POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY
THROUGH NEW MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY

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Abstract

The Deaf community has unique socializing factors, primarily linguistic, that influence their political engagement and are directly affected by political and procedural accessibility to the new media environment. The following study focuses on the socializing factors of the Deaf community specifically in regards to political information, opinion, and activism. Ultimately, I seek to uncover the reasons behind idiosyncratic or deficient political socialization. The methodology combines survey and interview to highlight real and perceived holes in the accessibility infrastructure of our country and clearly indicate the need for awareness and increased feedback in the political arena and in the media. Assistive technologies like closed captioning have particularly complex underpinnings but are the most relied-upon source of information for Deaf consumers. In this study, I present the perspectives of policy makers for media accessibility, producers of assistive technologies, and advocates within the Deaf community. I believe that the lack of accurate, first-hand access to news in the media contributes to episodic political isolation of the Deaf community. Much of the research about Deaf politics only touches the fringe of this issue: that we require greater mobilization of the Deaf community and of our political leaders and lobbyists to streamline important communication through accessible and effective media outlets. I propose that policies concerning media accessibility will only become increasingly retroactive. Using the results of my research and the principle of “kairotic space” between consumers and vendors, corporate social responsibility presents itself as the best intercession that can be made for Deaf political socialization in the new media environment.
I am especially grateful to the Deaf community, who took me in and taught me to expand my thoughts past words, to be more mindful and more honest. I’m grateful to all those who interviewed with me, allowing me to debate the contradictory nature of our work; that even the best intentions and efforts are sometimes subsumed by best practices. Shout out to Taylor Wardle, for giving me the “deaf husband” card. I will cherish it, and you, forever. To my family, especially Gabriel, thank you for supporting me through long days and nights and an even longer bibliography. And thank you to my committee, and Professor Diana Owen, who helped me to push past my limits more times than I can count.
Epigraph

The deafness does not itself shape his/her socialization; rather, it is the given against which society reacts in ways that will determine the child’s enculturation, his/her personal and group interrelationships, and his/her receptivity to the socializing content. These societal reactions are...always rooted in the society’s identification of, and its attempts to deal with, the deafness as a perceived instrument of interference with the normal media of socialization.

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List of Abbreviations

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act
ASL – American Sign Language
BSR – Business for Social Responsibility
CAD – Canadian Association of the Deaf
CAG – Consumer Advisory Group
CART – Communication Access Real-time Translation
CC – Closed Captioning
CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
CVAA – 21st Century Communications & Video Accessibility Act
DAC – Disability Advisory Committee
DHH – Deaf/Hard of Hearing
DNC – Democratic National Convention
DPN – Deaf President Now
ENT – Electronic Newsroom Technique
FCC – Federal Communications Commission
FRS – Federal Relay Service
LDS – Latter-day Saint
NAD – National Association of the Deaf
NCI – National Captioning Institute
PAC – Political Action Committee
PATD – Politics and the Deaf
SSDI – Social Security Disability Insurance
TCDA – Television Decoder Circuitry Act

TDI – Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.

TTY – Teletypewriter

VBI – Vertical Blanking Interval

VPD – Video Programming Distributor
Chapter 1:

Introduction

The Deaf community has long rejected the label of “disabled,” and their engagement in the political sphere has followed suit, reflecting the civil rights fervor of a linguistic or cultural minority rather than that of a disabled population. From the boycott of the newly-developed hearing aid in the 1950s, which falsely advertised a “cure” for deafness,\(^1\) to the fight for a Deaf president at Gallaudet University in 1988 to today, the Deaf community has been progressively vocal in claiming political equity and acknowledgment. The self-identification of the community as Deaf with a capital “D” is a push back to the medicalization of deafness. The medical profession, and by extension the majority of the hearing population, would claim that deafness needs to be cured, that it is a handicap and genetically inferior.\(^1\) Instead, this community claims their Deaf identity with pride as a result of their collective creation of cultural spaces, unique artistry, and most importantly, an independent communication modality – American Sign Language (ASL).\(^2\)

American Sign Language revolutionized the education of Deaf people in America. Having a common accessible language allowed Deaf individuals to congregate with others who shared their experiences rather than integrate with a hearing society they could not fully access.\(^3\) Consequently, the solidarity of community has given Deaf people the power to advocate for more inclusion in hearing society. However, accessibility for the Deaf community depends on

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the acknowledgment of their natural language. Katherine Jankowski states, “Unlike other marginalized group members who declare loudly their demand to be heard in a [shared modality], Deaf Americans are excluded from communicating their demands in that dominant mode of speech.” The Deaf community’s struggle with language access and marginalization due to hearing loss make them a unique study in political accessibility and disability rights. Despite 50+ years of inclusion efforts, barriers still exist in accessibility and advocacy for Deaf individuals.

There is no lack of willingness to participate among the Deaf community, according to 2012 survey data about the political activism of disability sectors. For this reason, they are a prime subject for piloting research in political accessibility. If members of the community are already politically active, the gap in full inclusion must lie elsewhere. Data concerning the political socialization of the Deaf community is sparse, but preceding studies on educational and linguistic socialization have created a guiding framework to this next important step in Deaf studies.

Political socialization is functionally defined in this study by those factors which motivate political activity and the communal beliefs and experiences which influence political positions. My study sheds light on quantity and quality of the Deaf community’s engagement with politics. The purpose of this study is to analyze the communication practices of a linguistic minority and what media-based solutions might provide internal or external supplements to those practices in order to achieve greater political socialization and participation. Shortcomings in

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contemporary political communication, particularly through the use of new media such as social media and the internet, may in fact undercut the political socialization of the Deaf community, which inhibits informed involvement and ease of self-advocacy in the political process. By exploring these issues from the Deaf perspective and through the analysis of media policies and procedures, I will answer the following research questions: 1) What are the prominent socializing agents in the Deaf community? 2) How does media access facilitate and/or hinder their political engagement?

My study focuses on the Deaf community characterized thus: individuals who identify themselves as Deaf or Hard of Hearing and use American Sign Language (ASL) as a means (though not necessarily a primary means) of communication. I recognize that the broader Deaf/deaf/Hard of Hearing community is more diverse in their linguistic and social behaviors, and I discuss the Deaf/deaf binary more in my literature review.

This study is a discussion of political communication strategy within and toward a demographic with particular communication needs: namely, through a visual-spatial modality. Most political rhetoric is dependent on aural cues and insinuations. My literature review will follow the emergence of the Deaf community in the political sphere and the subsequent changes to political rhetoric and accessibility in America. This background is necessary to understand Deaf politics: both where the Deaf community leans politically and which issues are central to the paradigm of the Deaf community. From here, I use two primary research methods in order to analyze the political socialization of Deaf individuals. First, I conduct a field survey to inquire about the educational and linguistic background of Deaf individuals and their political opinions and activity. This survey not only provides helpful content in studying the cultural influences on political socialization, but will also present a sample of the Deaf political community, showing
patterns in opinion, communication, and activity. Second, I conduct interviews with policy makers for media accessibility, producers of assistive technologies, and advocates within the Deaf community and analyze the resulting case studies of the contemporary media environment. With this comprehensive view of the political accessibility climate, solutions may be seen in rule-making, media production, and community activism.

**Personal Motivation**

There is a major lack of understanding about the socializing factors of the Deaf community which requires a human-centered approach. As an interpreter, wife of a Deaf husband, and resident at Gallaudet University, I have a personal stake in my collaboration with the Deaf community to promote awareness of this shortcoming and discover important trends in Deaf political socialization. These trends can tell us what effect educational and linguistic choices have on Deaf political socialization, and they can point out holes in socialization which if remedied will improve advocacy and representation of the Deaf community. Whether the holes are due to media strategies, information accessibility, intersectionality behaviors, or other causes, identifying them may be instrumental in empowering the Deaf community in politics. I also hope that my study will raise implications for other disabled groups and linguistic minorities that seek more recognition and political sway. According to a study done by Rutgers University, there were 10.8% more eligible voters with a disability in 2016 than in 2008, compared to 8.5% more eligible voters without a disability. Eligible voters who have a disability or whose household has a member with a disability were projected to constitute 62.7 million people, or one-fourth of the
The disabled population continues to grow and with it, the demand for attention to and innovation in accessibility issues.

**Theoretical Framework**

This work is interdisciplinary and will deal with three main theoretical frameworks, namely: political socialization, disabilities studies, and media accessibility. Most research on Deaf people in the political sphere has categorized them as a sector of the disability population. Disability literature depicts the Deaf community as an icon of political activism and influence. Between these two fields is the intersection of identity politics and political engagement. Both fields, as well as the results of my study, indicate that access to media interaction is the keystone of contemporary political socialization for the Deaf community. In this thesis, I will develop and discuss the following argument: The Deaf community has unique socializing factors, primarily linguistic, that influence their political engagement and are directly affected by political and procedural accessibility to the new media environment.

According to political socialization theory by Gimpel et al., there are five key figures for reinforcing the political values of a community:

- Parents
- Clergy
- Teachers
- Peers
- Media

Each of these influencers will be discussed in this study. Peer socialization, or socialization within the Deaf community, is the highest performing influencer for the Deaf individual.

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Familial socialization and religious association are both found to be subordinate to the influence of the Deaf community; some anecdotal research shows that familial socialization can discourage political conformity and engagement. Educational socialization enhances and encourages peer socialization, particularly where Deaf students are educated bilingually (in English and ASL) together with their peers. Media socialization is somewhat inchoate in previous literature, and in this study is shown to be a mixed bag; while new media such as social media has a positive effect on socialization, television and online video are problematic due to accessibility issues in captioning. Further in this study, the theory of corporate social responsibility is used to address the gap in media accessibility for the Deaf community.

**Part I – Political Engagement of the Deaf Community**

The literature review in Chapter 2 will give definition to my study. The Deaf community has played an important role in several political battlefronts in their pursuit of accessibility rights. Education has been the most prominent fight because of the community’s concern for the preservation of American Sign Language. The Deaf President Now protest in 1988 centered on the administration of an educational institution – Gallaudet University, the only institution for higher education of the Deaf. This protest demonstrated the community’s ability to spark social change on a large scale, and their determination to advocate and govern themselves in a local political setting. The literature review will discuss the Deaf community’s history of political involvement and political identification as well as the studies done up to this point on linguistic and political socialization within the community. While much of the literature focuses on education and linguistic access for Deaf children, my analysis focuses on socialization factors in the lives of Deaf adults. Semantic conflicts within disabilities studies and socialization research also are addressed.
Today, the Deaf community allies with other disability communities to continue the fight for information access and political advocacy. Chapter 3 will explore the interesting case study of the 2016 Presidential election cycle and the ways in which the disability community inserted themselves in campaigning efforts. The language of representation through media efforts will be analyzed in comparison with Deaf community perspectives. This will give an idea of the public presentation of Deaf political ideology, and also will highlight the shortcomings of the general populace in addressing their interests as outlined in my literature review. Because the Deaf community functions as a linguistic minority as well as a part of the disability population, their specific needs are not met by initiatives to appease the disability community as a whole.

In Chapter 4, I delve into one of the primary research methods of this study. I conducted a survey that tracks patterns of information and opinion within the Deaf community. These findings highlight some unique political consistencies among the Deaf population, specifically the Gallaudet University community. Ultimately, I seek to uncover the reasons behind idiosyncratic or deficient political socialization. The lack of accurate, first-hand access to news in the media may contribute to episodic political isolation of the Deaf community. If the only accessible political information is in the form of editorials and peer pressure from within the community, it could manifest in uninformed activism or voting patterns that do not represent the diversity of the community. What socialization gaps within the community might be filled in order to increase political information and participation? It may be that the nature of the Deaf community’s communication modality creates a unique kind of echo chamber in which the political ideas of the community are proliferated without real debate. For example, survey respondents were more likely to say that Deaf politics are important to them if they had taken the survey in ASL. On the other hand, what socialization gaps within our political system dissuade
the self-advocacy of the Deaf community? Much of the research about Deaf politics only touches the fringe of this issue: that we require greater mobilization of the Deaf community and of our political leaders and lobbyists to streamline important communication through accessible and effective media outlets. The preliminary findings of my survey indicate a preference for bilingual exposure and a reliance on closed captioned media in order to receive political news.

**Part II – Policies & Players in Media Accessibility**

My survey responses directed me to what may be the biggest barrier to Deaf accessibility today: poorly captioned media. The improvement and progression of assistive technologies are stuck in a labyrinth of rule-making that are not easily influenced by Deaf consumers. I conducted interviews that sought to dig into the background and perspectives of professionals in the Deaf community, in the government, and in the business sector. Using interviews with providers, clients, consumers, advocates, and policy makers, I recorded all of the varying perspectives of the players in media access. These interviews bring light to the moving parts of this issue and what might be done to address it. In Chapter 5, I refer back to policy history in order to point to the eminent concerns in future rule-making endeavors. Here I propose that policies concerning media accessibility will only become increasingly retroactive in the new media environment. Chapter 6 introduces the closed captioning environment within the framework of disabilities studies. I focus particularly on the concept of universal design and the creation of dialogical space between consumers and vendors.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I use corporate social responsibility as a framework to view and understand specific issues that have arisen in the captioning industry. Successful strategies for the improvement of media accessibility include consumer pressure, advocacy and grassroots movements, and feedback between the Deaf community and captioning providers. These
strategies gain prominence through the implementation of corporate social responsibility and therefore allow the Deaf community to not only receive but also participate in greater political socialization.

**Conclusion**

This is the largest study to date on the socializing factors of the Deaf community, specifically in regards to political information, opinion, and activism. These findings highlight real and perceived holes in the accessibility infrastructure of our country and clearly indicate the need for awareness and increased feedback in the political arena and in the media. Assistive technologies like closed captioning have particularly complex underpinnings but are the most relied-upon source of information for Deaf consumers. My analysis of the production of accessible media provides clarifying input to the political challenges for the Deaf community today. These insights point to solutions that can apply to the political system at large, those in the roles of mediator for disabled and linguistic minorities, and the Deaf community itself.
PART I: POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

The population involved in this study is entangled in complex identity politics. One reason this study is critical is because the Deaf community identifies and acts as a linguistic minority rather than a disabled population.\(^1\) Despite the expectation of disabled Americans to have a lower voter turnout,\(^2\) a comprehensive survey done by Rutgers University found the following: “When broken down by type of disability, the turnout gap for people with hearing impairments is very small and we cannot reject sampling error as an explanation, but the other disability gaps are large and strong enough to reject sampling error.”\(^3\) The Deaf community’s historical resistance of the disability label is affirmed by their political participation which is negligibly different from that of the general population. This literature review will establish a cultural understanding of the Deaf community in regards to the Medical and Social Models shown in critical research. Building on that foundation, I will describe the socializing factors of the community accounted for in Deaf studies literature. Finally, I will situate my research within the framework of political socialization and the studies done to this point on the political participation of the Deaf community. These studies include: a) surveys that were linked to census information but not to a cultural framework, b) research that was done on a much smaller scale

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using interviews and interpretation instead of direct outreach (the researcher did not know sign
language), and c) surveys and other research that were not conducted in the U.S. The studies
listed provide tangential insights which help define the scope of my original research.

Most works that have discussed Deaf culture and politics note, as do I, that there has not
been much foundational work for this topic. Skelton & Valentine, who published numerous
studies in the early 2000s, try to account for the absence of Deafness in disability research thus:
“This may be because geographers do not consider, like many D/deaf people, D/deafness to be a
disability. However, there is no geographical work on D/deafness within social, cultural and
feminist geography work either. It seems, therefore, to be a lacuna in geography.”

James Roots, who published a thesis on Deaf political participation in Canada, calls out the separation of
disabled people from studies done among other minority groups as “marginalization of the
disabled from the ranks of the marginalized.” The Deaf community experiences this to a greater
degree because they are operating with one foot in the disability community and the other in the
arena of linguistic minorities. For this reason, I attempt to explore different methodologies that
together might give a focused view of the internal and external political environment of the
Deaf community.

Medical v. Social Model

The Deaf community is one that is joined voluntarily and is more dependent on linguistic
and cultural choices than a genetic predisposition, so we cannot hold the Deaf community as a

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4 Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine, “‘It feels like being deaf is normal’: An exploration into the
complexities of defining D/deafness and young D/deaf people's identities,” Canadian Geographer / Le
Géographe Canadien 47, no. 4 (2003), 453 footnote, accessed April 1, 2017,
5 James Roots, The politics of visual language: deafness, language choice, and political socialization.
(Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1999), 24.
standard for all those with hearing loss. In Deaf studies, this division is categorized by the medical model and the social model of deafness. The medical model (lowercase d) defines a deaf individual by his audiological loss. This is a much broader application than the social model. According to Deaf Vote, there are approximately 22 million US citizens who fit into the medical categorization of deafness. While important for the current study, this number is not the focus. Skelton & Valentine note, “Unconditional support from the Deaf community ‘is not readily extended to deaf people in transition… Deaf people must abide by the rule of the culture to benefit from its support.” Many political studies do take into account the larger deaf population, but the political claims and concerns of the Deaf community are safeguarded by those who follow the rule of law within that culture, meaning they accept the use of sign language and are familiar with “Deaf issues” like linguistic access and cultural autonomy. Evidence of this unique socialization and issue specific participation is not seen among those who categorize themselves as medically deaf.

The target population for this study is that group which identifies as culturally Deaf (capital D). Social science has not yet found reliable numbers for this group as its categorization relies on individual perception. Defining oneself as visually-oriented (using a manual mode of communication) and politically-oriented to the community are critical to a cultural Deaf identity. This identity is positive and has allowed the Deaf community to achieve linguistic and political recognition. Among the reasons I chose this identity-specific population for my study are: 1) The community is distinctive in their linguistic preference and therefore also in their internal socialization. 2) The community has gained momentum in declaring this political identity which

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6 Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine. “‘It feels like being deaf is normal’: An exploration into the complexities of defining D/deafness and young D/deaf people's identities,” 455.
7 Ibid., Corker 1998 qtd in p. 453.
has paved roads to accessibility for the rest of the 22 million who are not politically identified here but still consume accessible services. 3) Despite being an extremely diverse population (deafness is not a respecter of persons), the Deaf community strives to have a unified message, a pseudo “homeland” (Padden), and definable cultural values, myths, and practices that allow for some group-wide analysis. Even still, this study recognizes that political platitudes would be hard to lay on those who communally identify as “big-D Deaf”. The observations made here are implicit with that caveat of understanding.

The social model of Deafness came about as sign language became a more prominent means of educating children with hearing loss and the community attached social value to it. Manual education became the mark of induction into a Deaf social network. Jankowski, author of Deaf Empowerment, says: “The placement of Deaf people in residential schools as a means of isolating them from society backfired when this approach paved the way for the self-determination of Deaf people…enabled them to create their own community in which sign language and institutional foundations were turned into positive achievements.”

The creation of communities and homelands also led to the inception of Deaf families as more and more individuals married within the network and Deafness, not hearing loss, became the epitome of social capital. The community has replaced the prevailing ideology of hearing loss with that of “Deaf Gain,” meaning the positive estimation of intellectual and societal benefits from having a Deaf identity and a visual linguistic modality.

The line between the medical v. social model becomes complicated when the government uses medical terms to support and represent marginalized communities, like those with

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disabilities. “Knowing well the special benefits, economic and otherwise, of calling themselves disabled, Deaf people have a history, albeit an uneasy one, of alignment with other disabled groups… ‘Disabled’ is not a primary term of self-identification, indeed it is one that requires a disclaimer.”¹⁰ This uneasy truce with the disability community for purposes of advocacy and financial support haunts the Deaf community’s political rhetoric. The politicized sector of the Deaf community strives to preserve their image as educated, independent, and articulate.¹⁰ Garcia argues that this portrayal is sometimes at the expense of “average” Deaf populations, such as those in border cultures with less access to education and more language mixing.¹¹

Deaf-centric hierarchy within the Deaf community can tend toward the discrimination of sectors within the population that don’t represent the ideal of Deaf Gain.¹² Skelton & Valentine observed that “Deaf people with other impairments often have to fight hard to get their other needs met within Deaf communities.”¹³ Strife between participation in the disability community and ongoing promotion for independent recognition make it difficult for the Deaf community to present a cohesive message to the political field. But there are currently more efforts in the Deaf community for the erasure of the Deaf/deaf or Deaf/other dichotomy. As Skelton & Valentine say quite bluntly, “D/deaf people are constructed as 'disabled' by political, economic and social practices. How they represent themselves has little meaning when they need support from the state in order to pursue their education and/or training goals.”¹³ Deaf people have a stronger cultural standing today than ever before and recognize the need to intermittently coalesce with

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¹⁰ Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, “Deaf People: A Different Center”, 396.
¹² Carol Padden, and Tom Humphries, “Deaf People: A Different Center,” 397.
¹³ Tracey Skelton, and Gill Valentine, “‘It feels like being deaf is normal’: An exploration into the complexities of defining D/deafness and young D/deaf people's identities,” 453-454.
other disabled causes. Their Deaf Pride may be partially subsumed by the economic needs of
those on government welfare or the political needs of those who are reliant on the advocacy of
the most vocal sector of the disabled population. Further evidence of Deaf outreach includes the
acceptance of more international signs and accommodation at Gallaudet University for the Deaf-blind
community, all of which exhibits “a transformation that is coming from within as
D/deaf people engage in a wider politics of identity and inclusion.”

Socialization in the Deaf Community

As discussed previously, failure to accommodate Deaf pupils in mainstream schools led
to the establishment of Deaf institutions which seeded communal Deaf hubs across the U.S.
Some rare cases exist wherein these hubs expanded into larger communities and socialization
was relatively unhindered because of the hearing population’s adoption of sign language. In the
late 19th century, Martha’s Vineyard had a strong signing community and some Deaf even held
political office. Quoted in Roots, Groce (1985), said “There was no language barrier and, by
extension, there seems to have been no social barrier.” In the national political sphere, however,
there will always be language barriers, which turns traditional socialization theory on its end.
“Socialization procedures are rendered irrelevant or ineffectual because they are rooted in the
assumption that all involved parties—the society itself, the socializing agencies, and the child—
share a common language, which in modern Western society is invariably an oral-aural

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14 Tracey Skelton, and Gill Valentine, “‘It feels like being deaf is normal’: An exploration into the
complexities of defining D/deafness and young D/deaf people’s identities,” 464-465.
15 James Roots. The politics of visual language: deafness, language choice, and political socialization,
62.
language." The Deaf community’s unique socialization requires particular consideration for the best avenues for access to the political and public sphere.

The Deaf community possesses unique cultural values and political opinions that are not, in the majority of cases, passed on through family, one of the traditional means of enculturation according to socialization theories. However, familial socialization of an individual cannot take place without reliable linguistic exposure and communication between parent and child. Therefore, the socializing process is flipped for many Deaf individuals born to hearing parents; instead of receiving social cues and justification of behavior from their parents, these individuals often transition to the Deaf community in adolescence or adulthood essentially as tabula rasa. They adopt the Deaf community’s political and social views, leaving behind the fragmentary socialization of their families. Skelton & Valentine describe the process in terms that allude to language used in queer studies: “The boundary between Deaf and deaf can be fluid…. For young people, the ‘age-frame’ of 16 to 25 can be time for a process of transition in which they are beginning to explore their identity in relation to their D/deafness.” The Deaf-of-hearing (Deaf child with hearing parents) individual is deviating from their family’s oral traditions to align with the manual traditions of the Deaf community, usually during a process of exploration and an overhaul of their social circle. However, unlike youth in the gay community, the Deaf individual is usually segregated from the general population at an early age in their schooling, with their

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16 James Roots. *The politics of visual language: deafness, language choice, and political socialization*, 44.
peers, and through media representation. The categorization of Deaf students as disabled places them in educational settings (other than Deaf institutions) where their natural language is seen as a setback to an oral/aural society, equating difficulty with English to difficulty with thought, or else it isolates them with an interpreter for the entirety of their educational and social exposure. Even popular culture emphasizes the desirability of the “super-crip,” disabled people who flawlessly pass in an able-bodied world.

The Deaf community’s main concerns are “the preservation of their language, policies for educating deaf children, and maintenance of their social and political organizations.”

Socialization studies would support this focus on early socialization (education and linguistic exposure) as it is during this period when children are the most profoundly affected by societal learning of norms, behaviors, and schools of thought. There has already been ample research about the education of Deaf children and numerous proposals of resources for their socialization. My study focuses on the socialization of Deaf adults through media access. Having established the community-building tools of language access and education, media is then the socializing agent which allows Deaf adults to re-enter mainstream political exposure, because of media’s “tendency to deaccentuate group-based differences,” provided said media is accessible. My survey sample is the eligible Deaf voting bloc, through whom I explore how the exposure they receive to media influences their political opinions and motivations.

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20 Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, “Deaf People: A Different Center,” 396.
The typology for the creation of Deaf identity, or the “attitudinal deafness measure” according to Baker and Cokely, is the alignment of audiological, political, social, and linguistic factors with those of the Deaf community. Roots adds his own measure, personal background, which includes the factors of parental deafness, age of onset, school attended, and extent of education. I argue that part of what it means to be Deaf is that despite (or in conjunction with) the typologies listed by Roots, the individual experiences linguistic and cultural exclusion during their formative years which eventually determines an identity based in Difference. These experiences are shared by all Deaf and therefore makes it easy for a deaf person wishing to join the community to understand and accept the cultural premises of information access and visual space. For example, the Deaf community places a taboo on the phrases “never mind” and “I’ll tell you later.” In a lifetime of not catching what a person says and asking for the information to be repeated, these phrases have been used to patronize and dismiss Deaf people as not worth the exchange of information. Deaf people are also aware of the sound cues that govern most of the hearing world and have developed work-around techniques to be aware of this information. These techniques come in many variations: positioning oneself in a room to always be able to see the door, or having a dog that signals when visitors arrive, or insisting on eye-contact during interactions. These baseline Deaf experiences are universal with or without the infinite individual array of educational and linguistic backgrounds and lead us to the subject of the political Deaf adult.

23 James Roots, The politics of visual language: deafness, language choice, and political socialization, 40.
The X Factor

Marginalization, to whatever degree, is the common factor for all Deaf individuals. Roots asserts that marginalization is the result of unsuccessful traditional socialization.\(^{24}\) This apparently negative consequence of ineffective political socialization is the difference that defines Deaf identity and becomes a positive force through what Jean Bethke Elshtain calls “politicized ontology.”\(^{24}\) “One’s identity becomes the sole and only ground of politics, the sole and only determinant of political good and evil. Those who disagree with my ‘politics,’ then, are the enemies of my identity.”\(^{25}\) This ontology is the celebration of displacement for the Deaf community. Roots agrees that this type of identity politics has improved the Deaf cause.\(^{24}\) Bickenback, quoted in Skelton & Valentine, also argues that “counter-hegemonic politics is far more revolutionary than political agitation directed at specific legislative or political ends.”\(^{26}\) One could debate that the counter-hegemony practiced by the Deaf allowed them to create a broader political platform for the disability community. Nevertheless, Elshtain claims that such a strategy cannot be successfully maintained.\(^{24}\) We see the breakdown of Deaf-centric identity politics when the Deaf community becomes involved in the international Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities, or in transportation accessibility for Uber,\(^{27}\) or in closed captioning quality standards. The Deaf community, having instituted their own social network is now, by necessity, releasing their hold on politicized ontology and becoming more concerned about


\(^{25}\) Ibid., 18-19.


broader advocacy and accessibility issues. These issues increasingly revolve around access to information and communication technologies.

**Theoretical Framework**

Two of the heavily used resources in this literature review are the research by Skelton & Valentine and by James Roots. Skelton & Valentine conducted their research in England and Roots in Canada; while the context and application of this American study will be different, it is beneficial to future research that the same initial premises are held across these studies. From Skelton & Valentine, political participation is “the process of involvement, shared responsibility and active engagement in decisions which affect the quality of life.”\(^{28}\) From James Roots, political socialization is “the internalization of communally taught and valued behavior. It is when a person ‘not only knows what is expected of him… he also feels that this is the proper way…to think’.\(^{29}\) From these two definitions, we can distinguish between internal and external political socialization: internal socialization is the potentially unconscious assimilation of cultural values and ideology, and external participation is the mindful adoption of activities or causes that influence our cultural values. Roots defends that Deaf political socialization relies on “1) an existing society with values and norms, 2) social context/interrelations, and 3) personal ‘biological inheritance’.\(^{30}\) This hearkens back to the typology of a Deaf identity, but the creation of a Deaf identity can predate socialization into the Deaf community. The identity is a sense of self that allows for Deaf people to relate and to have a common world-view. Socialization through the values, relationships, and the “biological inheritance” of the Deaf community will

\(^{28}\) Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine, “Political participation, political action and political identities: Young d/deaf people’s perspectives,” 131, qtd from Matthews et al. (1999), 136.


\(^{30}\) Ibid., 7-8.
strengthen and refine the Deaf identity’s role in political participation as Deaf individuals decide
the political issues and stances that are taken up on behalf of the community.

Linguistic access was previously noted as a socializing factor. Here it will be emphasized
as a tool for immersion and representation of the political Deaf adult. The concurrent and
sometimes competing use of ASL and English in the Deaf community is widely covered in
socialization literature. Firstly, it should be noted that Deaf individuals, including many Deaf-of-
hearing individuals (90% of the Deaf population), do not consider English their native tongue,
except for those who were able to successfully pass in oral development. “Deaf children will
develop a visual sign language as their “first fully accessible” language and learn English as a
second language, even though they may be exposed to spoken English or even a signed English
code from birth.”\(^{31}\) Whether or not ASL is the first or second language for a Deaf individual,
“ASL is the badge with which Deaf people are accepted as members of the Deaf community.”\(^{32}\)
Fluency in ASL defines your Deaf status. For this reason, Deaf-centric views typically devalue
uneducated individuals (who would use home-sign) and those who use ASL to supplement
spoken English, and give no special consideration to individuals with strong English abilities.\(^{33}\)

ASL has a distinct grammar from English and is not intended to be used as a crutch,
although many educational environments have done so. The dramatic irony is that Deaf
individuals with a fuller exposure to their native tongue experience more success in adopting
English than those who try to learn English, an aural language, as a primary tongue with no
previous linguistic foundation. Jankowski states,

\(^{31}\) Jean F. Andrews and Melissa Rusher. “Codeswitching techniques: Evidence-based instructional
practices for the ASL/English bilingual classroom.” In American Annals of the Deaf 155, no. 4 (2010),
\(^{32}\) K. A. Jankowski, Deaf empowerment: emergence, struggle, and rhetoric, 82.
\(^{33}\) Carol Padden and Tom Humphries “Deaf People: A Different Center,” 392 - 402.
Those with the strongest Deaf identity are the most likely to be bilingual… the chances are higher that [Deaf children of Deaf parents] will acquire ASL skills, thereby building a strong foundation in which to learn English skills. Thus, the creation of the bilingual identity, even as it embraced the dominant language, was also exploited to give the highest prominence to the strongest Deaf identity, in most cases – Deaf children of Deaf parents.³⁴

Deaf-of-Deaf not only have higher social capital because of their biological inheritance but because of their ASL fluency and from that, their ability to articulate the positions of the Deaf community to the hearing world.

**Studies on Political Activity**

Deaf status also has implications for political activity. In Roots’ study,³⁵ a group of people who identified as Deaf were surveyed about their political involvement. Roots analyzed the divide between oral and signing respondents. Oral respondents reported the same political orientation as their (hearing) parents; signing respondents reported a political orientation similar to their Deaf friends. Signing respondents believed themselves more politically efficacious than oral. Signing respondents had also participated in more public rallies that dealt with Deaf issues than oral respondents.³⁵ These findings confirm the pull of the Deaf community over the family for Deaf individuals who cannot pass orally. This is also indicative of the “in-between” Deaf identity. Those who were oral did not seem to have as firm a grasp on a political identity or a Deaf identity as those who were signing. However, the study, with a sample size of sixteen people (eight oral, eight signing) showed an 80% proportion of Deaf people who worked in the

³⁴ K. A. Jankowski, *Deaf empowerment: emergence, struggle, and rhetoric*, 82.
Deaf community. Only three of the oral respondents said that they worked in the public sector.\textsuperscript{36} Deaf socialization, then, does still have an influence on those who are raised orally, and work in the Deaf community pulls almost equally from varying levels of Deaf social capital.

Political efficacy was covered in a majority of studies done on Deaf socialization, including a study about the border Deaf community in El Paso\textsuperscript{37} and a study about Deaf inmates.\textsuperscript{38} The sense of political power or influence is the starting point for citizens’ motivation to participate. Roots 1992 found that “even those actively involved in the overtly political disabled rights movement felt themselves politically uneducated and inefficacious, unwelcomed by political parties and the state apparati, cynical, powerless, and culturally estranged from the political system.”\textsuperscript{39} Drawing on these studies, my survey analysis explores what political activities were ranked most effective by the Deaf community, the results of which indicate a preference toward more visual forms of participation that allow the Deaf community to feel politically empowered.

Visual forms of political participation are historically significant in the Deaf community. In the community’s most recognized and rewarded instance of political activism, the Deaf students at Gallaudet University overturned an election for university president in 1988 in a school-wide protest called Deaf President Now (DPN). The student population had been anxiously awaiting the appointment of Gallaudet’s first Deaf president and of the three nominees for president, two were Deaf. When the board instead announced their appointment of the only

\textsuperscript{36} James Roots, \textit{The politics of visual language: deafness, language choice, and political socialization}, 73.
\textsuperscript{37} Marisela Garcia, “Deaf Culture: The Creation of Self and Socialization through the Use of Sign Language.”
\textsuperscript{39} James Roots, \textit{The politics of visual language: deafness, language choice, and political socialization}, 24.
hearing nominee (she alone did not know sign language and was not present for the election), the student protesters decided to shut down the school by blocking the front gates of the University and marching on the Capitol. The internal rhetoric of the protesters and the indignant reaction of the board helped to solidify community opinion against the appointment of one who did not share the cultural or linguistic values of the institution. Jankowski writes that the media made a big difference in garnering support from outside sources, including food trucks and members of Congress. The board’s refusal to talk to the media compared to the students’ passion and openness swayed public opinion in favor of this new Deaf civil rights issue. “They could easily endorse the rationale that the protesters should get what they want, because what they wanted was to have one of their own as their leader.”

DPN is a core aspect of the American Deaf identity and is lauded as one of the community’s greatest achievements—it “symbolized Deaf ownership for Deaf people.” This period of hyper-engagement by the Deaf community lent momentum to the entire disability community and culminated in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

On a national scale, the most frequent grassroots campaigns in the Deaf community are to encourage voter turnout. In 2004, the Digiterp Communications and the Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens published the interviews of over twenty Deaf voters on why voting is important. Some of the more dynamic answers are included here:

I know many politicians have a history of oppressing Deaf people, but that flag represents our rights as Deaf citizens to voice our opinions. Many leaders are hearing, and I’ve had

40 K. A. Jankowski, Deaf empowerment: emergence, struggle, and rhetoric, 122.
41 Ibid., 33.
enough. I don’t want to discredit them, but they don’t listen to the Deaf community because the Deaf community is too passive and afraid.42

Here’s another:

Deaf people in America have to realize that they are lucky. In some other countries, it is illegal for Deaf people to vote. Deaf people used to not be allowed to drive. After years of struggle, that was changed. Similarly, there used to be no captioning or TTYs. But now the ADA has been passed which ensures those things. Without voting and without fighting for those rights, we wouldn’t have any of that.43

These depictions allude to the oppression of the Deaf community and fear that it will happen again if the community is complacent. Of course, studies show that Deaf people are already voting.44 Favorable turnouts may be due to the community’s high political efficacy, or the strength of their political identity, or simply the lack of communication barriers at polling places (voting ballots are in written English). The prevalent assumption of political inactivity in the Deaf community may also factor into their high turnout; internal and external forces are frequently chastising the community for low participation, which continues to motivate conscious-ridden members of the community. Kruse & Schur hypothesize that this reprobation is not inappropriate so much as it is outdated: “The lower turnout of people with disabilities may be confined to the older generation, who were socialized at a time when people with disabilities were typically marginalized and frequently segregated from mainstream society” (Figure 1

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43 Ibid.
Our categorization of the Deaf community as a part of the disability community may lead to an underestimation of current political participation due to popular narratives of oppression which caused low efficacy and turnout in the past.

![Figure 1. Age patterns in voter turnout between disabled and able-bodied citizens.](image)

The statistics in my and others’ studies show, as Gallaudet professor Brendan Stern says, that “most Deaf people vote for the same reasons that hearing people do—with their pocketbook.” With so many political similarities between the Deaf community and the general population, mainstream solutions for ensuring access to political information, such as closed captioning of mainstream media, are worth consideration. This literature review has provided the context for Deaf identity, Deaf socialization, and Deaf politics. Within that context, these questions follow: What factors are particularly salient in the development of the Deaf political adult? Who is responsible for addressing the political concerns of this community? Shields says

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46 Brendan Stern, interview by author, (February, 2017).
involvement “‘may greatly depend on the extent to which political elites attempt to address their political concerns’”47 and Schur points to disability organizations as the change makers for political participation. In the next chapter, a closer look at the disability rights movement during the 2016 general election will explore the role of politicians, advocacy groups, and the media.

Chapter 3:  
Involvement of the Disability Community in the  
2016 Election Cycle  

America’s heightened sensitivity to political correctness has led to more attention and awareness of the disability rights movement. However, attitudes toward people with disabilities have not necessarily changed since the movement began. In this chapter, I will explore the involvement of the disability community in the 2016 general election, discussing how the perception and treatment of people with disabilities is still very different from how the community sees and advocates for themselves. The literature review in Chapter 2 describes the struggle of the Deaf community to gain autonomy and separate themselves from the label of “disabled”. However, the following examples evidence an alliance between the Deaf community and the wider disabled population for the purposes of advocacy and promotion. I use televised and online media to provide data for this case study, analyzing any appearance of the disability community in relation to the political race. The lens of the media is helpful for understanding how the general public is socialized about disability issues and how the disability community in turn reacts to this political attention.  

This chapter will emphasize the socialization efforts seen recently on the part of political entities toward the disabled population. In regards to the Deaf community in particular, this case study will show that mass media still isn’t sure how to handle the Deaf community in terms of rhetoric and outreach. The events covered in the case study include: the involvement of both presidential candidates in disability rights issues and several incidents in the Trump campaign that incensed disability rights advocacy. Both candidates had misled approaches to the disability community which protract the under-utilization of this powerful voting bloc. By using
stereotypical, infantilizing, condescending, or “super-crip” portrayals of disability, politicians maintain a divide between able-bodies and disabled people. The number of those with disabilities or those who have household members with disabilities is ever-growing, and could influence our country in positive ways if the political system learned to culturally mediate their needs.¹

**Disability Specific Campaigns**

The 2016 election saw an unprecedented amount of disability-related news, good and bad. The most positive outcome of this is the creation of space for the disability movement to move forward, despite the results of the election. In the year preceding the election, the following campaigns were established:

- #CripTheVote is an online discussion space and provides aid to voting accessibility.² The word ‘crip’ or ‘cripple’ has been adopted by the disability community as a symbol of their past oppression and a reminder of the need for accommodation.

- Respectability is a website that promotes online content to increase awareness about disability culture.³ This project funds lobbying, employment training, and support groups to make change in disability policy.

- The Disability Visibility Project is an online platform that works toward creating an accessible oral history for the narratives of people with disabilities.⁴

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#SaytheWord is a social media campaign asserting a unified, unashamed identity as disabled. Although saying ‘disabled person’ rather than ‘person with disability’ has previously been stigmatized, this campaign calls for the disability community to own the word ‘disabled’ and use it as a tool for speaking out together.

Disability Vote is an online platform partnered with Rooted in Rights that created a video series on why people with disabilities should vote, along with the hashtag campaign #VoteDisability. One interviewee stated: “We have been colonized by those who think they know what’s best for us, or what’s an appropriate accommodation for us. They are deciding for us, and it should not be like that.”

Buzzfeed News featured a story entitled, “75% of US polling places are inaccessible to voters with disabilities. What is it like to be disabled on Election Day?” The mini-documentary interviewed Michelle Bishop from the National Disability Rights Network and conducted several tours through in/accessible polling places.

Many of these campaigns targeted voter turnout and by so doing, involved members of the disability community in mobilizing one another. These campaigns spoke of the internal motivation efforts of the disability community and their broader role in the political sphere relating to human rights and the exercise of free speech. These issues are fundamental to the disability movement but rarely understood by mainstream politicians, as seen in this case study.

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Donald Trump on Disability in 2016 Election Cycle

Donald Trump did not interact much with disability rights issues this campaign cycle, except in several instances where he enraged the community, which are discussed later. His platform focused on benefitting the working majority, and so in the interests of the able-bodied economic class, he largely disregarded the more marginal sector of the population that is people with disabilities. One occasion when Donald Trump did bring up a disability-related issue was during the Republican primary, when he discussed his suspicion regarding vaccinations and told a story which linked vaccination and autism. The only other mention of disability on record is when Donald Trump cited the statistics for Medicare fraud in the last decade and blamed what he called the “disability racket”: “Did you know that one out of every 20 people in America now claims disability? That adds up to $170 billion a year in disability checks. Between 2005 and 2009, it is estimated that $25 billion were eaten up in fraudulent Social Security Disability Insurance filings. On and on, scam after scam it goes.” These examples disregard not only the reality of the growing disability population, but also the individuals within the community by perpetuating the stigmatization of disability. Trump’s statements about disability imply that it is either something to be fixed, as in the case of vaccinations, or it is something that is sensationalized or exaggerated, as in the case of his claims about SSDI. He seems, if anything, resentful of the community rather than willing to help.

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Hillary Clinton on Disability in 2016 Election Cycle

Hillary Clinton, while not championing disability rights, created more space for the disability community to be involved in this election cycle. She made multiple efforts to showcase people with disabilities in ads and events, and these efforts paid off in the support of the disability community in movements like Disability Action for Hillary\textsuperscript{10} and Deaf People for Hillary Clinton.\textsuperscript{11} Although disabled voters tend to be evenly split among Republican and Democrat party lines,\textsuperscript{12} Clinton created a sort of “call to action” among the disability community to vote in accordance with identity politics rather than party politics. Her actual policy initiatives, however, did not universally benefit the disability community, focusing mostly on autism. Spokespersons for the disability community endorsed Hillary Clinton in mostly general terms without appealing to specific concerns in the community.

Autism Initiative Proposal

Sampling from the aforementioned social media movements showed that people feel Hillary Clinton’s support for the disability community because of her addition of the phrase “disability rights” in her speeches and in similar soundbites throughout her career. But she has also backed up her words to some degree at multiple points in her career. The Children’s Health Act of 2000 included funding for autism research and was supported by Hillary Clinton, then First Lady. The Expanding the Promise for Individuals with Autism Act was introduced by


Hillary Clinton while in the Senate. And according to her website, “she cosponsored legislation in 2006 that authorized hundreds of millions of dollars in new spending on autism-related programs.”\textsuperscript{13} In support of her inclusion efforts for the disability community this election cycle, Hillary Clinton also presented a plan for equal rights for people on the autism spectrum. Hillaryclinton.com calls it “a wide-ranging autism initiative—including steps to ensure they are treated with dignity, partnerships to help them secure employment, support for families and caregivers, and a commitment to increase research funding to deepen our understanding of autism.”\textsuperscript{13} While these actions only aid a small sector of the disability community, they spurred hope that she would pay attention to the cries of other disabled groups as well.

\textit{Anastasia Somoza Speaks at DNC}

The most public instance of the Clinton Campaign’s recognition of disability was the invitation for Anastasia Somoza to speak at the Democratic National Convention. Anastasia is a disability rights advocate with cerebral palsy. Her speech at the convention was rousing as she whole-heartedly endorsed Hillary Clinton for her plans to help disabled citizens claim equal rights, though she never specifically cited any Clinton initiatives. “Over the past 23 years, she has continued to serve as a friend and mentor, championing by inclusion and access to classrooms, higher education and the workforce.”\textsuperscript{14} She also denounced Donald Trump and his bigoted attitude, appealing to the ethos of all humanitarian-minded individuals to likewise condemn his “hateful” character.\textsuperscript{14}


The turnout for disabled people at the convention was impressive. According to philly.com, “Four hundred delegates with disabilities [were] at the convention – 35% more than attended in 2012.”15 This turnout was in part because of the Disability Council hosted by Disability Action for Hillary, a social media movement, during the week leading up to the convention. There, participants were able to share their thoughts and feelings about disability inclusion and disability rights policy in what they tagged as the “Inclusion Revolution.”15 Anastasia’s speech marked a bold statement by the DNC and the Clinton campaign to allow people with disabilities to have a voice in politics.

*Nyle DiMarco Ad for Hillary Clinton*

Nyle DiMarco is a Deaf celebrity who, in the year before the election, won competitions on the popular reality TV shows, America’s Next Top Model and Dancing with the Stars. His renown put him in the position of becoming a spokesman for the Deaf community, and he developed the Nyle DiMarco Foundation, which promotes the education of parents of Deaf children in order to give children access to sign language, their natural language16. His popularity also put him in the way of shooting an ad for the Hillary Clinton campaign which encouraged voters to support “the only candidate with a plan” to help people with disabilities.17 This ad and his endorsement spread throughout the Deaf community in a massive call to support Hillary Clinton for President.

The Hillary Clinton campaign somewhat exaggerated its support for people with disabilities. Hillaryclinton.com stated, “Yesterday was the ADA's 26th birthday. In its honor, former Sen. Tom Harkin, who sponsored the bill that became the law, sang its praises from the

15 Ronnie Polaneczky, “Disabled Finally Have a Place at the DNC.”
DNC podium.” While Senator Harkin did a lot of work in legislation for the ADA, the disability community traditionally honors Republican President George H.W. Bush for signing the ADA into law. Hillary Clinton’s campaign tactics to take credit for more disability policy than she planned to execute were effective in the political frenzy but also somewhat transparent.

**Incident #1: Donald Trump Mocks Daily News Reporter Serge Kovaleski**

The discrepancy between Hillary Clinton’s efforts and Donald Trump’s ignorance toward the disability community was negligible compared to the effect of Donald Trump’s insensitive comments at a rally about a disabled reporter. Trump criticized Serge Kovaleski for denying a statement made in an article fourteen years ago while imitating the reporter’s mobility impairment.

![Image of Donald Trump imitating Serge Kovaleski](image_url)

*Figure 2. Donald Trump allegedly mocks a disabled reporter.*

Donald Trump denies mocking the reporter, saying the imitation (Figure 2 above) was of Kovaleski “groveling” not exhibiting his disability. An excerpt of the interview is as follows:

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18 Brendan Stern, interview by author, (February, 2017).
I have no idea who this reporter, Serge Kovaleski, is, what he looks like or his level of intelligence. If Mr. Kovaleski is handicapped, I would not know because I do not know what he looks like. If I did know, I would definitely not say anything about his appearance. Serge Kovaleski must think a lot of himself if he thinks I remember him from decades ago—if I ever met him at all, which I doubt I did. He should stop using his disability to grandstand—get back to reporting for a paper that is rapidly going down the tubes.²⁰

Here, Donald Trump again mentions disability as an excuse for special treatment and sensationalism. Kovaleski commented only to say that he had interacted with Donald Trump at least a dozen times, more than enough to rule out Donald Trump’s assertion of having forgotten the reporter or his appearance.²⁰

In his attempts to back track from this offensive act, Donald Trump further commented, “I would never say anything bad about a person that has a disability. I swear to you it’s true, 100 percent true … Who would do that to [the] handicapped? I’ve spent a lot of money making buildings accessible.”²¹ This statement attempted to paint Donald Trump’s compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Acts as charity and divert attention from his negative actions but it did not receive a favorable response from the disability community.

Hillary Clinton “Grace” Ad

Priorities USA, a PAC that heavily supported Hillary Clinton for President, quickly took the opportunity to censure Donald Trump’s ill-thought actions and statements as an insult to the entire disability community. The campaign developed an ad called “Grace” (Figure 3 below), the story of the parents of a child with spina bifida whom they refer to as “a blessing” and “bringing out the goodness in each person.” They speak about the many beautiful characteristics of their child and how appalled and disgusted they were by Donald Trump’s childish mockery of a disabled reporter, while stirring music plays in the background. This ad was the most widely viewed of Hillary Clinton’s disability inclusion efforts (receiving 976,000 views compared to Nyle DiMarco’s 34,000 views), and the most poorly done. The ad infantilizes the person with disability and compares her much more serious condition to that of the reporter mentioned previously. Not only does this negate the individuality of people with disabilities, but the ad never shows Grace speaking for herself. An article in The Atlantic summed up the ethical concerns of this piece of propaganda:

The ad plays into stereotypes about disability, revealing tensions between disability-rights activists and mainstream politicians. Even elected officials and campaigns that want to support the disability-rights movement too often focus on parents instead of disabled people, on cute children rather than adults, and on white people with disabilities rather than the diverse community of people with disabilities.23

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All of the disability inclusion efforts by politicians this election have featured these kinds of inconsistencies, selecting “poster-child” disabled patrons in order to cover a wide voting bloc. With such large numbers of eligible voters with disabilities, the message of the disability community is no longer about a segment of the population but about how these very human conditions affect all of America. In any case, the discourse created by this less-than-ideal media attention is something for disability advocates to work with.

**Incident #2: Donald Trump and Marlee Matlin**

The second incident of note, and of special relevance to this research, was dredged up from the 2011 season of the reality TV show, *Celebrity Apprentice*. Marlee Matlin, a famous Deaf actress, competed on the show. Reports from other participants came to light that said

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Donald Trump had often mimicked her voice behind her back and even called her retarded.

Marlee Matlin’s Twitter response\(^{25}\):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{October 14, 2016} \\
\text{Recent media reports have circulated that Donald Trump allegedly referred me to as "retarded." The term is abhorrent and should never be used. The fact that we are talking about this during a very important moment in American history has upset me deeply.} \\
\text{I am Deaf. There are millions of Deaf and hard of hearing people like me, in the United States and around the world who face discrimination and misunderstanding like this on a daily basis. It is unacceptable.} \\
\text{So, what's my response? It's not about insults or taking each other down. As a person who is Deaf, as a woman, as a mom, as a wife, as an actor, I have a voice. And I'm using that voice to make myself heard...and vote.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Marlee}
\end{align*}
\]

Figure 4. Marlee Matlin responds to Donald Trump on Twitter.

This, again, was an instance of the disability community trying to point out the distinction between disabilities. Although the word ‘retarded’ is now out of favor with political correctness, it would accurately refer to a subset of the disabled population. The Deaf community has often set itself apart from the term ‘disabled’ and finds correlation between hearing loss and cognitive disability extremely offensive. This conflict interferes with “coalitional politics,” an idea perpetuated by advocates for a unified political message within the disability community (discussed more in Chapter 7).\(^{26}\) As seen in the critique of the “Grace” ad, even the parallel representation of two types of mobility impairment is problematic. Another factor in disability


\(^{26}\) Elizabeth Ellcessor, “Captions On, Off, on TV, Online: Accessibility and Search Engine Optimization in Online Closed Captioning,” 331.
rhetoric is the intersectionality of disabilities, or individuals with multiple disabilities who may not align with one disabled group. While groups like the Deaf community strive for individual representation, policy change for the disability community has typically required the support of the entire community. These observations illustrate the conflicts of interest in the disability community’s political agenda.

**Implications**

Identity politics is a struggle of the disability rights movement, but it is not a hindrance to political involvement of the disability community. Their own members are starting grassroots movements, speaking about these issues, and raising awareness, as seen throughout this chapter. In a survey done in combination with the 2012 US Census Data, Rutgers University linked major impairments such as vision, hearing, cognitive, and mobility to difficulty in voting.\(^{27}\) That is, every major impairment experienced these issues except for hearing, for which there was virtually no turnout gap. According to Rutgers University, the difference in turnout was affected by socioeconomic status, employment status, ease of access to polling places and ballots, and level of understanding between the voters and those assisting them at the polling place. Deaf respondents reported no major impediments to accessing the polling place or to reading and understanding the ballot.\(^{27}\) Accessibility and accommodation can increase voter mobilization for the disability community as a whole, giving them the opportunity to engage in more forms of civic participation just as they have in social media and other political campaigns.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a panoramic view of the disability community’s involvement in the political sphere in recent years. It is useful to understand Deaf politics with the overlay of

\(^{27}\) Lisa Schur and Douglas Kruse “Projecting the Number of Eligible Voters with Disabilities in the November 2016 Elections.”
disability rights activism in the current political environment in order to identify the individuality of the Deaf community while recognizing the strength of the disability cohort. Though my research is focused on the Deaf community, this case study was meant to be as diverse as possible in covering the disability rights movement. It is interesting to note how often the Deaf community took part. According to DeafVote.com, “Estimates of the [Deaf/deaf] population vary between 20 and 28 million. We don’t have exact numbers, because there hasn’t been a nationwide census of deaf people for several decades. But we do know that it is steadily increasing, as Baby Boomers age and experience progressive deafness.”

The Deaf population is progressively becoming more prominent both in the disability community and in the larger political sphere. The next chapter looks more deeply at how the disability rights movement affects the politics of the Deaf community, how members of the community prefer to receive and exchange political information, and how the community wants to participate in politics in the future.

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Chapter 4:  
Political Exposure and Activism in the Deaf Community  
Survey Analysis

In this chapter I present statistical findings from my own survey: Political Exposure and Activism in the Deaf Community. I am particularly interested in the ways that Deaf politics plays a role in the opinions and engagement of the community. “Deaf politics” was left up to the interpretation of the participant, but means in a general sense the issues surrounding disability rights and linguistic recognition for which the Deaf community has historically fought.\(^1\) Depending on the strength of their ties to the Deaf community, an individual might hold these issues to be a symbol of Deaf Pride. Pride is a joining force for the Deaf, a beacon at which the diaspora of the community can gather. Because they have never occupied a homeland per se, the scattered individuals of the Deaf community instead work towards a place of idealistic unification, away from family and isolated upbringings.\(^2\) Another aim of this survey is to parse out the linguistic and format preferences that influence the Deaf community’s political socialization. If ASL is the primary medium, does this create an echo chamber in the community?\(^3\) On the other hand, if the Deaf community is constantly gleaning political information from their second language, English, or from imperfect formats, like closed captioning, does it influence their political efficacy? Finally, I tracked the political activity of the Deaf community and what intersectionality factors may influence participation. 

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identity is necessarily compounded by gender, race, religion, age, etc. How does this play a role in activism?

This chapter primarily discusses my findings related to the Deaf community. However, there are two bodies of research similar to mine which provide supportive data to my own. I incorporate the survey data found by the Rutgers University study, 2012 Disability Turnout and Polling Place Accessibility, as the nearest study to mine in recent years, which provides a greater breadth of analysis in the Deaf/deaf population. I will also overview the findings of the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) in their 1992 survey, “‘PAH!-LITICS’: Deaf and Disabled Political Participation and Activity.” This study is the most topically similar to my own and led to some interesting proposals for increased political socialization for Canadian Deaf.

Survey Methodology

I conducted the survey in the two months leading up to the 2016 General Election. My survey was conducted at Gallaudet University, reaching out to contacts in the Deaf community by email, social media, and in person through flyers and canvassing. Participants were recruited during Homecoming weekend at Gallaudet University, during which I capitalized on members of the Deaf community who were coming from out of town. I also advertised my survey among my church community, which was a convenience sample that helped me reach the larger community through a snowball sampling method. I am connected virtually to a strong Deaf community in Utah and a border Deaf culture in Southern California (one whose members use colloquial

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American and Mexican Sign Language and not much English),⁶ both of whom I reached out to for this survey. For recruitment scripts, see Appendix B.

My survey was created through Survey Monkey. It began with a consent form which indicated that continuing the survey would record the participant’s answers. Non-US citizens, minors, and participants who identified as hearing were disqualified from the survey. Participants were given the option of taking the survey in ASL, with accompanying video segments for each question. I performed the transliteration and filming of these segments, which explained the question and the answer choices. Below the video, the English transcript of the question was available and the respondents were required to indicate their answer next to the English prompt.

Because this survey was intended to reach a large audience and had a small number of open-ended responses, I felt my resources would not be well spent by enabling respondents to send in an ASL video of their answers. I was able to receive feedback in ASL about the survey topics and response data during my interviews with community members in Chapter 6, some of whom participated in the survey. The questions for the survey were multiple choice, matrix/rating scale, or short answer; some questions had multiple parts. For a full script of the survey, see Appendix A. The participants were free to leave the survey at any point during the survey. The data from the responses to the survey were collected and coded in order to find representative insights from the community. Significant findings were compiled into the tables and charts in this chapter. I have compared these insights to current practices for political accessibility as found in my literature review.

Sample Characteristics

Of the 92 people who started this survey, 27 dropped out after the consent. This included 11 hearing respondents, 9 Deaf, and 6 Hard of Hearing, and 1 who classified as other. Hard of Hearing respondents may not have felt close enough to the Deaf community to want to participate in the study. This is exemplified in the results of the CAD study, which asked if respondents identified as Deaf or disabled. Of the 33 Hard of Hearing respondents, only 5 identified as Deaf, and the rest as disabled. Though my outreach was through the Deaf community, any Hard of Hearing participants could be on a wide range of association with the community and use of ASL.

For the Deaf participants who left the survey, they could have felt disassociated with the subject matter of the survey, or that the survey was slightly dense and they were either intimidated by the length of the survey or the linguistic level of the questions. 15% of the original number of Deaf participants dropped out. I predict that this is partially a result of my own social circle that includes the Deaf community of a border culture in California. Although these individuals were responsive through social media recruitment, their literacy skills are low, which may explain how the respondents we did have rated English fluency very high. The survey was available to these participants in ASL as well, but people with low-verbal skills may not have been comfortable with the somewhat academic vocabulary. Marisela Garcia’s graduate research about the Deaf community in El Paso noted that a much higher sector of the border population was illiterate. Mel Patterson, Deaf political activist in Northern California, also said that many Deaf people struggled to understand political content. Those who did respond to the

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7 Marisela Garcia, “Deaf Culture: The Creation of Self and Socialization through the Use of Sign Language,” 38.
8 Mel Patterson, interview by author, (February, 2017).
survey were from the more elite educated sector of the population: 86.9% of respondents rated themselves as fluent in English, 11.5% rated intermediate, and only one respondent rated poor.

The demographic distribution of the Deaf community is diverse across race, religion, age, and region. The sample size of this survey was small, and does not completely reflect the racial diversity of the population (83.6% of survey respondents were white), but does capture the Deaf community’s reach to different areas of the United States. The Deaf community is scattered across the United States, forming pockets around large cities and schools that give them access to other Deaf. Brendan Stern, an instructor of government and politics instructor at Gallaudet University and fourth generation Deaf man emphasizes the importance of region in these demographics:

To analyze the political motivations of the Deaf community, you need to unpack the question: Where is this community rooted? The Deaf community is centralized around Deaf institutions – schools that specifically cater to the needs of this linguistic minority. These institutions have become fewer but are prominent features of large Deaf populations. The biggest Deaf centers are Fremont and Riverside, California; Austin, Texas; Indianapolis, Indiana; and here at Gallaudet University. Obviously these areas, which cultivate Deaf communities, are extremely rich in liberal ideology. So the community is not just reflecting their own political identity but that of their local community.⁹

This comment is accurate to what was found in Table A1, which showed that the majority of East coast Deaf voted Democrat, the Midwest split pretty evenly among Democrat and Republican, and the South, Southwest, and West Coast were evenly distributed among all parties.

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⁹ Brendan Stern, interview by author, (February, 2017).
including Independent and other. 51.9% of the Democratic survey population came from the East coast, whose main Deaf hub is Gallaudet University. 49.2% of survey respondents were Gallaudet students or alumni. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Gallaudet University is a significant force behind the political agenda of the Deaf community. While this survey may have shown a more educated sector of the Deaf population, it represents a purposive sample of the Deaf political socialization process. In Deaf studies disciplines across the United States, Gallaudet University is used to exemplify the root of Deaf culture in America,\(^\text{10}\) and so the utilization of this small, seemingly elite sample of the Deaf community serves a purpose in analyzing the nexus of Deaf political socialization.

Gender and age were also examined in this survey. Almost half of the respondents were under the age of 35. Age was pretty evenly distributed over the following groups: 18-23 (20% college students/Millennials), 24-35 (27.3% post-graduate/grew up with the ADA), 36-45 (Generation X), and 46-60 (student/adult age during the DPN protest), with a smaller percentage of 61-75. It is important to note the aspects of Deaf history that impacted different age demographics, but no other significant findings were tied to age. Gender was cross tabulated with association to understand if male or female participants had stronger ties to the Deaf community. In Table A2 (Appendix C), males identified more strongly as associating very closely with the Deaf community (53.8%) as opposed to females who were more moderate, having a split response between a very close association and somewhat close association.

Because a good deal of my network came from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), I specifically examined the potential skew of having LDS respondents in the survey. However, I did not originally separate the LDS demographic from the Christian

\(^{10}\) K. A. Jankowski, *Deaf empowerment: emergence, struggle, and rhetoric.*
demographic, so the results of LDS respondents are only known for those who identified their
religion as other and wrote in LDS. The total religious breakdown was: 55.2% Christian, 20.7%
Agnostic/none, 19% LDS, 5.2% Jewish. There was obviously a higher proportion of LDS than
should be representative of the Deaf community. This skew was potentially harmful to questions
about religious association, political party, and presidential candidate; Mormons tend to be more
conservative and have a strong religious affiliation. The LDS demographic made up 37.5% of
the Republican vote (Table A3, Appendix C). If anything, the conservative skew made the Deaf
population lean less extremely toward the left. In candidate preferences, however, the Mormon
skew becomes a bit more evident. About half of the LDS vote went to other candidates, and 8%
of the total vote went to Mormon candidates (Mitt Romney or Evan McMullin) (Table A4,
Appendix C). The LDS demographic rated 18.5% higher than non-LDS in being very closely
associated with their church group, but for the question: How much political information do you
get from your community or church group? The LDS demographic responded equally to
somewhat or not at all (45.5%) as opposed to the non-LDS bracket, which responded somewhat
with 23.5% and not at all with 66.7% (Table 1 below). Overall, the LDS demographic showed a
slightly more conservative side of the Deaf population, but that may have been equally
representative of Deaf culture in more Western Deaf communities (Mormon culture originates in
the Southwest). The LDS religion did not affect participants association with the Deaf

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Conference on Religion and American Political Behavior, Southern Methodist University, October 4,
community even for those who had hearing families, and it did not influence their sources for political information (Table A5, Appendix C).\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{Table 1. How much does the LDS church influence members’ politics?}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How closely do you associate with your community or church group?</th>
<th>How much political information do you get from your community or church group?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within LDS</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-LDS</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Non-LDS</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Findings: Deaf Politics}

The guiding question at the start of the survey was: How do disability-specific topics influence the political opinions and participation of Deaf people? Participants showed a great amount of solidarity behind the disability rights platform. The community seems accustomed to respond quickly to prompts about Deaf issues, including: How much do Deaf politics influence your personal politics? Followed by: How important do you feel it is to have a presidential candidate who is concerned for disability rights? While only 24.6\% responded that “Deaf politics” (term left to the participant’s interpretation) was very influential to their personal politics, 84.6\% responded that it was very important to have a president who was concerned about disability rights (Table 2 below). Despite feeling so strongly about a president who took on the welfare of the disability community, a majority of respondents (46.2\%) said they had only

\textsuperscript{12} Note: Within the LDS church, there is a strong Deaf identity which has successfully advocated for ASL translation of scripture, ASL ordinances, ASL congregations and Deaf leaders, Deaf missionaries, and ASL interpretation of church-wide publications and conferences. These advancements in access have kept the Deaf identity strong within the Mormon culture.
done some research on the disability rights stances of political candidates and 36.9% admitted they had done none. This reflects a motivation in the community to gain more awareness and acknowledgment within the political sphere but not an expectation of overt activism on the part of politicians. However, there was a positive correlation between how much Deaf politics influenced a person’s politics and how active that person was politically (Pearson’s R=.289, p≤.05). The correlation between the influence of Deaf politics and political activism specifically during the 2016 election cycle was not significant, neither was the correlation between the influence of Deaf politics and how participants rated the effectiveness of political activities. As stated in the previous chapter as well as in the results below, political preference seemed to follow the small efforts of politicians to acknowledge the community. Incidents in media like the inclusion of a disability rights campaign in the 2016 DNC encouraged the left political alignment of the Deaf community.13

Table 2. How important is Deaf politics and how informed is the Deaf community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do Deaf politics influence your personal politics?</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important do you feel it is to have a presidential candidate who is concerned for disability rights?</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much research have you done on disability rights stances of political candidates or parties?</td>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>Very little or none</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A pattern emerged in the data that showed access to be the most important issue to the Deaf cause. Respondents were asked: What political topic do you care most about? (Table A6, Ronnie Polaneczky, “Disabled Finally Have a Place at the DNC,” Philly.com, July 27, 2016, accessed November 1, 2016, http://www.philly.com/philly/news/politics/dnc/20160727_Disabled_finally_have_a_place_at_the_DNC.html.
Appendix C & Figure 5 below.) Keeping in mind that the participants had been primed to think about disability rights from the previous questions, Deaf/disability rights ranked highest at 25.5%, followed by debt at 15.7%, and jobs at 13.7%. If debt and jobs were coded together under the category of economy, the majority of respondents (29.4%) would fall into this category.

Access came to the forefront of responses in answer to the question: What aspect of Deaf politics influences you the most? Education ranked fourth with 17%, jobs still held a favorable standing with 19.1%, rights received 23.4%, and access received the strongest majority with 25.5%. The data are more significant because this question was an open-ended response. That the majority of respondents would consciously select access as an issue is evident of the topic’s prominence in political dialogue among the Deaf community.

Figure 5. Pie chart comparisons, most important political and most important Deaf topic.
The CAD survey discovered strong opinion in the community on Deaf issues like inequality, education, and access. The survey presented respondents with provocative statements, represented below in Table 3.14 A surprising percentage of participants, 34.5%, strongly agreed with the statement: “Systemic discrimination is worse for disabled people than for women, visible minorities, or Natives.” The consensus of this statement implies that the Deaf/disabled identity is shaped by the community’s oppressive history and their role in civil rights movements. The following statement also evoked a dramatic response: “Equality in education must mean closing segregated schools and mainstreaming disabled students, without exception.” 41% of participants strongly disagreed. As discussed in the literature review, the Deaf community has transformed segregationist schooling into a power mechanism for the Deaf community to be able to create community, heal Deaf diaspora, and indoctrinate children with Deaf culture.15

The CAD found that the issue of access garnered the most unanimous political support from the Deaf community. 90.5% of respondents strongly agreed with: “All TV programming should be captioned,” and 72.5% strongly agreed with: “Government information should be made more accessible to disabled people.” The strong awareness for the need for government access and captioned televised programming informed much of the civil rights battle following this survey (conducted in 1992, four years after DPN and two years after passage of the ADA). Despite the diversified identity politics of the Deaf community, access is a universal need for the population as attested in these political polls.

14 James Roots, “‘PAH!-LITICS’: Deaf and Disabled Political Participation and Activity,” 141-146.
15 K.A. Jankowski, Deaf empowerment: emergence, struggle, and rhetoric, 50.
In my survey, I explore the relative level of information in the Deaf community by comparing several variables about political sources, knowledge, and research. By analyzing the relationships between these variables, I answered the research question: How informed do Deaf voters feel? One factor that had a detrimental effect on the information rating of the community was the use of social media for political information. Although it allows members of the community to be more in touch with mainstream media, they did not feel more knowledgeable by their use of that medium. Knowledge sources were investigated in Table A7 (Appendix C). Respondents were asked: Where do you get most of your political information? How much do you know about 2016 presidential candidates’ platforms? How much research have you done on disability rights stances of political candidates or parties? Most respondents (45%) cited social media as their chief source of political information (Table 7), and seemed very self-aware in their responses that they knew some (51.9%) or very little (25.9%) about candidate platforms. 48.1% of those who used social media said they had done very little research about candidate or party stances on disability rights. However, respondents that marked television or online research as their political sources rated their knowledge of candidates much higher than their research. In both cases there was more than a 30% drop between participants who said they knew a lot and those who said they did a lot of research. There was a notable correlation between how much...
research one did and how much one knew about 2016 presidential candidates (Pearson’s R=.461, p≤.01). These results indicate how conventional political mediums compare to newer media, such as social media. Although the respondents had not considered themselves doing research through television or online per se, they did feel more informed by taking part in those mediums. Despite the Deaf community’s use of social media for political purposes, feeling more informed through conventional mediums contributes to a higher sense of political efficacy.

**Findings: Community Association**

The dissemination of Deaf politics and the influence of disability-related topics on Deaf voters stems from a socializing agent. Here I considered the Deaf and hearing communities in their roles as socializing agents. This survey questioned what level of association participants had with the Deaf community versus the hearing community in order to look at connections with political opinion or behavior. In other words, how does community association influence political engagement? Twice as many respondents reported very close association with the Deaf community than those who responded very close association with the hearing community (Table 4 below). The majority of respondents associate with the hearing community somewhat. Those who responded no association with one or the other community are interesting cases. In the case of the Deaf community, it may refer to respondents who identify as Hard of Hearing and communicate orally. In the case of the hearing community, it would mean those who live and work solely inside the Deaf community. Although association favors the Deaf community, the table is flipped for the question: How much political information do you get from the following sources? Twice as many respondents get a lot of information from the hearing community.

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respond that they get some political information from both sources. This result is expected as the mainstream political environment is situated in the hearing community.

Table 4. How does community association influence political engagement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How closely do you associate with the following groups?</th>
<th>Deaf Community</th>
<th>Hearing Community</th>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much political information do you get from the following sources?</th>
<th>Deaf Community</th>
<th>Hearing Community</th>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very little or none</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your family is hearing, do you feel closer to your hearing family or to the Deaf community?</th>
<th>Deaf Community</th>
<th>Hearing Family</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A particular point of interest is those Deaf individuals who have hearing family, and if their socialization was therefore determined by the Deaf community, into which they entered voluntarily, or their hearing family. Keeping in mind that 90% of all Deaf people come from hearing families, the question is quite relevant: If your family is hearing, do you feel closer to your hearing family or to the Deaf community? The responses indicate if the Deaf individual followed traditional socialization trends within their families or if they were socialized instead by the “adopted” family of the Deaf community. 72.1% of respondents said they had hearing family (slightly lower than the average 90% because of the location of the survey at Gallaudet University, where there are strong roots for Deaf families) and 67.2% responded that they very closely associated with family. However, 55% of those with hearing family said they were closer to the Deaf community than to their family. In a cross-tabulation (Table A8, Appendix C)

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between these association and closeness factors, 63.2% of people who responded very close association with the Deaf community were those from hearing families who felt closer to the community.

The development of a strong socializing bond with the Deaf community results in part from the inadequacy of familial socialization to meet the needs of the Deaf individual. For a Deaf child, this is because 1) their family could not communicate with them or would not communicate with them manually,\textsuperscript{18} or 2) their family’s political values did not resonate with the Deaf experience of the child.\textsuperscript{19} The Deaf individual’s ensuing search for and acceptance into the Deaf community engenders intense community loyalty.\textsuperscript{20} Cross tabulations with respondents’ educational background (Table A9, Appendix C) indicate that community loyalty happens regardless of education path. In all school placements except for mainstream, more than 50% of participants responded being very closely associated with the Deaf community (41.9% of Mainstream respondents had very close Deaf community association). Only half of all respondents were Gallaudet students or alumni. There were interesting findings about the education paths of those who felt closer to the Deaf community than to their hearing families (Table 5 below). Of those who went to a Deaf school (meaning a residential school that uses sign language), more than half of the respondents felt closer to the Deaf community. From those in a Deaf program (i.e. a satellite school with a sign language program for a group of students), all participants but one felt closer to the Deaf community.


\textsuperscript{20} James Roots, “The politics of visual language: deafness, language choice, and political socialization,” (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1999), 70-71.
Traditionally, Deaf schools are more “Deaf” than Deaf programs because they allow greater socialization with the community. Deaf schools usually employ Deaf educators and follow a strict bilingual curriculum, with all subjects, including English, taught using ASL. The result of more closeness to the Deaf community from students in a Deaf program is counterintuitive. However, the literature review indicates a tendency for Deaf individuals who were denied full access to the community in adolescence to be more fervently attached in their adulthood. Erting (1994) explains how even well-meaning families of Deaf individuals may act in ways that push the individual to seek out refuge in the Deaf community. “The fact that even family members who have strong emotional bonds with the deaf individual behave in ways that reveal their very basic lack of understanding of the deaf experience, sometimes in spite of extraordinary efforts at understanding and accommodating, confirms the deaf individual’s belief that only other deaf people can really understand or behave appropriately.” The effect of socialization on the hearing/Deaf divide is affirmed in the finding that 37.5% of those who went to a Deaf school reported equal closeness with hearing family and the Deaf community, but no participants from Deaf programs responded closeness to both and the overwhelming majority responded closeness to only the Deaf community (85.7%). Mainstream schools represent a slightly different sector of the population, as they are comprised partially of Hard of Hearing and oral students. These students split evenly in their association levels among the Deaf community and their hearing family.

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21 K. A. Jankowski, *Deaf empowerment: emergence, struggle, and rhetoric.*
Table 5. Does educational placement influence socialization within families?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you categorize your childhood education?</th>
<th>If your family is hearing, do you feel closer to your hearing family or to the Deaf community?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf school</td>
<td>Hearing family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Deaf school</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within closeness</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School with Deaf Program</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Deaf program</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within closeness</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Mainstream</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within closeness</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within closeness</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Deaf political issues have fallen on both sides of partisan politics, the results of this survey show just as Chapter 3 that current socialization within the Deaf community aligns behind liberal values and platforms. Brendan Stern commented that though the ADA was signed by a Republican president in the ‘90s, identity politics today would not enable the modern Republican platform to support a similar initiative.²⁴ The correlation between close association with the Deaf community and the influence of Deaf politics is statistically significant (Pearson’s \( R = .398, \ p \leq .05 \)). Of those with hearing family, 50% of respondents who were closer to their hearing families voted Republican as opposed to 63.6% of respondents who were closer to the Deaf community and voted Democrat. 70% of the Democratic vote came from those who felt

²⁴ Brendan Stern, interview by author, (February 2017).
closer to the Deaf community than to their hearing families, a strong majority over any other party or candidate (Tables A10 & A11, Appendix C). The community loyalty of Deaf individuals from hearing families promotes greater socialization into Deaf issues and indoctrination of the Deaf community’s values and political bias.

**Findings: Linguistic and Format Preference**

How do linguistic preference, informational format, and political source influence political socialization and information? The ease with which ASL videos can be circulated and viewed on social media may contribute to the Deaf community’s prevalent use of that medium. However, social media as a source of political information corresponded to a lower perceived information level in the community than the use of conventional media (Table A7, Appendix C). Similarly, although ASL is the natural language of the Deaf community, it did not greatly contribute to political socialization (Table 6 below). Language preference turned out a 24.6% response for ASL, 8.2% response for English, and 67.2% response for both ASL and English. The language preference for the survey format was 67.4% in favor of English text with only 32.6% in favor of ASL and English text. Perhaps, like interviewee Mel Patterson said, there are not enough news programs in ASL for it to be a reliable political format. It is preferable to make conventional mediums more accessible for Deaf consumers (i.e. through closed captioning) so they can take part in mainstream political socialization.25 There were only two respondents who marked ASL as their sole format choice (they did not mark text, closed captioning, or picture as preferences). When asked where they get political information from, 71.4% of respondents whose preferred language was ASL said social media was their main political source, and none cited television as a main political source (Table A12, Appendix C). The lack of preference for

25 Mel Patterson, interview by author, (February, 2017).
conventional media among ASL users is problematic for their perceived level of information, which could in turn affect political efficacy. Those respondents who replied as specifically preferring ASL may have trouble with the inaccurate and fast-paced captioning on television.\textsuperscript{25}

In Chapters 5 and 6 I discuss more about the need for greater accessibility on television for Deaf audiences. Those who preferred bilingualism had a much more even distribution of formatting choices, but many still express concern about accessibility through television.

Table 6. Linguistic preference and format for political information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>ASL Frequency</th>
<th>ASL Percent</th>
<th>English Frequency</th>
<th>English Percent</th>
<th>Both Frequency</th>
<th>Both Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your preferred language?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you prefer to take this survey?</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What format do you pay attention to the most in media?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What format do you get most of your political information from?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What format do you trust the most for political news?</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey prompted respondents to differentiate between information formats they give attention to, formats they receive political information from, and formats they trust for political news (Table 7 below). These distinctive questions might give clues as to formats the Deaf community prefers for aesthetic value compared to formats the Deaf community believes are authoritative. The results show some of both cases. Closed captioning ranked the highest in all variables except for political information, where text received the majority of responses at 60% (compared to closed captioning at 56.9%). Respondents paid most attention to closed captioning by a margin of 26.2% and trusted it most by a margin of 9.3%. The problems with using closed captioning as a news source include the inaccuracy of real-time captioning, the reading speed of
captions, and the inconsistency of captioned video online. Also, with new media and faster-paced news cycles, more people are using text for political information. Mel Patterson describes how complicated this issue is: “Captioning goes so fast on the TV, so you can switch to reading text online which you can read slowly but the video online is not captioned at all. So Deaf consumers with poor literacy skills don’t understand politics. Deaf consumers with good literacy are very busy and have good jobs, so they don’t want to help those with poor literacy who can’t understand and stop caring.”26 These problems are discussed more in Chapters 5 and 6, and clarify why text is preferred for political information. It allows the consumer to read at his own speed without grammatical errors. ASL and picture, while more in accordance with the receptive skills of the Deaf community, do not often convey the same amount of information that text and closed captioning do.

Table 7. Source vs. format in political information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>Closed Captioning</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td>Closed Captioning</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Closed Captioning</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Research</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Conversations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>Picture/Video</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>Picture/Video</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>Picture/Video</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Karen Peltz Strauss, author of *A New Civil Right: Telecommunications Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans*, captions are how the Deaf community can feel like they are getting the same information as the general population.27 Chapter 6 discusses how the Deaf community has focused their biggest advocacy ventures on communication

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26 Mel Patterson, interview by author, (February, 2017).
technologies that allow them to be more integrated into the new media environment: video relay services, interpreters, and closed captioning.\textsuperscript{28} Although there is a significant correlation between the influence of Deaf politics and the attention paid to closed captioning (Pearson’s $R=0.261$, $p \leq 0.05$), there is no significant correlation between the influence of Deaf politics and the political information or trust level associated with closed captioning. There is likewise no significant correlation between how informed a person perceives themselves to be (How much do you know about 2016 candidates? How much research have you done about disability rights stances of candidates?) and that person’s preference for getting political information from closed captions.

Of political sources, the CAD study asks: “Do you get enough information about political issues and events from these places?” (Table A14, Appendix C). Only 19.6% of respondents said yes. 29.9% of respondents said no and 48.5% of respondents said they were not sure.\textsuperscript{29} Although we have identified preferred sources and formats for political information in the Deaf community, it may be hard to measure if that information is adequate for strong political socialization.

What is the benchmark for being informed enough? Though the Deaf community’s participation indicates that they are informed enough to be politically active (Table 9), the Deaf community rates their own level of information low (Table A7, Appendix C) as did interviews with community members. The survey provided evidence that the Deaf community sees the potential for better political information through closed captioning. In Table 8 (below) respondents were asked: Is there some way you would like to be more involved in politics in the future? Though most were willing to be involved, they did not have a specific area of interest. Of those who did, the highest number of respondents put closed captioning or media accessibility.


\textsuperscript{29} Roots, James. “‘PAH!-LITICS’: Deaf and Disabled Political Participation and Activity.”
Of those six respondents, five said they trusted closed captioning. In the cross tab, the ratio of people who trust closed captioning to those who pay attention to it is 34/52, or 65.4%. The ratio of people who trust closed captioning to those who get political information from it is 27/37, or 73%. These ratios show the Deaf community’s willingness to integrate into mainstream media and a desire for televised political socialization but also room for improvement in making that socialization method reliable.

Table 8. Ratios for closed captioning in trust, attention, political information, and involvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What formats do you trust the most for political news?</th>
<th>What format(s) do you pay attention to the most in media?</th>
<th>What format(s) do you get most of your political information from?</th>
<th>Is there some way you would like to be more involved in politics in the future?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closed Captioning</td>
<td>Closed Captioning</td>
<td>Closed Captioning</td>
<td>Coded responses for closed captioning/media accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within CC</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within column</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (picture/ASL/text)</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Other</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within column</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings: Political Activism

The Deaf community shows active participation, strong opinions regarding access and equality, and a willingness to be involved in politics in the future. The current political activism movements in the Deaf community, documented in Chapters 2 and 3, focus mostly on voter mobilization. What does political engagement in the Deaf community actually look like? The Rutgers survey shows that there is virtually no turnout gap between the hearing and Deaf populations. In this survey (Table 9 below), 78.5% of respondents said that they had voted before, 56.9% said they had voted in the 2016 election cycle (meaning in the primaries, as this

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survey was conducted prior to the general election), 88.7% said they were planning to vote, and 93.5% said they had registered to vote. As the highest response in all political participation questions, voting is a certifiable strength for the Deaf community.

Table 9. Political participation, 2016 participation, and political effectiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever participated in any of the following political activities?</th>
<th>What have you done so far to participate in the 2016 political race?</th>
<th>Which political activities do you feel are the most fulfilling and effective?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display political signs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss politics</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign/circulate a petition</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a Rally</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run for/hold office</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to see the difference between what participants did and what they thought was effective. The only rating that went up from participation to effectiveness was holding office. Behind voting and discussion, signing or circulating a petition was the most popular method of participation. However, petition showed the most dramatic decrease of any variable from participation to effectiveness – more than 20%. This ties back to the use of social media as a format, which often circulates trending petitions, but the Deaf community doesn’t put a lot of stock in their influence. How often the respondent expresses their political opinions through social media was significantly correlated to political participation (Pearson’s R=.328, p≤.01). This finding is true of the general population as well according to modern socialization research.31 Neither receiving news through social media nor expressing opinions through social

media had a significant correlation to political effectiveness. However, there was a significant correlation between how often the respondent uses mobile applications to get news and political participation (Pearson’s $R=.384$, $p \leq .01$) and political effectiveness (Pearson’s $R=.324$, $p \leq .01$). There was also a significant correlation between how often the respondent seeks out news and a positive rating of political participation (Pearson’s $R=.441$, $p \leq .01$) and effectiveness (Pearson’s $R=.384$, $p \leq .01$).

The CAD survey suggested possible incentives for Deaf respondents’ participation in political activities. The top ranked responses were: 1) I want to express my views publicly, 2) I believe I can make a difference, and 3) I enjoy working for my party/I participate for my benefit or ambitions/I enjoy the socializing. These reflect the political fervor during a time of peak engagement for the Deaf community between 1988 and 1992 (Table A15, Appendix C). The North American Deaf community had recently mobilized for the Deaf President Now protest at Gallaudet University, the only post-secondary educational institution for the Deaf, and for the passage of the ADA, the first national comprehensive disability rights act of its kind. Although these advancements gave the Deaf community confidence in sharing opinion as stated above, they still felt there was lack of accessibility services. This was demonstrated in the hypothetical given to survey participants: “Suppose a disabled person wants to run for a political office. Do you think any of the following things would be a big problem for him/her?” (Table 10 below). The most frequent response was that a disabled candidate would face a lack of support services. From the CAD survey through today, the Deaf community rates accessibility and awareness as the foremost reason for Deaf political participation and also the inhibitor to Deaf political efficacy.

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Table 10. Hypothetical Deaf political official.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suppose a disabled person wants to run for a political office. Do you think any of the following things would be a big problem for him/her?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of financial support</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from influential people</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra expenses faced by disabled people</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of dependable support services</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of party machinery</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of education</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance/prejudice of party personnel</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance/prejudice of voters</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Deaf community strikes a balance between convenient forms of participation and visually-dominant forms of participation (voting and rallies require visual presence, while discussion and petition do not). The DPN protest, discussed in Chapter 2, kick started the passage of the ADA and is a big part of the Deaf community’s legacy. Not only was DPN a huge political success for the Deaf community but it was also largely reliant on visual presence, or in other words, physical man-power. Other rallies and protests have also drawn large numbers from the Deaf community, but for this survey, protest ranked below 17% in each category. Attending a rally did beat petition in its effectiveness ranking. Similar trends in visual participation were seen in the responses of those who participated more frequently (Table A16, Appendix C) and in the CAD survey (Table A15, Appendix C). When asked about future participation, many respondents said they would like to become more involved but they are not sure how or when they will get that opportunity. There was an equal number of respondents (9%) who said they’d like to participate by running for office, voting, or participating in social media

33 Karen Peltz Strauss, A New Civil Right: Telecommunications Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans, 94.
35 Mel Patterson, interview by author, (February, 2017).
discussion. But the majority (13.6%) suggested that they would become involved in captioning or media accessibility. This finding is of particular importance going into Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of this study.

The following table is an appraisal of what Deaf people had participated in during the year before the 2012 election.\(^{36}\) It includes activities that were not included in my own survey. Over 30% of the Deaf population had spoken or written to a political representative. In a separate question, 41.5% of respondents said they had been contacted by representatives from political parties to “get out the vote” (Table A17, Appendix C). This is an impressive level of engagement with political officials and backs up the trends of voter mobilization discussed earlier. Of all respondents who participated in political acts, 21% said their action or work was related to disability issues.\(^{36}\)

Table 11. Rutgers measure of political participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the last year, have you…</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed money to a political party or candidate?</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written or spoken to an elected representative or public official?</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a political meeting?</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written a letter to a newspaper?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed money to an organization which is trying to influence government policy or legislation?</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked for a candidate running for public office?</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise worked with groups or on your own to change government laws or policies?</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration on some national or local issue other than a strike against your employer?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked with others or joined an organization in your community to do something about some community problem?</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In another series of questions, Rutgers researchers measured political efficacy among the Deaf community (Table 12 below). Participants rated their level of agreement with multiple statements about feeling involved or worthwhile to the political sphere. The most polarizing statement was: “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.” There was only a 4% margin of those who strongly agreed over those who strongly disagreed. This harkens back to the comments from multiple researchers about the difficulty some Deaf populations have with dense political material. A majority of respondents agreed with all statements, including the negative statements that public officials don’t care, people with disabilities don’t have a say in government actions, and people with disabilities can’t understand what’s going on. However, the statement that was most agreed

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38 James Roots, “‘PAH!-LITICS’: Deaf and Disabled Political Participation and Activity.”
with was: “People with disabilities have as much influence as other groups in government and public affairs.” The accordance of the Deaf community with this statement reflects the “attitudinal measure” discussed in Chapter 2, which comprises of the community’s identity as a linguistic minority group and their sense of Deaf Pride. Following the polarizing statement that people with disabilities don’t understand what’s going on, the next statement that was most disagreed with was: “Government officials treat people with disabilities with as much respect and dignity as they treat members of other groups.” Disrespect by government officials is reflected in the stereotypical advertisements and comments given in the 2016 campaign cycle.

When asked if the Deaf participants consider themselves to have a disability, 25.6% said no, and 21.3% also said that others would not consider them to have a disability. As mentioned in the literature review, the Deaf community recognizes their categorization as a disabled group by government entities but many members of the community still reject that label. The consensus here shows that the Deaf population has a very strong sense of their own worth and efficacy in the political sphere (with the exception of those who feel they don’t understand politics) but has concerns about how others see and treat them in politics.

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Table 12. Rutgers measure of political efficacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?</th>
<th>Agree Strongly Frequency</th>
<th>Agree Strongly Percent</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat Frequency</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat Percent</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat Frequency</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat Percent</th>
<th>Disagree Strongly Frequency</th>
<th>Disagree Strongly Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public officials don’t care much what people like me think.</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics.</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with disabilities have as much influence as other groups in government and public affairs.</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government officials treat people with disabilities with as much respect and dignity as they treat members of other groups.</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Through the lens of quantitative data in these surveys, this chapter shows how the Deaf community, though diverse, joins together in their political activism and identity, linguistic preferences, and information mediums. The Deaf community is a powerful potential voting bloc which values visual forms of participation and responds well to political outreach. Social change enacted by this community has created a space for the enculturation of the rising generation of Deaf as allies in the fight for access and equality. The Deaf diaspora has produced nation-wide pockets of the Deaf community which tend to participate and vote according to local politics. Social media and mobile technology have allowed the Deaf community to be involved in many ways with mainstream information flows and to practice the dissemination of their natural language. These findings help us to more fully understand the backgrounds and perspectives of the Deaf community and their prospects for future political involvement. The Deaf community still feels barred from full inclusion in the political process by a feelings of political inefficacy and lack of information access through media. Closed captioned media, an important political source and a key issue in Deaf political socialization, will be explored in the following chapters.
PART II: POLICIES & PLAYERS IN MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY

Chapter 5:

Media Accessibility Policy and Procedure

In the Trenches

In the survey, Political Exposure and Activism in the Deaf Community, respondents were asked, Is there some way you would like to be more involved in politics in the future? The most elected response was captioning or media accessibility (Table 8). According to Karen Strauss, the Deaf community believes they can get more accurate and timely political information from captioning than from other sources.¹ While Deaf consumers recognize that captioning has issues (Table A6, Appendix C), they continue to pay attention to it (Table 7) as the best method of receiving information from a large portion of broadcast media. Provided with the opportunity to engage in the improvement of these services, the Deaf community is willing and their political activity serves as proof of their motivation (Table 9). This chapter transitions to Part II of my thesis, which explores the media accessibility environment, specifically captioning, in depth. Evidence from interviews, government reports, and case studies will demonstrate the importance of captioning for Deaf political socialization. To begin this analysis, this chapter will give a literature review of the policies that shape media accessibility today.

It is important to fully orient ourselves in regards to media accessibility policy in order to analyze how its development has influenced users (specifically the Deaf community) and in turn, how users can influence the further development of accessible media through political engagement. In our current system, captioning and media accessibility originate from the encouragement, sponsorship, and legislation of the government. The great strides of the

Rehabilitation Act, the ADA, and the CVAA have constructed a sense of security in policy – that the government claims responsibility for ensuring access to media through captioning and other assistive technologies just as they have ensured ramps and elevators in public buildings. Unfortunately, unlike our accessible stone edifices which last for decades, the media environment changes too quickly for the government to be in a position to accept sole responsibility for updating access to new technologies. By understanding the history of this policy, we can more easily define what regulatory and non-regulatory solutions exist for increasing media accessibility and universal design in the future through the civic engagement of the Deaf community.

Captioning technology has always outstripped policy, both because of the length of time it takes government agencies to collect information and propose action and because the government is judicious about regulating protocols that might inhibit economic growth or civic participation. This policy is not lacking, there is simply a gap. The law can’t anticipate what it doesn’t know. Dependence on government for media accessibility solutions is not enough, as evidenced by the policy history. The FCC really only facilitates a broader platform for technology that has already been developed and practiced in innovative corporations. Although policy has a place in instituting a normalized standard of operation for new businesses, the FCC cannot be the go-to enforcement agency for companies who are shirking responsibility. FCC regulations and other rule-makings are the springboard for corporate engagement in accessibility, which we will discuss more in Chapter 7. This chapter examines policies that initiated accessibility in media and communication technologies, starting in the 1970s with the Rehabilitation Act and the development of closed captioning technology to our most recent rulemaking – the new Closed Captioning Quality standards which were rolled out by the FCC.
Policy History

This policy discussion is a general descriptive analysis of the governmental process for establishing media accessibility, specifically as it evolved toward the provision of closed captioning. More information and history about these policies could be researched through the sources I provide and many more. I intend only to provide a straightforward exploration of the political language used and the policies represented in the FCC archives, the Federal Register, and in Karen Strauss’ history of telecommunications policy, *A New Civil Right: Telecommunications Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans*. Karen Strauss was recently named the Deputy Chief of the FCC Consumer Bureau⁵, and her book details her history in writing legislation and interacting with the Deaf community. Her insights have provided a lot to this chapter. The policies this section will cover include: FCC Rulemaking, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990, the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the 21st Century Communications & Video Accessibility Act of 2010, and the Closed Captioning Standards of 2015.

FCC Rulemaking

Congress issues statutes to the FCC which give the agency the authority to make legislative rules.³ The FCC proceeds to make rules when a law is enacted regarding telecommunications policy or when the agency is petitioned by parties seeking change or direction. In deciding which issues require a rulemaking, the FCC says: “We evaluate whether

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the problem might be fixed without the issuance of a rule. For example, we may consider whether there are less burdensome alternatives than prohibiting certain behaviors; we may decide that requiring the disclosure of certain information by industry would achieve the agency’s objectives.” In this statement, it is apparent that the FCC views the function of policy to ban discrimination and misuse rather than to actively enhance access. This distinction can be seen as the underlying focus of every government ruling regarding disability.

The FCC sends out a Notice of Inquiry when they need more information in order to propose a rulemaking. Once they have collected information from interested groups about community needs and preferences, costs and man-power, current resources and technology, and standards already in place, the FCC drafts and sends out a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. This is posted on the Federal Register for 30 days during which the public can comment. Sometimes rulemakings are also discussed in person at the FCC’s monthly public business meetings. If any comments suggest an adjustment to the rulemaking that the FCC chooses to adopt, it must be either “a logical outgrowth of the proposal” that the public could have anticipated, or it must be made available in a subsequent commentary period. Overall, the rulemaking for the FCC is very logical and leaves plenty of space for interested parties to contribute information and feedback. However, these parties must know when and where to offer feedback by closely monitoring FCC rulemaking and the Federal Register. They must also provide substantive evidence for their petitions and suggestions to the FCC. Most parties who submit commentary to the FCC are advocacy groups with the resources to be thorough and comprehensive in their feedback. Following is an overview of those rulemakings that are relevant to the provision of media accessibility for closed caption viewers.

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4 “Rulemaking Process.”
Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 504

Although captioning technology was in production use since 1970, it was not included in any legislation until the 1990s. These early pieces of telecommunication legislation are important, however, in their establishment of regulating language for telecommunication service providers and because, “Captioning is a form of textualization, a process that has become increasingly necessary with the rise of multimedia formats.”5 The process of media textualization links these policies in a path leading to the development of full media access through closed captioning and the expanding possibility of universal design.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 included Section 504: “a federal law prohibiting programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating on the basis of disability.”6 This law enabled teletypewriters to become more widely used as a communication method for Deaf citizens. Teletypewriters are devices that can relay typed messages over a phone line to other teletypewriters, using technology similar to the telegraph. Section 504 required for their provision in places like hospitals, social security offices, universities, and law enforcement agencies.6 However, “Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act only covered federally assisted private and state entities, not the federal agencies themselves nor any part of the U.S. Congress.”7 While TTYs did provide some amount of access, they were very limited in their network reach. In the beginning, TTYs were very expensive technology and racked up astonishing phone bills because of the slow text transmission. Problems with costs and access

7 Ibid., 17.
were largely resolved in a legal battle between the FCC and AT&T about the interpretation of Section 21 of the 1934 Communications Act, which required “every common carrier engaged in interstate or foreign communications by wire or radio to furnish such communication service upon reasonable request”\(^8\) and to “make available… a rapid, efficient, Nation-wide, and world-wide wire and radio communication service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges.”\(^9\) The FCC went on to pass the Telecommunications for Disabled Act in 1982 which further provisioned the “reasonable access” to telephone services for people with disabilities.\(^10\)

*Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 508*

The technical limitations of the TTY service led to the conception of relay services, which allowed for an operator to receive text from a TTY and deliver a spoken message to any voice telephone number. As this initiative grew, relay services began offering simultaneous relay so that TTYs and telephones could actually engage in conversation. Meanwhile, Deaf advocacy groups and TTY service providers petitioned the FCC for legislation about interstate relay services, but it seemed no response was imminent, even though the capability had been successfully tested.\(^11\) In 1988, Gallaudet hosted a conference on relay services, and their relay task force in Washington, DC was able to push through the Telecommunications Accessibility Enhancement Act that same year, which established the Federal Relay Service (FRS). However, this only facilitated communications between the federal government and Deaf constituents. It wasn’t until the 1998 amendment of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act that all federal agencies were required to “develop, procure, maintain, and use accessible electronic and

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\(^9\) Ibid., 18.
\(^10\) Ibid., 36.
\(^11\) Ibid., 85.
information technologies.”¹² This particularly helped federal employees and it extended accessibility accommodations to all computer devices, not just TTY. Still, said Strauss in an interview, “If there was access to relay services, they were not confidential and often there were time constraints put on phone calls.”¹³ Relay services were just the beginning of assistive technologies for the Deaf that require a mediator, whether that be voice operator, ASL interpreter, or captioner. Providers and consumers still struggle with creating professional standards for these services.

_Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 Title IV_

With the Deaf President Now protest at Gallaudet University and the culmination of the disability rights movement, the Americans with Disabilities Act was the shining opportunity for relay services to have their day. The relay task force worried that “the ADA seemed focused on ways to prohibit discriminatory practices in existing programs and activities, rather than ways to create new programs.”¹⁴ This is consistent with the FCC’s rulemaking policy to offload action onto industry if the necessary change does not involve “prohibiting certain behaviors.”¹⁵ The language of Section IV of the ADA eventually required all employers, state and local governments, and public places, to provide “reasonable accommodation” to accessible services as long as it was not proven to be an “undue burden.”¹⁶ Strauss comments:

The ADA guidelines are notable for being the first set of federal standards to take a ‘universal design’ approach, a philosophy for designing structures that are usable by

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¹⁵ “Rulemaking Process.”
people with the widest possible range of functional capabilities. Many years later, this approach would be borrowed and successfully applied in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, in mandate requiring telecommunications manufacturers and service providers to incorporate accessible features in the design of their products and services.\textsuperscript{16}

The ADA was so revolutionary, in part, because it recognized the disabled population as part of the public, with all associated rights and privileges. Thus businesses could start employing the practice of designing with accessibility of the public in mind. Because the Deaf community had already submitted a tall order to the legislators of the ADA, including access to interpreters, assistive listening devices, and relay services, they held off on advocating for captioning requirements, fearing that it would push dissenters into the majority and the bill would not pass.\textsuperscript{17} At the time, lobby groups for media corporations strongly resisted captioning legislation; Karen Strauss said the movie industry wanted “to shut down the ADA because of Title IV.”\textsuperscript{18}

Eventually, the ADA did include a requirement that federally-produced public service announcements be closed captioned.\textsuperscript{19} The later success of the Telecommunications Act, Strauss said, came from three things: “We wrote it under the radar. We had a focus on deregulation. And we had Congressman Markey as our champion.”\textsuperscript{18} Despite not getting their entire wish list from the ADA, the Deaf community learned valuable lessons about how to sell big policy and was able to incorporate that wisdom six years later in the Telecommunications Act.

\textit{Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990}

\textsuperscript{17}Karen Peltz Strauss, \textit{A New Civil Right: Telecommunications Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans}, 228.

\textsuperscript{18}Karen Peltz Strauss, interview by author, (February, 2017).

\textsuperscript{19}Elizabeth Ellcessor, “Captions On, Off, on TV, Online: Accessibility and Search Engine Optimization in Online Closed Captioning,” 334.
The Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990 (TDCA) first attempted to solve the problem of distribution of closed captioning, rather than production. All TVs larger than 13 inches diagonal were required to be compatible with set-top decoder boxes. These decoders received captions through line 21 of the vertical blanking interval (VBI) of broadcast television signals. The TDCA wanted the television medium to be accessible “to the fullest extent possible by technology” to elderly, deaf, hard of hearing, children, etc.\(^\text{20}\) This rulemaking also required that caption text be customizable for viewers, including font, spacing, color, screen position, word wrap, and easy reader (reading level captions). The FCC shared that some commenters felt this rulemaking to be unnecessarily minimalist: “They contend that Section 9 is a least common denominator approach which does not provide adequate closed captioning in the digital environment and which would not represent any significant improvement over the analog status quo.”\(^\text{20}\) Policy advocates tended to overestimate the role of the FCC in rulemaking. The FCC continues to favor deregulation and policy that is secure (meaning, won’t need to be intensely enforced). Therefore, the policy made in this and every other case of media accessibility relies on industry practices that are already in place and technology that has already been tested. The FCC does not mandate for disability accommodation that requires the development of new technology; instead, the agency rules that an existing technology be more widely used. This exemplifies the retroactive political system surrounding media accessibility and why consumers and their advocates are often unsatisfied with the gentle language used in federal rulemaking.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 covers in greatest detail the discussion surrounding the provision of closed captioning for video programming. It was the first comprehensive report and order from the FCC about captioning and did in fact take many issues into consideration, although some were left to industry to sort out or else deferred until such time as the FCC saw a greater need for rulemaking.21 In their initial Notice of Inquiry and Accessibility Report preceding the enactment of the Telecommunications Act, the FCC examined the availability and cost of closed captioning. At this point, voluntary closed captioning was already distributed in the following proportions: 70% of broadcast network programming, 100% of nationally broadcast public television, 4% of basic cable programming, and 35% of premium cable programming.22 Karen Strauss says “By 1996, all of the major broadcasting networks were captioning – CBS, NBC, ABC, etc. HBO and Disney were doing pretty good. What was still missing was basic cable – only about 5-10% of basic cable programs were captioned.”23

Each hour of captioned programming was estimated to cost 20-30 work hours and $2,000-$5,000.22 Department of Education funds covered about 40% of captioned programs, including national news, public affairs, children's programming, movies, and prime time specials.21 These associated costs were compared with the reported benefits of captioning: “the Commission on the Education of the Deaf has stated that ‘captioning of TV . . . is the most significant technological development for persons who are deaf’”. The FCC also quoted a

statement from Congress from the enactment of the TCDA, saying that closed-captions “significantly improved the quality of [Deaf/Hard of Hearing] lives.”

The FCC was very aware of the discrepancies in the quality of closed captioning and the detriment of poor quality captions to consumers: “Captions, unlike words in books or periodicals, are impermanent. When there are typographical errors or incorrect word usage, the reader does not have the time to look over the previous words to deduce the intended meaning.” In Chapter 6, differences in captioning styles and their implications will be discussed. Captioning styles such as pop-up, roll-up, verbatim, italics or parenthetical use for off-screen or unspoken information are still held as artistic or professional decisions of the captioning vendor. The Accessibility Report states, “Expert captioners do not appear to agree on the best presentation style.” Captioners have never conducted any kind of broad research on the preferences of consumers for captioning styles. This contributes to the FCC’s lack of decision-making on the subject, and begs the question: What qualifies captioners as experts if they are not involved in self-training and improvement through consumer population sampling? Captioning vendors have internal review processes but struggle with staying in contact with the Deaf community as the industry moves forward.

Section 305. Section 305 of the Telecommunications Act amended Section 713 of the Communications Act of 1934, which provided a schedule for the implementation of captioned video programming, “regardless of distribution technology.” This schedule proposed that new programming follow a phase-in schedule for captioning, increasing in quantity by 25% every two years with full compliance scheduled for 2006. 75% of pre-rule non-exempt library

programming was also required to be captioned by 2008. Compliance to the phase-in schedule would be measured every quarter. This rulemaking declined to “adopt standards for the non-technical aspects of captioning, including accuracy of transcription, spelling, placement and style” and similarly declined from instituting any standards for the training or qualification of captioners.\textsuperscript{26} Commenters battled over the establishment of quality standards, and the notice even includes a list of suggested standards (which look very similar to what was eventually instituted in 2015). “Others believe that mandatory captioning without quality standards will promote a decline in captioning quality. NCI, one of the larger caption suppliers, states that the Commission should consider minimum quality standards, sufficient to ensure consistent, adequate service to the public without impairing competition among captioning services.”\textsuperscript{26} This discussion was ultimately deferred for 20 years.

Another particular point of strife in this regulation was the provision of standards for visually-dominant programming, such as weather, sports, and commercials. News related programs were given the opportunity to used Electronic Newsroom Technique (ENT), which loads the news script into the caption broadcast signal but does not allow for the captioning of additional or spontaneous commentary by the newscasters. Commenters on the FCC inquiry stated that only about 30\% of what is said on news broadcasts follows the script, leaving out breaking stories and live field reports along with other substantial information.\textsuperscript{26} Sports were not exempt from captioning requirements because it was economically feasible for them to comply. Commercials were exempt, and there was specific discussion about political advertisements, which stated the benefits of political advertising for people with disabilities. “Requiring parties to close caption political advertising, however, could impose an economic burden and, thus,

\textsuperscript{26} Federal Communications Commission, The Commission Proposes Rules for Closed Captioning: NPRM.
might prevent some of this type of advertising, especially political advertising for local elections.”

Although this inquiry provided for input from both sides of the issue, the FCC dropped the discussion of political advertisements in the discussion and final rulemaking. According to closed captioning aficionado Sean Zdenek, captioning of political ads is “required by law in certain instances,” citing the internal revenue code which requires candidates on the presidential ticket to caption television ads in order to be eligible for funding from the Presidential Election Campaign Fund. Zdenek offers that some states have also required closed captioning of political advertisements or videos but there are varying levels of adherence.

Section 255. Eventually, it was decided that distributors, not producers, are responsible for ensuring compliance, against the suggestions of some captioners (they felt the captioning process would generally be smoother if done at the production level, not the distribution level). The FCC’s justification: “By holding distributors responsible for captioning, there typically will be a single entity to which complaints must be addressed, and there will be no need for tracking the entities responsible for producing programs alleged to violate the rules.” For closed captioning to be completed successfully at the production stage, distributors would be responsible for drafting contracts that require such.

Karen Strauss said, “Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act was probably the weakest piece of legislation we wrote. It required products and services to be accessible, ‘if

readily achievable.’ But the requirement was absolutism – they had to make all of their products and services accessible. For example, TAITEC was trying to pick just one product line to make it accessible but that wasn’t successful for consumers to be able to use it.”³⁰ Because the legislation asked for either full compliance or exemption, corporations had no incentive to employ creative solutions using captioning through specific products. Instead, they applied for exemption. Another large problem that arose was the need for captions to be reformatted when a television show aired in a different setting after a long period of time or after being edited. Video Programming Distributors (VPD) often decided to air the program without captions or with old captions, and the FCC declined from setting regulation for reformatting.³¹ The only quality standards set by the Telecommunications Act were that captions be delivered “complete and intact.”³¹ A journal article by Elizabeth Ellcessor notes that because the FCC regulates distributors directly, individuals are not given the right to sue for non-compliance.³² This adds to the degree of separation from consumer to provider in the media accessibility network, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

21st Century Communications & Video Accessibility Act of 2010

Title I of the CVAA says that all products and services that use broadband must be accessible to people with disabilities – therefore, smartphones and other devices considered exempt from the TV Decoder Act were now included.³³ Title II required that programming

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³¹ Federal Communications Commission, Report & Order on Closed Captioning and Video Description of Video Programming.
³² Elizabeth Ellcessor, “Captions On, Off, on TV, Online: Accessibility and Search Engine Optimization in Online Closed Captioning,” 335.
previously broadcast on television must be captioned on the internet as well. The CVAA also provided for access to emergency information through all mediums and emergency services through 911. According to Strauss, the CVAA is what provided for captions in advanced communication services, like email, text, and IP based technologies – not just telecommunications. It was also much more direct than Section 255; the CVAA assumed that accessibility was achievable with present technological developments. The language used was “unless not achievable” as opposed to “if readily achievable” which was much easier to enforce.

Why was this piece of legislation so much more powerful than previous policies? In the CVAA, the FCC recognized the short-sightedness of past legislation which did not attempt to include developing technology or new media. The FCC wrote: “These laws were not able to keep up with the fast paced technological changes that our society has witnessed over the past decade.” This rulemaking saw a shift from the more hesitant regulation of the 20th century to a concentrated effort on forward-thinking accommodation. The disability community was also especially attentive to this rulemaking because the internet was a big threat to access. The CVAA was written from 2007-2010, when tablets were emerging but not popular yet. Karen Strauss estimates that this is the only regulation for accessible technology that really looked ahead of its time. Because of the TV Decoder Act, people doubted the capability of receiving captions on a small mobile device, but Strauss commented that people were already reading messages on their Blackberries. “Regulations are always chasing new media development. But we knew that with the change in technology formats, accessibility would be easier and so we included requirements for advanced communication services.”

product to have accessibility but it did require a range of products, and allowed companies to use
third parties to achieve compliance.\textsuperscript{35} Apple’s iPhone was a phenomenal innovation which
provided assurance to policy makers that accessibility through mobile technology was
achievable, hence the CVAA required captioning to be functional on any device.

\textit{Closed Captioning Regulations of 2015}

We are now in the contented aftermath of the long-awaited captioning standards of 2015,
which are young enough that there has not yet been cause for enforcement and new enough that
the community has been quiet about further telecommunication accessibility needs. After the
CVAA, the increase in competition among captioning vendors made quality maintenance rather
sketchy. Strauss says, “Before the adoption of the Telecommunications Act, only three
companies were doing the captioning. Afterward, competition rose and it drove the standards
down.”\textsuperscript{36} Years after the 2004 petition from Telecommunication Services for the Deaf and Hard
of Hearing, Inc. (TDI), Consumer Advisory Committee Report in 2007, and Notices of Proposed
Rulemaking in 2005 and in 2008,\textsuperscript{37} the FCC finally came up with a Report and Order for closed
captioning standards in 2014. FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler cites this rulemaking as one of the
highlights of his tenure:

I'm proud of what we did to help technology be used to attack the challenges of
individuals with disabilities. The first thing we did was the closed captioning rules. For
10 years — for 10 years! — there had been a petition here at the commission saying that

\textsuperscript{35} “Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act.”
\textsuperscript{36} Karen Peltz Strauss, interview by author, (February, 2017).
\textsuperscript{37} Federal Communications Commission, \textit{FCC Moves to Upgrade TV Closed Captioning Quality. New
Standards - Including Accuracy, Timeliness, and On-Screen Placement of Closed Captions - Will Ensure
Full Access to TV Programming for Americans Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.} February 20, 2014,
closed captioning isn't keeping up with what's going on [on the screen]. It's too slow. And there are better technologies. And the commission had done nothing about it. It's the kind of thing that you or I, as hearing people, if the audio was out of sync as much, we would be raising holy hell. And I sat at that meeting and I said we're going to fix that.38

The primary factor in the establishment of captioning standards was the complaints of consumers. Commenters to the FCC had long reported an array of bad captioning qualities, including: “inaccurate, gibberish, garbled, butchered, incomplete, misspelled and/or misunderstood, incomprehensible, obscuring the speaker, or significantly lagging.”39

Furthermore, the provision by Section 202 of the CVAA for closed captioning on video distributed to the internet after being broadcast on television had the unintended consequence of perpetuating poor-quality closed captioning for an even broader audience of viewers. “The expanded availability of such programming [on the internet] makes ensuring the quality of captioning on shows aired on television in the first instance all the more important.”39

The new closed captioning standards are able to address some of the issues with the competitiveness and deregulation of the captioning industry. All previous rulemakings only affected VPDs and assistive technology manufacturers, and by association television producers. These standards finally had a direct bearing on captioning providers to be accountable for their expertise.

The new captioning regulations included standards for accuracy, synchronicity, program completeness, and placement. These metrics ensure that the whole program is captioned, even if


it means running captions into the next program or commercial, that the captioning is verbatim when possible, that it is indicative of speakers and other audio sources, that it is timely, and that it is visible on the screen. ⁴⁰ Because of the renovations in captioning quality, the FCC felt that the allowance for Electronic Newsroom Technique needed to be revisited. In its new order, “the ENT rule now prohibits the four major national broadcast networks, their affiliates… and national non-broadcast networks serving at least 50 percent of all homes subscribing to [Multi-channel] VPD services from using ENT to caption live programming.” ⁴⁰ This allows much greater access to local broadcasting and makes condensed/censored captioning the exception rather than the rule.

Although alternative accountability processes were discussed, the FCC ruled to keep VPDs as the main responsible entity for ensuring compliance. Regarding the standards for VPDs, Georgia Association of Broadcasters published a succinct summary of the FCC’s Report and Order. ⁴¹ In short, VPDs were given additional accountability to perform maintenance and record keeping, and to obtain certification from television producers. Different standards exist for pre-recorded, live, and near-live programming: Real-time captioning is not expected to meet compliance. FCC encourages caption providers to have contracts with programmers that provide them with forward copies of scripts and require internet, audio, and training in order to perform their function well. Certification comes on three different levels: the first is full compliance. The second is “best practice,” in which vendors produce their own standards but include verification and training. Producers give captioners the resources to do the job well, including doing live


display instead of real-time captioning, monitoring and logging mistakes, and having a staff contact for caption providers. The FCC also encourages programs to deliver the audio to caption providers a few seconds in advance for real-time or near-live programming. The third level of certification is exemption.42

Despite having tighter standards, the FCC left a lot of leeway for VPDs to meet compliance based on the type of programming. New networks are given exemption from these requirements for four years. Strauss commented, “This is the most problematic part of the ruling so far, we’ve received a lot of push back against that.”43 Even after the CVAA and the Closed Captioning standards, some of the best forward-thinking policies for media access to date, the FCC seems to hold on to some tentative rulemaking practices by allowing so much time for compliance and continuing to allow networks to comply with pre-scripted newsroom copy through ENT.

Conclusion

Media accessibility policy has made tremendous progress in the accommodation it provides and the more proactive language it uses. The present shortcomings in FCC rulemaking are necessary checks to the authority of the government in this matter. The FCC intentionally leaves space for privatized action in its regulations that has not yet been filled by an accountable party. Looking ahead at the players involved in media accessibility, it is helpful to note what accommodations have been filled by the policies just discussed (Table 13 below). Knowing the policy can help demystify a process that has been assumed the only viable solution for inaccessible media and help formulate a solution in which Deaf consumers can realize their political influence and corporations can implement practices that go beyond regulatory mandates.

### Table 13: What’s captioned and which policy required it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Captioned Media</th>
<th>Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training and informational multimedia distributed by federal agencies</td>
<td>Rehabilitation act (1973) section 508 (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video programming services provided by businesses and organizations</td>
<td>ADA (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All screens larger than 13 inches must be compatible with set-top decoders</td>
<td>Television Decoder Act (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All analog television programming aired after 1998 and digital television</td>
<td>Telecommunications Act (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programming aired after 2002, 75% of all aired programming prior to 1998</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All previously-televised online programming and all professional video, web-</td>
<td>CVAA (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>based video content portals, university content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy, Synchronicity, Placement, Competence in Captions</td>
<td>Closed Captioning Standards (2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6:

Are Closed Captions Open to Interpretation?
Deciphering the Problem of Assistive Technology

A key reason for the improvement of captioning is that it is a primary resource for the socialization of the Deaf community. Nevertheless, the benefits of closed captioning on television impact a much wider population of captioning consumers. Previously discussed in my survey analysis, Deaf participants were asked where they got most of their political information. The highest responses were social media, followed by television. However, most video formats on social media are captioned by volunteers or not at all. A growing number of television programs, especially news, are near-live or live broadcasts, for which captioning is lower-quality than offline productions. Respondents were asked what formats they pay attention to, what they get political information from, and what they trust. For all questions, closed captioning and text were by far the most preferred formats, with CC slightly higher than text (Table 7). These responses indicate that despite the errors in captioning, the Deaf community uses this assistive technology more than any other information format.

Access to assistive technology for the disability community is stuck in the middle of a busy intersection of interests with businesses, government entities, and individuals all clamoring for right of way. Clear directions are obscured for consumers, clients, providers, and policy makers because of so many competing angles. This chapter demonstrates a) The status of the media accessibility environment today, and b) How disability studies can bridge the gap between compliance and corporate social responsibility. Because this chapter explores the disability perspective more deeply than the rest of my study, I will use corresponding vocabulary from the discipline of disabilities studies. This perspective provides the context of Deaf political thought
and identity that is used in Deaf political socialization. Table 14 below defines the media accessibility players I will discuss in this and subsequent chapters.

Table 14. Media accessibility players nomenclature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Accessibility Player</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy group</td>
<td>Organized groups who advocate for Deaf rights and accessibility to the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive Technology Manufacturer</td>
<td>For instance, developers of CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captioning Provider</td>
<td>Also referred to as captioning vendor, or captioner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>The Deaf consumer of closed captioning services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Advisory Group</td>
<td>Internal organizations for captioning providers and government entities to receive specific product feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agent</td>
<td>Meaning the FCC, who is responsible for rulemaking regarding telecommunications services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Programming Distributor</td>
<td>VPDs are the broadcast networks who are under mandate by the FCC to ensure captioned programming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Producer</td>
<td>Individual makers of television shows that are often under contract with the VPD to caption their programs. They are also the clients of captioning providers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The government regulations established for the provision of disabled individuals with access to assistive technology have been hard won and celebrated, as in the case of the ADA. However, the lack of clarity and specificity in this and subsequent regulations has left accommodation for media accessibility up to private industry. The conflict mainly exists between clients, or television producers, who have fiduciary responsibility for closed captioning (typically as contracted with their video programming distributor or VPD), and consumers, who are the active users of the technology. Media are becoming more and more accessible, but the customization and consumer feedback for these services is somewhat lacking. As the following case study will demonstrate, able-bodied providers of captioning services often operate according to efficiency rather than effectiveness; they are designing with the client in mind, not the consumer. The client’s interests are usually focused on pragmatic business practices and a generic, able-bodied consumer, and so accessibility for disabled people is retrofitted to their
products. Because providers operate on the backend of media access, they may not have the ability to make ties with or advocate for the Deaf community.

By understanding the larger framework of disability culture, we not only see additional benefits of closed captioning for the Deaf community, but also the critical need for consumer-driven universal design. This design approach mitigates and/or improves cultural mediation of able-bodies for the disabled. Cultural mediation is necessary in captioning services when there is no direct translation for language or practice, but it requires sensitivity of the transmitting culture’s values as well as the receiving culture’s values.\(^1\) Universal design will allow for a “kairotic space” between Deaf consumers, caption providers, and television producers in the media accessibility environment.\(^2\)

**Contextual Overview of Captioning**

Accurate captioning for television and film has come through an extensive political evolution. The technological capability of broadcasting closed captions began in the early 1970s.\(^3\) In 1979, the government sponsored the establishment of the National Captioning Institute (NCI), which has continued as a non-profit organization since. Other organizations were also sponsored to experiment with closed captioning. Then in 1990, the ADA was passed, which prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities and mandated information access, though its language was somewhat nebulous. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

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has responsibility for ensuring access to broadcast media and other communication technologies. Section 508 amendment of the Rehabilitation Act and subsequent regulations by the FCC have brought captioning to a relatively stable level today, where most television and all video programming is available with verbatim captioning.4

The most recent policy language regarding captioning quality does little to standardize captioning practices. The Captioning Standards released in 2014 explain that captions must be 1) accurate 2) synchronous, 3) complete, and 4) properly placed.5 The descriptions of these qualifications expose a measure of self-contradiction. For instance, captioning must not be paraphrased, but in the case of a time constraint, the provider (or the producer) may exercise good judgement to cut down the written content. Captioning must appear on-screen in time with the audio information, but the acceptable lag time for captions is not specified, which leaves paraphrasing decisions up to the providers (or the producers). Captions must reflect the same punctuation and capitalization as the verbal information, but some captioners provide captioning in all caps to appear more readable. Captioning must indicate the speaker and any off-screen audio information, but the choice to indicate speakers nominally or by screen placement is up to the provider, as is the choice to use pop-on captions or scrolling captions.5 Consumers may reasonably have preferences for these practices, but the literature and interviews cited in this paper indicate that the captioning industry has not reached a consensus.6

The FCC offers a lot of flexibility for captioning providers but leaves consumers with only reactionary methods of addressing issues. Different captioning standards are recognized for programming that is live, near-live, or pre-recorded. The FCC does not regulate captioning for DVDs or video games (but the service distributors of these products are often required to provide accessible media), and the FCC has declared exempt distributors for whom captioning would be economically burdensome as well as “self-implementing exemptions [which] include public service announcements shorter than 10 minutes and not paid for with federal dollars, programming shown from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m., and programming primarily textual.” An important exemption that would fit into these categories is political advertisements, which play a distinctive role in exposing voters to candidate positions, as in the case of the 2016 General Election discussed in Chapter 3. The enforcement of these standards is in large part the burden of the consumer and follows retrofit procedures. The policy states that “accuracy spot checks” constitute the following: “Within 30 days following notification of a pattern or trend of complaints from the Commission, [VPDs will] conduct spot checks of television program captions to assess caption quality and address any ongoing concerns.” In other words, checks on captioning quality will most likely occur after several consumers have issued complaints to the FCC about the same program. Within a month, the FCC will investigate these claims and address them only if the issue is ongoing and not, to use their phrase, de minimis.

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Ethical Concerns in Captioning: Censorship and Accuracy

The concern of paraphrasing has been one of the most prominent frustrations for the Deaf community in media accessibility. It is seen by the Deaf community as an act of censorship for the convenience of producers or providers. Michael Stinson explains the justification of this practice in his essay, “Current and Future Technologies in the Education of Deaf Students”:

A concern of the producers of captions and of educators has been whether [Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)] individuals are able to understand captions that are presented at relatively fast speeds (e.g., 141 words per minute or greater) and that sometimes contain complex grammatical forms. This concern is based upon the limited reading proficiency of many DHH persons (Ward, Yang, Paul, & Loeterman, 2007).

He goes on to examine several studies which have tested comprehension of different rates and of different grammatical renderings of the audio information, in order to see if there was a legitimate reason for producers to “delete information considered nonessential.” His findings indicate that this editing practice “either has no effect upon comprehension or that variation in rate only affects selected readers.” Although reading comprehension among the Deaf population is a viable concern, specific consumer outcries for verbatim captioning changed the subject of captioning discourse from pragmatics to paternalism.

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Providers have modified captioning procedures for Deaf adults (children’s shows are held to a different standard) to accommodate the preferences of the Deaf community for full disclosure of communication, minimizing cultural mediation. Offline programs (not live) are now captioned verbatim, to the point of including vocal tics and stumbling of the program’s characters. This guideline holds even in such cases as reality TV shows when unscripted characters may make the captions hard to read because of their “um”s, “like”s, and “you know”s. However, the inclusion of this information allows consumers access to the cultural context of the show.

In cases where producers decide to intervene for the purpose of cultural mediation, the ethics become complicated. Here is an example of how censored captions might be mistakenly delivered to the Deaf consumer:

If a captioner hears a word or words that were censored in an earlier part of the program but are not in a later part, we notify the client, and to expedite the process, the client almost always tells us to leave those words out of the caption file. It’s our understanding that those words are later omitted from the audio before the program airs. Some clients have asked us to caption two versions of a program: a “clean” version which will air in an earlier time slot and a “dirty” version which will air in a later time slot. As more and more programming is repurposed to air on different networks, sold, or distributed through different outlets, the correct version of the captions may not always follow suit. For many hearing people, it may seem more shocking to read profane language than to hear it, so producers might think it a service to use the “clean” captions for DHH consumers. However, the Deaf community argues that when government or private entities make subjective decisions

12 Glenys Mulholland, interview by author, (February, 2017).
about if or how something is captioned, they “supersede the individual judgment of… Deaf Americans who have worked long and hard to make sure that they have full standing as citizens in this society.”\textsuperscript{13} Some argue that intervention may reasonably come into play when considering the reading characteristics and needs of Deaf children. Nevertheless, audiovisual translator Soledad Zárate states that strategies for culturally mediating programs for children “owe more to intuition than to factual information, and a lack of a solid knowledge and awareness of deaf children’s reading abilities and needs is manifest.”\textsuperscript{14} Sean Zdenek calls this intuitive method the “art and rhetoric of captioning.”\textsuperscript{15} These methods have provided numerous style guides and well-captioned programming, but still rely on the provider’s rather than the consumer’s perspectives.

Posadas contends that the method of translation in media accessibility cannot have a perfect balance between cultural mediation and political correctness: “The goals and methodology of translation cannot exclusively depend on specific previously described problems. Translation competence is neither based on rules nor innate, but depends completely on experience. It is impossible to provide a single goal for every intercultural communicative situation, or a universal translation method.”\textsuperscript{16} Again, Posadas argues from the side of the providers, that they must make value judgments based on on-the-job experience, but he fails to acknowledge the experience and preferences of the consumers of the target language.

The outlook of the disability community on decision making by able-bodied ‘beneficiaries’ is captured in this example from autistic literature. Here, Jim Sinclair talks rather

\textsuperscript{15} Sean Zdenek, “Which Sounds Are Significant? Towards a Rhetoric of Closed Captioning.”
bluntly about accommodations that are made for, not with, people with disabilities, and how this process is ultimately detrimental:

Some autistics have experienced situations in which autistic people are in the majority, but (NeuroTypical) people are still in charge of creating structure and setting the agenda… Whether good or bad, environments created and run by NT people are not autistic spaces, even if the majority of people within them are autistic… The very fact that NTs are creating and managing a program or a service, for the benefit of autistic participants, conveys the perception that autistic people are helpless and dependent on NTs to take care of us. In a shared autistic space, autistic people are in charge. Autistic people determine what our needs are, and autistic people make the decisions about how to go about getting our needs met (Schwarz, 1999; Shapiro, 1991).  

The Deaf community has echoed these sentiments on multiple occasions. Producers, providers, and policy makers may attempt to make a space that is for a universal audience, but it is not a universal space unless it incorporates the consumer. An example in captioning is that the NCI formed a consumer advisory group (CAG) due to a mandate from an educational grant. Although the NCI received beneficial feedback from the group at its inception, the CAG never grew (having less than 30 members) and has yet to convene a second time in the three year span of the grant. The competition of the captioning industry and the pressure of VPDs on caption providers has made this lack of consumer involvement commonplace among the captioning vendors researched in this study.

18 Glenys Mulholland, interview by author, (February 2017).
Call for Universal Design Principles

Universal design argues for technology with human-centered design, a focus on the diversity of the user experience that allows for the creation of a product that won’t need a retrofit. The creators of the website Modality in Motion have striven for a completely accessible space on the web where this design process is discussed. These designers contend that universal design can never truly be achieved when products are created with a default user in mind because such a user is inevitably a normative individual with no “barriers to access.” For many products, the consumer base is too wide for complete accessibility to happen. However, practicing universal design principles enhances companies’ abilities to achieve what Sushil Oswal calls “accessibility at the interface level,” which is the goal of disability rights activists.

Instead of overhauling their practices, many companies try to meet accessibility requirements by retrofitting their products, which leads to ethical and technical concerns. Oswal claims that retrofitting is “intrinsically inferior to the primary access available to the able-bodied because such an access sets the disabled apart in a separate category.” His definition of retrofitting is that a company creates a fix or addendum to their product as the result of complaints from consumers – this is similar to the FCC spot checking process. “Retrofits are problematic because they tend to be added on only after complaints are lodged and determined to be legitimate. Indeed, in many cases, access issues are addressed only after legal action is taken.” In some cases, the line between design and retrofitting may become blurred. For example, closed captioning is often the last part of production for a show or movie – if the

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captioning is in place at the air date but the captions themselves do not come into the script until after the show has been designed, was the show retrofit or not, and what are the implications? If a product is retrofit because of consumer complaints, is this better or worse than a product being retrofit because of a policy enactment? These questions lead back to the idea that universal design principles avoid ethical dilemmas by allowing producers to understand and communicate with consumers.

The NCI and its competitors in captioning are privately owned businesses run on a commission from their clients—the producers of the programs. The privatization of captioning services means that each captioning business has its own procedure for developing and assuring the quality of closed captioning. If the captioning industry were purely capitalist, this could allow consumers with different preferences to subscribe to whichever service provider they wish. However, because TV producers are the client, they choose which captioning vendor to use, and consumers must accept what is broadcast. This has several ramifications; first, viewers who have complaints about captioning cannot directly appeal the NCI, or any other captioning service because the NCI may or may not have a contract with the specific show a consumer has a complaint about. It may not be apparent to the consumer who the provider is; the consumer would have to find and contact them through the VPD. The client is usually difficult for consumers to contact because most television programs do not have a designated position for handling captions; the NCI usually deals directly with the producer of the show, and then only briefly. Furthermore, the NCI and other captioning vendors are often under constraints from the

22 Glenys Mulholland, interview by author, (February 2017).
client ordering the captions, meaning that any complaints about captioning may be solitary instances of accommodating the client. The FCC won’t take any action in these cases.

Because of the competing business interests of clients and captioners, consumerism in the captioning industry is not driven by the actual consumer and the end product is a result of efficient and convenient practices, rather than a universally designed artifact. The clients are not necessarily familiar with captioning or the process by which captioning happens, so the NCI (or another provider) must advocate for the viewers, but they may not know or have the time and resources to receive feedback from the community on a case by case basis. Eventually providers must follow the clients’ wishes. “Fortunately, these are usually minor stylistic preferences and not egregious errors.” Still, the captioners themselves are somewhat isolated from the client, whose main point of contact at the NCI is the marketer or the schedule coordinator, effectively creating a “black box” for captioning and descriptive services. Clients submit their film with a deadline (very often the NCI only gets 2-3 days to caption a program) and there isn’t much dialogue about the product that is going out to Deaf viewers. In some cases, the client continues to change production material (re-shooting a scene, choosing soundtrack music) after the captioning request is in, creating errors after the fact.

“Universal design is a process, a means rather than an end. There’s no such thing as a universally designed text. There’s no such thing as a text that meets everyone’s needs.”

Modality in Motion admits the limitations of universal design, and this paper does not mean to suggest it is the cure for assistive technology services. So what is the end for captioning? What is

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24 Glenys Mulholland, interview by author, (February, 2017).
25 “What NCI Clients Are Saying.”
26 Melanie Yergeau, et al., “Multimodality in Motion: Disability and Kairotic Spaces.”
the value of using this method for improving consumer involvement in assistive technology? Although universal design is admittedly not the “end,” Modality in Motion argues that it is the solution to solving accessibility problems. It is a process for the sake of being a process, which from a disabilities studies perspective is very valid – it allows for empathy. Given the weaknesses of assistive technology to this point and the slowness and occasional apathy of those responsible for accessibility, universal design aims to provide a better incentive for providers, clients, and policy makers. That incentive is kairotic space.

**Kairotic Space**

The concept of kairotic space comes from the idea that social capital is generated from spaces of high spontaneity and corresponding social pressure. In her article, “Ways to Move,” Margaret Price uses this concept to change the way we think about disability. Instead of assistive technology simply “leveling the playing field” she proposes that the more important task is catering to individual student needs and personalities. The more we can accommodate, the more disabled people can participate in a kairotic space. For Price, accommodation includes clearly defined expectations in the situation with a disabled person instead of punishing unorthodox behavior. She argues that we cannot accommodate by simply providing assistive technology; we have to recognize personal and cultural sensitivities as well. Applied to captioning, consumer advisement for best practices has become “unorthodox” in the captioning industry, as providers feel constrained by their competitors and their own business models. Achieving accessibility design for producers means embracing “crip time,” in order to put the opinions of the person with disabilities first. Engineering this “kairotic space” produces iterations of technologies in which the individual experiences of consumers are taken into account.

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account. By allowing participation, producers and providers will generate a social capital of connection, relation, and engagement.

Engagement with Deaf culture has already discovered many intrinsic and extrinsic values that support the “preservation of what most consider a disability.”\(^{28}\) Bauman and Murray detail these benefits, such as new insights into multi-modal possibilities of language and technological, architectural, and visual possibilities available through greater spatial awareness and organization. The linguistic and cultural diversity that the Deaf community offers can be beneficial in transnational human relations as well as in the study of individual human identity. Although the community and the language is still evolving, Deaf people have established themselves with a unique language equal in complexity to spoken languages, a political and humanitarian voice in society, and a pseudo-homeland in their community spaces.\(^{28}\) The concept of Deaf Gain is missed by most companies providing assistive technology. For this reason, the technology is still catching up to “hearing” technology and has not seen much of a spillover effect into other forms of innovation. Captioners are largely using the same technology that was developed in the ‘70s. For example, captioning can help to develop faster literacy in children and adults. Deaf space architecture can improve our buildings aesthetically and pragmatically. Realizing the value of the Deaf consumer will provide better motivation for technology providers and can inspire them to create more with universal design in mind.

A.E. Beckett argues that subpopulations of the disability community are continuously tied to “defensive forms of engagement” because of social stigma.\(^{29}\) Furthermore, Beckett


explains, cultural barriers prevent the Deaf community from uniting with other disability groups in order to advocate for greater accessibility. Although some causes have united a wider base of disabled advocates, most disability groups feel that their own individual experiences separate them from other groups, making joint movements across the disability community extremely difficult. Beckett concedes that there is “some doubt [in] the idea that a unified and positive ‘disability identity’, as defined by proponents of ‘disability politics’, is at the heart of all disability campaigning.”

Whether or not the Deaf community rallies with other disabled groups to further their cause, their unique position as a vocal, active, concentrated minority can affect change for other disabled groups still fighting for media accessibility, as in the case of video description for the blind, and for other captioning consumers who benefit from the community’s activism.

Instead of the FCC and/or the ADA dictating the consumer role in media accessibility, universal design can lead producers to true social gain by means of interaction with the consumer. Interaction leads to engagement and better services rather than simply accommodation or compliance. In a recent report about accessibility services at Georgetown University, an administrator said, “At a university that prides itself on excellence, we are just meeting compliance.” Engagement by means of kairotic space will not only reap benefits for the disability community, but will also facilitate creativity and human-centered user design in all fields. The disability community will be able to engage in true citizenship, as envisioned by Beckett. This closed captioning case study brings up issues in policy and procedure, consumer concerns about ethics and best practices, and the competing interests of the different players.

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Universal design principles help to address these issues for the coordination of accessibility services and the provision of equal opportunity for disabled consumers to engage in socially meaningful kairotic space and self-advocacy. In the next chapter, I will discuss how these principles can be implemented into the media accessibility social network by way of corporate social responsibility.
Chapter 7:

Corporate Social Responsibility

Among Media Accessibility Players

Presently, the Deaf community is expected to use the government as their primary resource for getting the attention of media producers, but without the media literacy that would come through accessibility, Deaf consumers may be less aware of how to self-advocate within the government. This chapter will outline what media accessibility solutions are possible as internet and video production continue to expand. Instead of keeping the FCC as the prime mediator between media accessibility parties, corporations can take the opening left by vague and passive policy to make strides in media accessibility. Having a built-in layer for corporate social responsibility provides an incentive of social capital for media accessibility and closes the gap between compliance and accommodation. Even in cases when consumer preference is unclear or not thoroughly researched, providers have not been able to engage in meaningful dialogue about captioning standardization with consumers. By shortening the communication paths between consumers and providers, the Deaf community can advocate for universal design within media development, which in the case of captioning would improve internet and television usage for all consumers. This approach would offer the reciprocal advantage of allowing the Deaf community to become more politically and civically informed through the media, thereby empowering them to access governmental processes more efficiently.

The original research in this chapter comes from interviews with five stakeholders in media accessibility from policy, captioning, and advocacy backgrounds. In my interview methodology, I identified individuals who could give me a breadth of perspective about the accessibility environment, including captioners, policy makers, advocates, and members of the
Deaf community. These individuals are key players in the media accessibility environment; they work with rule-making agencies, consumer advocacy groups, and captioning production companies. Their experiences are backed up by historical accounts of captioning progress, and their differing perspectives on media accessibility highlight the intercommunication taking place in this environment. These media accessibility players show perspectives from both the hearing and Deaf worlds that shape consumer interaction and captioning practices today and help to identify possible spaces for consumer involvement and accessibility improvement in media. I conducted semi-structured interviews with questions about: Who are the key players in accessibility? Where are there still weaknesses in policy? Who is responsible for making the political process accessible to consumers? How do policy makers and captioning producers receive feedback?

The Political Exposure and Activism of the Deaf Community survey indicates that the media source to which individuals most often turn for news is social media, and the format most widely used to get information is closed captioning (Table 7). However, according to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, online media is not required to be captioned unless it was previously broadcast. Captioning quality standards were only recently established as of 2015. Understanding who is involved with proposing regulations for captioning and ensuring quality is key to understanding socialization gaps within the Deaf community. The objectives of this section are to understand the stakeholders and players in accessible media production, and to understand how media accessibility affects the socialization of the Deaf community. I breakdown my interview findings into two frameworks: a social network descriptive analysis and the theory of corporate social responsibility. Social network analysis allows for a more systematic breakdown of the players and roles in media accessibility. It also gives us information
about key players and the degree of separation between different interests. Corporate social responsibility demonstrates collaborative principles that tie together the needs of consumers and rectify the limitations of policy.

**Media Accessibility Social Network**

![Graph showing the media accessibility social network](image)

*Figure 6. Media accessibility social network, government hub.*

Social network analysis defines relationships between elements in a network. For the captioning network, the players used are those described in Table 14. This brief descriptive analysis illustrates those individual entities and relationships who are operating effectively in the captioning industry and where there are gaps. “Understanding any one piece of information in this environment depends on understanding the way it is endorsed by and refers to other pieces of information within a large network of links.”

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of data collected from the policy analysis and interviews in this study (Tables A20 & A21, Appendix C). The connecting edges within this network were determined by the research question: who is giving direction/instruction to whom? In Figure 6, government is depicted as the main hub for media accessibility. It is very clear that government creates a bridge between invested parties, without which there would be a large degree of separation, especially between consumers and VPDs. Figure 7 takes a different approach. Here, three hubs in the network are shown: the captioning provider/vendor, the government agent, and the consumer: the captioning vendor because they are responsible for enacting the policies of the FCC and creating the end product for consumers; the government because they give direction and receive feedback from the most players; and the consumer because they are the focus of this thesis. The political involvement of Deaf consumers is the reason captioning policy has risen to its current status and the political socialization needs and wants of the community are the driving force for the continuing progression of media accessibility. Consumers in this network have direct access to the government hub but not to the captioning vendor hub, and are still separated from the right side of the network. The position of the captioning vendor is ideally where the consumer would be.

The government hub is unique because its outgoing degree reflects only instruction based on the collection of information instead of engaging dialogue. Below, I will analyze the needs and perspectives of consumers and captioners specifically and the role of feedback in this network. Other data that could potentially provide valuable network information include: How many groups comment on the Federal Register and who are they? Which caption vendors are the most popular in high-grossing television networks? Or, which caption vendors have the most reliable captioning standards and quality? These are possible avenues for future research.
Consumers

The consumer in Figure 7 is somewhat isolated in the media accessibility environment. Consumers provide information to more active consumers in advocacy and consumer advisory groups, who reach out to more influential entities on their behalf. Elizabeth Ellcessor emphasizes that the exclusion of Deaf consumers from media, in this case media accessibility, is not just an inconvenience or one less entertainment option, but is tied to their political identity. “The literal inability of some audiences to access media excludes them from notions of citizenship within a mediated public sphere in which political knowledge and participation increasingly occur through mediated forms.”

The mediated public political sphere has provided the Deaf community more opportunity to be civically engaged. Mel Patterson says that the biggest
problem in Deaf political involvement, though, is media accessibility.\(^3\) Closed captioning and text are both problematic for Deaf viewers with lower reading skills, which causes them to lose interest in politics. Patterson recognizes that there are some sources of news in ASL, which is a more easily understood medium for low-verbal Deaf. One in particular is called DPN news. “They give a recap every week or so, but that is not enough to stay on top of political news.”\(^4\) Patterson gives the example that many Deaf consumers only recognize the most televised political figures, like Donald Trump, but don’t know about people like Betsy Devos, who now has an enormous influence on one of the Deaf community’s most prized issues – education. Patterson ranks closed captioning as “probably my third preference” for media access but admits it is not really a choice because so many consumers are oral or Hard of Hearing.\(^4\) According to this data, the isolation of the Deaf community in media access leads to disinterested citizenship.

Mel Patterson and another strong member of the Deaf community, Brendan Stern, agree that it is not up to the government or hearing experts to fix the problem of Deaf political engagement or media access. Stern comments that just because captioners are not members of the Deaf community does not mean they have less expertise. “It is the same with teachers for the Deaf. Hearing teachers can be just as effective as Deaf teachers if they have the right skills and attitude. But these skills come from involvement in the community.”\(^5\) Patterson supports the idea of a feedback loop into the community by saying that regular citizens should take responsibility for paying attention to Deaf issues in their everyday lives and then voicing their concerns to political representatives. “They just need to be more aware.”\(^4\) Those who can have the greatest influence are what he calls “prosumers,” or consumers who also work in the field of media.

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\(^3\) Mel Patterson, interview by author, (February, 2017).
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Brendan Stern, interview by author, (February, 2017).
access and politics. “People like me, people in the NAD – they are strategically placed to make a difference.” In this, the Deaf community assumes responsibility for creating more bridges in the media accessibility social network. The isolation of consumers is not placed on any one group and neither is the responsibility for increased engagement; all parties can work together for a more human-centered approach to media accessibility and political socialization.

Captioning Practice

The captioning profession takes pride in their work and has developed professional, if not standardized, styles to meet the needs of television producers, their strongest tie in the media accessibility social network. The National Captioning Institute, one of the first organizations to provide this service, has perhaps the most identifiable protocol in the industry. Glenys Mulholland says that the best practices outlined in the 2014 FCC standards “were modeled in part upon the policies and procedures of the National Captioning Institute. They follow a style guide that NCI developed using several sources, including response to viewer feedback and research conducted by NCI and other institutions.” Mulholland also asserts that the work of NCI is committed to the consumer:

NCI’s very existence as a nonprofit (one that was established to develop and provide services to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community) means that our mission was built upon – and continues to center around -- commitment to the end user. Through active engagement with our clients, constant analysis and improvement of internal procedures and standards, and involvement with others in the industry, including the FCC, we constantly serve consumers through our work.6

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Although competition in the industry has caused community engagement to wane, the NCI continues to develop products and refine their standards through introspection and engagement with clients (television producers). The NCI in particular could be a powerful source for corporate social responsibility, which will be discussed more later, because of their history with the FCC and their position as a respected national captioning vendor.

Another pioneer in captioning and assistive technology is WGBH, a member station of PBS. Of PBS, the FCC states, “In the 1970s, the Commission granted PBS a number of authorizations to conduct experimental transmissions using closed captioning. PBS has been at the forefront in the development of captioning technology and services. PBS has approximately 340 affiliates that reach almost all television households.”\(^7\) Larry Goldberg, former director of Media Access at WGBH, recalls when the station was approached for an open caption project with the Department of Health, Education & Welfare (now Health & Human Services). They were “heavily reliant on federal funds.”\(^8\) WGBH’s caption center is non-profit, and created their own software called CC Writer in order to caption. At the time, there was no option for outsourcing captions. His work there was truly the origin of captioning, and his story, like the NCI, has a narrative of intense early involvement with Deaf consumers until achieving expertise in the industry.\(^8\)

Interviewees commented on some of the captioning practices that are current sources of contention between captioning vendors, their clients, and the consumers. For Karen Strauss, it is “the battle between the screen and captions [which] has only intensified.”\(^9\) On news programs

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\(^8\) Larry Goldberg, interview by author, (February, 2017).

especially, users complain that school cancellations and other news scrawls are covered by the captions. Larry Goldberg says that after the CVAA, local newsrooms experimented with real-time captioning which became problematic for viewers. The enactment of the new captioning standards was, he said, a good example of advocacy organizations emphasizing their dissatisfaction. But the standards have yet to be enforced (as in, there have not been any recent cases in which a sufficient complaint was filed and the FCC pursued disciplinary action with a station for non-compliance). There are still places that do not have captions. Mel Patterson, Deaf co-founder of Politics and the Deaf PAC (PATD), identified airlines as a main source. The NAD fought for and achieved in-flight captions from Gogo Air, but the customers have to pay to use it. Flying on business trips is frustrating, Patterson says, “I want my eyes to be able to relax.” But the reason closed captions are not always reliably delivered to the end user, Goldberg says, is usually very technical. “There is a very long chain from producer to consumer. It’s hard to tell where the problem is. Real-time captioning is still very hard. Automatic speech recognition won’t fix the problem for a while.” These examples help us to reflect on the more nuanced ways in which captioning practice, if not done up to standard, can be a disservice to the community of users. The battle over the screen, real-time captions, and captioning in public transportation spaces have created wedges in the media accessibility network, leaving consumers always on the defense for captioning quality and weakening the ties between the left and the right side of the network (Figure 7 above).

Captioning practice currently has a piecemeal standard between the regulations of the FCC, the petitions of advocacy groups, and the internal processes of captioning vendors. To summarize the Deaf CC-viewing experience: the FCC has required that all public broadcasting

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10 Larry Goldberg, interview by author, (February, 2017).
11 Mel Patterson, interview by author, (February, 2017).
be captioned. Movies and television shows must be captioned. Live captioning is a regular practice for all news networks,\textsuperscript{12} and the industry is working on enforcing captions for internet videos that were previously aired on television.\textsuperscript{13} Professional captioning is not allowed to air unless it contains 98-99\% accuracy.\textsuperscript{12} This by no means covers everything; the entire cosmos of personal videos on the internet are not captioned unless a volunteer chooses to do so, with sometimes illegible results. Considering that broadcasts can sometimes have a speaking rate of more than 200 words per minute, even a 98\% accuracy rating means incorrect captioning up to four times per minute, which can seem a lot to viewers.\textsuperscript{14} Although the media accessibility network is sharing responsibility for captioning standards, the practices within the industry itself are extremely varied and this variation does not have a steady feedback loop into the network.

\textit{Feedback and Advocacy}

Advocacy groups could be identified as another hub in the media accessibility network. Their involvement facilitates feedback between several players. Goldberg gives a lot of the credit for the CVAA to advocacy groups like Telecommunications for the Deaf, NAD, and the Hearing Loss Association.\textsuperscript{15} Although advocacy organizations don’t often have a lot of resources, they were the ones who really pushed and “demanded the law.”\textsuperscript{16} Outspoken proponents like Congressman Ed Markey and Senator Tom Harkin were invaluable. The lesson from these advocates, says Goldberg, is “if they are relentless, they can see a lot of change.”\textsuperscript{16} Strauss agrees

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Larry Goldberg, interview by author, (February, 2017).
\item \textsuperscript{16} Strauss agrees
\end{itemize}
that advocacy groups exhibit the most involvement in accessibility issues – not just national but local groups. She comments that they play an enormous role in proposing legislation; they’re able to “coalesce the message from the community.”¹⁶ They refine and articulate what consumers are saying and bring it to the Disability Advisory Committee, which Strauss worked with for a while at the FCC. Advocacy groups can write proposals and the FCC will reflect these insights in their rulemaking, as we have seen when the FCC publishes comments and concerns from the Deaf community.

Feedback and advocacy is included in the FCC protocol for rulemaking. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the FCC asks for input on the rulemaking process, including suggestions for alternative solutions. In a strong move towards the encouragement of feedback and the promotion of transparency in media accessibility policy, the FCC determined that all submitted petitions for exemption would be posted on the Federal Register for public comment.¹⁷ This allows interested parties to take up the cause of any entity they feel is unjustly applying for exemption, as previously happened in the case of sports producers.

Direct consumer feedback is possible between consumers, VPDs, and captioners, but the reports from these interviews show that it is not a reliable tie in the media accessibility network. The CVAA requires the provision of a feedback link on VPD websites. Goldberg says these links are “heavily under-utilized.”¹⁸ There is a history of problems with accessibility, and users, especially older users, “just accept it when something doesn’t work again.”¹⁸ This disengagement in the community is related to the survey finding that many Deaf participants

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¹⁸ Larry Goldberg, interview by author, (February, 2017).
aren’t sure how to become involved with accessibility issues and with the finding by Rutgers that the political engagement of people with disabilities wanes with age (Figure 1).\textsuperscript{19} Early in the captioning industry, Goldberg cites that WGBH had Consumer Advisory Boards.\textsuperscript{20} There were staff designated for collecting feedback from the community, and their outreach and marketing team employed Deaf people to help. “There was always feedback, some of it quite formal.”\textsuperscript{20} As more competitors arose in the captioning business, there was “less ability to do the necessary outreach.”\textsuperscript{20} Strauss says social media is really the best method for getting feedback directly from constituents.\textsuperscript{21} But over time, legislators feel they have spent so much time working with the Deaf community that they can act both as legislators and advocates. Because of Strauss’ own work with legislation, involvement, and advocacy, she considers herself an honorary member of the Deaf community.\textsuperscript{21} These comments indicate a shift in the social network, that while consumers are less involved, the government and captioning players are taking on a greater role for advocacy.

Another method for feedback is that many vendors, though not all, include a captioning credit at the end of their programs, but consumers have to wait for the notation and then look up the vendor to be able to call and give feedback. In real-time captioning, says Mulholland, captioners do sometimes receive feedback directly from viewers.\textsuperscript{22} However, it is more common for the viewers to take their comments to the local station, network, or producer – the entity responsible for providing captioning (VPD) – and then those comments are relayed to the caption

\textsuperscript{20} Larry Goldberg, interview by author, (February, 2017).
\textsuperscript{21} Karen Peltz Strauss, interview by author, (February, 2017).
\textsuperscript{22} Glenys Mulholland, interview by author, (February, 2017).
Provider for investigation and feedback. NCI viewers who have complaints can contact them via phone or e-mail, but of course the NCI can only resolve an issue with captions they created.\textsuperscript{23} Mulholland goes on, “That said, there are many things that can happen to a caption file after it leaves our hands that we have little or no control over: encoding or technical issues, content changes that take place after captions have been submitted, etc.”\textsuperscript{23} If a consumer were to reach out to a television producer, the producer may have staff coordinating captioning services, but “whether the viewer would be able to contact that person directly is uncertain.”\textsuperscript{23} In the current network, there is no sure way for captioning vendor and consumers to request or provide feedback. Captioning providers feel that the degree of separation to the consumer is necessary. “From a workflow standpoint, it would not be efficient for clients to contact captioners directly or they would constantly be interrupted.”\textsuperscript{23} The feedback loop is presently stuck, but the network players have gotten used to it, and so may not see a better way of incorporating consumer feedback into this process.

The most notable gap seen in the media accessibility network is that consumers provided feedback to the early captioning industry, but this engagement was somewhat replaced by internal expertise of captioning providers and policy makers, who have developed their own feedback loop for captioning procedures. Current policy and procedure has created a safety net around VPDs and captioning vendors, with a degree of separation of at least two to consumers (Figure 7 above) and a formal process for complaints that is not often used.

**Corporate Social Responsibility**

The unique political needs of the Deaf community require solutions that go beyond compliance; they require good corporate citizenship. In a book on the subject, Jeremy Moon

\textsuperscript{23} Glenys Mulholland, interview by author, (February, 2017).
defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as “policies and practices of corporations that reflect business responsibility for some of the wider societal good. Yet the precise manifestation and direction of the responsibility lie at the discretion of the corporation.”

In the Closed Captioning Report and Order, the FCC stated “The marketplace alone was not incentive to improve captioning quality.” How can CSR be implemented in a manner that allows proper incentive and achieves the goal of accessibility and engagement? Several topics from Moon’s book that are applicable here include stakeholder involvement, consumer pressure, and community reputation. Already, as noted by Ellcessor, “By shaping norms of corporate behavior and consumer expectations outside of explicit political processes, industry decisions create the context in which national and international policies emerge.” The proposal of CSR does not mean a cease-fire on all government involvement or action. It does mean removing punishment for non-compliance as the primary incentive for access players and implementing a constructive focus on inclusion and engagement.

The UN has helped to promote CSR in human rights through the Ruggie Report, which is a framework submitted in 2008 to help “Protect, Respect, and Remedy” human rights by defining roles and responsibilities of state, business, and service organizations. This framework

26 Elizabeth Ellcessor, “Captions On, Off, on TV, Online: Accessibility and Search Engine Optimization in Online Closed Captioning,” 332.
helps to define a practical application of corporate social responsibility. By walking through these steps, it becomes apparent that the media accessibility environment already imitates many aspects of corporate social responsibility. As corporations, government agents, and consumers embrace the concepts of CSR, implementation will fall into place with many currently existing practices and produce a better system for media access and consumer feedback. Formalizing this system has the advantage of knowledge building and ongoing accountability between players.

- The state responsibility is to protect. The FCC is already in an optimal position to provide the following suggested supports: “Provide effective guidance to business enterprises on how to respect human rights throughout their operations; Encourage, and where appropriate require, business enterprises to communicate how they address their human rights impacts.”

- The corporate responsibility is to respect. It could be a captioning business like the NCI or a television network like WGBH that host dialogue about a best practice methodology following these stipulations: “Informed by relevant internal and/or external expertise; Publicly available and communicated internally and externally to all personnel, business partners and other relevant parties.”

- The consumer responsibility is to seek remedy. The Deaf community can become more politically engaged by initiating advocacy efforts which are: “Legitimate, Accessible, Equitable, Transparent, Rights-compatible, a Source of Continuous Learning”

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30 Ibid., 15.

31 Ibid., 26.
CSR will change our current system by offering equal responsibility to different players, thus ensuring multiple “first-responders” for accessibility improvement, maintenance, and crisis. There are many successful CSR initiatives from which a media accessibility initiative could model itself, for example, Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), which emphasizes collaboration parallel with expansion.\(^{32}\) In the captioning industry especially, more collaboration would bring clarity to media accessibility issues and practices.

Having a “global standard of expected conduct”\(^{33}\) can promote standards for the captioning industry while shifting responsibility to more equally balance the engagement of private actors. In the article, “Analyzing Disability in Socially Responsible Companies,”\(^{34}\) Spanish corporations are measured for their level of social responsibility toward people with disabilities. Because of the lack of literature on CSR and Disability, these researchers developed four indices to measure social responsibility: stakeholders, visibility, human resources, and accessibility. These measures have to do with the transparency of corporations to accommodate and include people with disabilities. They concluded that financial services are the most responsible toward people with disabilities and in general, companies are better at accommodating customers than employees. They conclude that professional development would help them to have a better understanding of accommodation practices on an organizational level.

In his article “Rethinking Disability and Corporate Responsibility,” Robert Metts comments that business and the disability community are currently mutually exclusive, neither being involved in the political discussions of the other. “As a result, disability communities tend to be denied the


\(^{33}\) “UN ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ Framework and Guiding Principles.”

cooperation of an informed and involved business community, and policy makers tend to be
denied access to the vast reservoirs of unique and relevant expertise and resources that reside in
their business communities. Private enterprise suffers as well, as businesses are often hampered
by costly and ineffective disability laws and regulations that have been designed without their
input.”35 In the media accessibility social network, we see evidence of both of these situations.
Because consumers are not the client, they are separated from regular business practices. Deaf
consumers, as Metts mentions, also have expertise that could provide ongoing benefit to the
captioning industry. As the industry practices more visibility, consumers will be able to utilize
feedback loops to communicate their priorities. Corporate social responsibility reduces the
burden of compliance for business because it strives for proactive engagement. If corporations
felt that they had a hand in disability policy and consumers felt their input changed captioning
practices in genial ways, all parties would benefit.

Ellcessor takes the opposite view in regards to the future direction of captioning: “Just as
‘closed captions were not widely embraced by television producers nor audiences until they
became required by law’ (Ellis and Kent 2010, 138), online captions must have the force of law
behind them in order to ensure their existence, quality, and availability for those who need them
(Clark 2008), and those laws may regulate industry directly.”36 Ellcessor claims that privatizing
closed captions led to more corporate neglect, both in relegating responsibility to VPDs and in
conditioning the provision of captions on the ability to turn them off. However, the retroactive
policy of the past indicates that online captions would also be enforced only after the technology
and practice has proven itself for a number of years. CSR would provide incentive so that

35 Robert L. Metts, “Rethinking Disability and Corporate Responsibility,” Journal of Leadership,
36 Elizabeth Ellcessor, “Captions On, Off, on TV, Online: Accessibility and Search Engine Optimization
in Online Closed Captioning,” 336.
consumers could access these services on a broader scale without policy mandating compliance. In the interview data, the survey data, and the social network visualization it is apparent that the communication pathways for consumer involvement in accessibility are insufficient. Only with communication between private agents, government, and the community can a lasting solution be found. Larry Goldberg, now at Yahoo, commented that there is a lot captioned now that isn’t required.37 “The latest comScore Media Metrix states that 14.5 billion online videos were watched during the month of March [2009]. Google sites, including YouTube, account for 40% of these videos.”38 The next section applies the concept of corporate social responsibility to several case studies of media accessibility in order to provide good and bad examples of it in action.

*Retroactive Policy*

The primary shortcoming that CSR would address is retroactive policy. As in the case of the Telecommunications Act, Video Programming Distributors were given eight years to comply with the standards for closed captioning. By the time the law was fully enforced, the array of information and communication technologies was much broader than television, for which the law was written. Mobile devices with roaming internet access were available for most citizens. It took another four years for the CVAA to be enacted. Pam Samuelson describes the challenge of drafting legislation that can accommodate the fast paced media environment.39 The first challenge, she says, is to determine whether a new rule needs to be made or if an old law can

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37 Larry Goldberg, interview by author, (February, 2017).
apply to the new situation. Once the government decides to legislate, they often implement rules which are minimalist or technology neutral, which we see in the examples discussed above. These policies mainly aim to protect constitutional rights without overstepping bounds that would inhibit market forces or personal freedom.\footnote{Federal Communications Commission. Report & Order on Closed Captioning and Video Description of Video Programming.} “Technological and economic developments have made it more difficult to ensure that certain societal values, such as those favoring privacy, innovation, and freedom of expression, will continue to be preserved.”\footnote{Elizabeth Elcessor, “Captions On, Off, on TV, Online: Accessibility and Search Engine Optimization in Online Closed Captioning,” 330.} Because of the ethical concerns described here, the FCC waits to act until petitions from advocacy groups indicate that consumer rights have been violated. More accountability on the part of the business sector and the Deaf community could help alleviate pressure on the government to address all grievances.

Legislative action in regards to captioning faces a catch-22 between allowing innovation, ensuring access, and encouraging freedoms. Assistive technology manufacturers could play a large part in alleviating these concerns by incorporating universal design into their products. Elcessor comments, “This cycle, in which inaccessible technology is met with critique and then overhauled, has been critiqued for its redundancy and expense, both of which could be avoided if the needs of people with disabilities had been taken into account from the beginning of product development.”\footnote{Elizabeth Elcessor, “Captions On, Off, on TV, Online: Accessibility and Search Engine Optimization in Online Closed Captioning,” 330.} Universal design and corporate responsibility are the preventative measures for retroactive policy.

Because of the increased ability to produce textualization, the Deaf community benefits from a focused universal design, or specifically Deaf design for accessible media products. Elcessor says, “Textualization is valuable to the market; forms of accessible web development that do not lead to textualization, such as audio description of multimedia content for blind
audiences, have received significantly less attention. In prioritizing a form of accessibility that has clear benefits for industry, the historically successful coalitional identity politics of disability are fractured.\textsuperscript{42} The Deaf community has never been content with the “coalitional” disability identity.\textsuperscript{43} From a disability perspective, the separation of access for Deaf from access for other disabled groups seems piecemeal, as Ellcessor suggests, but this focused approach is necessary for innovation in assistive technology. Because the Deaf community has shown that they are a force for pulling the disability community into greater accessibility and mobilization,\textsuperscript{44} media access for Deaf consumers could have productive results for the entire disability community. The separation of captioning policy from disability policy changes the angle of advocacy, but it may allow the Deaf community to respond in new ways, for example, by participating in CSR.

\textit{Captioning and Verbatim}

One of the earliest and most important examples of consumer pressure changing captioning policy was the multi-level project in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{45} Deaf education was very focused on oral skills at the time, and studies showed lagging literacy rates of Deaf children.\textsuperscript{46} Captioning experts agreed, in tandem with the researchers of these linguistic studies, that skillful editing of shows, particularly children’s shows, would better match the reading and comprehension level of the Deaf viewers. Goldberg was working with WGBH on this project at the time, and says he

\textsuperscript{42} Elizabeth Ellcessor, “Captions On, Off, on TV, Online: Accessibility and Search Engine Optimization in Online Closed Captioning,” 346.
\textsuperscript{45} Larry Goldberg, interview by author, (February, 2017).
had mixed feelings about the feedback he received from research versus consumers and parents.\(^{47}\) “As the Deaf Power movement grew, we got feedback saying editing was paternalistic. The very difficult work we put into editing captions, which we thought was essential, stopped.”\(^{47}\)

When asked if he had seen positive or negative consequences from the switch to verbatim captioning, Goldberg explained that he had since moved on from WGBH and not kept up with the research on this subject.\(^{47}\)

When the NPRM for the Telecommunications Act Section 305 came out, it reiterated sentiment for edited captions: “While it appears that a verbatim transcription is generally to be preferred, this is not always the case.”\(^{48}\) Citing children’s programs as an example, the FCC goes on: “If quality were defined in terms of the accuracy of a verbatim transcription, any regulations we adopt could interfere with the captioners' art.”\(^{48}\) The Deaf community saw any kind of editing as censorship and ableism.\(^{49}\) In the case of other consumers for captioning – elderly, hard of hearing, and people in gyms, bars, or restaurants – verbatim is obviously preferred. The issue is somewhat complicated by the details of the work and research put into edited captions.\(^{47}\)

However, the switch to verbatim captioning was gradually implemented.\(^{50}\) This incident shows even when intent and expertise of servicers are good, their implementation or practice may not serve the actual interests of the Deaf consumer. Consumer pressure was able to remedy this conflict, but it damaged the trust between captioners and consumers. This can be damaging to

\(^{47}\) Larry Goldberg, interview by author, (February, 2017).
social capital within a network. By implementing corporate social responsibility, path lengths between media accessibility players can be shortened and consumers and providers can have more dialogue about best practices.

**Captioning Solutions**

Online providers have the greatest need for practicing corporate social responsibility in order to deliver captioned and otherwise accessible material. Platforms can also offer solutions for providing accessibility to user generated content. One example of such is the Accessible Technology page for University of Washington.51 The webpage describes the process for captioning your own material; Amara.org, DotSub.com, and Subtitle Horse are some of the do-it-yourself captioning services. First, the user uploads a video (to YouTube, for example) and provides the URL to the captioning service, then the captioning tool allows the user to watch the video while transcribing. Captions will appear in real-time, and the user can review and edit the captions, then download the appropriate caption file. Finally, the user can upload the caption file following the specifications of their video host.51 With technology like this, more corporations and advocacy groups can launch campaigns for citizens to self-caption. Transparent feedback loops in companies would also allow for increased consumer involvement, for example, if consumers commented on content they wish to be captioned, and that content joined a queue for business or self-captioners to accommodate.

**Conclusion**

In enforcing media accessibility policy, the FCC is ensuring compliance but not engagement, which is the real need of the Deaf community. When distributors are responsible for

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captioning but they have no ties to the community, how can they ensure a consumer-designed product? Advocacy groups currently champion feedback to the government, but may not have the resources to fully take on this role with other accessibility players. Meanwhile, the community may not have the information it needs to become effectively involved. Table 15 below is a visualization of the current allocation of responsibilities. In what ways could this become more inclusive?

Table 15. Legal roles in captioning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
<th>Captioning</th>
<th>Enforcement</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video Programming Distributors</td>
<td>Federal Communications Commission</td>
<td>Advocacy Groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The action steps under corporate social responsibility are not relegated solely to corporations. In order for corporations to understand and have incentive for their engagement, the Deaf community also needs to be involved. Consumer pressure helps to maintain and enhance CSR. But for the community to get involved, they need to be more informed about how consumer pressure can and has successfully enacted change in media accessibility. If captioning vendors are more transparent about their policies, then consumers will have a better idea of what needs to change. By involving the community more, captioning vendors can understand and capitalize on Deaf consumer expertise and preferences. The government can also provide more incentive to responsible captioning vendors and producers, instead of just punishing non-compliance. Television producers will be able to respond to these incentives by choosing to patronize captioning vendors who go beyond compliance, and vice versa! The process of CSR will close so many gaps – politically, socially, and professionally. It will allow the Deaf community to claim responsibility for the status of closed captioning services instead of relying on other players in the network. As all of the network players understand socially responsible
strategies for media accessibility policy and enact “beyond compliance” procedures, political socialization and engagement in the Deaf community will improve.
Chapter 8:

Conclusion

This purpose of this thesis is two-fold: 1) To uncover the socialization factors within the deaf community and to explore the role of media accessibility in the socialization and political engagement of the deaf community, and 2) To examine the policy environment and actions that have impacted the media accessibility and political socialization of the Deaf community. From Part I, I discovered some important takeaways about the political orientations and engagement of the Deaf community, including that they vote more often and use media in particular ways. From Part II, I find that while there are policies aimed at media accessibility and technological developments, like captioning, accessibility for the Deaf community remains contested and incomplete, and solutions are needed. With this understanding of media accessibility, responsibility for creating and carrying out accessibility solutions can be more effectively allocated. The following is a summary and discussion of the findings in this study.

Part I: Political Socialization of the Deaf Community

The contextualization of the Deaf community as a linguistic minority frames their political ideology. Deaf politics tend to center on issues like ASL access for Deaf children, the recognition of ASL as a language, and interpretation services that allow them to experience interactions in their natural language. Access to self-advocacy and autonomy is paramount in the Deaf political community. While the Deaf community has a very high voter turnout rate, their political efficacy and association with the hearing community are not strong points in their political engagement. This ultimately allowed me to identify the survey’s most important data, which is the focal need of the Deaf community for media access. Closed captioning will allow the Deaf community to engage with mainstream media more easily, and therefore with the
political process more comfortably. The greater access the Deaf community has in public spaces and dialogue, including the media, the greater freedom they have in political expression.

**Part II: Media Accessibility of, by, and for the Deaf Community**

Despite the Deaf preference for closed captioning, the format still has a lot of technical issues and doesn’t fulfill its potential for connecting the Deaf community with the political environment. As consumers, members of the Deaf community are conscious of the need for improvement of closed captioning, but due to the large degree of separation from captioning providers and video programming distributors (VPDs), many don’t know how to get involved. Closed captioning is critical to the community’s political information and efficacy and needs the corroboration of the Deaf community, its advocates, policy makers, and service providers to dissect the issue and generate a Deaf-centered solution. Since corporations have no transparent accountability to Deaf consumers, the best outcome at present is retroactive accommodation. Captioning policy is much more restricted without the ability to promote, only to prohibit.

Establishing corporate social responsibility for media access will give more legitimacy to universal design and allow for a collective understanding of Deaf Gain. This can spur others to take part in accessibility through self-captioning and other movements. Finally, and most importantly, corporate social responsibility will lead to the creation and maintenance of “kairotic space” between the Deaf community and the players in media accessibility. The current captioning industry is competitive and often ill-used by television producers and VPDs who require extremely tight deadlines and provide very little interaction. Through CSR, captioning businesses will be able to improve the quality and the pace of their practice, the Deaf community
will be able to make informed suggestions about the needs for assistive technology, and the FCC will be able to facilitate the promotion of human rights.

This paper does not propose accommodating a monolingual audience. Although the Deaf population can’t access material in an aural medium, they can still access bilingual material. Similarly, when movies are disseminated to Switzerland, the audience does not advocate for the remake of the movie into a Swiss setting, but rather the dubbing of the lines into accessible language.¹ So the Deaf community asks access to the dominant language (spoken English) in a comprehensible medium (CC). Improving accessibility through closed captioning is a universal design initiative that all audiences can endorse; it benefits the hearing community when audio can’t be accessed, when there are too many audio inputs, and when they are multi-communicating.² Without the excuse that captioning is little-used, the improvement of these services should be paramount.

**Shortcomings and Looking Forward**

Although this thesis works to identify the gaps in Deaf political socialization and in the closed captioning industry, it is not intended to critique the professional and educational work accomplished by media accessibility parties. The Deaf community is extremely diverse and has accomplished Herculean feats in political activism and disability rights. Captioning providers are essentially interpreters, and the work of facilitating understanding to an audience as broad as captioning consumers is laudable. As Sean Zdenek discusses in his book, *Reading Sounds: Closed Captioned Media and Popular Culture*, captioning requires close contextual readings and

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interpretation of media.\textsuperscript{3} The proposed frameworks in this thesis provide steps toward more knowledge sharing between those stakeholders in accessible media. I recognize that there are many other issues in the socialization of the Deaf community that this study could have pursued: education, job opportunities, etc. The issue of media seemed particularly poignant given my political focus. I also recognize that media accessibility and captioning go beyond video programming on television and the internet. I have personally experienced inaccessibility to visual information on transportation systems and numerous other settings. But media grounds us in political exposure, and so, again, I chose to focus there.

One issue that may arise in launching corporate social responsibility for media access is political apathy in the Deaf community. Although many Deaf people vote and most are politically active, accessibility advocacy requires hyper-engagement, especially in CSR. The Deaf community is perhaps the best equipped among the disability community to articulate and support their political views because of their history of involvement with civil rights. However, in the new media environment, even with the shortcomings of online media, the Deaf community is pretty well connected. Brendan Stern comments that during the Deaf Power movement, people in the community felt much more isolated.\textsuperscript{4} The shift of format preferences and heightened media and technology accessibility might mean that most Deaf people follow the free-ride theory.\textsuperscript{5} “They can ride on the benefits of others advocating for them in the political process. If the NAD is fighting their battles, then they have no need to get involved.”\textsuperscript{4} On the contrary, the Deaf community’s unique identity as a linguistic minority and marginalized group could mean


\textsuperscript{4} Brendan Stern, interview by author, (February, 2017).

that what might appear to be “slacktivism,” may in fact be a hegemonic resistance to forms of socialization that are not Deaf-centric. Furthermore, the Deaf community is too diverse to risk becoming an echo chamber: “we mean to suggest a bounded, enclosed media space that has the potential to both magnify the messages delivered within it and insulate them from rebuttal.”⁶ The Deaf community has a history, opinions, activity, and unity that are too politically charged for them to be complacent in politics.

**The Consumer**

This thesis has a lot of moving parts that can seem overwhelming unless we hold on to that common thread – the consumer. The Deaf consumer is the linchpin in political socialization of the Deaf community through new media accessibility. The Deaf consumer has cultural values regarding language, family, and a history of civic oppression that fuels their engagement, as seen in Chapter 2. However, their engagement is always pushing against the political stigmas and pandering of the hearing world, like was shown in Chapter 3. The biggest contribution I can make to the information and socialization of the Deaf community is to explore what socializing factors influence their opinions and engagement. There has never been a survey that has focused so specifically on the Deaf community as a linguistic minority in the U.S. The survey was designed with the Deaf community’s unique characteristics in mind, and not as a sector of the disability community.

This finding helps target media accessibility as one of the primary sources of disempowerment in the Deaf community today but more information about the media environment is needed in order to act on this knowledge. Chapters 5 and 6 and 7 give us a 360 view of the captioning arena. The FCC’s current media policies are bridges to more secure

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technology access but increased consumer involvement can be enabled through corporate social responsibility. From the perspective of the Deaf identity and the need for universal design, we can see how captioning procedures are still not making good use of their best source of product review – the consumer. Because the consumer is removed from the process of producing accessible media, their closest entry point is through policy makers. The FCC mediates much of the interaction between political groups, the government, and the assistive technology industry, but they lack approachability for the individual consumer because of bureaucracy. The players involved in captioning have already incorporated aspects of corporate social responsibility and most importantly, they have already responded to instances of consumer pressure. These experiences lay a groundwork for implementing corporate social responsibility as an actual partnership between caption providers and video programming distributors, consumers and advocates, and the government.

In order to empower the consumer base for closed captioning, policy implementation needs to help providers and clients shift focus from “improving” or “socializing” the disability community to communicating with them, preserving their right to self-advocacy. Although the disability community has provided input for accessibility accommodations, the policy language of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in existing consumer guidelines for captioning services remains vague. As providers of assistive technology exercise principles of universal design, they can counteract the poor quality of retrofit services seen in numerous case studies in this thesis. With work in corporate social responsibility, more research could be conducted on the specific caption style preferences of the Deaf community so that providers have a human-centered benchmark toward which they can curb their policies. Universal design for
media access should be granted the same consideration that privacy design has already achieved in the technological sector.

Providers can work to facilitate communication with the target audience, instead of promoting top-down socialization, by deferring to consumer experiences and preference. A reformation of assistive technology services is possible through the application of universal design principles. In order to address the bureaucratic concerns of assistive technology discussed above – vague policies and differences in procedure among captioning producers – consumers need an avenue for communication. The separation of consumer from client and client from producer is the reason for most complaints about assistive services. Clients and providers think it impractical for them to entertain first-hand viewer preferences, but consumers must be empowered to express their opinion on the accommodations they use.

This small sector of the community is making accessible media possible for everyone with hearing loss, the elderly, English as a second language learners, children, and the vast population of multi-communicating citizens. If the same accessibility were given to blind, mentally disabled, and mobility impaired members of the population, the increase of political participation in the disability community might also become competitive with the general population. The political socialization of Deaf community serves a larger purpose in the new media environment than the implementation of closed captioning; as a visible, civil-oriented, passionate linguistic group, the Deaf community brings universal design onto the national stage.
Appendix A: Survey

*The recruitment video, survey questions, and thesis defense can be viewed in ASL on the following playlist:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLth2hPUXCN3c6gyW356R2MmKKArOz2lS
back to them later, or you can close the survey and come back another day. The online survey will close and responses will be collected on November 9, 2016.

All of your responses will remain anonymous and no identifying information about you will be collected during the study. Once you submit your completed survey, there will be no way to withdraw your responses because they will be anonymous.

Study data will be kept in digital format, accessible only to the principal investigator, Julia Wardle, and password protected. There are no risks associated with this study. By completing and submitting this survey, you consent to participate in this study.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, the research project, or your rights as a research participant, please contact the principal investigator or Georgetown University IRB.

Julia Wardle
MA Candidate, Principal Investigator
jgs84@georgetown.edu
443-771-2377

Georgetown IRB
irboard@georgetown.edu
202-687-1506
## English: Today's Political Environment

### Deaf Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much do Deaf politics influence your personal politics?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important do you feel it is to have a presidential candidate who is concerned for disability rights?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2016 Platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Very little or none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much do you know about 2016 presidential candidates' platforms?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much research have you done on disability rights stances of political candidates or parties?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Personal Politics

- What political topic do you care most about?
- What topic related to Deaf politics influences you the most?
## English: Information and Sources

### Political News

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you seek out political news?</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Less than once per week</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use mobile applications to get news?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you receive news through social media?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you express your political opinions through social media, including re-posting text or video?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Where do you get most of your political information?

- [ ] Social media
- [ ] Television
- [ ] Online research
- [ ] Personal conversations
- [ ] Other

### Information Format (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Closed Captions</th>
<th>ASL</th>
<th>Picture or Video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What format(s) do you pay attention to the most in media?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What format(s) do you get most of your political information from?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What format(s) do you trust the most for political news?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English: Experience and Participation

### Political Participation (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Display Political signs</th>
<th>Discuss Politics</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Sign or Circulate a Petition</th>
<th>Protest</th>
<th>Attend a rally</th>
<th>Run for or Hold office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Have you ever participated in any of the following political activities?**

- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

**What have you done so far to participate in the 2016 political race?**

- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

**Which political activities do you feel are the most fulfilling and effective?**

- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

---

**Is there a political organization that you feel is the most effective in addressing disability rights?**

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] I don’t know

**If yes, which organization? Have you been in contact with them?**

---

**Is there some way you would like to be more involved in politics in the future?**

---
## English: Social Network

### How closely do you associate with the following groups?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Coworkers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community or Church Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How much political information do you get from the following sources?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Very little or none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Coworkers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community or Church Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Are you planning to vote in the 2016 election?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] I haven't decided

### Are you registered to vote in the 2016 election?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not eligible to vote
Which political party do you agree with most?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Other

Which presidential candidate do you agree with most?

- Donald Trump
- Hillary Clinton
- Gary Johnson
- Jill Stein
- Other
English: Demographics

Are you a Gallaudet student or alumni?
- Yes
- No

How would you categorize your childhood education?
- Deaf School
- Mainstream
- School with Deaf Program
- Other

Do you have Deaf family?
- Yes
- No

If your family is hearing, do you feel closer to your hearing family or to the Deaf community?

What is your preferred language?
- English
- ASL
- Both
- Other

How would you rate your English proficiency?
- Fluent
- Intermediate
- Poor
In what region were you introduced to the Deaf community?
- New England
- East Coast
- Midwest
- South
- Southwest
- West Coast
- Other

What is your gender?
- Male
- Female

What is your age?

What is your race?
- Asian
- Black
- Latino
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- White
- Other


What is your religion?

- Agnostic
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Other

Do you have any feedback or opinions you would like to share about this study?
Appendix B: Recruitment Scripts

Georgetown University
Consent to Participate in Research Study

INTERVIEW

STUDY TITLE: Political Socialization of the Deaf Community Through New Media

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Julia Wardle  TELEPHONE: 443-771-2377

ADVISOR: Diana Owen

INTRODUCTION
You are invited to participate in this research study. Your participation is entirely voluntary, you should not feel pressured to take part in any way. If you have any questions, please reach out to the Principal Investigator. If you decide that you want to participate, please sign and date where indicated at the end of this form.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE
This study looks more deeply at the involvement of different participants in the policy battle for media accessibility. Advocacy groups, caption providers, policy makers, and consumers all have very different perspectives on the process of gaining media accessibility and the ways in which this process could still be improved. By having the personal perspectives of these different participants, this study can give a more holistic view of the policy environment surrounding closed captioning and media accessibility. Comments provided in this study will be used alongside a policy analysis in order to discuss congruent and incongruent opinions and experiences in furthering media accessibility.

STUDY PLAN
You are being asked to take part in this study because you are influential in media accessibility through your involvement in one or more of the following areas: policy making, closed captioning, Deaf advocacy, and the Deaf community. One or two participants from each of these areas will take part in this study in person or over voice or video calls.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will take part in one interview with a possible follow up session. The interview will last 45-60 minutes and will take place at a convenient location or through the telephone. Follow up interviews may be scheduled several weeks after the initial interview and will be shorter in duration. These will be scheduled through the principal investigator. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your role in media accessibility and your opinions about its shortcomings and future implications. Notes of the interview will be taken, but you will not be recorded. The investigator will be sensitive to information you do not want included in the study.

RISKS
There are no risks associated with participating in this study.
Benefits
If you agree to take part in this study, there will be no direct benefit to you. However, information gathered in this study may provide insight into what initiatives have been successful in improving media accessibility and how they might be capitalized in the future.

Confidentiality
Every effort will be made to keep any information collected about you confidential. However, it is impossible to guarantee absolute confidentiality. In order to keep information about you safe, study data will be de-identified and known only to the Principal Investigator, who will keep data in a password-protected digital file on her personal computer. The Georgetown University IRB is allowed to access your study records if there is any need to review the data for any reason.

We would like to include your place of work and organizational role in the thesis that results from this research project. We want to describe you for attribution and explanatory purposes. However, you have the option to be completely anonymous when data from this study are published; if this is the case, please indicate on the last page of this form.

Your Rights as a Research Participant
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary at all times. You can choose not to participate at all or to leave the study at any point. If you decide not to participate or to leave the study, there will be no effect on your relationship with the researcher or any other negative consequences. If you inform the researcher that you no longer want to be included in this study, the information already obtained through your participation will be discarded.

Questions or Concerns?
If you have questions about the study, you may contact Julia Wardle at 443-771-2377 or jgs84@georgetown.edu. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty advisor, Diana Owen at 202-687-7194 or OwenD@georgetown.edu. Please call the Georgetown University IRB Office at 202-687-1506 (8:30am to 5:00pm, Monday to Friday) if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.
STATEMENT OF PERSON OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT
I have fully explained this study to the participant. I have discussed the study’s purpose and procedures, the possible risks and benefits, and that participation is completely voluntary. I have invited the participant to ask questions and I have given complete answers to all of the participant’s questions.

___________________________________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent  Date

CONSENT OF PARTICIPANT
I understand all of the information in this Informed Consent Form.
I have gotten complete answers for all of my questions.
I freely and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

☐ YES  (If you change your mind about this at any point, please let the researcher know)
☐ NO
☐ ALTERATION:  
Name or pseudonym to be used: ____________________________________________
(e.g. first name only, initials only, random pseudonym, only work position/title, only institutional affiliation etc.)

___________________________________________
Participant Signature  Date

Printed Name of Participant

Once you sign this form, you will receive a copy of it to keep, and the researcher will keep another copy in your research record.

Please indicate whether you agree to have your organization name and position used alongside your comments in the final publication that results from this research.

☐ YES  (If you change your mind about this at any point, please let the researcher know)
☐ NO
☐ ALTERATION:  
Name or pseudonym to be used: ____________________________________________
(e.g. first name only, initials only, random pseudonym, only work position/title, only institutional affiliation etc.)
Hi,

I am an ASL interpreter in the DC area and a graduate student at Georgetown University, studying Political Communication and Disabilities Studies. I have noticed that there is a lack of research about political activity in the Deaf community today.

This survey is part of my thesis work to better understand how the Deaf community is exposed to political information and how that information shapes Deaf politics. I need your participation! The survey is in both English and ASL and takes 10-15 minutes to complete. I’m hoping to have more than 100 responses by Election Day, November 8th – please forward to as many Deaf/Hard of Hearing people as you can.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/J3WB58L

I believe this study can be a great step towards better political accessibility for the Deaf community in the future, like closed captioning on political ads and ASL voting ballots. I really appreciate your time and answers! Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you,

Julia Wardle

ASL Social Media Recruitment Video


Social Media Recruitment Script

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Friends! Please check out my thesis survey: Political Exposure and Activism in the Deaf Community

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/J3WB58L

Transcript:
Hi, my name is Julia Wardle. I work as an ASL interpreter in Washington, DC and I am a graduate student at Georgetown University. As the 2016 presidential election draws closer, I have wondered how the Deaf community has been involved in the political scene. Current research about Deaf politics is scarce. That’s why I created this survey to ask about Deaf political socialization. Please take 10-15 minutes to answer this survey and forward it to your Deaf and Hard of Hearing friends! The survey is in both English and Sign. If I can collect at least 100 responses by November 8th, I envision a representation of evidence that can increase advocacy for Deaf political accessibility in the future, for example, better subtitles for political advertisements or ASL voting ballots. I appreciate your involvement! Please contact me if you have any questions.
Deaf Politics Survey

What influences your political opinion the most?

How can political media be more accessible?

Master’s Candidate Julia Wardle investigates the political participation and socialization of the Deaf community in her Thesis research. Please take 10-15 minutes to complete this important survey!
Appendix C: Tables

Table A1. How does cultural region affect party affiliation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In what region were you introduced to the Deaf community?</th>
<th>Which political party do you agree with most?</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Coast/New England</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within East</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within party</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Midwest</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within party</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South/Southwest</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within South</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within party</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within West</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within party</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A2. The difference between male and female community association.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your gender?</th>
<th>How closely do you associate with the Deaf community?</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Male</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Female</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A3. LDS party affiliation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Which political party do you agree with most?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within LDS</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within party</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-LDS</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Non-LDS</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within party</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A4. LDS preference for presidential candidate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Which presidential candidate do you agree with most?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>Gary Johnson</td>
<td>Jill Stein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within LDS</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within party</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-LDS</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Non-LDS</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within party</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A5. Religious influence on community association and familial association.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your religion?</th>
<th>How closely do you associate with the following groups?</th>
<th>If your family is hearing, do you feel closer to your hearing family or to the Deaf community?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deaf community</td>
<td>Hearing community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Christian</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within closeness</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Jewish</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within closeness</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Agnostic</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within closeness</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Other</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within closeness</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A6. (This table corresponds to Figure 5). Most important political and most important Deaf topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What political topic do you care most about?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>What topic related to Deaf politics influences you the most?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/Disability</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy/Debt</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy/Jobs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Rights</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security/Military</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A7. Source of political information as related to perceived information level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where do you get most of your political information?</th>
<th>How much do you know about 2016 presidential candidates’ platforms?</th>
<th>How much research have you done on disability rights stances of political candidates or parties?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within social media</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within information level</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within television</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within information level</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online research</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within online research</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within information level</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal conversations</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within personal conversations</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within information level</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A8. Community association of Deaf with hearing families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your family is hearing, do you feel closer to your hearing family or to the Deaf community?</th>
<th>How closely do you associate with the Deaf community?</th>
<th>How closely do you associate with the hearing community?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing family</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within hearing family</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf community</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Deaf community</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Both</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Neither</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A9. Community association based on educational background.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you categorize your childhood education?</th>
<th>How closely do you associate with the Deaf community?</th>
<th>How closely do you associate with the hearing community?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deaf school</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Deaf school</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School with Deaf Program</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Deaf program</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mainstream</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Mainstream</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Other</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within association</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A10. Deaf ties to hearing family and their influence on party preference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your family is hearing, do you feel closer to your hearing family or to the Deaf community?</th>
<th>Which political party do you agree with most?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing family</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within hearing family</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within political party</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf community</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Deaf community</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within political party</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Both</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within political party</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Neither</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within political party</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If your family is hearing, do you feel closer to your hearing family or to the Deaf community?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hearing family</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deaf community</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Both</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neither</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table A11. Deaf ties to hearing family and their influence on candidate preference.*
Table A12. Does language preference influence political source?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your preferred language?</th>
<th>Where do you get most of your political information?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/bilingual</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within English/bilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within political source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within ASL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within political source</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A13. Frequency of news received through apps and social media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you use mobile applications to get news?</th>
<th>How often do you receive news through social media?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once per week</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A14. CAD survey, who influences political opinion and information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where do you get most of your information about political events and issues in Canada?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Who influences you (helps you) to make your opinions on political issues?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family/friends</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV/radio</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers/magazines</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>Teacher/professors</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government sources</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>Personal research</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer boards</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>Non-government organization</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-government origin</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>Personal feeling about politician involved</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A15. CAD survey, political participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please check any of the following activities that you have participated in in the past four years.</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wrote letters to MP, other politicians</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in public protests, rallies</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbied politicians for non-political group</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbied non-political group for political party</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made financial donation to political party</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigned for candidate for Liberal/NDP leadership</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held office in party riding association</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in political party conference</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked for a politician or political party</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table A16. Political participation and frequency of participation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever participated in any of the following political activities?</th>
<th>Display political signs</th>
<th>Discuss politics</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Sign/circulate a petition</th>
<th>Protest</th>
<th>Attend a rally</th>
<th>Run for/hold office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many of the following political activities have you participated in?</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>% within how many</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>% within how many</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>% within how many</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table A17. Rutgers survey, getting out the vote.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During the campaign this fall, who talked to you about registering to vote or getting out to vote?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives from political parties</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives from other organizations</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone else</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A18. Rutgers survey, frequency of following public affairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the time</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only now and then</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly at all</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A19. Rutgers survey, civic involvement in disability causes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you worked to change a private organization’s policies or practices affecting people with disabilities, such as through talking to business owners, or filing lawsuits?</th>
<th>Yes Frequency</th>
<th>Yes Percent</th>
<th>No Frequency</th>
<th>No Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you regularly meet with other people in any groups or organizations – for example, groups organized around service, hobbies, sports, social or political issues, or other interests?</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you regularly participate in any disability groups or organizations?</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table A20. Media accessibility social network degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Accessibility Social Network</th>
<th>Out Degree</th>
<th>In Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Group</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive Technology Producer (Manufacturer)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captioning Producer (Provider)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Advisory Group</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Network (Video Programming Distributor)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Producer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table A21. Media accessibility social network adjacency matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Network Matrix</th>
<th>Advocacy Group</th>
<th>Assistive Technology Manufacturer</th>
<th>Captioning Provider</th>
<th>Consumer</th>
<th>Consumer Advisory Group</th>
<th>Government Agent</th>
<th>Video Programming Distributor</th>
<th>Television Producer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive Technology Manufacturer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captioning Provider</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Advisory Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Programming Distributor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Producer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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