with its folds and tears. But these words as a story, as an autoethnography, needed some order to transform into something someone else could make sense of, could connect to, and could read as an analysis. I clearly needed some form to my record of memories, so I turned to the literature. I used questionnaires from two different works to guide my write up of my recollections. American nursing scholar Susan B. Matt (2008) seeks to work against the medical model of disability informing how disabled employees are managed—and how they manage themselves—in the workplace settings she encountered (Matt 2008, 1525). I have adapted her questionnaire to reflect the language of frontline social service workplaces rather than nursing in a hospital setting, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 1: Interview Guide A

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about your disability. 2. Tell me about the quality of your experience working in the community social service agency as a person with a disability. 3. What was the interview process like for you? 4. When you began working in the agency, what factors affected your perception of your coworkers' acceptance of you as a colleague with respect to your disability? 5. How could you tell if your supervisor accepted you as a worker with a disability? 6. What clues did you perceive from clients that led you to feel accepted or not as a caregiver for these patients? 7. Can you describe your employer's attitude about providing disability accommodation? 8. How did you perceive the agency's overall attitude about diversity in the workforce? 9. What specific events or behaviours contributed to this perception? 10. Since you have worked in this particular environment, describe how included you have felt in the social exchanges and events in your program(s) and in the agency overall? 11. What behaviours have contributed to these feelings? 12. What behaviours by agency management have affected your perception of their |
|---|

acceptance of you on an ongoing basis?
 13. What behaviours by your supervisor have had an effect on your perception of his or her acceptance of you as a worker on the unit?
 14. How do client's behaviours expose their attitudes toward you as a caregiver with a disability?

Source: Interview Guide adapted from Matt 2008, 1526-1527.

Renée Punch, Merv Hyde and Des Power (2007) interviewed d/Deaf graduates of an Australian university. Their research captures the tension between providing accommodation and recognizing different student bodies in the university setting, and a postgraduate employment culture struggling to negotiate human rights legislation and claims to specific standards of productivity and professionalism. The questionnaire the authors used, and which I used as a second interview guide, relates specifically to experiences of d/Deaf workers at work without being specific to a particular occupation or site, so I did not change the questions. The table is below:

Table 1: Interview Guide B

“At work, to what extent does your hearing loss affect your ability to participate in...”
 1. Department/staff meetings?
 2. Receiving instructions or supervision?
 3. In-service, professional development, or training activities?
 4. Performance evaluations?
 5. Casual interactions with coworkers?
 6. Work-related social functions?

Source: Interview Guide adapted from Punch, Hyde and Power 2007, 4.

I began with the questions used by Matt (2008) and applied them to five different social service workplaces that were part of my recollections. Her questionnaire was useful in framing what I perceived about my experiences and how I felt about them, both in my memories and at the time of writing. Then, I used the questions from Punch, Hyde and Power (2007), applying them to the same social service workplaces. In addition,

Punch, Hyde and Power's (ibid.) questionnaire helped me to contextualize my memories according to text, space, place and culture. I found that between the two sets of questions, I was able to flesh out my memories of experiences in multiple workplaces, each with their own cultures.

As well as helping me find an entry point to writing my experience, Matt (2008) and Punch, Hyde and Power (2007) helped me to contain the stories to a specific context—one relating my encounters with other people, technologies, geographies and institutionalized knowledges at work. Where I once had trouble writing about my life without going back to the beginning and looking for the end, I now had a means of sticking to a particular spatio-temporal outline for my experience. And I began to understand how my memories of experience are partial and constituted in the act of remembering; this meant I could let go of the beginning and the end. The ethnographic description of routine and extraordinary disruptions to the fabric of policies and practices grew out of memories of how my professional body collided and colluded with those of my coworkers, supervisors and clients, as well as other social service providers. Similar stories also presented from my experiences as a student, from primary through graduate studies.

Once I had followed the self-interview process, I had thirty-three single-spaced pages of narrative. At this point, I began to create composite vignettes of experiences that played out across multiple workplaces. Since this is theoretical autoethnography, the point is not pursuing one true portrayal of what I think happened, or an attempt to list the wrongs I have survived as a deaf worker. Instead, I attempt to portray how multiple bodies inhabiting different subjectivities bump up against what Ahmed (2009) refers to as

“the brick wall” of institutionalized practices and policies (48). As I inhabit a deaf body in hearing workplaces, a pattern emerged of consistent moments when the brick wall would emerge. However, my deafness, while always embodied, contributes to my subjectivity in several, fluid ways, depending on the day, the space, the time, and innumerable other factors. And my deafness is constituted in relation to the various hearing bodies and otherwise abled and disabled bodies it encounters. The autoethnography I pursue, as Mary Louise Pratt (1994) explains, is one that “selectively appropriates some tools of objectification both to counter eradication (‘We are still here despite your/their efforts’) and to counter objectification (‘We are not as you/they see us’)” (44). In pursuit of this form of writing and analysis, then, the vignettes became constructions wherein the happenstances are what happened, as I remember it, but the material details have shifted. The vignettes describe the folding and unfolding of the difference deafness makes as I bump into, or against, policy and practices and technologies and co-workers and clients, to constitute a worker who can hear, or cannot quite hear, or really cannot hear (Michalko 2002).

Each un/finished⁹ vignette describing something that happened several times in several different workplaces is portrayed as one experience, and the bodies and spaces are composites of those I encountered in my experiences. What I hope the reader is left with is an opportunity to engage and interpret the force of the sensation of being outside of a correct body, correct practice and correct space – the moment of disruption or fracturing. These vignettes went through six drafts and rewrites, with the feedback of my supervisor. In places where my writing had the tone of self-righteousness, I had to tone it down. In

⁹ I use “un/finished” here to reiterate the partial and subjective act and product of writing autoethnography.

places where my writing reproduced the dichotomies I eschewed, I had to develop more subtlety in my description. In places where my writing made universal claims, I had to bring more specificity to my deaf body. And, in order to invite the reader to believe the stories as interactions among multiple bodies in time and space, I used the method of thick description without so much emotion (Geertz 1973). In later drafts, I put emotion back in, after I had done the work of crafting a singular portrayal; at this stage, emotion served as a tool for conveying disruption. The vignettes are intentionally-crafted elements of my experience.

Ethics of Autoethnography

Returning to the contested status of autoethnography as methodology, ethical issues are important to consider. For this project, I applied for an ethics waiver from the university Human Research Ethics Board (HREB). An ethics waiver permits the applicant to forego filling out an extensive questionnaire about the potential harms the research they intend to do may cause participants and how this harm may be prevented. Even so, I had to write a two-page prose application describing my intentions, the sites for data collection (workplaces) and how I meant to prevent any harm to others. After a brief email conversation with a member of the HREB I revised my application and it was accepted.

I do not name others, and encounters with specific persons and in specific spaces described in the vignettes are actually constructions of multiple examples of similar encounters. Yet there is a risk of compromising confidentiality and harming reputations – this is especially true if readers conflate compositions with people and spaces they know.

I am aware of the standards set for research with humans in my university community. And, I struggled to establish a firm grasp of the ethics governing my work.

Scholars practicing emerging research methodologies are compelled to fit their ethical frameworks within that determined by their academic and governmental funding institutions. The work of Martin Tolich (2010) and Heewon Chang (2008) reflects this tension. They describe several problematic situations arising in autoethnographic research. Tolich (2010), dissatisfied with discussions of ethics he encountered in academic community/ies doing autoethnography, sets out to provide “ten foundational guidelines for autoethnographers” (1600). Most compelling for my practice as an autoethnographer attempting to write ethically, Tolich cites Kristina Medford’s (2006) caution “that [autoethnographers] should not publish anything they would not show to the other persons mentioned in the text” (in Tolich 2010, 1607). Tolich also argues that researchers should always assume that “people mentioned in the text will read it one day” (ibid. 1608). Heewon Chang (2008) suggests that autoethnographers damage the ethical quality of their work: when they fail to engage with the larger social and cultural constitution of their experience as they share it; when they do more storytelling than making meaning of those stories; when their data is solely from their own memory; when others in their stories are not treated according to standardized ethical practice; and describing their work as “autoethnography” when it is not (54).

Titchkosky (2008) constructs composites of what people around her say to justify and explain the absence of disabled bodies and the presence of poor accommodations in her academic workplace. She explains how she situated her research within institutionalized ethical frameworks, “my narratives harm no one since no individual is

represented and the narratives stem from recollections of things said in the course of my daily life, rather than a deliberate collection of narratives” (ibid. 42). By framing what people have said (repetitively, casually, as a given) as something that all involved say, and have said, Titchkosky (ibid.) positions the narratives as exposing relationships between bodies, spaces, and texts, and not people.

I do think that since Titchkosky (2008) explicitly states that her data are from the mouths of those she interacts with in her one workplace, there is an opportunity for a reader to recognize their own presence in the text. However, the point is that the reader is participating in a set of institutionalized practices taken for granted as common sense. Any reader can read Titchkosky’s (ibid.) work and recognize a phrase they have uttered, and it is this moment of recognition that hopefully disrupts the replication of practices as given, accepted common sense. This sort of construction of narratives out of commonplace occurrences is what I attempt in the vignettes shared in the next chapter. Individuals were part of creating the memories I drew from in the vignettes, but the experiences constituting the memories were repetitive. These things happened many times, over and over again. As the descriptions of my workplace experiences appear in the vignettes, they all seem to be unique. But they are not. They are part of a repetitive pattern that emerged over time. Some of them even took place *daily* over the seven years of professional practice across the five workplaces.

Feminist Ethics

Liz Stanley (1992) argues that feminist autobiography can be a space to position the self as “a fictive truth reliant on cultural convention concerning what ‘a life’ consists of and how its story can be told both in speech and, somewhat differently, in writing,” and

that this written self is constituted through everyday material relations. It is these material relations that drive the moments I remember as disrupting my workplaces and it is the interactions of space, power, bodies and technologies that I seek to interrogate by recounting how these interactions inscribed my body as deaf or hearing, abled or disabled. In doing thus, I attempt to look at the material “discourses that underpin autobiographical speaking” (Probyn 1989, 21). Writing the autoethnographical vignettes was a challenge to my sense of ethics because I was aware that the memories I chose to include meant that I excluded others, and, by choosing one narrative to emphasize, I give evidence that taken at face value, runs the risk of reinforcing the very categories of fixity I wish to contest (Visweswaran 1994, 1; Scott 1992, 25). Implicated in these vignettes are the bodies of others who are going about living their own narratives as workers, managers, and clients. Using our interactions in composites is an act of erasure and consists of interpreting what of their contribution to that encounter is to be included and excluded. The tension driving my desire to embed a feminist ethic into the research is one between participating in a normalizing authoritative discourse—an effort that will hopefully be rewarded with the letters of M and A after my name in professional settings—and the compulsion to negotiate my memories in a way that is productive of new ways for deaf bodies to inhabit workplaces.

I am conscious of writing between disciplinary discourses: social work, geography, philosophy, sociology, cultural studies and feminist poststructuralist approaches to each (Richards 2008). Untangling the *mangle* of institutionalized disciplinary knowledge, ethics and methodology, is what happens when giving an account of oneself (Butler 2005). When the act of giving the account is always already an *entrée* into theorizing, it

becomes confusing. Doing autoethnography is still an awkward and disruptive way to do social research and as such, discussions of ethics are rife with standards applicable to the standard-writer's discipline rather than the theoretical project the data is intended to inform and be informed by.

Jillian A. Tullis Owen et al. (2009) offer an example of an academic sharing a story in his classroom from his life, which resonated with a student and sparked a quasi-therapeutic relationship with that student. They consider this situation:

What if a student assumes this story is about her but it really isn't? What if I made up this story only to prove a point? These questions reveal how truth and self-disclosure are intertwined in ethics. . . Telling the truth is not always the ethical thing to do because choices of truth affect writers, readers, and communities. (Owen et al. 2009, 194)

This example of the messiness of truth, experience and storytelling is one I think about as I negotiate being as truthful¹⁰ as possible in my portrayals of problematic experiences as they are constituted through practice, policy and space, and honouring the confidentiality and privacy of any possible informants to my project. This messiness is also on my mind while I prepare for defending my thesis and consider using elements for publication. It is a complicated and unending negotiation of the relationships between ethnography, fiction, truth and experience (Visweswaran 1994, 1).

A Map into Analysis

In this chapter, I have situated autoethnography within the feminist poststructuralist theory explored in Chapter Two. I linked the practice of autoethnography with the concept of situating d/Deaf experiences on a plane of immanence as a form of cracking

¹⁰ Here, I use truthful in the sense that Visweswaran (1994) uses it in her "Sari Stories" (166-177).

deaf subjectivities. Next, I described the methods used to construct the vignettes to be analyzed in the next chapter, reviewing the questionnaires used to draw out vivid memories and contain them to the context of my workplaces. Then, I made explicit the ethical tensions underpinning feminist poststructuralist autoethnography. I reviewed the institutional ethics application process required of those doing research on human subjects and introduced different approaches to negotiating power in research through inclusion and exclusion. I came to the interim conclusion that in order to demonstrate the validity of my methodology and methods, I have to provide truthful accounts of experience; in order to pursue the theoretical direction I have chosen, experience must be embraced as subjective and partial; and in order to protect confidentiality and justify the use of my experience at all, I must fictionalize elements of my experience.

Turning to the analysis, I offer this: as I trace the multiple discourses threading through accounts of material experience, the constitution of my subjectivities, as the person who lived the experience and the person who wrote and then rewrote that experience, will become more visible and simultaneously less fixed. Ultimately, raking over the vignettes with a feminist poststructuralist approach will comprise of “an inquiry on the cost the writing—critical writing or theory—and its affects” (Miller 1991, 24, cited in Linda Anderson 2001, 125). Following Kaufmann’s (2005) autoethnographic reading of Foucault in which she demonstrates how her autobiography is always present in her interpretations of theory, I will make material the feminist poststructuralist use of Deleuzian and Guattarian concepts by reading them through vignettes of my experience

(577). The analysis will form cartographies of the present as it is informed by memories of the past and drive the discussion of possible futures.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This chapter constitutes a plane of immanence, a space where I trace my becomings through several striated planes of deafness and hearing.¹¹ By mapping differentiating subjectivities as I have inhabited them at work and school, I illustrate how deaf subjectivity is formed, cracked, and then reformed through encounters with other subjectivities, spaces, places and time.¹² Deafness and hearing have been neither fixed nor transcended. They have been folded and are folding into each other, alongside and through multiple spaces, places and times. Throughout this chapter I engage theoretically with autoethnography. For the purpose of clarity, the vignettes are distinguished from the analysis through the use of this font. Asterisks signify the separation of the vignettes and analysis from the introductory and concluding sections of this chapter.

Introducing a Series of Vignettes

I have begun my vignettes at the point at which I lost my hearing, the time and the way in which I began becoming d/Deaf. This not *the* beginning, but a line between the two points of hearing and deafness, a line signifying my multiple, mixed subjectivities. My map of fissures splitting fixed inhabitations of various deaf and hearing faces begins here (after Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 293). I first describe the labour of deafness and the work that goes into living deaf in a hearing world. Next, I describe shifting inhabitations of deafness as I interact with new technologies and geographies when I first leave home.

¹¹ Striated planes, or spaces, are “coded; they have an internal nature and intrinsic properties from which their movements, situations, and confrontations derive” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 352). Smooth planes, or spaces, are “elements of a nonsubjectified machine assemblage with no intrinsic properties, only situational ones” (ibid., 353).

¹² Colebrook (2002) explains Deleuzian differentiation: “If we think of one immanent substance as constantly differentiating and expressing itself differently, then we have to abandon the idea of forces and powers being grounded on some representative normative unit or measure, such as ‘man’,” or, in this case Hearing (63).

Portraying the earliest appearances of fissures in a belief that individual hard work constitutes appropriate faciality, I identify disaffection as I try to keep grips on a workable working body. My reliance on specific spaces becomes more and more apparent, to myself and to others. Moving to the west coast, I become aware of interdependence as a material reality and learn to name this, and I begin to inhabit deafness as a disability. Negotiating accepted practices of looking for work, I experience the folding in of my ability with technologies new and old, physical and social, and develop strategies for managing deafness at work. I trace the route of learning to inhabit (and learning I cannot inhabit) the appropriate social worker body through specific spaces, practices and technologies. Leaks in the professional face of social worker increase as I become caught in between institutional desires to be inclusive and institutional practices framed as immutable and the entrenched belief that *this is just the way it is*. I document the emotional baggage erupting as I slip out of proper professional subjectivities. Discussing how case management meetings are situated in frontline social work practice, I interrogate *normal* as a plane of striation. Technology promises to enable deaf people, of certain degrees of deafness and speech, to inhabit a body loosely understood as hearing; technology reliably fails and disrupts routes to *normalcy* and belonging. I reenact a moment of repetition in my life where technology, space, place, time and multiple bodies constitute a moment of professional fracture. Moving from social work to academic worklife, I describe an undying yearning to belong and remember the points of splitting as this consistently fails in a body that is always becoming different (to Deafness and to hearing). I close my vignettes with a discussion of

deafness and hearing and a strategic inhabitation of interdependency on the plane of immanence.

Becoming d/Deaf

When I was nine months old, in late 1979, I contracted meningitis. I was hospitalized for three weeks and returned home healthy, but different. My family tells me that before the illness I responded to clapping and the sound of voices, for example, whereas afterwards, I seemed to retreat, and no longer responded to any sound. After several months of tests, I was diagnosed as severely-to-profoundly hearing impaired (deaf). I could not then, and still cannot, hear without powerful hearing aids.

Here, I set the stage for multiple subjectivities as hearing and deaf. I was born hearing and became deaf at a young age, before memory. Yet, as I grew up, I always made the distinction that I was not *born* deaf. I was born *normal* and through illness experienced catastrophe (Crowley 2010, 552). This distinction situates me in a striated,¹³ fixed space as not-deaf and almost-hearing. This is the first deaf subjectivity I remember inhabiting, it is the first inhabitation of self on the plane of immanence to constitute d/Deafness (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 40-41).¹⁴ In this remembered moment I am positioned to seek belonging in the hearing world and erasure of deafness as difference, as it presents in my embodied subjectivity.

¹³ Striated space “imposes binary thought, it cuts and divides objects into categories, and divides people from each other and from the spaces they inhabit. ... In striated space the binaries become naturalized—the world is divided that way because it is that way—and they can create apparently insurmountable impediments to change” (Davies, 2009, 23).

¹⁴ Judith Butler writes, “[t]o be a body is, in some sense, to be deprived of having a full recollection of one’s life” (Butler 2005, 38). In quoting Butler I reiterate that this is a narrative of deafness and it is not an attempt at narrating my life.

The Work of Hearing d/Deafness

My life has been defined by *work*. By the age of two, I work for hours on a daily basis at being appropriate in my hearing world. This means spending two to three hours a day sitting at a table at home with my mother. Having prepared lesson plans the night before, she sits with me going through exercise after exercise. These lessons teach me to 'hear' again, to learn the appropriate 'hearing' body, to act with the correct conversational manners and to respond to the proper visual conversational cues. Daily, I sit through my lessons, learning to speak and listen as a hearing person speaks and listens. I play with dolls and action figures, geometric magnets and trains. I draw pictures of my family and friends and paint the things I see and imagine. Often, my older, hearing, brother joins us. I like my lessons. They are fun.

Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I identify as hearing impaired, always making the effort to distinguish hearing impaired from deaf. Until I am in school full-time, I commute with my mother two or three times a week to sessions with an audiologist in a children's hospital in the city nearest to our town. These sessions resemble those my mother led at home, but are a little more sterile in the sense that they are set in an institution and that there are other children who were deaf *and* hearing just like me. At home, the lessons are a way of being with my family and, in the hospital, the lessons are a way of being among other children who were also not normal.

As a teenager in a small Ontario town, I grow up known to and knowing most of the people whose paths I cross in a day, including my peers, teachers, neighbours, and business owners, in fact nearly everyone. People I know and had relationships with usually knew I was capable as any other teenager and perhaps a little more responsible than most others. As a teenager, when I apply for a job, I am hired. Every job I apply for, from the age of twelve onwards, I get. I work as a babysitter, student librarian, café server, and farm worker. While library patrons and café or farm customers are

sometimes unaware and or impatient, communication hiccups in our interactions are most often expected and at the very least tolerated. My lack of ability to use the phone for routine questions, customer service, or even to phone 911 in case of an emergency never seems to strike anyone as problematic, including the parents of the young children I take care of. I understand it, as apparently did they, as part of the package. I do not know nor do I learn what could be done about access to the phone for emergency calls.

Vicki Crowley (2010) writes that “the labour of deafness is intense,” as she describes the work of inhabiting an appropriate academic body at work (550). Clearly, I was doing the work of childhood that other, *normal*, children and teenagers do. But, on top of this, I had a fulltime job, doing the labour of fitting into my mostly hearing family. The lack I brought to the table (as described in experiences of work as an adolescent in my hometown) seemed to be accepted as a fact of life. This self, a complication of what I describe in the first vignette, is one where my community’s conception of acceptable and livable and doable is folded¹⁵ into the labour of what I do in order to work and go to school. In turn, what I can do, and do in fact do, is folded back into the spaces, places and bodies of my community, reformulating what is necessary to be able to babysit, work in a café, farm or library. The bodies deemed capable are shifted as supervision, scheduling, timing of tasks, and humour, enfold mine, with its limitations and strengths. This constant revision along the plane enfolds my childhood experiences and reiterates not-deaf and almost-hearing.

¹⁵ In relation to the self and subjectivity, “the fold announces that the inside is nothing more than a fold of outside ... subjectivity might be understood as precisely a topology of these different kinds of folds” (Simon O’Sullivan, in Parr, 2005, 103).

Leaving Home

When I move away from my hometown to university, my ability to work at a range of jobs requiring a range of skills, changes. I get a text telephone (TTD/TTY) and visual fire alarm (flashing light) for the first time in my first year of university. At home, I moved through a community where most people knew I was “some kind of deaf” and took it in stride. Having moved to a new city, I negotiate a community where no one knows me, and see/hear the deafness before they really notice the rest of me. Libraries and cafés, on- and off-campus, turn out to be much larger, busier and noisier, than I am used to. It becomes harder for me to move past first encounters where I have to struggle to find out how much something is and when something is due, among other essential details in a given verbal exchange that most hearing people take for granted. Instead of being a reliable, responsible teenager who has *overcome* some of the difficulties arising from my deafness, I am now an “impaired” stranger who has no prior examples or models of deafness in a given workplace.

Technology became specific to my embodiment: an alarm and a telephone that I do not need to hear. I was introduced to new possibilities of becoming. By disrupting my path to not-deaf and almost-hearing, deafness could move from “a locus of inarticulateness, of confusion,” and isolation, to an inhabitation of multiple possibles, with sight as a route to articulateness, understanding, and participation (Davis 1995, 21: cited in Loeser 2003, 79). Fissures started tracing through the incorrect parts of my body that I had worked so hard to accomplish. I began to see what might come if I changed the narrative and approached technology and space differently. The material reality of my subjectivity began to visibly slide out of the faciality of not-deaf and almost-hearing, once I began to see and hear myself through strangers’ eyes and ears.

Working to Live

I do not work during my first year of university. I drop out of school in my second year and eventually find work through a provincial work/welfare program for unemployed youth. Because the majority of the jobs are in the food service industry, it is difficult to find work, even with a job-finder who is good at her job and supportive of me. Food service work is often in noisy, poorly lit spaces. Workers have to negotiate numerous customers ordering from a long list of things that may look the same to a speech reader and most service is conducted through verbal conversation, all elements of communication I find extremely challenging.

Once I do find work, it is as a cashier for a coffee kiosk in the local military college. My supervisor and co-worker make it apparent that they find me amusing and doubt my intelligence through off-hand comments about what is weird about my voice and expressing impatience with my need to clarify and confirm instructions by repeating back what I think they had said. We are all poorly paid and they know that half my wages are government-subsidized. I am at the bottom of the hierarchy. My presence seems to be an opportunity to vent their frustrations with a crappy working life. The mostly male students and faculty at the college often treat us, three women, as sexualized objects of play or scorn. It is a nasty working culture and being different as a deaf body makes it even nastier. My co-worker is able to take smoke breaks several times an hour, leaving the site to go outside. I once make the mistake of asking to take a five-minute break for fresh air and to rest my eyes from the strain of reading lips in the dim light and white noise of the coffee makers. My co-worker and supervisor mock my request, as they make their way toward the door for a smoke.

This job is soul-crushing. I sell coffee to future officers of the Canadian military, smile dumbly through their inane jokes, and endure their small talk and dismissals of my humanity, while changing their crisp \$20 bills for \$1.10 drinks and penny tips. I can't see

a different future. Once I emerge from the daily grind, I remember what my parents taught me as a teenager: I need to be overqualified to get my foot in the door as a person marked as d/Deaf and sometimes disabled. I have the privilege of parents who would and could help me go back to school.

The labour of deafness increased as my ability to work became more explicitly contested by those I worked for and with. Here, my embodiment was truly inappropriate; I had no camaraderie with my co-worker and was alienated from the students and faculty we served. Alienation cracked my attachment to almost-hearing even more. Working at the bottom of the hierarchy presented less choice and fewer foreseeable possibilities. Yet it is here that an awareness of class and gender relations folded into not-deaf and almost-hearing, and unfolded into something else yet to come. This job made not-deaf and almost-hearing untenable; denial of material experience, I decided, would get me nowhere.

Starting Over in the West

I learned that I would likely have to rely on being known in a community before people made a commitment to hire me and this lesson stayed with me while moving to the west coast and starting university again. Such awareness goes further than the standard prospective employment practice of 'making yourself known' to possible employers by making phone calls, sending emails of introduction, and dropping by the workplace. What I mean here is that I need to live somewhere for a good while and become friends with people and, as we get to know each other, depend on sympathetic allies to discover how I move through their world as a deaf person as well as what I am capable of. And, with that awareness, I come to hope that friends of friends will accept suggestions and referrals from people who have gotten to know me. Such an approach to finding a job is a more tenuous approach than what is taught in university and off-

campus job search centres, and a modified approach to the unpaid and volunteer work options available to many students hoping to gain employment in a competitive professional market.

While studying towards completing my undergraduate degree, most people I know work to pay for theirs. They work in bars, coffee shops and restaurants. Biding my time and building connections, I am able to work first as a volunteer for a semester's tuition credit at the campus women's centre. Eventually this grows into a work-study position for the campus sexual assault centre, which then, after four years, grows into a unionized position for the same employer. Throughout this time (the first two years I lived in this city), I volunteer extensively and apply for jobs with the student groups I volunteer for, but am rarely hired. When I am hired, the workplaces hiring me explicitly sought workers who might be marginalized in other workplaces as women, queer people, people of colour, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities. During this period, I become more and more aware of the great privilege I carried, and still carry, with a middle class background and parents determined to support my education through to graduation.

At this point on the plane, I learned to name the experience of differentiation and recognize what it is that makes me work differently from others around me, at least in relation to deafness and hearing (Davies and Gannon et. al 2009, 147). Instead of pretending that I did not notice how inclusivity meant slowing down for me (to repeat, to take notes, to make visible), I gradually began to articulate what participation would look like for me, as I witnessed other women with differently-marked embodiments advocating for themselves. Interdependence began to replace independence as the concept to negotiate at work and play.

Walking on foot in the film, *Examined Life*, alongside disability activist and scholar Sunara Taylor in her wheelchair, Judith Butler interrogates Deleuzian ideas through the concept of interdependence (A. Taylor 2008). The two demonstrate the fractured and multiple meanings and embodiments of ability, interdependence and the discovery of what a body can do (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Discovering what a deaf body can do opens up multiple possibilities for subjectivity: depending on access to technology, a body could become closer to hearing than ever before, and my increased exposure to the social technologies of Deaf culture meant a body could become Deaf. At this point on the plane deafness and hearing constitute a hybridity and the experience of being splits up the middle, doubly conscious of dual subjectivities necessarily contradictory to one another (Bhabha 2008).

Disclosure

As part of “putting myself out there” to potential employers I become acutely aware of the significant role making phone calls plays in such assertiveness. Making phone calls is impossible before I gain access to a text telephone. At the time, text telephones cost at least \$500. Once I have access to the phone, when I make a phone call to a potential employer, I immediately disclose my disability because the conversation is mediated through a third party who self-identifies as such. Since calls go through an operator, I cannot take calls directly unless receptionists are determined enough to call the relay operator through the telephone company. And I have to hear the phone ring, or be facing the phone when it rings so that, if I fail to hear the ring, I can see the signal light. Emails to prospective employers often have them email a response asking for a number and time to call me – the email can only ever be a prelude to the phone call.

Dropping by a workplace is just as unnerving for I have to out myself as deaf in order to communicate effectively, and often, disclosing deafness does not ease communication if the other person mumbles or covers their face with their hands, or gesticulates a lot with their hands. Disclosure of my hearing impairment is inevitable. I have to rely further on the good will and understanding of the potential employer, and on any staff who might facilitate my access to them.

Discussing disclosure as a risk in searching for employment highlights how working life reiterates disability and deafness as private aspects of a life, an imperfect embodiment behind a face of fixed correctness. Faciality, for Deleuze and Guattari (1987), is not representative of individual humanity, nor is it a window into human psychology (169-170). Rather, the face:

is a map... The face is produced only when the head ceases to be a part of the body, when it ceases to be coded by the body . . . when the body, head included, has been decoded and has to be *overcoded* by something we shall call the Face. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 170).

Struggling with disclosure continued to crack up not-deaf and almost-hearing to the point of unrecognizability, a zone of intensity drawn to other intensities to constitute something new. Instead of forcing myself to inhabit a specific Face, I had begun to think about what it would be like to not have to do such extensive labour to erase deafness and apologize for hearing differently.

Becoming a d/Deaf Worker

My first few non-student jobs are social service and activist positions serving women through a women's centre and mostly women through a sexual assault centre. Neither position is permanent. In each position I am in a job-share arrangement with the other staff member taking on answering the telephone and doing more obvious,

communication-intensive outreach tasks. I do roughly half of each job; it is truly a job-share. If it is obvious I cannot do a task without significant investment in shifting the workplace culture and space through behaviour or technology, then my coworker takes it on. Each of my coworkers are able to think forward enough to identify potential communication-based tasks without me having to continually point out the work that I cannot do.

My first significant jobs are comprised of co-coordinating a campus women's centre and a campus sexual assault centre. Both organizations are non-profit, student-funded and operating on tight budgets with limited staff working limited hours, doing activist work on campus and in the larger local community. The jobs require the ability to work long hours recruiting, educating, training and supporting volunteers as well as providing crisis support in the moment, as needed, and acting as a liaison between feminist, antiracist and social service organizations on and off campus.

Both spaces are somewhat isolated geographically from the rest of the student union building, in long corridors, for privacy and confidentiality. I am often surprised and startled when people come to the door or office, no matter where I face as I work, because both spaces are rooms with a door, without windows onto the hallway, barring me from anticipating an arrival. Despite their isolation, the workspaces are loud, as people in the corridor have conversations, possibly thinking that the space in the hallway was the best for conversing without interrupting office workers or others in that area of the building. Instead, they are distracting for me, their indistinguishable voices carrying and echoing through the door, while I support women in crisis. It is a frustrating negotiation between providing a safer space for people in need of such spaces and a safer and effective working space for me.

While working for the campus women's and sexual assault centres I get my first work text telephone. What I find frustrating is that I can only make calls out and I cannot receive them. This means that if I am the only one in office or a coworker or volunteer is present but occupied, someone may call in crisis seeking support or a referral and their call will not be answered. This occurs in both workspaces, wherever I am working on a given day. Because of the tight budget, I do not feel that I can spend money and time figuring out what to do to make the job more accessible. I am also not aware of what rights I do or do not have to accommodation as a deaf worker, nor do I realize how much it might cost to provide specific, appropriate accommodation, where to find funding for such changes.

Negotiating workload and capacity with the coworkers I shared jobs with was a form of "place-making" which focused on "relations with others, including non-human animate and inanimate others" (Davies and Gannon 2009, 1). My coworkers and I had managed to constitute a space where we make the budgetary and spatial limitations productive of new possibilities, all the while ruing these restrictions, and resisting them. In these places I became painfully aware of the impact of space on my capacity to work well. The sound of laughter and heated discussion ricocheting around the hallways was beyond my control but served to control how I used the space. The ways in which I articulated I could not do the work folded into how my coworkers could do the tasks and folded out into a new conception of the job, a division between outreach and support. In the vignette, I frame the situation as being what it is, unchangeable. But in fact, we changed it together within our environment with what we had, and we changed how we each did our work in relation to the other(s).

Becoming a Social Worker

During my undergraduate social work degree program and after graduation, I work mostly in frontline social services. In this kind of work, the majority of my contact with clients was in a drop-in setting indoors or on the street or out of doors—either walking around downtown or anchored by a vehicle. This generally means serving multiple people at a time, upwards of 20 to 60 people in a given shift. Shiftwork varies according to the segment of the workday given to running a drop-in or undertaking outreach: anywhere from three to nine hours for a workday. My drop-in and outreach experiences involve delivering the noon or evening meal to clients as a means of ensuring they get at least one meal that day and also as a means of building rapport. Building rapport ideally contributes to building a level of trust so that people will bring issues other than hunger to the staff for support. In my jobs, I provide support, advocacy and referral for clients dealing with homelessness, substance use, harm reduction, Hepatitis C, HIV and other chronic and disabling illnesses, mental illness, colonial legacies, trauma, and street and gendered violence. But I provide no dedicated support for anyone hearing impaired or d/Deaf. In one work experience, agency policy dictates that practicum students are not welcome to participate in the shift change meeting. Shift change meetings take place in the overlapping half-hour between shifts, as the shelter operates on a three-shift schedule over a 24-hour day. These meetings allow staff members to communicate about issues with clients, such as who has had allowances against the house rules made for them; who is banned; who needs additional, specialized assistance; any programming happening that day, etc. I am expected to show up during the shift change meeting but not to participate or be present at the meeting. Instead my role is to get started with setting up for the day, evening or night to come, and be available for residents who need the sugar bowl refilled, a bag for their belongings, an issue with the laundry machine resolved, etc. The meetings take place in

the office by the shelter entrance and I spend most of my time at the other end of the building, in the kitchen area or upstairs changing the beds or organizing stuff in the attic to prevent pest infestation. As I go about my shift, the staff working that shift casually and verbally share information deemed relevant to my tasks.

Often this means I am working alone, on the other side of the building from staff, out of sight and earshot. I am left to make decisions, with or for clients, which I have no history, grounding, or professional credentials to make. This lack of appropriate knowledge leads to conflict due to inconsistent messaging from staff as they make exceptions for clients and do not always pass the relevant information on to me. This is information that they likely pass on to other staff in the shift change meeting or as they go about their workday in the office. During these conflicts, clients sometimes get angry and impatient, experiencing me as a staff person who is undermining protocol or denying an agreement they have made with actual staff. Many clients, as they get upset become difficult for me to understand; some gesticulate or have trouble enunciating clearly or are heavily medicated (drugged) and cannot look me in the eye. And yet, due to my own communication issues, I need people to clarify what they need from me and make direct eye contact.

The practice of imparting important instructions verbally as situations arise sets me, as a deaf practicum student, up for failure by increasing the chances for confusion over appropriate protocol and easily avoidable conflicts with staff and with clients. A meeting could have afforded a quiet space set aside for specific conversations (who is staying where, who has had allowances made, and who needs extra support, what is being done differently today and how and why). Receiving essential information verbally on the fly as staff rushes from client to client and task-to-task means a lot of crucial information may be lost for me. Where a hearing practicum student may be able to pick

up instructions in a casual manner, I cannot. I need to see my supervisor's face to read their speech. Receiving directions or updates while changing bed sheets or prepping food for a meal together means that I can see the speaker's face only part of the time, and they are muffled. I receive random bits without the chance to clarify and review. We are rushed, getting through the tasks at hand as quickly as possible so that we can get on to the next one, so our conversation is rushed as well, that is, if it is even a conversation. Being rushed means there are few spaces in any discussion to double check that I have heard what is expected or needed of me correctly. Instead, taking the time to confirm what I am meant to do slows us down and disrupts the regularized pace of completing tasks. To continually confirm what has been said is to compound the burden of the already stretched workers who supervise me.

Classmates who had completed practicum placements at the same site before me noted that the rule barring practicum students from shift change meetings was a new one. I was aware of this when I began my practicum and I brought these concerns up with my supervisor who was also a member of the management team. The management team was adamant that the rules were non-negotiable, implying that if I could not make the situation work as-is for me then I should not work in such an environment. I repeatedly make the argument that it is unsafe to have students in the space and to keep them out of the loop of staff communication about protocol and important conflicts and behavioural issues with clients generally and specifically.

It is particularly unsafe for a deaf student to work in a place where time and space cannot be dedicated for specific questions and instructions. And yet, it is difficult for me to find the confidence to make the argument on my own behalf as a deaf practicum student. I feel as if the point of the entire endeavour is to demonstrate that I can do the work that my hearing peers could do with little modification of space, place and culture.

To admit that I need specific changes to how our work is conducted confirms that most of the supervisors, teachers and other people I have encountered professionally and academically are right.

At the halfway point in my placement (halfway through the academic semester), an incident at the shelter forces me to consider a reality I have resisted to this point. No matter how hard I work at the menial tasks usually assigned to students and new staff, I will never convince the staff and management to adjust and include me in meetings, supervisory communication and camaraderie.

A fight breaks out among residents while we (the staff and I) are all in the office. A staff member runs to the room where the fight is happening and I follow. She looks up at me as she kneels by the resident who is lying down and yells, "Call 911!" I rush back to the office and ask the staff member there to call 911 and describe what I saw. After the residents break up the fight and the tension dies down, the first staff member comes back into the office for debriefing. She asks me why I didn't make the call myself on the extension line closest to the room the fight was in. I explain what I have already explained several times—every time I worked a shift with a staff person for the first time, when I was interviewed, and several times as a reminder to staff who seemed to forget. I am deaf and hear some things but rely on lip reading and I cannot make voice calls on the telephone. The staff member apologizes and says that she had forgotten. The conversation moves on to other topics. It becomes clear to me that if I want to be safer and considered part of a working team, I will have to finish my practicum elsewhere. My safety and inclusion will never be granted more consideration than that allotted to an able-bodied, hearing worker. This is in spite of the fact that in every other social service workplace I move through, a violent incident is an opportunity to review all the staff

responses to the incident and revisit what worked and what didn't and what could be shifted in the future—regardless of the presence of a disabled body.

When there are other staff members or volunteers around, even one other person, I do not feel any more vulnerable than anyone else in that line of work might feel. But when I am alone, I am more aware of my own specific vulnerabilities related to my limited communication skills because of my limited hearing and limited visibility to read lips. Crises, fights and other mishaps take on monumental importance because of my inability to phone 911, cry out for help or mediate discord. Rather than understanding my awareness as a fear of clients or a fear of the job, I understand my awareness as a fear of how I might fail to be useful, or how I might diminish a client's safety or that of my co-workers. My awareness of my own safety is directly linked to awareness of a client's safety, because my own is so simply promised, so easily violated, and so quickly forgotten.

While the undergraduate Social Work program is committed to anti-ableist principles of support and pedagogy, there is little that can be done without more money, space and time for disrupting *the way it is*. What keeps returning to my mind is the legacy of a social construction of social service workers, particularly those doing charitable work, as being well and able and sober and white and somehow *better* at life than the people they serve—social service workers are assumed to not need assistance or accommodation themselves. Social work is able to maintain its professional status through assumptions that helpers are better, and better off, in most ways than those that they help.

So many folds constitute the subjectivity I inhabited as a social worker: colonial, Judeo-Christian, middle class, white, feminine, and heterosexual legacies of appropriate bodies doing the work. In school, these legacies had been framed as a historicity that was

slowly being disrupted through anti-oppressive practices. However, these legacies are productive of the present moment, and tied into late capitalism. I use *late capitalism* to mark existing geopolitical trends wherein systems of production and labour have seen a reorganization of the work people do. In North America, for example, instead of food production and the manufacture of goods (the latter of which is now mostly outsourced overseas) much work involves service: customer service, food service, social service, and health service. Neoliberal technologies constitute a “machinic process” of late capitalism and inform how governments, organizations and individuals deliver services, particularly in the public service, education, social service and health sectors (Bonta and Protevi 2004). Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon (2009) write, these technologies pervade workplaces at the individual level: “Individuals are made responsible for their own survival and set in competition against each other in their will to survive” (ibid. 3-4). Strategies for survival are driven by funding directives as well as by the needs of marginalized population. Such competition and fear directly compromises opportunities for recognizing and affirming instances of interdependence as creative and sustainable practice.

Bodies doing this work, and succeeding under the neoliberal agenda,¹⁶ are strong individuals getting ahead without relying on the support of others. My presence at work disrupted this narrative. For a brief time on practicum, the materialities of deafness reflected to the management and staff that their practices, despite claims to a feminist and anti-authoritarian organizational history, were compromised by larger claims of

¹⁶ By ‘successful’, I mean employable and staying employed and by ‘agenda’ I mean constitutive discourses and practices that are drawn from neoliberal ideologies facilitating the intensification of contemporary capitalist regimes in Canada.

individualism, efficiency, worker obedience, and the same dovetailing with neoliberal policy-making principles. The school was able to do little to disrupt the charitable model under which social work students did unpaid work with little or no attention paid to their safety, on a practical everyday level. Together, the agency and the school affirmed striated lines through correct social working bodies: deaf bodies do not do this work, the work and cost of integration is too much, the needs of the client population is too great to take the time to reconstruct how the work can be done. Here, I was conscious of the leakiness of the institution's face as well as my own, as a correct social work student, but I had also felt nailed in place, bonded to the cracked face because of policy and its reputed fixity. While the intent to change and include different bodies in the workplace existed, the policy of explicit exclusion implicated specific bodies as the bodies that could do the work. On the plane, the not-deaf and almost-hearing subjectivity is so well fractured, there is little left to recognize. Instead, subjectivity is becoming, multiple and contested, dependent on the space, place and time of event.

On leaving my most recent job as a social worker and in reading this vignette along with the others, I realize that part of this process had been about demonstrating that I, in my specific, problematic embodiment, could slide into the faciality constituted through prior bodies and policy doing and governing that work. And, in this context, lacking specificity, I could not do the work.

Outreach Meetings

Given that I have experienced both blatant and subtle forms of doubt from superiors, coworkers and clients in relation to my deafness, I negotiate a good deal of baggage as I move through various social work spaces. A common practice for strengthening the safety net across community service agencies is holding case

management meetings. These meetings usually include at least one worker from each agency involved in the life of a given person. Case management meetings are often difficult to coordinate due to time constraints, workloads and conflicting work and programming schedules among participating workers. Sometimes meetings include the person in question and sometimes they do not. Such meetings are intended as an opportunity to meet the other workers who also work with the people served by your agency, face to face. Most often, my coworkers have 'met' these other workers on the phone several times and there is a moment of recognition and camaraderie when they finally work together in the same space.

Instead of being an occasion of relief and team building for me, these meetings fill me with dread: Which coworker will be there from my agency? Will the room be quiet or will the air-conditioner run all the time? How many will be at the meeting? Will we have an opportunity to introduce ourselves so I can explain how I communicate? What will the light be like? Will anyone else be there who is d/Deaf?

These thoughts swirl through my head because a) the coworker may or may not be an ally who understands my situation and models how to communicate with me to the others present; b) if the room is on a noisy corridor or the window is open onto a busy street or there is a loud appliance in the room, the distraction factor will be high; c) meetings with more than three people are tiring, especially if I am just learning to read their faces for the first time and there is casual cross-talk and a lack of visibility; d) where there is no round of introductions, there is no opportunity to disrupt the proceedings as I usually cannot read a group conversation for an appropriate pause to introduce myself and my deafness; e) if the light is poor and there is no opportunity to choose seating according to light, I will not be able to see the majority of the group enough to read lips;

and f) if there were to be another d/Deaf person or a person with profound hearing loss, then the meeting could take on a different tone.

These meetings are, above all, a chance to cement alliances between workers at different agencies for stronger support of clients moving among agencies. They are also a chance to demonstrate why their client should be referred to your agency should the need arise—if another worker feels you are simpatico and will know how to work with their client, they will trust your agency with a referral. If, however, you make no impression or worse yet, a poor impression because you cannot participate in the conversation or participate in a way that is deemed inappropriate because you cannot read all the cues, you are out of luck. And so is their client.

One such meeting takes place in a local school specializing in music education. The provincial government has funded a pilot program for adults living with addictions and mental health issues who are also clients of the provincial welfare and disability assistance program. Several frontline workers meet with the educators at the school to talk about members of our respective programs who might be eligible, in light of the fairly strict financial eligibility requirements. The room is brightly lit, the group is relatively small (about eight to ten people), and the table we sit around is small, so that faces can easily be seen. All of this seems to be optimal as a set of circumstances for this type of meeting. The meeting unfolds over 45 minutes. The conversation is steady. My coworker participates in the conversation. However, the pace of the conversation and the fact that the only person I know at the meeting is my co-worker means that I cannot get a grasp on the conversation—ever, throughout the entire meeting. I come away having missed participating at all and knowing no more than I knew before the meeting from the promotional material that we had received from the program. I feel I let my clients down—this was a potentially valuable resource that could disrupt the conventional

pattern of support and advocacy we usually provide them. I try to de-brief with my coworker. But when I ask about what has been discussed in the meeting, my coworker redirects me to the brochure, indicating that the information I need is there. Clearly more was transmitted in that meeting than through the small brochure in my hand. But I am left not knowing.

This meeting, and my coworker's response, reminds me of the necessity of allies in the workplace. I need a coworker who 'gets' it and who can negotiate between the way things have always been done in their experience and the way we need to do them now; taking notes, sharing responsibility for alerting others in attendance of the presence of a deaf coworker, debriefing after a meeting. Difficult as it is to capture, it seems that people who belong to a *normal* way of practice respond best when they see someone whose practice is also *normal* disrupting the norm. Maybe people need a recognizable model of other ways to respond to, behave towards and include difference. So here I note that a coworker who gets it, gets that they have a role to play alongside their deaf peer. My coworker's response serves to remind me that people who can hear tend to take that ability for granted, and work that can be done to challenge the heavy reliance on exclusive verbal communication is extra, unwelcome work.

My usual feelings of embarrassment, regret and frustration after such encounters surface. What is so frustrating in these outreach meetings, and in the different organizations I've worked for more generally, is that we spend a lot of time discussing how inaccessible many health and welfare services actually are for clients. We talk about the Byzantine phone trees of the Ministry of Housing and Social Development and the ministry's requirement of applying online for welfare and disability assistance which has been touted as simplifying services—maybe by laying off workers. We talk about how frustrating such changes are for clients, especially those middle-aged clients

passed over by the Internet and cell phones. And this doesn't include those who are becoming deafened due to aging, the constant noise of life on the streets and violence and expedited aging due to illness and substance use.

I found, and still find, it hard to articulate the issues with going to outreach and other meetings. Often, one-on-one with coworkers or workers from another agency, something relating to my deafness sometimes comes up and a light bulb goes off for the other person. Sometimes a connection is made between how clients struggle in case management meetings at which they are expected to follow a conversation with the multiple workers supporting them, from different agencies and organizations, and how I might struggle in a meeting between workers. Or, more importantly, a flash of awareness occurs for them, and they see a direct correlation between the factors I have listed (space, sound, light, number of people, pace of conversation) and my ability to participate. But I wonder what it would be like if two deaf social workers are at the table. I only get to imagine what it would be like because I have never worked with another visibly deaf co-worker. Would it be easier? Would there have to be fewer fleeting moments before something sticks? Perhaps not in time for me, but maybe for the next deaf worker.

The meeting room constituted a topographical plane on which various bodies demonstrated varying levels of correct embodiment—some fissures visible, others left to surmise—at work as they interacted with each other, the light, space and time of day. Their conversation and informational exchanges folded into the other elements to create a successful moment, a distillation of being on, right, accurate, appropriate. The experience of majoritarian subjectivity around deafness, hearing, ability, and disability unfolded, as I watched, silently.

Such encounters, outreach meetings and failures of useful and correct communication between and among workers, serve to fold my social working body into embodied deafness through these types of material practices, and then reinscribe it/me as something less than correct. Crowley (2010) writes of her experiences as a deaf academic in the classroom:

I become a body that holds no knowledge, no communicative capacity, a watching body to be spoken around or spoken to by others who might ‘fill me in.’ I am no longer human in the way I was only seconds before [the request to repeat and to speak louder]. I am filled in with summaries and gestures. (550)

Repetition of such moments inscribed my body with bruises from constant slamming against the brick wall (Ahmed 2009). The humiliation was greater for the public nature of my slipping out of correctness in front of workers from other agencies and programs.

Technology at Work

My digital hearing aid hangs over the back of the ear. It is a huge technological advance over the hearing aids I wore when I got my first pair, and far less visible. This technology does not erase my deafness or fix my speech or grease interactions with other people to the point of invisibility. I have to remind people of this sometimes: I may not look “different” but the way I hear and speak is decidedly not *normal*.

Even with a hearing aid, my ability to do my work well and on time is linked to the atmospheric conditions in the spaces I move through. Fluorescent lighting, computers, fax machines, co-workers talking in the hallways around my office, fans, dishwashers, refrigerators, telephones—all of these things weave a fabric of noise and light interacting with my hearing aid and affecting my ability to focus. My hearing aid is a huge annoyance that I depend upon. When it is humid or raining outside, the tube transmitting

sound from the receiver (which collects the noise around me) into my ear canal gets blocked with water. The clarity of sound is diminished when this happens, so that everything sounds muted, like I have a bad cold. The batteries die after about a week and sometimes I forget to carry a spare pack. The hearing aid itself bothers my ear—it feels heavy sometimes, and cuts into the skin on the top of my ear and inside my ear and the only thing that will help the ear heal is to not wear my hearing aid which is not an option when I am at work. I'm grateful that I am able to find the money to pay for almost current hearing aids and even more grateful for the chance to listen to music and to the sound of the wind, laughter, the voices of those around me, and other mundane sounds I do not, indeed cannot, take for granted. My hearing aid is something I do not want to imagine living without, but I have my days where I remember hearing a story from my itinerant teacher of the deaf about another student who tried, with fierce longing, to flush their aid down the toilet.

My relationship with voice telephones and text telephones (TTD-TTY's) have been fraught, at best. The evolution of cell phones with ample text messaging packages (and the embrace of text messaging by hearing people in North America) and mobile access to email has monumentally eased my way at work and outside of work. When I first left home, I could still hear and hold conversations on a voice telephone with a select few (family members). Even then such conversations were spotty and consisted mostly of one person or the other repeating mundane comments or questions over and over until both parties tired of the ordeal and agreed to end it till next time—and these were with people I conversed with, face to face, on a daily basis. Often, such conversations were a loose reiteration of what we had already discussed in person. Even then, I had to keep foremost in my mind that phone calls would not work for casual queries about jobs. If I had an overdue book at the library, I would not get a call reminding me to return it (or, I

would, but I would not have a means of collecting the message). I could not call a cab, for any purpose, on my own.

TTD-TTYs held tremendous promise for a time, especially in the workplace. But, for example, navigating a phone tree for various ministries or health services means calling once to find out, with the operator, which button to press, hanging up and then calling again to actually press the right button likely leading to another button and another call... It takes hearing coworkers seconds to make a call that takes at least several minutes for me to make, assuming I get through to a relay operator right away. I dread having clients in the office with me when I make these text-telephone calls to do advocacy work on their behalf. There is a risk of exposure, as if the promise of specific technology would fail and highlight my incompetence in their eyes. It can take so long to get through to an operator, let alone hang up and call again with the number in the phone tree for the operator to call, that clients leave in frustration and are sometimes reluctant to work with me again.

My family, my friends and my coworkers all use text messaging to get in touch with me, or if not text messaging, they send emails which I can collect and return on my cell phone. In my working life, the role of text messaging is limited by the fact that only some staff members have cell phone use paid for by our workplace, though many of us use text messaging to determine whether a coworker is coming in that day, to call in sick, to ask or answer a quick question. Telephone contact with clients is done by voice telephone or TTD-TTY (though my coworkers who can hear on cell phones can talk to clients by cell phone). I have a few (less than five) clients who prefer (and can) access support and counselling by email with me. Mostly, email is for interoffice communication and staying in touch with workers and programs at other agencies, however most

interagency communication occurs by telephone if it involves client service.

Offering sustainable online counselling is not the point of the services provided.

Another example of a common and frustrating encounter with technologies at work: I am in the drop-in dining area. A client and I are sitting at a long dining table, with other clients sitting at the table as well. Behind us is a bank of windows along one wall, with bright light pouring onto our faces. The kitchen is adjacent to the dining area, providing a steady soundtrack of racket. The light is good, the client is facing me and speaking clearly and I am catching some of what he is saying. The tables around us are full; there is constant movement in my peripheral vision with other clients getting themselves food, talking to each other and other staff. I try not to get distracted. I cannot hear anything but the dishwasher! I try to keep a grip on our conversation. But I realize from a question the client has asked me that I've become lost. I got lost without realizing it. The act of focussing so hard overrode my ability to follow the conversation. I know he is disappointed. I am too. I want to invite him to move into another room where we can talk and I can still keep my co-worker in my line of sight. But someone is in there using the phone. Finally, through some repetition and scribbles on a piece of paper, I get the information I needed in order to work on behalf of the client.

This type of encounter played out with various people at least a few times every day that I worked in frontline social services. I felt like my head would explode from the light and noise and effort of keeping up with those around me. In yet another example, for a staff meeting we sit around a large rectangular table. The light is directly overhead and fluorescent. There is a whiteboard on the wall at one end of the long room. Several coworkers make their desire to be anywhere-but-here very clear through body language, side conversations outside of the agenda and sitting away from the table, often out of sight. A manager leading the meeting reminds the staff on hand to make themselves

visible and not speak out of turn. I do not want to be here either yet I have no choice but to make an effort to pay attention; even by looking down at my book for a moment, I miss important things occurring around me. These meetings are important; we make decisions about safety protocol, we learn about shifts or cuts in funding, we share how programs are working together or overlapping in service provision. Usually, I miss the majority of it. I see and hear that people are angry in response to an issue, or sad about someone in our community with failing health. There are shared jokes and camaraderie. I know it is all happening but remain on the social periphery and watching for all of it. I check in with coworkers afterwards and ask what the important stuff was so that I know and do not have to wait for meeting notes, which may or may not be emailed out at an undetermined time. Most of the time coworkers can tell me about the discussions they were invested in, but not much more.

The impact of such meetings is a distinct recognition that the contributions I can make or do make in other exchanges, relationships, venues, do not have a place here. How can I contribute to the culture of our workplace and spaces, support clients and coworkers appropriately, and do the work as I am required to do it, when I am not sure what is going on beyond my daily program routine?

The technologies of hearing, the practices of using sound and not relying as heavily on sight, foster a specific assemblage¹⁷ constituting the workplace. Alacrity, efficiency, and movement fold bodies appropriately using and producing these technologies into the routine of what is. Engaging technology at work, over the years and in several different spaces, it became obvious that accommodations made were usually about

¹⁷ An assemblage is constituted through lines, intensities, movements, and speeds. A workplace, for example, is an assemblage of bodies, practices, policies, and space, as well as the possible futures the encounters between all these elements in the assemblage can produce (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 3-4). Another example is the human body, which is an assemblage of organs, water, environment, emotion, and other bodies.

accommodating normality and not about the most effective and sustainable assemblage of my body, workplaces, and technologies (Loeser 2003).

As a youth, using the telephone and the other dedicated devices at hand, I provided strained performances of hearing, made do with what I had, and made it work for the hearing others around me. At work, this kind of performance failed, cracked open to reveal how meagre such attempts to catch up and make do actually are. In the drop-in and in the staff meeting, I slipped and showed my hand: a body without materials to share – knowledge or appropriate practice. The slip, or leak, happened with clients in the drop-in and in offices, with technology and in simple conversation; it happened with coworkers at staff meetings, in simple conversations, one-on-one and in groups, in official and in social capacities; it happened everywhere and every time. I was rendered useless.

In the preceding examples of my experiences at work, I described a rift between my coworkers and myself when my experience of marginalization via our policies and practices was under erasure even as my deafness reconstituted the institutional notion of correct social working bodies. This rift is expressed as fixed and unchanging, but in fact it would end in a matter of moments, as the next crisis rumbled through. And this rift, or crack, in our team of people presumably inhabiting similar social working bodies, did produce new lines of flight; the disaffection and isolation generated different possible approaches, as well as the possibility of graduate school. What may have been experienced as an unbending assertion of a particular space, process, and desire, was actually a period wracked by second thoughts and guilt.

This vignette—describing the social and material technologies forming meetings, drop-ins, and one-on-one conversations in my workdays—specifically, counts the series

of tiny tears in the fabric of not-deaf and almost-hearing accumulating daily over seven years of social work practice (and more as a worker). These were moments where the reasons for my being there became folded into the labour of deafness and the brick walls all around, and became folded out as the reasons for me not to be there. Crowley (2010) describes the catastrophe of deafness, which is “being questioned for the visible/audible marker; in the discursive environment around us, not the embodied and inscribed experience of deafness” (552). Inhabiting a social worker body, while embodied deaf, has meant surviving a series of catastrophes every day.

Academic Work/Life

Moving from frontline social work to another field is something I have thought about pursuing for a long time. In the process of doing coursework and writing my thesis, I deliberated whether to leave my most recent employment in social work and use graduate school as a means of making a break and moving beyond frontline work.

Larger employers with more systemic funding, mainstream-recognized work, and actual human resources departments, for example, have been idealized in my mind's eye as easier places to work. I believed this for some time because I thought such workplaces are better equipped for a deaf employee from the point of hiring, in that protocols for accommodation are in place and funded. For example, growing up the daughter of a federal public servant, my hearing aids were paid for largely by his employee health insurance plan. In my own workplaces, benefits have not covered more than 15% of the total cost of my hearing aid, though they are essential to my ability to do the work. I do not know a lot about how employee benefit programs work, but I hope that health or disability needs appearing in greater numbers in a given member population are covered more extensively than one appearing less often—then again, I would like for there to be no dichotomy or hierarchy of security for anyone with a given disability or

health issue, common or otherwise. This could also be a reflection of generational shifts; perhaps now that baby boomers are becoming senior citizens and more and more losing their hearing, benefits will change to reflect this demographic need. Perhaps larger employers relying more on an older and long-term workforce have made this shift. Perhaps the union and the university graduate student society negotiating my benefit plans (work and student plans) minimize the needs of the few who do have hearing loss against the lack of need on the part of the greater number of members, among a fairly young membership.

I expected that working in academia would present fewer barriers to a sustainable working life as university administrations seem to market themselves as proudly progressive employers. Granted, this image has largely been conjecture on my part. But it is proving rather rapidly to be a flawed assumption.

At a local conference, I present a brief synopsis of my thesis research. My presentation is part of a panel with three other master's students doing similar work. The conference takes place over a two-day period. Each evening there is a social dinner at a pub downtown. I go along to dinner each night out of a desire to make an effort and because I am aware that socializing is an important part of building professional relationships, particularly among graduate students and professors. Both pubs are very dark and loud and students from other programs at the conference seem prepared (and able) to network and communicate in that environment.

I know immediately that I am not making the best first impression with other academics because I cannot hear or see people clearly enough to ask them the appropriate questions or to answer theirs. At one dinner I sit next to a professor who oversees several well-funded projects in disability research. We do not get much further than exchanging our names, though not for a lack of effort. The professor repeats

himself several times for my benefit, to no avail. I walk away from each evening not much wiser to the kind of research happening in different programs on different campuses. This example, along with several others like it, has made me think even more cautiously about pursuing further post-graduate education, beyond the usual considerations of funding, location and admission.

I participated in a national American geography conference session of presentations on research in deaf geographies. It was an opportunity to share my research with a room of academics that might recognize some of the themes I was writing about, mostly because they are also writing, and in many cases, living, d/Deaf histories, poetry, and autoethnography. In the lead up to the conference, the conference organizers invited participants to disclose any need for accommodation. I arranged for a professional note-taker to type notes of everyone else's presentations so that I could keep up with the session and I was thrilled to find out that this service would be provided free of charge.

Since I have participated in other academic conferences I make the assumption that a microphone would be provided to presenters, even if the majority of the people in the room spoke American or British Sign Language given that Sign Language interpretation is to be provided, and interpreters will need to hear those who speak orally. The session has presenters speaking only Sign Language, speaking a combination of English and Sign Language, and just speaking English. I speak English and neither American nor British Sign Language. I did not ask for a microphone to be provided when I made my request for accommodation. I am soft-spoken and when I begin to speak it is immediately apparent that no one is able to follow what I was saying. An interpreter demands that I raise my voice, raising hers to do so. Other audience members also ask me to raise my voice. I struggle consistently with projecting due, in

part, to a life-long and now habitual effort to ensure I am not yelling and to speak appropriately. The interpreter comes and stands right next to me while I speak and even then has trouble understanding me and relaying my presentation to the audience. There are no microphones on the lectern or table beside it. We are all lost in the dark and windowless room – a room where people cannot hear me, I cannot see them well, and my presentation cannot end quickly enough!

Exhausted when I finish my presentation, which is interrupted several times in order to negotiate the interpretation issue, I sit down and focus on the note-taker's transcription of the rest of the session. Later, I consider how I had hoped to find and contribute to a sense of community in that session but had not been able to because of the absence of a common conference technology. I had not anticipated this type of barrier among d/Deaf presenters. I had presented my own experience of feeling at a loss for some sort of home in the hearing world, and in doing so, confirmed I am not really at home in the Deaf world either. Belonging in the cultural landscape of both the hearing and Deaf worlds requires insider experience, none of which I have, and can only acquire through seemingly endless moments of awkwardness and embarrassment. My body, voice, and language skills do not fit either world.

Writing these experiences down has “nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 5). So I mapped a breakdown of an appropriate academic self as I tried to communicate with a professor and several students I had not met before, which meant I had to learn how to read their speech, even as I was to demonstrate a coherent, intelligent, relevant academic self (Crowley 2010, 549; Loeser 2003, 75). Crowley (*ibid.*) describes the double narrative playing out in interactions as she watches another deaf academic at work, “I also see the signs of a body tuning in, working hard to hear, having laboured

hard to think and produce something that others will want to think and hear alongside” (549). In that situation I was never fully present because at least half of me was always already assessing the flow of communication, whether my speech was poor or untimely, and whether they were interested enough to try to meet me halfway.

The experience of sharing an autoethnographic narrative of deafness with a room of d/Deaf (and hearing) academics exploded any superficial notions of belonging I had brought into the room with me. The presentation found me making explicit the ways in which deafness ruptured my oralist subjectivities and also compromised the taken-for-granted constitution of the hearing workforces of the workplaces I have worked in, in front of an audience of people who seemed mostly to operate within Deaf culture, or move between Deaf and hearing with fluency. And, yet, my presence disrupted the ideas of deaf and Deaf community in that room. My presentation worked against narratives of belonging, selfhood, and right, by framing my experience as subjective and multiple. I was conscious of the work the others had put into excavating marginalized histories and experiences of people around the western world who used Sign Language and inhabit a very different cultural relationship with visual communication. In efforts to bring that marginalized or suppressed history of Deafness forward, and to introduce alternative forms of theorizing Deafness and Sign language, a process of signification is taking hold, a folding of Deafness as a political position as well as cultural belonging as a fixed marker of subjectivity, community and field of study. This seminar made real the issues facing crackdwellers residing in between deafness, Deafness and hearing (Brueggemann 2009, 73). I found myself caught in between the fixed and impermeable Deaf identity,

community and linguistic minority in that room, and the similarly fixed and impermeable norm of Hearing at that conference.

Where I am now

In my undergraduate program I know one instructor who is Deaf. By chance we are from the same geographical region and know some of the same people. She is culturally Deaf and we negotiate deafness and hearing very differently. Most importantly for me, she provides me with an example of a deaf social worker. (We exist!) In my time at school, this instructor is the only visibly (signing) Deaf instructor I have (or even see). Over time I meet other instructors and students who are late deafened and or hard of hearing.

Throughout my life, I have moved from hearing impaired and “not-Deaf” to deaf with some hearing and a distinct unease with embracing any hearing- or communication-related identity. I hear and do not hear. I hear differently. This is the way it is. This is the way I am. This is the becoming I embrace.

While in graduate school, I meet another master’s student who was dealing with progressive hearing loss and has just gotten their first powerful over-the-ear hearing aid (something like mine). We connect briefly over shared experiences of not hearing in hearing communities. An issue I struggle with, in not identifying as Deaf or hard of hearing (there are organizations that serve Deaf people and hard of hearing people), is the lack of visible community. Then I remember that I have managed to connect with a variety of people with a mix of abilities and differing identities without our hearing being the lynchpin.

At the end of the day, despite my awareness that I am most *at home* in the hearing culture I have known since birth, I also know there will be a constant struggle to make residence as a worker who is both and neither deaf and hearing. Participation in

workplaces (including academia) requires a level of interdependence I have always relied upon and also resisted every step of the way. From childhood, though not always aware of this, I feared that to foster interdependence would be to capitulate to the stereotype of dependency I always had in the back of my mind. This fear drove me to deny that I was deaf and to try to pass as hearing when I thought I could. Until I realized I could never really hide my speech and reliance on written notes in classes and I could no longer rely on friends or family to handle voice telephone calls on my behalf, I thought that independence should be achieved at all costs—though I’ve just listed ways in which that independence was wholly dependent on the kindness of others. I occupy an in-between world that fits me—snugly—but does not seem to fit anyone else I know. The community I yearn for remains hidden to me—I cannot voice it, and I cannot hear it calling to me.

Susanne Gannon (2006), engaging Foucault’s technologies of the self, suggests that “[w]riting the self produces transformation of the self and, potentially, of the world in local and particular contexts” (479). In this chapter I have traced the progression of my understanding of deaf subjectivity along a plane of immanence, one filled with lines of flight in multiple directions: not-deaf and almost-hearing; disability; the promise and failure of technology; interdependence replacing independence; and possibilities yet to come. In writing my self as deaf, I reiterated the various ways the people, institutions and spaces I encountered from early childhood inscribed my body as deaf, hearing-impaired, Deaf, disabled, lacking, transcendent, different, and un-belonging. I also sought to re-inscribe my body as something built of all these lines, speeds and intensities, and as something disrupting them, tearing their faciality so that they are changed in the encounter too. A deaf body constituted through lack and transcendence destabilizes what

is, and brings in something new, even if it is only a momentary shift. These vignettes constitute the assemblages interacting on the plane of immanence, performing deafness as multiple, informed by each conception of deafness and hearing that has come before, and the deafness and hearing still to come.

An ethics of affirmation builds in the discussion chapter and is sustained through conceptualizing difference as occurring on a plane of immanence, continually changing and unpredictable. In the next chapter I will explore what writing a differentiated subject as partial, multiple, and always-changing can contribute to productive theorizing of deafness and workplaces as specific sites of differentiation, as well as to poststructural autoethnography.

Chapter Five: Presenting Possibilities

I absolutely refuse a discourse that would assume a single code, a single language game, a single context, a single situation; and I claim this right not simply out of caprice or because it is to my taste, but for ethical and political reasons. (Derrida 1996, 81)

I undertook this project as a means towards destabilizing the fixed, binary deaf subject whose other is a hearing subject. Poststructural autoethnography contributed intentionally-limited vignettes composed of specific moments of rupture as repeated throughout my working life. By writing these autoethnographic vignettes, I pursued a path out of simply objecting to the brick wall replicating itself through the years and spaces of working in a deaf body. Deleuze and Parnet (2002) propose that movement does not happen according to one's agenda when an objection is made (to an injustice, for example). Instead, "[m]ovement always happens behind the thinker's back, or in the moment when he [*sic*] blinks" (ibid. 1). Revisiting past experience with the tricks and games that minds play with memory is an act of transformation. Tracing what autoethnographic texts can do is a way of mapping this movement, which happened as the brick wall appeared and I was too busy trying to survive to notice.

Poststructural Autoethnography as Becoming-Imperceptible

Presenting autoethnography, however subjective and unfixed, for analysis opens up an opportunity to see where moments of hurt, rage and confusion are productive of affirmative ethics (Braidotti 2009). What can these texts do to produce new thought? The plane of immanence is a way of situating the self as "an area of geographical terrain encompassed by the larger environment that surrounds it with no necessity for maintaining clear-cut distinctions between what is self and what is not-self" (Lorraine

2000, 181). The folds in the topographical terrain constitute the relations between the self and its others, human and non-human.

In order to map the intensities and flows on the plane of immanence, as the self is constituted, stripped down, re-inscribed, and the process is repeated, Lorraine (*ibid.*) argues for “writing imperceptible” as a mode of self-presentation (182). A task of writing the self imperceptible, for Deleuze and Guattari, is ““deterritorialization’¹⁸ from the norm by attending to points of destabilization in existing patterns of organization” (*ibid.*, 184). This is not a process of erasing geography but of producing new ways of inhabiting one’s geography by making new connections with other bodies and geographies.

Writing deafness imperceptible is a rethinking the permanent inhabitation of a specific space within the multiplicity of “deafness.” Indeed, it is a process of exposing the unsustainable binary replicated as one attempts to adapt to specific bodily agendas of deafness: not-deaf and almost-hearing, in an attempt to become hearing; conversely: not-hearing and almost-Deaf, almost belonging. Writing the working body imperceptible entails cracking up the white, middle class, Christian, feminine, abled body and following the fissures as they trace lines out of fixity. What other competent professional bodies present when the paths are cleared and opened up to them? How does a deafness-embodied social worker transform her specific working landscape?

Writing autoethnographically with an eye to becoming-imperceptible means portraying encounters with others not as particular people (which, at the start of remembering in order to write, they are), but as points (with myself as another point). The

¹⁸ “To deterritorialise is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations” (Parr 2005, 67).

mess between the points, the “bifurcating, divergent and muddled lines”

between the points was *the* point of the narrative analysis (Deleuze and Parnet 2002, ix).

Writing imperceptible knowing the potential for a loss of categorical belonging,

a writer cannot wish to be “known,” recognized ... Writing has no other end than to lose one’s face, to jump over or pierce through the wall, to plane down the wall very patiently. (Deleuze and Parnet 2002, 45)

That brick wall that keeps reappearing? It needs to be bulldozed, its bricks scattered and reconfigured.

Becoming-imperceptible is a means of disrupting common sense from its secured, dominant position as a source of thought—or, in Deleuze’s opinion, a repressor of thought (Lorraine 2000, 190). At work, common sense extensively dictates professional praxis. Following Titchkosky (2008), people at work will say: *Things have been done this way for this reason for so long and haven’t broken down yet*. Exceptions to the rule are not understood as sites of irruption of sensibility but instead as errors against common sense. Irruptive moments are not invitations to investigate new ways of approaching praxis, as affirmed by neoliberal funding practices limiting creative and critical employment praxis in social service workplaces. In multiple workspaces constituted through hearing and abled working bodies and spaces, common sense is a brick wall of significant magnitude.

Ability and Hearing as Common Sense

Continuing to trace Deleuze’s thought through becoming-imperceptible and the disruption of common sense, Lorraine (ibid.) highlights his approach to the unsayable (191). The unsayable “is singular, the part of experience—no matter how ordinary or mundane that experience may be—that eludes any description we try to give it”

(ibid.). The unsayable of inhabiting a deaf embodiment in hearing workplaces constituted through effective hearing and speech practices is the moment of failure and rift. These are the moments when the hearing, institutionalized other will be quick to notice and articulate to themselves, coworkers, managers, and so on. However these moments for me, as a deaf worker, are sites of struggle, either to disprove or erase myself through overcompensation. Common sense would dictate that a failure on my part to answer the phone speaks to a particular lack in me. Common sense would dictate that I accept this rationale and overcompensate by doing other things, often things not in the purview of the job description, to erase the irritation and inconvenience to my others. Pursuing the unsayable, instead, invites us to rethink what our bodies can do in sharedspace.

How can we reconstitute the routine? By using adaptive technologies, such as a TTD-TTY, yes, but also a change in culture and practices—a change in all bodies—to en flesh the reality of embodied differences in what our routines accomplish. Writing imperceptible interrupts common sense and also affirms *potentia*¹⁹ for all bodies involved, including those benefiting from common sense. Lorraine (ibid.) notes that by inhabiting the “between” in conversations, writing and ideas, “Deleuze creates a vocabulary that minimizes the role of anything that one might call a starting or an ending point in order to focus on the moment of contact or interaction between and among ideas, events and people” (193). Inhabiting “between” sustains a space for transformations, however large or small, as deafness, disability and ability collide, pull apart, and fold into each other, as they encounter bodies, institutions, texts, emotions, and spaces.

¹⁹ *Potentia* is positive power and *potestas* is repressive power (Braidotti 2009, 45).

The Plane of Immanence

Continuing the geographical nature of many of the metaphors, I return to the plane of immanence. Williams (in Parr 2005) explains the distinction between transcendence and immanence. Philosophies privilege relations in their proposals of thought. “If [a relation] is ‘to’ [something] then it is philosophy of transcendence. If it is ‘in’ then it is immanence” (ibid. 126). The topographical folds appearing throughout the analysis are visible relations of the subject in its subjectivity through its encounters with space, place and time. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) explain that “[i]t is a table, a plateau, or a slice; it is a plane of consistency or, more accurately, the plane of immanence of concepts, the phenomenon” (35). I can pursue this line of thought and position my body as the plane of immanence, with deafness, hearing, ability, disability, social work, gender, whiteness, class, and education (though the list is never-ending) rolling along and folding into each other as concepts. Or, I can position deafness as the plane and situate multiple conceptions of deafness, including notions of Deaf people as a linguistic minority, images of thought held as common sense portraying d/Deaf people as incompetent and incapable, and dichotomies of embodied experiences versus medical and sociological constructions of d/Deafness—and this is just the beginning, or rather, just another part of the middle.

The intent behind such an exercise is to break through walls fixing subjectivity to universalizing norms of what our bodies can do. If thoughts of deafness, or social work, or methodology, for example, are opened up, the things bodies can do, the bodies inhabiting social work, and the things texts can do will change as they are thought into something new. The plane of immanence provides a theoretical space for thinking new thought—yet Deleuze and Guattari (ibid) caution that the plane is “neither a concept nor the concept of all concepts,” for if it were, concepts would become fixed and

universalized, once again. The plane of immanence is the image of thought as multiple, constituted and contextualized (ibid. 37). By understanding ourselves as multiplicities constituted through our encounters in the world, we can initiate transformations of thought and practice (and trace it, as it is happening or how it has happened). Lorraine (2007), in writing about the use of Deleuzian thought for feminism, articulates this conceptualization of the self as “a differential logic” whereby difference is creative and in kind (279).

Braidotti’s Affirmative Ethics

A differential logic turns us away from binaries and towards the work of critiquing problematic and violent relations of erasure and censure as an effect of affirmative ethics (Braidotti 2009, 45). Conventional critique of workplace *potestas* would involve looking back at experiences in my workplaces and offering ways in which that space could have been constituted differently (how policy could have been changed, where money could have been found to make accommodations possible, etc.). Instead, for Braidotti (ibid.) “[a]ffirmative politics rests on a time-continuum that indexes the present on the possibility of thinking sustainable futures,” and does not assume the conditions for making change are available in the historical and geographical moment of making critique.

Inhabiting a plane of immanence situates us to think the new and practice an affirmative ethics. Affirmative ethics as a practice and affect is way of intentionally inhabiting this perch as a means of creating new concepts and more sustainable modes of existence. Braidotti (ibid.) cites Adrienne Rich (2001) when she states that “the political activist has to think ‘in spite of the times’ and hence ‘out of my time’, thus creating the

analytics – the conditions of possibility – of the future” (46). Residing in a body that has been untimely has allowed me to think around, or through, conventional conceptions of the way things are. Residence on the margin, however subjective, can afford one a perch from which to witness the folds in the landscape changing in ways that are invisible on the ground and in the centre.

Braidotti argues of affirmative ethics that such practices:

propose an enlarged sense of the inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or ‘earth’ others. . . it implies a new way of combining self-interests with the well being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one’s territorial or inhuman, i.e. environmental inter-connections. (Braidotti 2009, 47)

Braidotti is discussing ethics of affirmation on a grander, global scale. However, I suggest that her approach, alongside Butler’s (in A. Taylor 2008) discussion of Deleuzian interdependence and Lorraine’s (2007) differential logic, has much to contribute to the ways in which bodies are constituted as valuable in individual subjectivities and in workplaces.

A Map to the Final Fold

The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, Jacques Derrida’s (1996) refusal of the singular and fixed subject, sets up the conclusion. I close this chapter with a reiteration that deafness, hearing, and Deafness are multiply constituted, leaky and contextualized through specific spaces, places and moments. Deleuze and Guattari’s plane of immanence provides space for thinking, multiply, messily and simultaneously, new concepts. Braidotti’s ethics of affirmation make explicit the political nature of inhabiting a plane of immanence to produce new thought for more sustainable futures. Having thought through these two ideas, I propose a possible route to disrupting

differentiating approaches to bodies and spaces and turn towards differentiation. The irony of inhabiting an untimely subjectivity reiterating the impossibility of a clean and unbroken faciality, and a place of belonging, is that I have come home to feminist poststructuralism. Through the process of dismantling the notion of home and contesting the labour of belonging to either Hearing or Deaf communities of visibility and identity, I feel that my deaf subjectivity has been made visible by a concerted undertaking to think the new.

In the final, concluding chapter I will trace the path I followed through the deafness literature; engagements with theories of the body, disability, deafness and poststructural feminisms inspired by Deleuze; a description of the methods of autoethnography, along with a troubling of the authority of the self as writer; I share the composite autoethnography of my experiences as a deaf social worker and student and tie the theoretical foundation set in the theory chapter to the discourses made visible in the analysis; and, finally, I discuss the findings and implications for thinking new conceptions of deafness, hearing, social work and workplaces.

Chapter Six: A Plane Folding in on Itself

I approached this thesis with the hope of enacting a space productive of feminist poststructuralist notions differentiating deafness, hearing and Deafness. This was done using poststructural autoethnography to access and analyse memories of rupture in my body as a deaf student, social worker and graduate student, and in the social and spatial relations I negotiated in those roles. I framed knowledge and subjectivity as multiple and unfixed. Simultaneous to pursuing multiple and unfixed subjectivities of d/Deafness, I also had to participate in institutionalized knowledge-making practices and to do so, I had to freeze a momentary experience as finite and contained. My subjectivity in memory, as it was captured, became contained by the act of writing. Yet, as the analysis indicated, setting down memory is an act of always already analyzing, as discussed more fully in Chap. 4. In short, through five chapters I developed a thesis that deafness and hearing are always *and*, and not *either/or*, as traditionally conceptualized.

In this chapter, I summarize the main points from my inquiry into the multiplicity of deafness and hearing. I map the production of my thought away from binaries of deafness and disability toward multiplicities of deafness, Deafness, hearing, disability and ability. The map traces my engagement with modern and postmodern notions of d/Deafness, as well as differently marked bodies in workplaces. It also traces how I engaged feminist theories of the body, the disabled body and feminist poststructuralist uses of Deleuzean thought to produce new concepts of the body, difference and politics. I used the method of drawing out memory to construct the vignettes. The messiness of methodology is explicit, particularly in the use of poststructuralist autoethnography and the interrogation of experience. The analysis was presented through the vignettes, section by section. I discuss what the texts do as I read them, and think through what they capture

of tears in the social and spatial fabric of workplaces and the academy I experienced. Last, I return to the philosophers engaged in the theory chapter, and think through their concepts to analyse cracked deaf subjectivities, as they've spanned over time, space and geography.

The main concepts pursued in this thesis are the *plane of immanence* and *specificity*. For this project, deafness in the workplace has been conceptualized as a plane of immanence on and through which multiple bodies and affects transform d/Deafness as it plays out in a social worker's professional body in workplaces. Specificity is an approach to the constituted nature of subjectivity; it is an attempt to capture power negotiations in particular bodies, spaces, places and moments in time. The experiences of deafness I share in the vignettes are constituted specifically. Positioning my experiences as a plane of immanence has been an act of writing the self-imperceptible, a way of pulling out of the emotional ownership of what I had felt, thought, heard, said and done, and locating the spaces and places and moments I participated in at work within a larger plane of encounter.

Writing the self-imperceptible informed how I wrote and analyzed poststructural autoethnography. Poststructural autoethnography proves messy in this instance. Negotiating institutional and feminist ethics meant it was rarely clear what I should do regarding confidentiality, experience, and truth. The point became that the proper thing to do in a methodology reliant on my experience as data was never straightforward. Instead, approaching the work ethically meant accepting that it is a continual back-and-forth between memory, data-generation and analysis. Doing poststructural autoethnography was an exercise in pulling apart the neatly bound threads of common sense suppressing

the material realities of what it takes to be a social worker in a correct body.

Doing so made a mess, and making a mess cracked up the work of trying to fit a disruptive body into a contained, and correct role.

Cracking up d/Deafness along multiple fissures disrupts traditional modes of deafness, hearing, disability and ability as fixed and permanent subjectivities, experiences, and identities. Inhabiting a cracked deafness is the conscious residence in a material reality socially constituted through multiple factors, all of which are changing all the time, changing deafness itself. The relationship between deafness and hearing is more than just a scale of the ability to perceive sound. It is also more than the difference between speech, voice, and Sign. It is a complex and unfixed relationship wherein each feeds and feeds off the other to constitute itself as a marker of cultural, physical and/or medical identity. As with any other body, space, concept, or moment, deafness and hearing are wholly interdependent on the multiple cracks, or lines, tracing meanings through them. Understanding deafness and hearing as multiply constituted and leaky offers opportunities to trace different lines between points on that scale of the ability to perceive sound and scales of articulateness. It also presents possibilities of transforming those hierarchical scales into a mutable and fluid topography upon which d/Deafness can be a productive and positive signifier of creative difference.

In closing, d/Deafness is unfixed, partial, permeable, messy, cracked, and positioned as a plane of immanence. d/Deafness has served as a material disruption of what a body can do as a social worker and student in multiple workplaces. d/Deafness also serves, as it disrupts, as an irruption of possibility in what bodies can do when they inhabit interdependence as an intentional mode of inhabitation. By tracing the paths

d/Deafness has carved across my experiences at work, I have mapped out what a body can do, and does, in relation to other bodies, spaces, places, and moments in time.

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