# Mapping Resonance:
## Tracing the Senses Communicating in the Spaces Between Deaf and Hearing People

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## Abstract

**Mapping Resonance: Tracing the Senses Communicating in the Spaces Between Deaf and Hearing People**

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This research seeks to trace how communicating feels, smells, tastes, sounds and looks in the spaces between deaf people and hearing people. By shifting the focus from "barriers" to spaces, from limitations to relationalities, and way from auralism and phonocentrism towards a polysensory understanding of communication, this thesis breaks with the conventional constructions of the hearing/not-hearing nexus, and opens up many new prospects for interpersonal and intersensory interaction between hearing people and deaf people. This creative and community-engaged ethnographic project was an inter-sensorial exploration that included eleven participants across four languages: English, French, American Sign Language (ASL), and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) as well as multiple language modalities, written, spoken, and signed. The first phase explored a social-institutional context and involved conducting two semi-structured interviews with two deaf university students who pursued human rights complaints against the same university after being denied access to sign language interpretation—even as their respective cases occurred twenty years apart. The second phase explored a social-creative context and involved conducting two focus groups, each participant exploring their own sense of communicating across deaf and hearing spaces. In each phase, participants described their narratives and experiences through visual, tactile, and auditory mediums, including narratives, maps, collages, video, sign language poetry, objects, and illustrations. Next, situational and relational mapping methods were employed to trace the experiences sensorily and multi-modally. Findings suggest that in contrast to popular transactional communication models, there are no barriers or gaps to communication; communicating is a persistent, inter-sensory experience that exists in the relationships between people and their environment, and occurs across time and space. In this light, new conversations

are needed regarding our accountability to these relationships and how these inter-sensory spaces of communication impact our individual and collective well-being.

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## Contribution of Authors

This thesis includes a co-authored journal article: *Reflecting on Bodily Listening in Place: An Intercultural and Intersensory Research-Creation Project*. This was a collaboration between myself, Paula Bath; Tiphaine Girault, a Deaf artist; and Ellen Waterman, a flutist, vocalist, improviser, and music researcher. Ellen had embarked on the project to create an instructional score, titled *Bodily Listening in Place*. Although Ellen, in the end, created the score, each author contributed equally, both to the research process and in writing the research article. In this collaboration, my role was more on the design and execution side of the research process, whereas Tiphaine and Ellen worked as two individual artists engaged in the activity and communicating across multiple models and senses. In addition, at the end of the research-creation collaboration, Ellen went on to publish her instructional score.

This thesis also includes a co-directed video: *Re{verbe}: A Video Documentation of A Sensory Ethnography of Communication*. This collaboration was between myself, Paula Bath; and curator Elizabeth Sweeney. The video brought together the narratives and creative scores of the deaf and hearing research participants who participated in this PhD research project. The video is designed to frame particular experiences and give the audience a sensory experience linked to the tensions found in this research—tensions such as: What language is privileged at this moment? Which parts of a message are accessible to you and which are not? When you are not understanding, what does that make you feel? This video documentation was also screened as part of a public engagement event, which included a panel involving some of the research participants as well as a visual arts exhibition held in April 2024 at 4th Space, Concordia University, in Montreal.

*Listen* to everything all the time and remind yourself when you are not listening.

—Pauline Oliveros

# Chapter One: Researcher's Positionality and Introduction

In this section, I introduce myself as the researcher. I explain my background and experience, based upon which I developed my three pillars of praxis and which have led to my desire to complete this work and share a personal story, which explains why this work is so meaningful to me. I then introduce the social issue of oral normativity and the limits of law to seek to understand the moments when deaf and hearing people interact and navigate communication boundaries. Finally, I outline the various parts of this thesis.

## Introducing the Researcher

As a phonocentric person,[1] I was born into the dominant auditory/spoken language and cultural group. As a teenager, deaf people gave me a gift. They taught me two sign languages: American Sign Language (ASL) and the Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ). Being now married to a francophone deaf person and having hearing children, I live and work within the interstitial spaces between deaf and hearing people, signed and spoken languages, and anglophone and francophone cultures. I focus on the moments at which ideas, structures, processes, and cultures are lived, negotiated, and experienced by people—more specifically, deaf and hearing people.

## Defining Three Pillars of Praxis

My research interests oscillate between three pillars of praxis: academics, institutions, and community. For more than 25 years, I have collaborated with institutions in the communications field, 17 of them spent as an accredited sign language interpreter, brokering discourses occurring at sites where deaf and hearing people met. These past six years, I have specialized in federal regulatory communications policy, taking on roles and gaining the perspectives of both deaf and hearing people, taking part in creating regulatory frameworks,

[1] I use the term *phonocentric* in alignment with Derrida's (2016) and Lapiak's (2007) definitions to acknowledge that my perception of the world is rooted in sound and hearing. This perspective represents the only human relationality that I was familiar with until adolescence, when I met a deaf person for the first time.

working as a senior policy analyst with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), and playing a role in implementing those same regulatory frameworks as the Director of Regulatory Compliance and Strategy at Canada VRS (Video Relay Services), the sole entity in Canada (regulated by the CRTC) that operates to make our dominant voice-telephony system accessible to deaf people in sign languages. These professional experiences have given me the opportunity to witness and see how real-world tensions are lived and negotiated by people at the sites where people meet the institutions, structures, policies, and processes of an oral-normative society.

My academic pursuits have included obtaining a certificate in American Sign Language, a diploma in Sign Language Interpretation, a BA in Organizational Communications, and an MA in Communications (Identity and Diversity). My early graduate research examined society critically, particularly the mainstream media's representation of deaf people and sign languages. In my master's thesis, I discussed how the dominant language group legitimized its means of representation of Deaf people in the face of disfavour by Deaf leaders, and perpetuated myths and misunderstandings about sign language as being mere gestural code to represent or give access to spoken language and not a language in its own right (Bath, 2012). In my PhD work, I distanced myself somewhat from media, identity, and representation while continuing to take a critical ethnographic look at society and drawing from creative research approaches to understand the lived experiences of oral normativity and trace the inter-sensory experiences of communicating with both deaf and hearing people.

The final praxis is community. In addition to working as a sign language interpreter in 2009, I co-founded, with deaf artists, the organization Spill.Propagation,[2] a Canadian artist-run centre in sign language. Since then, at Spill.Propagation we have established a particular ethic of creativity and collaboration called *co-creation*, an inter-sensory and inter-cultural process that reunites deaf and hearing people upon a common ground in order to bring forward a new generation of ideas, creative approaches, artistic practices, and installations. Since its inception, Spill.Propagation has secured multi-year operational funding from the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ). The organization's work

[2] For the English website, see: https://spill-propagation.com/; and for the French, see: https://spill-propagation.com/?lang=fr.

has been recognized by the Ottawa Art Gallery which procured one of its art installations for the gallery's permanent collection; and, more recently, honoured by the National Gallery of Canada as runner-up for the prestigious Lacy Prize, recognizing the activities and impact of small organizations and artist-run spaces in Canada. Watching deaf and hearing people co-create in this way and seeing how the sector has recognized the value of these collaborations has solidified my desire to continue engaging with the community through ethnographic and co-creation practices during this PhD research project.

Sean Wilson (2008) puts forward an aspect of Indigenous research ontology and epistemology that establishes relationships as the basis of understanding and creating reality. He proposes that finding common ground is a prerequisite for examining one's accountability to these relationships (p. 7) and comprises a structure for understanding cross-cultural communication. As such, to situate myself in relation to this project, as I do in this chapter, upholds the standard of relational accountability I hope to design into this project's methodology. Thus, before I retell the stories of others as they unfolded during this PhD project, I will begin with "my why" and the story that brought me to care about initiating a PhD project in the first place.

**The Researcher's Story**

Five years of failed pregnancies later, here we were. The midwife clinic did not have a reputation for providing sign language interpreters. So, we brought our own. Our friend and sign language interpreter sat next to us in the waiting room, ignoring the issue of whether or not she would be paid but knowing we needed to navigate communication barriers as a deaf person and a hearing person in the world. The midwife led us into her office. There were three of us and not enough chairs. "Who is this?" the midwife asked in French. "Our Interpreter," we said. "Why is she here?" the midwife asked. "To interpret," we said. "I am deaf," my partner said. The midwife stood with her eyes darting between the three of us and then walked over to our interpreter, grabbed her by the arm, and walked her out of the office, closing the door. "Tsk, tsk. No," the midwife expressed her disapproval. "Now, let's continue." I cannot remember what she said next. I remember only the feeling of pressure on my knee as I tried to stand. My deaf partner was holding me down and saying "no" through her eyes. The only thing my eyes could see was, "I am so sorry." Then I transformed into a vessel, passing the midwife's speech—through me—into

my ears and out my hands. Afterward, I began to wonder: What if we could back-translate such moments of deaf and hearing people communicating? What might we see differently? And so, my PhD journey began with my research positionality mirroring my lived experience in the spaces between the beauty, and the struggle, to find a common ground in communication that meets the sensory needs of both deaf and hearing people.

**The Limits of Law and Impact of Oral Normativity**

The *Accessible Canada Act*, enacted in 2019, recognizes American Sign Language (ASL), the Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ), and Indigenous Sign Languages (ISL) as primary languages used by Deaf Canadians for the purpose of communication. Although such legislation promises much, I find that sign language case law in Canada, looking at it more realistically, illuminates the limits of the law to reach those moments when deaf and hearing people interact and navigate the continuums and boundaries that exist between signed, spoken, and written languages. I see these limitations underlined in two prominent Canadian human rights cases, each involving deaf people and access to sign language interpretation: *Howard v. University of British Columbia* (1993) and *Dunkley v. UBC and another* (2015). These cases occurred some 22 years apart yet involved recurring issues. Both deaf students had requested sign language interpretation. Despite this, they were refused. Each time, the institutions provided legitimate concerns and rationale as to why interpretation could not be provided, namely financial hardship. Both cases debated different ideas of accessibility, human rights, equality, deafness, and disability, and, as such, offer a glimpse into the mundane—the everyday legitimized tensions that exist between deaf and hearing people communicating. In the more recent case, *Dunkley v. UBC and another* (2015), British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal member Marlene Tyshynski went further, saying the structural dimensions of society and the central place that spoken language occupies in the design and delivery of educational services needed to be considered. Tyshynski indicated that educational services "are designed for persons without a hearing disability" (para. 680) and that "the norm of oral communication is oriented to persons who can hear and imposes a burden on persons who are deaf that is not imposed on others" (para. 389). In other words, deaf people are living in and accommodating an oral-normative society, not rather the other way around as is commonly supposed. Each of these cases

brought attention to institutionalized oral normativity in Canada and how society defines *communication* as "having gaps," thereby focusing communication accessibility on removing barriers and closing gaps. To do this, we place emphasis on interpretation and translation. However, this approach is problematic and does not go far enough to address the persistent social landscape of oral normativity impacting the lived experiences of deaf and hearing people communicating daily.

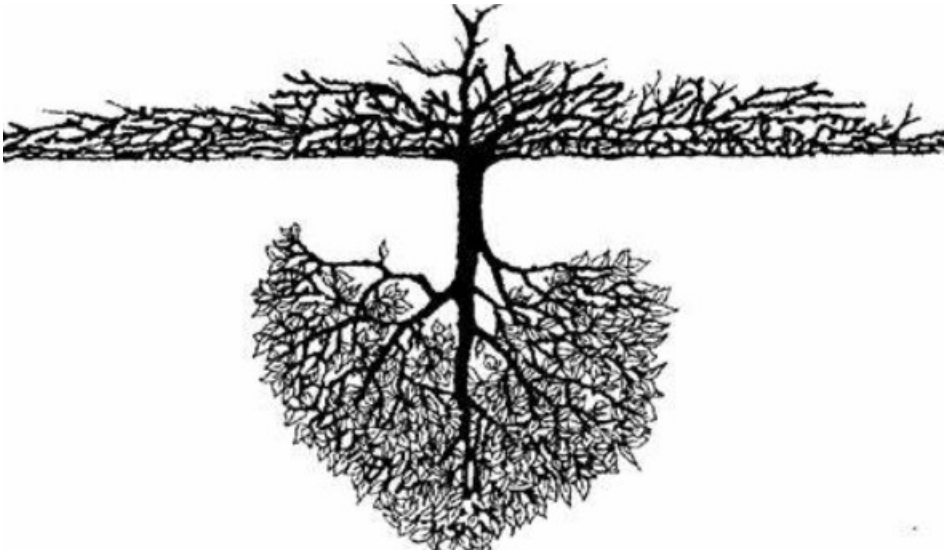
I will argue that communicating is a multi-relational and inter-sensory experience linking people to one another and to their internal and external environments. I aim to influence the reach of accessibility laws and policies pertaining to communication and sign language by turning a much-needed focus away from translation and onto the sensory resonance of communicating as it occurs in real time and space, and as it impacts deaf and hearing people respectively.

**Sign Language Describes Communicating as Social Resonance**

At the site where the echo (or feedback) reaches the receiver, the positive or negative impact of communication is most observable. Here, we can observe how communication *resonates* across deaf and hearing experiences. Resonance is a visceral sense of oneself in relationship to an external stimulus. The study participants chose the spoken and written word "reverberation" to be inclusive of both French and English, but also to describe communication as a felt network. This approach, too, borrows concepts from ecology. Before we can understand reverberation, we must understand that communicating is not simply one person communicating with another. Suzanne Simard's (2021) work focuses on documenting the intelligence of the forest, and I have adopted a new perspective of communication based on this nonhuman context. Simard looks beyond individual trees—i.e., one tree in relation to a second tree—arguing that attention must be turned to the forest as a whole, and its use of an interconnected network of communication produced by its underground root and fungi systems.

**Figure 1**

*The Tree's Interconnected Root System*



This is similar in some ways to Ingold's (2011) concept of entanglements, looking at the reverberations across the lifeworld, resisting the impulse to pick its components apart, and observing instead how these entangled forces operate by understanding them as complex meshwork. However, Simard's work goes beyond observing a meshwork to seeing how this interconnected network creates a complex system of care. The network allows trees to grow together, connect to one another (and to other organisms such as soil and animals), and transmit carbon to each other for their own survival and collective well-being (p. 270). I find that this interconnected system offers a model of collective care and well-being rooted in communication. From a sensory and relational communication model, various elements of one's environment are perceived via senses: letters, policies, forms, offices, emails, iPads, and applications, together making up the entire, interconnected web of communication itself.

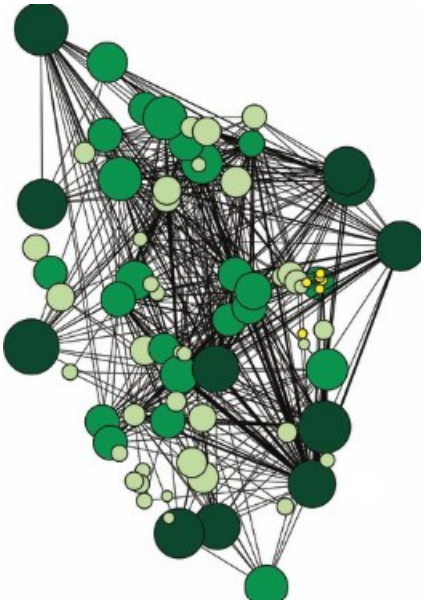
## Evaluating Spaces as an Integrated Social System of Care

Where Ballestero's mesh of bifurcation leaves off at collective ideas of care, Simard's work yields new communication ideas. In communication, what is of concern is not, as

Ballestero puts it, the *site of bifurcation*, or where the elements in nature split, but rather where they come into contact: the *convergence*. This is the split where emplacement becomes active, a verb—the experience. It is either emplacing or displacing. When we identify resonance in communication, we must first establish a baseline of collective care. Quite different from Michael Jackson's work, which focuses on identifying individual well-being, here the emphasis is on collective well-being. By way of offering a map of such a convergence, Figure 2, below, represents the fungal systems of a forest, illustrating the interconnected communication system between a group of trees (represented by green dots). Developed by Simard, the map illustrates how trees talk to each other and may be used to describe the complexity and uniqueness of the experiences of individuals communicating.

**Figure 2**

*The Communication System of Trees*



From an interconnected relational framework, we may begin to understand that we are linked not only through an network of communication and our sensory perception of the points of interconnection, but also in indirect relation to the communicating experiences of others. Here, I will shift the discussion toward how communication relates both to individual as well as collective well-being. With resonance and systems of care in mind, we can begin to focus our

attention on accounting for the internal and environmental conditions that comprise our experiences when communicating.

This doctoral research project mapped the senses communicating in the spaces between deaf and hearing people. Through this work, certain conditions previously categorized as external or as obstacles to communication, such as noise or gaps or barriers, are now argued to be part and parcel of the communication experience itself. This work proposes a Relational Model of Communicating to bring greater accountability to these spaces and to spur the formation of policies and standards to consider how more inclusive spaces of communication can be produced that include the conditions necessary to adapt in real time and space to the diverse needs of deaf and hearing people in different contexts and across multiple language and sensory modalities. Moving beyond constructs of communication as a language-based phenomenon allows us to understand communicating as an inter-sensory form of social contact, and as connected to a larger social ecology. In this light, new conversations can begin regarding our accountability to these relationships and how we can evaluate the efficacy of these communication spaces by considering their impact on our individual and collective well-being.

**Observing the Limits of Law on Fostering Healthy Communication**

Both cases, *Howard v. University of British Columbia* (1993) and *Dunkley v. UBC and another* (2015), debated issues of accessibility, human rights, equality, deafness, and disability. Together, these two cases offer a glimpse into the social mundane. Legitimized tensions exist at the boundaries of deaf and hearing people communicating and at the sites of interaction between signed, spoken, and written languages in Canada. For my PhD, I distanced myself from constructs of communication "barriers" and moved toward ideas of communicating "spaces." I wanted to delve into these spaces and not ask *if* barriers exist but, rather, *how* deaf and hearing people are doing. My interest in spaces is perhaps best articulated in the form of another anecdote and lived experience of my own. I recall a time in Mexico when I was learning to mountain bike. I straddled my new bike at the top of a rocky trail. I knew it was going to be a fast descent. Possibly a bloody one. As I stared at my impossible future, I asked my coach how to avoid every rock and tree and log in my path. His reply was: "You can't. If you look at the rock, you will hit it. But, if you look at *the spaces between them*, your tire will find that space and

move forward." With this PhD project, I explored these "spaces between the rocks" and the chapters that follow are what I uncovered.

**Thesis Overview**

In Chapter Two, I describe the *theoretical framework* of this study. In this section, I review the four traditional pillars of theory commonly used in the field of Deaf and Interpreting Studies: the Pathological Model, the Social Disability Model, the Cultural Model, and Post-Structuralism. I will apply these approaches to the point of focus of my research—communication between deaf and hearing people—and discuss their limitations. I then introduce the field of ecology, and the concepts found therein, as a useful field to apply to issues in the field of communication. Beginning with an ecology perspective, I reposition communication also from a sensorial perspective and begin to define a new and relational model of communication.

Next, in Chapter Three, I describe the context of the social world as *oral normative* and as a context that impacts the communication between deaf and hearing people. To develop this context, I describe the main arguments found in the two seminal legal cases in the field of university education that I mention above: *Howard* (1993) and *Dunkley* (2015). These cases and their arguments mirror our social world and show how legal discourses are limited and do not sufficiently address oral normativity in society.

In Chapter Four, I further develop the focus of this research, which is to explore the ways in which communication is relational and describe the project's *research questions*, each question enabling me to trace the senses across the lived experiences of deaf and hearing people.

In Chapter Five, I outline the *methodological framework* for this study. I describe the inter-sensory and inter-cultural research practices that I employ as well as how the study builds on previous work in research-creation and community-engaged research. This section, in particular, will include a previously published article that I co-authored, demonstrating a particular research-creation method involving an inter-sensory exploration of perception and approaching listening as experienced by a deaf person and a hearing person communicating. I describe how this initial research method served as a field case study, forming a foundation upon which I built from for this project's methodology. I revised the research method to increase its

scale by adding more research participants, interviews with two focus groups, and an additional data analysis phase that included situational mapping and relational analysis.

In Chapter Six, I describe in detail the multi-phase and multi-modal *methods* used to conduct the data-collection phase of this research. The methods I describe include a Sensewalk, the collection of creative scores from participants, and sense mapping. I describe the two legal cases including two semi-structured interviews of the two Deaf people involved, along with the two focus groups. This section also outlines the unique member-checking and validation phase.

Chapter Seven outlines the *research findings* and shows the creative scores collected from the research participants as well as the multi-modal relational maps traced out during the data-analysis process. Themes identified in this tracing of common senses found between the creative scores are also discussed.

Next, in Chapter Eight, I discuss the *implications of the findings* as related directly to the concept of communicating. I use the various findings from this research to critique transactional models of communication as well as forge a new inter-sensory and relational model of communication.

In Chapter Nine, I present the public presentation and engagement component of this research study, which took place in 2024 at 4th Space, at Concordia University. I present the video documentation, exhibition, and panel discussion that were created to engage with a public audience and include further discussion of the participants' experiences of communication. The video screening presents the research participants and their stories, including that of myself, as the researcher. The participants retell their stories in connection to their creative scores as offered during this research process. Their multi-model descriptions of their sensed experience communication from the spaces between deaf and hearing people are traced and woven together to form a synthesis of sensory experiences. Included in this section is a collection of still images from the video together with a link to access the full video. To capture the public engagement component of this research, I transcribed the audience's questions and the discussion that followed, which included those present from the research project, myself, my video co-curator, and some of the research participants.

Finally, in the Appendices, I include the researcher's "echoes," capturing their concepts and meanings in a summary document used during the member validation phase, a gallery of all of the creative scores collected during the project (not all of these scores were included in the video installation), an inventory of important signed and written language terminology and definitions as they unfolded during this research process, and, lastly, a selected list of interview transcripts and direct quotes.

In this section, I made a call to distance this project from constructs of communication *barriers* and turn it toward communicating as concerning *spaces*. The two case law files, *Howard* (1993) and *Dunkley* (2015), are presented as examples from the social sphere representing the tensions existing between deaf and hearing people communicating. These cases brought attention to institutionalized oral normativity and emphasized the importance of beginning to think of communicating as a multi-relational, inter-sensory experience that links people to one another and to their internal and external environments.

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

In this section, I review the four predominant theoretical approaches that are discussed in relation to society, deaf people, and sign language: pathological, social disability, cultural, and post-structuralism. This section will examine these theoretical approaches and explore how *communication* is constructed within each theoretical framework. I will then explain the limitations of each theory in regard to its ability to account for an individual's diverse experiences of communicating. I then offer a new theoretical approach to apply to communication—ecology—and discuss how concepts from ecology may enhance our ability to identify and better understand the relationships existing between people communicating.

### Pathological Model and Communication

Normalized conceptions of disability impact how communication is structured and our experiences of communication in society. The application of a pathological or medical perspective upon deaf people is rooted in the natural sciences and establishes deafness as a particular formation of physical attributes or characteristics. This perspective defines deafness as a disability, an inability to hear (Crow, 1996). Prior to the 1960s, the prevailing view was that sign language comprised a primitive communication system. This perspective was influenced by the dominant culture's ideal method of communication—"oralism"—which insisted on teaching deaf people by way of speaking, lip-reading, and hearing, and to the exclusion of sign language (Bauman, 2008a, p. 1). Crow (1996) examines the various discourses and terms that fall within the pathological and subsequent medicalization frameworks. These terms include *impairment*, including "any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function,"; as well as *disability*, being "any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being" (p. 2); and *handicap*, "a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a normal role (depending on age, sex, and social or cultural factors) for that individual" (p. 2). In this model, disability is simply a physical, mental, or sensory impairment, and cure or remedy is situated as the primary concern (Baynton, 2008, p. 296).

Since the 1960s, the pathological model has been strongly criticized as presenting a limited view of deaf experience, one that is far removed from the lived experiences of deaf

people. Hearing social worlds have been criticized for doing so poorly by way of relating to deaf experiences, including identity and language needs, resulting in deaf people being regularly misunderstood (Graif, 2018, p. 7). The pathological perspective also creates deaf and hearing dichotomies that fix an irrevocable difference between deafness/disability and hearing/ability. Over the years, the pathological paradigm has been accused of restricting our understanding of deaf people and of failing to consider their diverse lived experiences. For example, historically speaking, sign languages are not written languages, and so, prior to technological advancements in film and video, advocates for sign language inclusion were required to express their perspectives through written language (Bauman, 2008a, p. 6). Thus, the knowledge communicated through visual and gestural language is restricted to a foreign language, i.e., the written mode.

According to this paradigm, *communication* is reduced to characteristics related to hearing or not hearing. From this standpoint, communication is standardized in ways that centralize the hearing of a spoken language and establish sign language as a remedy for a communication problem caused by deafness—that is, by one's inability to hear spoken language. Deafness, as a communication pathology, is conventionally seen as the root factor causing the isolation of a deaf person from society. Deafness is described as an affliction that disconnects a deaf person from language; deaf people are perceived as being unable to understand spoken language or as lacking a voice, which is seen as a kind of social paralysis (Graif, 2018, p. 13). From a pathological point of view, sign language is considered a tool—a visual and gestural code that enables deaf people to access spoken language (Bath, 2012) and provides a means of teaching voiceless children to communicate (Rée, 2000, p. 152). Harlan Lane (1989) defines society's central positioning of spoken language in the context of the education of deaf children as a form of institutionalized *audism*—the institutional domination of deaf people by "hearing ways" (as quoted in Bauman, 2008b, p. 43) and an exercise of pathological authority. More recently, this institutionalization of spoken language and the lasting effects of its domination upon deaf people has also been noted by Paget (2020), who suggests that discrimination continues to occur because of pathology-based misconceptions about deaf people and sign language, manifesting themselves in legal contexts and impacting the lives of deaf people.

Howard Becker (1963) indicates that a common view of "deviance" is linked to pathology, such that a person deviates from the medial standard of health and is then contextualized as an "outsider" (p. 6). In this point of view, deafness differs from hearing because hearing is considered the central standard of health. The deaf/hearing dichotomy, however, spawns an identity politic. Becker argues against identity politics, stating that we need to go beyond identity politics and instead consider the complex structures and negotiations taking place in society, given the established rules and legislation playing out in society. He asserts that deviance results from breaking an agreed-upon rule rather than being a social symptom resulting from any particular physical characteristic (p. 7). Becker sees legislation as a rich source for analyzing the social world, given that it is based on a shared symbolic system of values. Further, Becker argues that legislation can fail to consider a fundamental reality that some people are deviating and disadvantaged from the start (p. 126) and that accommodation is difficult to achieve given the conflicting interests of the members of different groups (p. 122). Becker also criticizes legislation and those who enforce it, claiming they focus too much on the "ends"—the removal of barriers—and not enough on the "means" (p. 143).

Section 15(1) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) provides protection against discrimination based on a pathology of disability:

> Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.

Pathological formations of disability are also reflected as the *Charter* enshrines deafness as a physical disability and a characteristic that an individual must possess in order to benefit from its protection against discrimination. In other words, a person must be deaf—which is synonymous with physical disability—to be included in this legal extension of protection against discrimination. Over the years, however, counter-narratives have developed stemming from the perspectives of social constructivism, which establishes that deafness is not a pathological condition but rather a characteristic that forms the basis of membership in a linguistic and cultural minority group that forms the Deaf community (Ladd, 2003; Leigh, 2009).

According to Goffman (1963), the solution is to move away from problems linked to human attributes that discredit the individual and instead adopt an approach that considers the language of relationships (p. 3). Goffman would agree that meanings change as contexts change. This notion of change can be identified, as social identities such as "normal" and "stigmatized" are not static; an individual may be a part of several groups and shift between them depending on the social context. The next chapter discusses how meanings change in a social context.

**Social Disability Model and Communication**

The social disability paradigm is distinct from the pathological paradigm discussed above. In general, the social paradigm examines the social circumstances that are exterior to an individual's body, rather than physical or cognitive characteristics, and assumes that meaning is created and negotiated by humans through social interaction (Barrett, 2018, p. 33). From this perspective, characteristics such as "deaf" or "disability" are identities that partially constitute both a physical-medicalized construct and a social identity (Goffman, 1963, p. 2). For example, in a capitalist economy, the social disability model legitimates how one category of deaf people, the unemployed, are so because the lack of communication accommodations available to them prevent successful employment (Lane, 2008, p. 278). Goffman (1963) suggests that societies categorize people based on identity to regulate social encounters and enhance predictability. He also argues that social encounters create gaps between the identity an individual assumes (actual identity) and the identity that society attaches to them (virtual identity) (p. 2). The pathological paradigm characterizes deafness as a dysfunction, an inability to hear. In contrast, the social disability paradigm views deaf people as abled if supplied with the necessary accessible social context. Goffman describes how this gap might lead to tensions in "mixed social situations" involving members from a normal group and members from a stigmatized group. He defines stigmas as "bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and negative about the moral status of the signifier" (p. 1). Stigmas are problematic because they are linked to attributes that discredit the individual:

> When normals and stigmatized do in fact enter one another's immediate presence, especially when they there attempt to sustain a joint conversational encounter, there occurs one of the primal scenes of sociology; for, in many cases, these moments will be

> the ones when the causes and effects of stigma must be directly confronted by both sides. (p. 13)

It is at the point of social interaction that the uncertainty about how particular identities will intersect with policies unfolds. Rooted in a social disability model, Leigh (2009) positions social disability as a social-minority model and a development toward a collective consciousness. This collective consciousness places Deaf people in a minority group status by emphasizing "life with a difference" without focusing on discourses of deficit (p. 13). This model, however, still looks at "the body" as an element of consideration; and how the environment can be harmonious or disharmonious with regard to the body, creating conducive or disruptive environments for individuals as they participate in society. Ladd (2003) asserts that the social-minority model and its minority membership is "deafness" itself, and that the focus must not only be on environmental factors but on the Deaf individual and their sense of being-in-the-world (p. 15). The discourses encountered within the social-minority model shift the focus away from impairment of the human body to the barriers that exist in the social, physical, and attitudinal environments related to the matter of being in the world.

In alignment, the legal discourses that operate within Canada's federal accessibility legislation, the *Accessible Canada Act*, target societal barriers as placing limits on persons with disabilities. The intention of the Act is described as,

> a proactive and systemic approach for identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility without delay complements the rights of persons with disabilities under the Canadian Human Rights Act.[3]

This narrative identifies barriers to accessibility within society and emphasizes the need to remove them so that accessibility can occur.

**Cultural Model and Communication**

There also exists a Deaf cultural perspective. In the United States, the concept of "Deaf culture" became a means through which Deaf people constructed a unique cultural world. Carol Padden's 1980 article "The Deaf Community and the Culture of Deaf People" described this

[3] https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada/act-summary.html#h2.04

effort and set out a theoretical framework that became the foundation of Deaf Studies (Murray, 2017, p. 88). Padden (1980) defined culture as "a set of learned behaviours of a group of people who have their language, values, rules for behaviour, and traditions" (p. 92), thereby marking a cultural turn. More recently, Deaf British scholar Paddy Ladd (2003) introduced a new "culture-linguistic model" that fundamentally links the existence of culture to language—and notably signed languages—to better capture the Deaf experience and acknowledge "the positive experiences created by their social, cultural and artistic lives situated within the 250-year-old history of their own clubs, schools and organizations" (p. 164). In an accessibility framework, in contrast, a person's language and culture protections commonly fall outside of the realm of consideration. The cultural-linguistic model diverges from the central focus of pathology, shifting away from the structure of society toward a central focus on Deaf experience. This model shifted the Deaf experience from the margins of society toward a new epicentre of lived experience—a Deaf experience. This shift was necessary, Ladd argues, as alinguistic and acultural perspectives did not sufficiently describe the lived experiences of Deaf people as a cultural minority group (p. 44).

Over time, the field of Deaf Studies has examined a variety of perspectives well beyond concepts of Deaf culture, community, and identity. More recently, according to Kusters et al. (2017), the Deaf culture concept evolved into an "umbrella term. It now includes embodied behaviour such as waving or causing vibrations, artistic expression, technology, accessibility concerns, and checklists of Deaf "values" and "habits" (p. 8). It also is a perspective that fails to capture the totality of the Deaf experience; for instance, it fails to account for how even a Deaf person who does not encounter sign language or Deaf culture until later in life can attend a residential school for the Deaf and express feelings of having finally *found* their true home—even though it might be argued that they did not possess or encounter Deaf culture prior to that point (Baynton, 2008, p. 294). Yet, the cultural perspective is also widely considered to be an essential one, described by Deaf scholars as a necessary step that has permitted the reframing of Deaf communities and cultures in the face of a long history of pathological and medicalized discourses, over centuries of oralism, that have impacted the lives of Deaf people (Paddy Ladd referenced in Kusters et al., 2017, p. 13).

The term *culture* has been criticized across disciplines for its limited ability to capture the complexity of human experience. Lila Abu-Lughod (2008) agrees that the term is often used as an essentialist concept and argues against its use entirely. Abu-Lughod suggests that the term *culture* has a way of establishing false ideas of group coherency and serves to permanently fix a homogenized experience among members of a "cultural" group in ways that do not exist (p. 58). To resist establishing such a false "cultural" coherency, Abu-Lughod suggests that we need to recognize that people's lived experiences are diverse and far too complex to be categorized as a "culture." Abu-Lughod suggests, instead, that we should adopt an ethnographic perspective, situate people in time and space, and listen to their lived experiences in the form of stories. Similar arguments have been made against homogenizing ideas such as "community" and the consequential risks of establishing a false sense of coherency. To Roberto Esposito (2009), the traditional view of a "community" as being a group of members with shared characteristics is problematic. He argues that a community is not about *having* something in common with each other; rather, a community functions as a continuum and eventually reaches a boundary where something is not the "same," and, at that point, a disruption occurs. Therefore, this disruption of sameness itself spawns the existence of a community. Esposito argues:

> The being of a community is a gap, the space that relates to others in a common non-belonging, a loss of what is one's own which never manages to be added up into a common good. (p. 27)

Esposito's definition of community invites a reconsideration, underlining how conventional definitions of a common concept such as "community" can re-establish boundaries. The boundaries of a community impact people's lived experiences, and their sense of belonging and not belonging; and thus point to how structural forces need to be considered in the context of the relationality between deaf and hearing people.

**Post-Structuralism Model and Communication**

Aurality is a driving force in many cultures around the world. Often, the sensory qualities emphasized by society are not necessarily linked to the dominant medium of communication but rather are perceived by the dominant group as the medium of creation and life itself (McLuhan, 1996, p. 148). Derrida (2016) writes that the prevailing discourse in Western and French thought

revolves around “structuralism,” defined by the organization of meanings within society. These organized meanings take a hierarchical form, creating a dominating centre of reason known as logocentrism (p. 108). Traditionally, cultural dimensions were considered as distinct from a society’s structures and institutions. It was believed that organized structures and institutions were a society’s primary means of regulating people’s behaviour and practices (Abu-Lughod, 2008, as cited in Gertz, 2008, p. 29). Derrida’s work in post-structuralism focuses both on forms and on their social and cultural signification. Derrida argues that,

> to be a structuralist is first to concentrate on the organisation of meaning, on the autonomy and idiosyncratic balance, the completion of each moment, each form; and it is to refuse to regulate everyone that is not comprehensible as an ideal type to the status of aberrational accidence. (as cited in Crowley, 1989, p. 26)

Derrida (2016) is renowned for his deconstructional philosophical work, including for developing the very concept of deconstruction. This approach challenges the existing totality of structures forming a naturalized centre of constructed meaning (logocentrism) by providing a force to disassociate this assumed structural totality. Derrida also introduces another strategic concept, *phonocentrism*, which critiques societal norms governing language, reading, interpretation, and writing (Crowley, 1989, p. 1). Derrida (1978) challenges Hegel’s assertion that force becomes a phenomenon at the moment of articulation. He highlights the relationship between form, force, and significance in relation to language, and critiques language for imposing a limit on knowledge due to inherent structural limits:

> One must refer to language’s peculiar inability to emerge from itself in order to articulate its origin, and not to the *thought* of force. Force is the other of language without which language would not be what it is. (p. 27; emphasis in the original)

According to Derrida (2016), in society, logocentrism gives way to phonocentrism, representing the “absolute proximity of voice and being, voice and meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning.” Sound and the act of hearing oneself speak are collapsed into the essence of presence (pp. 12–13). Derrida suggests that logocentrism-phonocentrism not only represents centrism itself but forms the basis for human presence. He writes that the meaning of a sign is an element of sound and forms an integral part of the fundamental production of meaning. In

consequence, Derrida explores the rejection of writing, since to hear oneself speak brings forward the very presence of being:

> The notion of the sign … remains therefore within the heritage of that logocentrism which is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning … one already has a premonition that phonocentrism gets mixed up with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as presence. (Derrida, 2016, p. 12)

According to Derrida, meaning is structured through centres, particularly phonocentrism. These centralized forms of organized meaning subordinate other elements to themselves, such as the subordination of written language to spoken language.

Scholars in Deaf Studies and critical Deaf art suggest that phonocentrism is also a theoretical perspective that serves as a means to examine the subordination of signed languages not only to spoken languages (Lane, 1989; Bauman, 2004) but also to spoken and written languages (Lapiak, 2014). Ladd (2003) notes that institutions, especially those providing educational, human, and medical services, consist in oralism,[4] and that phonocentrism influences how institutions attempt to provide services to Deaf people (p. 113). The term for this hearing-centered paternalism, coined in 1972 by American Deaf educator and author Tom Humphries, is *audism*:

> Audism is the corporate institution for dealing with Deaf people, dealing with them by making statements about them, authorizing views of them, describing them, teaching about them, governing where they go to school and, in some cases, where they live; in short, audism is the hearing way of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the Deaf community. (Lane, 1992, p. 43)

Bauman (2004) positions audism as a theory within the broader theoretical framework of phonocentrism, which is described as an ontological orientation of voice-as-presence that, when institutionalized, perpetuates violence against Deaf people (Bauman, 2008b, p. 42). Lane critiques medical and educational institutions that claim to care for Deaf people but, in reality,

[4] *Oralism* is defined as the educational system imposed upon Deaf communities worldwide during the last 120 years, which removed Deaf people and replaced them with hearing-led systems that promoted speech, lipreading, and hearing aids only (Ladd, 2003, p. xviii).

sustain the conditions of disability (Lane, 1992, as cited in Bauman, 2004, p. 241). From a hearing-centric perspective, Lane and Bauman argue that a system exists that privileges hearing people (Lane, 1992; Bauman, 2004, p. 241). Bauman (2008b) suggests that deconstruction is necessary to dismantle the logocentric norm of phonocentrism—voice as presence/being—and argues that we must reject this narrow definition of voice to allow for new relations between being and language, and for the inclusion of sign language (p. 51). Bauman (2004) argues that speech must be replaced with sign language to eradicate phonocentrism (p. 245). However, to replace one centre with another may simply alter a system of advantage without doing anything to address the issue of subordination.

Jolanta Lapiak, a Canadian Ameslan[5] artist, also employs Derrida's framework of phonocentrism. Instead of adhering to fixed centres, however, Lapiak establishes the boundaries of language modalities as fluid. She aims to move beyond identity politics (Deaf people versus hearing people) toward a concept of a language continuum, illustrating how different language modalities (signed, spoken, and written) are. In a public performance titled *Arche-Writing Performance* (2007), Lapiak actively resists perceived, divisive boundaries between signed, spoken, and written languages. She seeks to show a connectedness that exists among different language modalities:

> Lapiak, masked, stands in front of the room. She stands in front of a smooth wall covered by a long piece of white rice paper. Facing the audience and holding one piece of black coal in each hand, Lapiak begins to move. She begins to "speak" in American Sign Language. Then, she turns around towards the wall. She continues to "speak" as she presses her hands against the wall, making contact with the paper. Her "spoken" signs are now transferred into writing. A permanent and visual voice was created. (my account of Lapiak's live performance)

Lapiak argues that the hierarchical positions of language modalities, such as signed and written languages, are not static but dynamic. In resisting phonocentrism, we cannot replace one language modality for another. Still, there must be a "giving up" of phonocentrism's control by allowing space for "eye-people" to offer diverse ways of thinking and doing in society (Lapiak,

[5] The term *Ameslan* (an abbreviation from "American Sign Language") indicates a concept that identifies a person with their language. It is an obsolete term coined in the 1960s, which Lapiak (2007) revitalizes.

2014). If one looks at language as relational, Lapiak's work considers the opportunities for analysis that exist in the connections between people and language modalities. Similarly, recent research in Deaf Studies has demonstrated the importance of redefining sensory boundaries and embracing interdisciplinary relationality.

In their research, Friedner and Helmreich (2012) challenge the established dichotomy between the sense of hearing (the ear) and of seeing (the eye), and argue for a reconsideration of the separation between sound studies and Deaf studies (p. 74). Friedner and Helmreich state that spoken (vocal) and signed (hand/face positioning) languages are both articulation vehicles because both serve as a means to move beyond language, beyond the body's mechanical function, to produce speech and signs in ways that illustrate how the dimensions of language and society are entangled (p. 80). Lapiak (2009) suggests that relinquishing common, established boundaries, structures, and ways of thinking and doing opens up a sense of "home" or liberation for Deaf people. In a 2009 public performance titled *In the eye of ~~phonocentrism~~*[6], Lapiak mobilizes this process of "giving up" phonocentrism:

> On stage, Lapiak set an English dictionary onto a pedestal and opened it to a random page. Lapiak described the book as filled with English words—words that had dominated language in society for centuries. The audience was asked to "give up" phonocentrism by ripping out a page. (my account of Lapiak's live performance)

In this performance, Lapiak made no distinction between deaf and hearing people; everyone was equally called to "give up" phonocentrism by ripping a page from the book. In the act of ripping, no one, either deaf or hearing, shared the same sensation or experience. Lapiak stated that the act of "ripping" evokes different emotions, giving people a sense of guilt, regret, and pain—and for some, like Lapiak herself, a sense of relief and justice, a sense of being "unleashed" from the control or confinement of phonocentrism. As Lapiak (2009) puts it:

> Ripping out the pages from this book feels like "a sense of justice for the historic and enduring phonocentric based eradication of sign language in society."

With this, Lapiak joins others whose performative scores take a position of non-duality. The work in non-duality consists in resisting duality, which seeks to separate (Lushetich, 2014). A

[6] Lapiak writes ~~phonocentrism~~ with a strikethrough as an act of erasing ~~phonocentrism~~ as she writes.

critique of phonocentrism exposes its narrow view of rationality. Phonocentrism establishes relationships by creating dominant centres, like sound, in positions of superiority while subordinating other sensory experiences. Efforts have been made to deconstruct phonocentrism by replacing it with various experiences from centres of deaf experience, such as visio-centric (visual) experience or the tactile-centric (touch) experience of the DeafBlind.

In a society shaped, and thus designed, by predominantly hearing and speaking people, emphasis should shift from seeking a central point toward prioritizing exploration of perspectives that bring deaf and hearing people together in communication and onto common ground. Wilson (2008) argues that establishing such a common ground is necessary for members of different cultures to begin sharing knowledge and understanding (p. 6). Wilson suggests that centralizing a key aspect of Indigenous knowledge—the concept of relationality—and one's accountability to those relationships (p. 7) is essential. From this point of view, communication is relational.

When navigating the boundaries of language modalities (signed, spoken, or written) and modes of communication (relational, material, immaterial), the experience of communication persists, both before and during the presence, or absence, of sign language interpreting services. The connection between humans and their environment still exists. To better understand communication experiences, attention needs to be paid to understanding how communication between deaf and hearing people works. I argue that we need to shift focus from *barriers* to *spaces*. But before we discuss spaces, it is essential to consider how each of the four models above is insufficient for capturing an individual's experience of communication. All these models are silent on certain key elements. First, they do not account for how communicating is an experience about the relationships, not the disconnections, which exist between the people sharing, or not, the same language and/or culture. Second, they do not account for how communicating is indifferent to disability or ability, and that both deaf and hearing people have their own communication needs and experiences. Third, they do not account for how communicating includes a relationship between people and their internal and external environments. Finally, they do not account for how communicating pertains to one's well-being and is, indeed, the principal means by which a person forges their sense of self and well-being in the world. To address this absence, I am basing my investigation into deaf and hearing communication on a different theoretical perspective: ecology.

**Ecology and Communication**

Spaces are located at the borders of signed, spoken, and written languages and are multi-model, inter-sensory, and multi-relational. Within these spaces, when communication between deaf and hearing people is examined, a complex communication ecology takes shape, decentralized from any individual or language, linking people to themselves, to others, and to their environment. Bateson (1972) advocated for adopting an ecological perspective, urging people to find new and alternative ways of examining interconnections. Coined by biologist Ernst Haeckel in 1869, the term *ecology* referred to the relationships and interactions between living organisms and their environment (as cited in Marsden, 1983, p. 29). In the resulting field of ecology, these interactions were recognized within ecological systems, where multiple interactions occurred between individuals and their environment at any one time (Wasik, 2016, p. 37). The concept of ecology has evolved, giving rise to a new theoretical perspective known as "social ecology," which brings together elements from sociology and geography. R. E. Park defined human ecology as the pursuit of understanding the interconnectedness of individuals and their spatial terms,

> to emphasize … space. In society, we not only live together, but at the same time, we live apart, and human relations can always be reckoned, with more or less accuracy, in terms of distance. (as cited in Marsden, 1983, p. 34)

Proceeding from a classical ecological viewpoint, Marsden (1983) argued that environmental analysis aimed to recognize that human activities were organized within sociocultural frameworks, with competing forces that both interrupted and regulated the functioning of the ecology itself (p. 34). Emerging from biology and anthropology, Gregory Bateson coined the term "ecology of the mind" and extended the concept of ecology further into the social context. Bateson introduced the idea that individuals are open systems and contributed considerations for learning and communication theories (Wasik, 2016, p. 39). With this, Bateson challenged traditional ways of thinking of "perception" as a singular and narrow event, challenging people to find new and alternative perspectives on any subject and thus to see, in new ways, the new realities that exist. Bateson argued that to find these new perspectives and realities, we must understand how things work by adopting a different perspective:

> It is inculcated by our great universities who believe there is such a thing as psychology, which is different from sociology, and such a thing as anthropology, which is different from both, and such a thing as aesthetics or art criticism, which is different from both, all three, all four, whatever. And that the world is made of separable items of knowledge in which, if you were a student, you could be examined by a series of disconnected questions called true and false quizzes—quiz bits, as you might say. And the first point I want to get over to you is that the world is not like that at all. Or, let us be more polite. The world in which I live is not like that at all. And as to you, it's your business to live in whatever world you want to. (as cited in Bateson et al., 2011)

From the perspective of an ecology of the mind, Bateson promoted the concept of "systems of ideas" to examine how humans live together. As Bateson argues: "The major problems in the world are the result of the difference between how nature works and how people think" (Bateson & Sieburg, & Bateson, 2011, video archive). He argues, further, that everything is connected and that people's thoughts are not their own but by-products of their culture. In his theory of the ecology of the mind, Bateson affirms that ecology, or context, gives meaning. "Without context," he states, "words and actions have no meaning" (Bateson & Sieburg, & Bateson, 2011, video archive). A social ecology perspective holds great promise for reshaping our concepts of communication. However, applying an ecological perspective to the social world is incomplete without considering the living element of the senses. As we establish the new perspective—an ecology of communication—we will first link certain interrelated perspectives in sensory anthropology and communication.

**Rooting Communicating in Sensorial Perspectives**

Communication serves as a vehicle for human relationality. When people navigate the boundaries and interstitial spaces between signed, spoken, and written languages, communication must be released from linear and transactional perspectives that are limited to a notion of movement from one entity (sender) to another entity (receiver). Instead, communication should be considered and understood to be inter-relational and inter-sensorial. Finnegan (2002) argues that modes of communication comprise diverse ways through which

human beings interconnect with one another and their environment across time and space. According to Finnegan, communication is an activity that mobilizes the social ecology:

> Communication is to be found in the creative mutual interacting of individuals or groups in specific contexts rather than in abstract systems of codes or the transmission of bounded "messages." Communicating is not a once-and-for-all transfer of some referential context but develops as the interactors jointly and severally co-construct the process. (p. 7)

In this context, language becomes an "action," representing a process that can transcend social boundaries rather than solely being a "product" or a distinct entity with a defined set of symbols and thoughts (p. 7). Instead, language becomes an active process in "forming the human world" and plays a crucial role in understanding the process of interaction within social theory.

> These perspectives [language as action] highlight the active and processual nature of human life and the role of creative human action in forming the human world, linked into the increasing emphasis on process and interaction within social theory more generally. (p. 7)

Adopting a broader understanding of communication allows for more diverse perspectives on how communication works. From an ecology-of-communication perspective, the interconnection between language modalities and human experience is foregrounded, highlighting the complexity existing between people and their environment. Finnegan argues that all of our senses play a role in human interconnection and calls for a broader view of communication that encompasses various modalities, including nonverbal, material, and linguistic modalities. Sense-based research offers new dimensions for understanding the complexities of human interaction. As David Howes (2005) writes: "The senses are constructed and lived differently in different societies and periods. This fact has profound implications for how cultural subjects comprehend the environment and other persons and things in their environment" (p. 399). When approaching another culture, what is the relative importance of the different senses to the members of that culture, and how does their culture's map of the senses differ from ours? The senses are crucial in establishing links between people and their relationship with themselves, others, and their environments. They cast light on places previously shadowed by dominating concepts of language and language translation or interpretation. Although the senses are known to comprise

the human being's perceptual system, the interrelatedness of which provides continuous and stable information, making living and adapting through possible in life (Gibson, 1968), Rodaway (1994) argues that "the senses are not merely passive receptors of particular kinds of environment stimuli but are actively involved in the structuring of that information and are significant in the overall sense of a world achieved by the sentient" (p. 5).

To reach beyond the limits of language and in conjunction with the consideration of the senses, Jackson (2013) contends that it is imperative to consider the body. More specifically, the body's actions must be released from existing cognitive and linguistic models that prioritize verbal action over bodily action:

> The first problem arises from the intellectualist tendency to regard body praxis as secondary to verbal praxis … from both phylogenetic and ontogenetic points of view, thinking and communicating through the body precede and to a great extent always remain beyond speech. (pp. 54–55)

Jackson's work emanates from the perspectives of Binswanger and Merleau-Ponty, who asserted that meaning should not only be a "sign" existing in a dimension separate from the body but rather a "sign" that constitutes the body's action, as meaning is experienced in the environment before its transformation into a symbol of language. The essence of this experience gives a person a sense of "being in the world." Jackson (2013) argues that incorporating a phenomenological approach to understanding the body as praxis is crucial. This involves understanding "how human experience is grounded in bodily movement within a social and material environment and by examining at the level of the event the interplay of habitual patterns of body use and conversational ideas about the world" (p. 57). From this perspective, the body is not pathologized; it connects people and their environment, fostering empathy and a shared understanding. Jackson explains this sense of "being in the world" through a metaphor of standing/falling and a sense of equilibrium/disequilibrium:

> In this sense, uprightness of posture may be said to define a psychophysical relationship with the world, so to lose this position, this "standing," is simultaneously a bodily and intellectual loss of balance, a disturbance at the centre and ground of our being. Metaphors of falling and disequilibrium disclose this integral connection of the psychic and the physical; they do not express a concept in terms of a bodily image. (p. 55)

This metaphor of equilibrium/disequilibrium aligns with the work of Canadian DeafSpace researcher Robert T. Sirvage, who examines society's assumptions, commonly erroneous ones, about the lived experiences of Deaf people. Sirvage (personal communication, December 15, 2019) signs: "How misguided it is for people wanting to understand the lived experiences of Deaf people to plug their ears. If you want to understand how Deaf people perceive and experience the world—walk backwards." This transition in the discussion brings us to my proposed theoretical context for understanding communication. This social ecology perspective includes within it an element of understanding communication in the context of one's well-being.

Dylan Robinson (2016) noted that Canada's reconciliation efforts with Indigenous peoples are limited because Canada is unwilling to jeopardize the integrity of current dominant structures. Similar approaches existing in Canada similarly impact the existence of signed languages—with the current dominant sensorial and communication structures being those of sound and speech. Consequently, people in positions of power approach communication in ways that legitimize their oral-normative points of view, systems, and power structures. In a predominantly hearing and spoken-language society, current accessibility and human rights law neither prohibits oral normativity nor guarantees the provision of sign language interpreting. Thus, the law is constricted in preventing barriers from arising during interactions between hearing and deaf people.[7] Thus, it is essential to move away from traditional discourses about whether or not discrimination is occurring and move instead toward a better understanding of how communication happens.

The sensorium offers investigation into inter-sensorial realities. By adopting a social and sensory ecology-of-communication perspective, we shift away from the predominant models of human communication, which depict it as a human-centred cognitive and linear process involving the encoding, transmitting, receiving, and decoding of messages (Shannon and Weaver, 1964). It is also a movement toward acknowledging the tensions existing between personal

[7] It is common practice to use an uppercase *D* in *Deaf* to refer to a linguistic and cultural minority such as the Deaf community or the Deaf culture. In this work, I look to move beyond discussions of culture. I acknowledge that Deaf culture is a culture itself, and that Deaf and hearing people have different cultures. However, in this work, I choose to write in a lower case "d" to move beyond an emphasis of identity and culture and into different discussions of relationality. I also seek to bring deaf and hearing people onto a common ground in space and time. Moreover, visually using the lower case in both the *deaf* and *hearing* terminology reminds me of this intention. When I quote others, their original reference to culture is maintained.

disputations and external circumstances (Jackson & Piette, 2015). Rodaway (1994) writes that communication establishes an active relationship with the world, converting abstract spaces into meaningful places and perhaps—through the social dimension of touching—giving us roots (p. 45). The social dimension of touching is also present in Howes's (2005) concept of emplacement, characterized by the sensuous interrelationship of the body-mind-environment (p. 7) and inter-sensoriality, the multidirectional interaction of the senses and sensory ideologies (p. 9) across deaf and hearing bodies and cultures. As Howes and Classen (2014) elaborate:

> The counterpart of emplacement is displacement, the feeling that one is homeless, disconnected from one's physical and social environment. A sense of displacement is often the plight of the socially marginalized. (p. 7)

Embracing a relational approach makes it possible to move away from cognitive, linguistic, and other linear communication models. Instead, it allows for the adoption of a perspective that views communication as a creative human process that is inter-sensory and includes many modes of human interaction and living across time and space (Finnegan, 2002, p. 5). Nancy (1990) examines communication as an expression of one's sense of being, asserting that this must be understood as differential or relational. He argues that this relationality is measured by the act of speaking language, specifically in the spaces between a word and one's experience in relation to this word (p. xxix). From an ecology-of-communication perspective, language serves as a tool for articulating one's knowledge but is not itself the orientation point of experience. In this perspective, what becomes available for analysis is the concept of "emplacement."

Howes (2005) define "emplacement" as a combination of sensory and social values. This concept is presented from an ecology-of-communication perspective (p. 7). In particular, emplacement is associated with an orientation rather than language, encompassing the feeling of being "home." Howes (2005) adds:

> The counterpart of emplacement is displacement, the feeling that one is homeless, disconnected from one's physical and social environment. A sense of displacement is often the plight of the socially marginalized. (p. 7)

People who can hear greatly value their sense of hearing, and they establish connections between their body, mind, and environments based on this sense. However, these connections do not

translate on par with a deaf person's sense of being in the world. Sirvage (2019) articulates the concept of emplacement and introduces the sense of balance/unbalance as a metaphor to describe a deaf person's sense of being in the world. Howes and Classen (2014) also delve into the concepts of the senses as a means of communication. What Sirvage describes is a sense of orientation which describes an overarching notion of emplacement. This orientation is not centred on language but revolves around a profound feeling of being "home." This sense of home, akin to Sirvage's sense of balance, may be disrupted, creating tensions between desired and undesired sensory states such as balance/imbalance and home/homeless. Communication has traditionally been perceived as a cognitive and linear process. Nonetheless, our communication is also connected to our bodies. Jackson (2013) argues that the body needs to be released from prevailing cognitive and linguistic models that diminish the value of body-related experiential practices. According to Jackson, recognizing the body as a necessary precursor to the senses allows for a deeper understanding of one's sense of being.

Howes and Classen (2014) affirm that combining sensory and social values forms connections between one's body and mind, and one's physical and social environments (p. 7). Jackson (2013) argues that as we surpass the limits of language and contemplate the senses, the body should also be considered. In this view, the body is not pathologized; instead, it is regarded as something that connects people to their environment.

It seems insufficient to describe a mere "sense of being" and, more importantly, to identify senses of "well-being-in-the-world" (Jackson, 2002) in seeking to understand how social organizations and human emotions intersect. A growing body of research grounded in social constructivist approaches asserts the necessity to consider the body in ways that include human emotions. Building on social constructivist approaches, this body of research considers the body, emotions, and how lived experiences are felt (de Courville Nicol, 2022; Hochschild, 2012). Hochschild (2012) writes that feelings are vital information, which, alongside other senses such as sight and hearing, help construct an individual's experience (p. 31). De Courville Nicol (2022) writes that emotional norms are felt forms of problem-solving:

> Embodied in/capacity theory … builds on these insights. It introduces the concept of emotional-norms as felt forms of problem-solving. These embodied concepts of in-capacity are internal strategic responses to danger. They are the dialectically felt forms of

> the problems individuals embody in negotiating their everyday lives. Emotional-norms strategically orient individual and collective action in the confrontation, avoidance, prevention, or be friendly of painful outcomes and the implementation of pleasurable ones. (p. 15)

Like Goffman, de Courville Nicol recognizes the presence of spaces of interaction, specifically the *interfacial*. De Courville Nicol conceptualizes the interfacial as a boundary between one's "inner and outer culture" and defines this space as a realm in which one can witness the intersection of social and personal cultures.

**Defining a Relational Model of Communicating**

Artist Jolanta Lapiak's work moves beyond identity politics and its accompanying divisions (e.g., deaf people versus hearing people) and phonocentrism (spoken language dominance). She develops the notion of a language continuum, illustrating how different language modalities (signed, spoken, and written) are connected (Lapiak, 2007). Friedner and Helmreich (2012) also question the division not of different language modalities but of the senses, such as hearing and seeing. This has led me to explore new ways in which to understand the connections between linguistic, physical, and material elements. Lapiak has contributed to a body of wellness research, stating that she felt a sense of being "unleashed" to overcome dominance, such as deconstructing phonocentrism. Consequently, she wanted to position communication beyond encoded and decoded messages ready for translation and, instead, as a shared inter-sensory and intercultural experience. The two legal cases mentioned above, *Howard v. University of British Columbia* (1993) and *Dunkley v. UBC and another* (2015), drew attention to institutionalized oral normativity in Canada and underline how society's perception of communication, its gaps addressed via sign-language translation, falls short in accommodating the changing landscape of oral normativity and the diverse lived experiences of both hearing and deaf people. As mentioned above, in a society dominated by hearing and spoken language, the law neither prohibits oral normativity nor guarantees the provision of sign-language interpreting, thereby limiting its efficacy in removing or preventing the barriers that exist when hearing and deaf people interact. To foster a more inclusive approach, it is necessary to move beyond traditional discourses centred on pathological characteristics, language, and culture, and to

remove barriers instead of compounding them. To do this, we consider not how communication is being prohibited but, instead, how communication is occurring.

This research approach adopts a relational stance by incorporating the concept of social sensorial ecology with the idea of communication. Though this is a social-sensorial ecological perspective, communication is no longer limited by medical or cultural identity politics, language privilege, or subordination discourses. Rather than isolate communication within individual frameworks, here it is examined by considering how these ideas interact. Drawing inspiration from Gregory Bateson (1972), I challenge the conventional perception of events within which people and their environments are assumed to be disconnected. I counter the prevailing accessibility discourses that focus on identifying and removing barriers, which, in and of themselves, necessitate the existence of social gaps and disconnectedness to be remedied. I aim instead to rethink the construct of communication by embracing a new perspective and, as Bateson encouraged, to do so by finding out how things work (Bateson, 2010). This research project aims to map intercultural resonance by following the senses across the interstitial spaces between deaf and hearing people where communication occurs. I took a moment to explore the interstitial spaces—inter-sensory, inter-cultural, inter-linguistic—within the communication between deaf and hearing people. I observed how experience, memory, social life, and the environment interconnect. This project will delve into the emplacement concept, closely analyzing its manifestation in the interstitial spaces between deaf and hearing people. Where legal discourses are limited to bringing forward ideas of the existence of an ecology of communication, the exploration of communication as creative interaction offers new ways of relating to ourselves, to one another, and to our environments.

In this section, I introduced the field of ecology as a theoretical approach that allows the process and experience of communication to be better understood as an interconnected web of multi-model and inter-sensory relationships. Building upon the work of other scholars before me, who moved beyond identity politics and the persistent divisions between deaf and hearing people, I, too, sought to turn my attention toward sensory studies and began to define a Relational Communication Model.

## Chapter Three: Seeing the Social World As – Oral Normative

In this part, I take a closer look at the social world and the functioning of communication between deaf and hearing people, I will contextualize the main arguments of the two legal cases aforementioned, *Howard v. University of British Columbia* (1993) and *Dunkley v. UBC and another* (2015), relating to communicating, deaf people, and sign language in Canadian society. These arguments are not an exhaustive list; to offer one would require an extensive discourse analysis and is beyond of the scope of this research. The arguments selected exemplify some of the more prominent themes and are, in my opinion, significant for understanding how communication is constricted as well as the limits of legal discourses for addressing oral normativity in society.

### Communicating Between Spoken and Signed Languages

In 1993, Nigel Howard, a deaf student, said he could not pursue his teaching degree at the University of British Columbia because sign language interpreting services would not be provided (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993). Born profoundly deaf and a native user of American Sign Language, Howard could speak and read lips. However, in environments of two or more people, such as a classroom, he needed the presence of sign language interpreters to follow the communication occurring in spoken language. Howard won his case and was provided interpreting services by the university. In 2015, Jessica Dunkley, a deaf Métis medical resident, was offered a medical residency at the University of British Columbia in 2015, which was to be held at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. Dunkley's request for sign language interpretation services was denied (*Dunkley v. UBC and another*, 2015). The two cases occurred twenty-two years apart, so the pertinent question is this: Since Howard won his case, and as Dunkley's case involved similar issues (i.e., deafness, spoken language, the need for interpretation) and the same academic institution, why wasn't the experience of communicating easier for Dunkley? That in both cases the deaf person's human rights challenge was successful demonstrates that human rights legislation in Canada is sound. In both cases, however, it is the deaf person who shoulders the burden of struggle and, potentially, to give up and walk away from a service, institution, or goal they wish to achieve—such as attending university, obtaining a degree, and pursuing a chosen career. How might legislation or policies therefore be altered to

allow for spaces, including institutions, that are inclusive of diverse communication needs between deaf and hearing people? To examine this question further, we will examine the similarities between the two cases.

**A Pathological Construct and Legal Imperative Adopted by Institutions: Deafness**

Both deaf students, Howard and Dunkley, asked the university to protect them from discrimination. Howard claimed discrimination under section 3 of British Columbia's *Human Rights Act* (1984) for failing to provide a sign language interpreter. Per section 3 of the Act:

> No person shall (a) deny to a person or class of persons any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public or (b) discriminate against a person or class of persons with respect to any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public, because of the physical or mental disability of that person or class of persons.

Dunkley claimed discrimination against her under section 8 of the BC *Human Rights Code*:

> (1) A person must not, without a bona fide and reasonable justification,
>
> (a) deny to a person or class of persons any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public or
>
> (b) discriminate against a person or class of persons regarding any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public, because of the physical or mental disability of that person or class of persons.

The pathological and medicalized physical characteristic of deafness, as a disability, is a necessary legal piece to be considered, being an important element that triggers the grounds for protection against discrimination. In addition to an individual's physical characteristics, the common physical characteristics of a group must also be considered. The case *Eldridge v. British Columbia (Attorney General)* (1997), used as part of the Dunkley analysis, established the need for sign-language interpretation in medical settings and established that discrimination is also linked to the individual and to the intersection between individual physical characteristics and social rules. This intersection, then, results in a disproportionate burden experienced by those who possess this characteristic in comparison to those who do not,

> The adverse effects suffered by deaf persons stem not from the imposition of a burden not faced by the mainstream population, but rather from a failure to ensure that they benefit equally from a service offered to everyone. (*Eldridge v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*, 1997, para. 66)

In other words, the characteristic of deafness is a legal requirement and a characteristic shared by a group, and is rule bound. This characteristic is experienced in the intersection between deaf people, other people, legislation, and institutions. The decision of the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal (Honourable Tom W. Patch) in the *Howard* (1993) case explicitly determined that discrimination had occurred on the grounds of Nigel Howard's disability characteristic (deafness) and that, without providing sign-language interpreters, the University provided educational services in a way that adversely affected Howard (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993, p. 23).

In the *Dunkley* (2015) case, Jessica Dunkley had to prove her characteristics of deafness, and the institution with the relevant authority decided upon what evidence would be sufficient to validate this characteristic. Upon acceptance into the medical residency program, the University argued that Dunkley needed to prove her deafness to validate her need and request accommodation. To comply, Dunkley submitted her audiology report. In addition, since first-year UBC residents are randomly placed at one of three training sites (hospitals), Dunkley had made a special request to be placed in an ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat) rotation at the hospital because it was located the most closely to the institution's accessibility services, the ENT department,[8] and the A&D Office (today called the Centre for Accessibility) (*Dunkley v. UBC and another*, 2015, para. 620). However, the university did not accept Dunkley's audiology report as sufficient evidence of her deafness. Dunkley testified that the University had told her, only shortly before starting her residency in July, that the audiology report and letter were insufficient evidence. The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority requested a new report to be generated by an ENT specialist at the university. Dunkley replied that since her first diagnosis of deafness as a child by an ENT specialist, she had been under the care of audiologists (para. 184). Nonetheless, the institution

[8] Dunkley's goal was to seek a rotation in dermatology; she was not seeking an ENT specialty.

insisted. Due to the wait times to see an ENT, it was only *after the start* of Dunkley's residency that she obtained an ENT specialist's diagnosis: deafness.

**A Social Context of Competing Tensions and Needs**

When discussions arise about communication accommodations for deaf people, the reasons for or against them extend far beyond realms of rights, disability, and language. These arguments are like a constellation of needs existing at a relative distance from each other, each competing for space and energy to exist. This competition creates social tension. In the *Dunkley* case, the university identified that there exists a limited funding pool designated for accommodating students with disabilities (para. 490a). This pool of funding must be shared among all disabled students, and that students have competing needs. In other words, the funds must be available to all students in need and be used equally among the students with disabilities, which ignores the market value and the actual costs necessary to provide the requested accommodation. In a letter sent by the university to Dr. Dunkley notifying her that she had been place on permanent leave from her medical residency program, the main reason cited pertains to financial considerations, specifically the cost of sign-language interpreting services and the absence of a budget available to pay for such expenses.

> You [Dunkley] must understand that financial considerations, while not the sole considerations, do play a significant role in determining whether the full accommodation you seek can be provided. This is a reality we must face. We have to be able to identify a source for funding this accommodation, in particular the cost of providing interpreters, as the office of the postgraduate dean does not have a budget for matters of this nature. (para. 233)

In Howard's case, the university identified an alternative funding source, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), and insisted that Howard apply for this external funding to assist with reducing costs for the university. However, the VRS program was intended to assist people with disabilities to enter the job market, and given that Howard had already obtained a BA degree, he was deemed to possess sufficient skills to do so. But Howard wanted to further his education and sought a teaching degree to become a teacher. This, however, disqualified him from the VRS funding program:

> VRS would not fund graduate courses for interpreting services for Nigel as he already had training and experience which would allow him to enter the competitive job market. He has more than entry level employment skills. (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993, p. 128)

The lived experience of deafness within a university institution transcends dimensions of disability and the need for language accommodation. Instead, it is situated in a social context and is linked to other, often competing, social needs. These needs can include concerns regarding perceived fairness, roles and responsibilities, economy and budget, and politics. All of these dimensions play out in the social world in spaces where deaf and hearing people are communicating. The next similarity between these two cases illustrates the oral normativity of society and how deaf people are burdened with navigating it.

**Navigating an Oral Normative Society**

In the *Dunkley* case, Tribunal Member Tyshynski noted the significance of considering the structural dimensions of society and how spoken language is embedded into the design and delivery of education services. This concept, I argue, extends beyond educational institutions and can be used as a critique of society in general. Tyshynski stated that educational services "are designed for persons without a hearing disability" and that "the norm of oral communication is oriented to persons who can hear and impose a burden on persons who are Deaf that is not imposed on others" (*Dunkley v. UBC and another*, 2015, paras. 680, 389). But identifying institutions, such as educational services, as oral normative is not the only consideration. We also need to recognize how oral normativity is a social landscape that consistently changes, adding complexity and challenge to those who navigate it.

For instance, in the *Dunkley* (2015) case, Dr. Rungta, Associate Dean for the Postgraduate Medical Education Office and spokesperson for the University, argued that if an academic institution provided sign-language interpreting services to Dunkley at one point in time, it would not be guaranteed to do so again, stating that contexts change.

> I really took to heart what Dr. Dunkley said, which is that her assumption, I think, had been because that had always been the case for her, which is that her—all her undergraduate training both at the University of British Columbia and the University of

> Ottawa have always been provided with no specific obstacles or barriers. And when she matched to the residency program, it was a whole different landscape. And I think it was my impression that Dr. Dunkley was operating on the fact that she was at a university and why should you know why should it not be just as it was, but it was not as it was. And I think that that was somewhat difficult to begin to change, so to speak. (*Dunkley v. UBC and another*, 2015, para. 204)

Navigating this elusive and evolving landscape, Dunkley had to begin her residency without a guarantee of sign-language interpreting services. To adapt, Dunkley agreed to the requirement that she complete three (of four) rotations in rheumatology and research, because these did not require sign-language interpretation. The university proposed this approach as a suitable accommodation. However, what this meant for Dunkley was severely restricted options for gaining exposure and experience in the medical field. The university morphed Dunkley's social environment in ways that limited social engagement, thereby precluding the use, and thus the need, for sign-language interpretation. If the deaf person is isolated and there are no hearing people, there is no deaf-and-hearing communication; thus, there remains no need to pay for sign-language interpreting services.

In the Tribunal's decision in the *Howard* case, limits were also placed on the provision of interpreting services:

> I find that the Respondent has discriminated against the Complainant by providing a service—postgraduate education—in a manner that adversely affects the Complainant, and that it failed to reasonably accommodate the Complainant by not providing a sign language interpreter. My conclusion does not mean that respondents must, of its own resources, meet the access needs of all students with disabilities. … If that situation changed then the hardship on the University would also change; the hardship might then be undue. (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993, para. 54)

"If clauses" in legal discourses, particularly those introducing hardship, continue to be problematic to those navigating spaces where deaf and hearing people are communicating. Despite the lack of successful argumentation of financial hardship in court, the institution's *perceived* undue hardship is played out and endured by the deaf complainant in their efforts to communicate with hearing people, well before any legal proceedings are even initiated. To this

end, an additional, concealed hypocrisy is taking place, which is noticeable when comparing the two cases.

Howard sought communication accommodation specifically for attending course lectures, whereas Dunkley requested accommodation for attending lectures, conferences, meetings with doctors, and engaging with fellow residents. For example, in 1993, Howard was a BEd teacher education student seeking access to interpreting services for university lectures (cost estimated at $9,000 per year). In contrast, in 2015, Dunkley, a medical resident, was seeking access to interpreting services for a more extensive range of activities, including lectures, appointments with patients, conversations with hospital staff, meetings with other residents, and engaging with other medical professionals (cost estimated at $700,000–950,000 per year). This difference underscores the reality that institutional concerns for undue hardship will not go away. Concerns about undue hardship will likely increase as deaf people become more included in society, leading to an increased need for communication and, thus, increased demand for communication accessibility. It appears that the more included deaf people become in their social environments, the more frequently communication interactions between deaf and hearing people will take place, and the wider the array of communication accommodation services that will be required. Increased communication inclusion ultimately results in a higher cost to institutions to provide those services. Consequently, the conditions for undue hardship at the institutional level continue over time, as does, therefore, the argument of hardship.

**Continuing to Remain Silent on Well-Being**

Although the court transcripts convey only a limited sense as to considerations of personal well-being, traces of emotion emerge in the testimonials of the deaf complainants. Both Howard and Dunkley made references to their emotional state. I argue that in an evaluation of the overall effectiveness of spaces of inclusive communication, we must scrutinize how the experience of communicating unfolds for the participants. We may ask: How are the people communicating impacted—are they well? How effective is our legislation and our case law in promoting the conditions necessary for well-being in spaces where deaf and hearing people are communicating?

As mentioned above, Howard was required by the university to complete a funding application form with Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and, in so doing, he was required to share details about his finances. Despite the university program officials being aware that Howard was employed and would not qualify, the university insisted Howard go through the motions and disclose his financial portfolio. During the court proceeding, Howard commented on his experience on this point and described feeling a sense of futility, pressure, and the lack of privacy:

> I didn't really like it. I felt, what was the point, the service should be there, I should be able to get interpreters, it should be equal access. I shouldn't have to do all the paperwork and waste all the time when I could be concentrating on my studies, getting ready for school. And they knew what my needs would be, they knew that I would need an interpreter, the professors should have been informed before so they could be comfortable with it, but there was no time to do any of that, it was all very pressured, and I felt looked down upon, and I felt like I had no privacy. (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993, p. 10)

In its closing remarks, the Tribunal agreed with the university, deeming the completion of such financial forms required to apply for external funding as necessary, stating, "I do think he [Howard] should be required to take all possible steps, no matter how futile they may be." (p. 23). When steps are considered futile by all parties yet still determined as necessary by institutions, one must question what purpose they ultimately serve. Furthermore, it raises the question as to whether the impact, clearly a negative one, of undertaking these futile steps would affect Howard's sense of well-being. Was this negative impact fair and reasonable?

Dunkley expressed similar experiences of futility and frustration. She described how her initial sense of frustration later transformed into a complete lack of trust in the university's commitment to supporting her entry into the residency program. Dunkley described the anguish she experienced as time passed, as the university took too long to reach a final decision on whether or not to implement sign-language interpreting services. As Dunkley reported:

> Because of that time it had already been about four months and there had been very minimal progress and that I was constantly trying to be involved in this accommodation process but I felt like they were not including me in their provision of accommodating

> me. And I felt that they were not working in good faith to accommodate me in the residency. (*Dunkley v. UBC and another*, 2015, para. 189)

In addition to the negative emotions associated with institutional processes and delays in decision-making, this impacted the deaf students' social relationships with others and their peers. On April 30, 1990, Nigel Howard's prerequisite courses began, but interpreting services were not yet in place. Howard attended the course for the first few days without interpreters. During that time, Howard described his experience of feeling infantilized and dependent upon others:

> I felt that I was interrupting their [other students'] studies. They paid for the course, too, and they should be able to pay attention to the instructor without having constant interruption by someone asking what's going on; their attention would be divided. And I felt that I should be able to be independently taking the course. I felt like a little kid asking someone, "can you help me, can you help me out here please?" and I felt like I wanted to be more responsible and independent, and I couldn't. (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993, p. 7)

What is apparent in considering the similarities of these two legal cases, occurring two decades apart, is that the experiences of communication for deaf and hearing people are similar—complex and challenging. Though human rights and accessibility legislation exist, they need to reach further into the lived experiences of deaf and hearing people and improve their well-being in the spaces and times in which they communicate. To do this, we need to understand communicating as a relationship between oneself, others, and our environment. This will be addressed in the next chapter.

In this section, I have presented the social world as oral normative and argued that the common themes, including the competing tensions and needs existing between people and institutions, encountered in the legal cases *Howard v. University of British Columbia* (1993) and *Dunkley v. UBC and another* (2015) are representative of the themes existing in a modern society context when navigating communication across spoken and signed languages. One stark omission in the theme was identified and discussed: silence in regard to the impact of communication on a person's well-being.

*Stories go in circles*, they don't go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles, because there are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you're lost you start to open up and listen.

—Terry Tafoya (1995)

## Chapter Four: Seeing Communicating as Relational

In this section, I position this research study as a means to better understand various sensory-cultural terms and sensory regimes. I introduce the concept of *home* as a tool for pointing to and describing a space and place in which a person has a sense of an alignment existing between themselves and their environment. I then list the overarching research and sub-research questions that guide this research project.

Ethnographically mapping communication as relational, encompassing inter-sensory and multi-dimensional aspects, prioritizes concern for people's communication experiences. This approach maps the relationships at play (between people, objects, individual needs, policies, time, etc.) in spaces where deaf and hearing people are communicating, and contributes to understanding communication accessibility in Canada. By moving beyond the dimension of language, discussions may be had about internal environments, personalities, memories and trauma from previous lived experiences, current sensory perceptions, needs, and emotions. Also, there is a discussion available regarding external environments, including institutions, processes, policies, staff, economic structures, and materials. in observing these interstitial spaces of deaf and hearing people communicating, the existence of various sensing bodies, languages, and language modalities becomes evident.

This study positions communicating as a pathway to understanding sensory-cultural terms and sensory regimes. From this perspective, the concept of a "communication gap" requiring accommodation or accessibility measures, such that function as a bridge between people, is a mischaracterization that establishes our social world as a social disconnection. To the contrary, it is more true that our senses are constructed and experienced differently across various periods and societies. It is via senses that people understand their environments, including the people and things existing within their environments (Howes, 2005, p. 399). Communicating is linked to the experiences offered to us by our senses. By positioning communicating within a social ecology framework and by tracing the senses that unfold in the spaces of communication between deaf and hearing people, we can begin to see how communication is relational. By adopting an ecological perspective, no inherent concern for a centre exists. Instead, the concern shifts toward the well-being of the interconnected living network and the availability of necessary resources. This challenges the pathological, social, and cultural notion that meaning

and experience are created and structured around centralized points of privilege, such as a deaf centre or a hearing centre. However, from an ecological perspective, meaning is not established around centralized points but is created through relationships existing within the interstitial space. These relationships reflect diverse individual perspectives. This approach rejects normative ideals that seek to produce contained and symmetrical meanings. Instead, it values interhuman connections as asymmetrical experiences.

For such work about communicating, it is essential to locate oneself and make one's position relevant in connection to the social ecology, while at once resisting a centralized notion of perspective. To achieve this, the study worked with an overarching concept of *home* to identify a space or place in which one feels aligned with one's values and environment, and in which one may resist established societal oral, auditory, and sound-based norms. In this context, the idea aligns with Jackson's (2002) concept of *home* as a way of being in the world, and involves finding a balance between taking action and being acted upon (p. 32).

**Research Question and Sub-Question(s)**

To explore communication as relational, this research project sets out to map resonance across the senses by tracing the senses interculturally across the lived experiences of deaf and hearing people. I will pause within the interstitial spaces—inter-sensorial, inter-cultural, inter-linguistic—between deaf and hearing people communicating to observe the interconnection between experience, memory, social life, and environment. My research questions are:

1. How does communicating echo and resonate across deaf and hearing experiences?

2. How is communicating experienced as a sense of relationship to the world—to the self, to others, and to a sense of place?

3. How are sensory memories expressed by hearing and Deaf people in the process of co-creation, and

4. How can spaces of co-creation inform discussions about inter-sensory communication, including aural and oral diversity, and foster a sense of well-being in the world?

In this section, I introduced the concept of home as a tool for describing the sense of place and outlined the overarching and sub-research questions of this research study.

# Chapter Five: Methodological Framework

In this section, I root this research project's methodology in inter-sensory and inter-cultural research practices. I define two primary methodological, conceptual tools for framing this research's exploration: the Sensewalk and the Sensescape. Further, I include herein a co-published journal article that captures, in detail, a research-creation process involving a deaf artist and a hearing artist communicating across multi-model and inter-sensory boundaries. The results from this earlier project inform the basis for this research project's methodology. This project aims at expanding and deepening these findings and thereby contributing further to the scholarship of research-creation.

## Inter-Sensory and Inter-Cultural Research Practices

This project contributes to a growing body of research methodologies wherein scholars increasingly understand the limitations of human rights approaches. Instead, scholars are shifting focus toward a more nuanced approach that considers the social and cultural dimensions of human rights discourses (Greco and Di Giovanni, 2017). Employing sociological and anthropological research methods, this project considers the significance of ethnographic knowledge production (Ghodsee, 2013). Notably, sensory ethnography enriches our comprehension of diverse ways of knowing and being in the world and, as such, is vital to ethnography (Culhane, 2017, p. 46). In Shawn Wilson's (2008) work "Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods," he states that Indigenous epistemology is concerned with the concept of development through the establishment of relationships (p. 8). Wilson emphasizes, furthermore the importance in Indigenous methodology of being accountable to these relationships (p. 7). He presents an aspect of Indigenous ontology and epistemology that underscores relationships as the foundation for understanding and creating reality. This methodology involves scrutinizing accountability to these relationships (p. 7) and requires a means for identifying common ground, a structure of understanding, in cross-cultural communication.

The methodology for this project was designed to introduce accountability in forming relationships. To achieve this goal, I sought to map interstitial spaces where communication occurred (not the barriers) between deaf and hearing people. In this project, I was not a neutral

observer; it felt inauthentic to solicit others to share pieces of their life without reciprocating in the form of a conversation. Consequently, I became implicated as one of the storytellers, and the research participants became my co-researchers. The methodological framework adds to the ongoing efforts in sensory anthropology and in research and creation methods, and is a co-created ethnography project. Peter Morin (2016), a Tahltan performance artist and researcher, explores the spoken language of residential school survivors and the dynamic between the Indigenous body and the spaces where Truth and Reconciliation gatherings occur (p. 67). As a phonocentric researcher and member of the dominant language and cultural group, I believed weaving the shared stories from this research with my own lived experiences in relation to these narratives was crucial for relationality and for finding common ground, and integral to the co-creation aspect of this research.

My inter-sensory and inter-cultural research-creation project also drew inspiration from the work of Steven Feld (2012), Friedner (2008), and Friedner and Helmreich (2012), all of whom explore the intersection of culture and sound. Friedner and Helmreich (2012) conducted a study of the sense of sound through the experience of feeling sounds as low-frequency vibrations. Their findings identified vibration as a shared experience that goes beyond the dichotomy of deaf-versus-hearing and a singular focus on visual orientations. As Michelle Friedner (2008) states:

> Cross-cultural investigations make clear the diversity of human experiences and the role that culture plays in organizing meaning and mediating environmental information, including what normality is or how to experience and talk about the sacred, difficult, or puzzling character of altered sensory worlds. (p. 116)

Researchers are increasingly asserting that our experience of words begins with our senses (Rée, 1999, p. 15) and that we inhabit different sensory worlds—personally and culturally—while other researchers have identified the sensibilities of dance and body-to-body transmission of cultural knowledge, and how culturally constructed process of transmission influences our sense of self (Hahn, 2021). From here we can assert that there is value in building awareness for the sensibilities of what *someone else* might be experiencing that can expand our knowledge of the self/other relationship and foster more open communications. This inter-cultural and inter-sensory investigation employed a multi-modal approach, incorporating

narratives told in different languages and language modalities, and diverse material forms such as objects, videos, images, and other artistic creations. Artistic practices served as an ethnographic methodology integrated into the research design, practice, and analysis. Developing products for communication with diverse linguistic and cultural publics is an emerging field (Culhane, 2017, p. 7). This project contributes to the growing body of research that utilizes inventive and creative research methods. By way of example, Abranches and Theuerkauf (2021) used photography to allow British and non-British participants to express their sense of place and belonging during the Brexit referendum. Marlene Creates (Garvey & Kunard, 2017) employed narratives, memory maps, and objects to explore the relationships between the people of northern Labrador and their sense of home. In her work *The Distance Between Two Points is Measured in Memories, Labrador 1988*, Creates shifts away from her typical artistic focus on natural sites, concentrating instead on cultural sites by speaking with the people who have lived in or near to these places (Garvey & Kunard, 2017, p. 58).

Anthropologists must remain attentive to inter-cultural variation due to differing sensory values (Howes & Classen, 2014, p. 12; Classen, 1997, p. 402). The creative methodology of the present work was inspired, in part, by the audacious artistic work of two women: Jolanta Lapiak, whose multimedia work focuses on deconstructing ~~phonocentrism~~, as discussed in an earlier chapter, and Josette Bushell-Mingo, a Sweden-based English theatre actor and director of African descent. Bushell-Mingo's theatrical work brings together people from different backgrounds, uniting them in speaking a common (artistic) language. Having assembled deaf and hearing ensembles in Sweden, Canada, and elsewhere to explore the advantages of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic creative work, Bushell-Mingo (2019) observes that something new emerges when these two vectors intersect. Sensory ethnography, more specifically, integral to human social relations, was incorporated into this project in the aim of understanding how experience, knowledge, and feeling bodies are engaged in diverse ways of knowing, forming a foundation for understanding sensory knowledge (Culhane, 2017, p. 46). For example, in this multi-linguistic project, one must pay attention to how participants may seek to communicate experiences that are not expressible, or may lose precision when using a different language. For this project, I had to be concerned about how all experiences originating in a signed language, or in French, had to be transmitted into written English for analysis, with its linguistic and cultural freedoms and limits. However, because of such limitations, communicating one's experiences in ways that

ventured beyond language, or including multi-modal communication strategies that would best express the essence of a person's experience, were encouraged in this project.

**Creative and Innovative Research Practices**

Although ethnography has a long history of research methods, creative practice research has lagged behind and continues to establish itself (Berry, 2017). It is, however, being recognized as a valuable contribution to ethnographic practices, given that writing, visual storytelling, and other documentary practices are employed across the two disciplines. This project explored the interstitial spaces between deaf and hearing people communicating in two social contexts: the *Social-Institutional* and the *Social-Creative Community*. In the Social-Institutional context, perspectives from Nigel Howard and Jessica Dunkley emerged from their human rights legal case transcripts. Discourses found in legal testimonies reflect those encountered in society. In an oral-normative society, the law neither prohibits oral normativity nor guarantees the provision of sign-language interpreting services. The legal framework addresses discrimination against deaf people, but necessitates that the discrimination has already occurred prior to intervention.

The Social-Creative Community context diverged from the institutional context and brought together deaf and hearing people to reflect on their experiences in social settings more broadly. Design for this context was based on an earlier, inter-cultural bodily-listening project that involved two artists, one deaf and one hearing, as they communicated across time and space. The project, titled *Reflecting on Bodily Listening in Place: An Intercultural and Intersensory Research-Creation Project (Bodily Listening)* (Bath et al., 2023), involved a collaboration between myself; artist Ellen Waterman, a flutist, vocalist, improviser, and music researcher; and Tiphaine Girault, an interdisciplinary artist, printmaker, and comic illustrator who has been deaf since birth. In this research-creation project,[9] Ellen aimed to deconstruct her auditory-centric positionality in her approach to music-making to create an instructional score for World Listening Day, an event organized by the non-profit media arts organization New Adventures in Sound Art (NAISA).[10] The project promoted the use of non-traditional musical scores. As such, NAISA developed a series of instructional, text-based scores intended to form the basis of online

[9] The project was funded in part by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Government of Canada.
[10] See: https://naisa.ca/media-archive/sound-art-text-scores/bodily-listening-in-place/.

workshops and skills-development experiences. The project sought to destabilize the dynamics of language and experience, conducting an exchange through an ethic of co-creation as a research space and place of co-inquiry (Batty and Berry, 2015) and aiming to understand the importance of *home* as a site of listening.

In this collaboration, I developed an inter-cultural and inter-sensory co-creation methodology, which Ellen and Tiphaine used in their inter-cultural, inter-sensory exchange. In this exchange, they produced a series of what I call "creative scores." These scores are not instructional; rather they were created by the artists as multi-modal pieces to convey particular experiences. Intended as a tool for communicating multi-sensorily, the creative scores offer a multi-sensory glimpse into another person's lived experience. They are not intended to mimic those experiences but, rather, function as a retelling of the experience. The scores allow for inter-sensory listening through full-body listening. Using these creative scores, I join others who have moved away from conventional musical scoring, which traditionally includes documentation of written notes, pitches, rhythms, etc. Pauline Oliveros (2009) writes about the significance of this shift away from traditional scores: "Conventional music scores direct attention to predictable repeatable specific pitches and rhythms" (p. 4). Rather than simply offer replicable instructions, I was more interested in discovering the unpredictable. To do this, Oliveros says that we must listen, even to background noises (p. 6).

In the *Bodily Listening* project, Tiphaine maintained a sense of *home* by presenting her scores to Ellen through her chosen artistic discipline—illustrations, narratives, and metaphors—and by engaging with material objects. Ellen offered her scores through improvised sound (flute), body movement, and videos of her physical presence playing amid natural elements such as wind, trees, and other features of the natural environment. Ultimately, the echoed scores became a series of oscillating interpretations of experience exchanged between Ellen and Tiphaine. This study drew from this ethic of co-creative exchange, with each participant tasked with producing a creative score, capturing and retelling their particular experience.

In this section, I introduced creative and innovative research practices and defined two interstitial spaces existing within communication between deaf and hearing people: the *Social-Institutional* and the *Social-Creative Community*. In particular, I introduced an earlier bodily listening project, which served as a starting point for me in working collaboratively and

communicating multi-modally with deaf and hearing people. A full-length reprint of the abovementioned co-authored journal article reflecting on this earlier project—its objective, methodology, and outcomes—is provided in the next section of this thesis.

## Chapter Six: Co-Authored Article – Reflecting on *Bodily Listening in Place*

In this section, I include the reprint of a co-authored journal article titled: *Reflecting on Bodily Listening in Place: An Intercultural and Intersensory Research-Creation Project (Bath et al., 2023)*. Originally co-published by Paula Bath, Tiphaine Girault, and Ellen Waterman in *Performance Matters*, it is reproduced below with permission.[11]

### Introduction

Bodily Listening in Place[12] is an instructional score for intersensory improvisation commissioned by New Adventures in Sound Art (NAISA) for World Listening Day 2022. It was composed by Ellen Waterman, a flutist and vocalist, improviser, and music researcher, in consultation with Tiphaine Girault and Paula Bath of SPiLL.PROpagation,[13] an Artist Center for Creation and Production in Sign Language in Canada. The score was distributed both as English text and video with ASL (American Sign Language) and people of all backgrounds, experience, and sensory modalities were invited to record and share their own realizations online in any medium (sonic, visual, or textual). World Listening Day is an annual event held on July 18, the birthday of Canadian composer and founder of acoustic ecology, R. Murray Schafer (1933–2021). Normally, the event focuses on the auditory dimension of listening, not surprising given that Schafer's work on the soundscape (1977/1994) was designed to highlight the roles of sound and listening in the environment as a corrective to the dominance of visuality in Western society. However, the theme for 2022, "listening across boundaries," suggested the possibility for an expanded approach to listening through different modes of sensory experience. Bodily Listening in Place became a research-creation project through which Ellen, Paula, and Tiphaine explored

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[11] Please note that although the note numbering here follows in line with that of the rest of the thesis, the text of the footnotes in the reprinted section, except where noted by me, is reproduced faithfully from the original essay.

[12] Bodily Listening in Place was funded in part by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Government of Canada. The score for Bodily Listening in Place is available in text and video with ASL interpretation at https://naisa.ca/media-archive/sound-art-text-scores/bodily-listening-in-place/. Waterman's realizations of the piece are also linked here. As the score notes, "Anyone, of any experience and from any location, is invited to participate. You are encouraged to interpret the score and express yourself according to your body's way of perceiving the world, and your understanding of music." Waterman held two improvisation workshops in the lead up to World Listening Day and participants uploaded their own realizations as sound/audio, video, image, or text. We shared our realizations of the score in an online gathering on Sunday, July 17 (the day before World Listening Day). https://www.worldlisteningproject.org/.

[13] https://spill-propagation.com/.

processes of intersensory and intercultural exchange across hearing and deaf experience, and through sonic, haptic, kinetic, linguistic, and graphic media. In this critical reflection, we discuss our collaboration, which took place between February and June 2022 and comprised an iterative process of conversation, artmaking, photographic and video documentation, and writing. We, Ellen, Paula, and Tiphaine, share our distinct motivations and experiences of the research-creation process and together we reflect on specific moments in our collaboration, illustrated by examples from our documentation. We begin with Ellen's explanation of the score, the inspiration for the piece in signed music, and her desire to decentre audition and adopt an expanded practice of listening through intersensory improvisation. Paula, writing on behalf of herself and Tiphaine, situates the work in SPiLL.PROpagation's commitment to intercultural collaboration. She unpacks the dynamics of language, experience, and exchange, through an ethics of cocreation and the importance of "home" as a site of listening. We propose that intersensory improvisation is a productive research-creation methodology that can reveal new ways of relating to each other and the world.

**Ellen's Perspective**

> *Walk so silently that the bottoms of your feet become ears.*
>
> —Pauline Oliveros, Sonic Meditations

Listening, as the late great Pauline Oliveros (1932–2016) taught us, is not the same thing as hearing (Oliveros, 2005; Oliveros 2015). But like many hearing musicians, I am hyper-oriented toward aurality. When I improvise, my instinct is to close my eyes, to block out all sensory information that is not immediately connected to sound making and audition. Indeed, both of my preferred musical means, flute and voice, produce sounds at the mouth in close proximity to the ear. Sound is thus an intimate and visceral presence. But as Jonathan Sterne (2021) has recently pointed out, vocal sounds are not produced in the mouth (pp. 74–77).[14] They involve a complex of bodily systems from the lungs to the voice box to resonating space in the

[14] See Sterne (2021) for a fascinating discussion of voice, vocality, and impairment. He presents a "practicebased model of voice" as a "historical and culturally located practice, connected to people's agency but also to cultural contestation" (p. 65). One might consider listening in the same way.

chest and head. Both vocal and flute sound production are also kinetic—they rely on the expulsion of breath controlled by intercostal muscles and embouchure. For flutists, tilting the pelvis forward and bending the knees slightly releases tension and opens out the sound (Pearson, 2006). It matters how the tongue feels in the mouth, where the glottis lies, the precise deployment of lip and facial muscles, where the lip-plate of the flute is positioned below the bottom lip and whether the skin is sweaty or dry, how the hands sit on the body of the flute and how the pads of fingertips feel on the keys. Sound is affected by the angle of wrists and elbows, the slope of shoulders, and posture. For me, playing the flute is an all-body experience. I sway and dip, and if the sounds I'm making are forceful, I may even feel compelled to jerk a knee up or bend suddenly at the waist like (my daughter jokes) a headbanger at a metal concert. My experience of the sounds I make varies according to my energy level and wellness, the time of day and ambient temperature, the nebulous atmosphere of the space I'm playing in with its sound-reflecting or absorbing materials, electronic amplification and processing, other sound makers present whether human or otherwise (birds, wind soughing in the trees, water lapping, traffic). During the 1990s, when I performed in R. Murray Schafer's annual environmental music theatre project, Patria the Epilogue: And Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon (1983), my experience was informed by the natural beauty of its forest location, playing flute while watching the mist drift over a lake in the cold pre-dawn light (Waterman, 1998). All these elements—sonic, haptic, kinetic, and visual—affect my perception of the music. Together, they constitute the intersensory, intentional, attentive, and responsive act of listening. But although I have always had this embodied knowledge, my musical practice and my assumptions about music and sound have, until recently, been unquestioningly predicated on aurality.

In 2020, I went in search of deaf musicians for a research-creation project in which musicians are asked to create in response to visual art exhibitions.[15] That's how I first learned about signed music, an entirely visual and kinetic form of music that has no truck with audition. Pamela E. Witcher's early piece "Experimental Clip" was a revelation (Witcher, 2008). Through modified ASL signs, abstracted hand movements, facial expressions, other body movements, and video editing, this dynamic piece clearly demonstrates musical features of rhythm, phrase, texture, form, and affect. Jody Cripps, a Deaf ASL linguist who leads the Signed Music Project,

[15] https://carleton.ca/mssc/research/resonance-towards-a-community-engaged-model-of-research-creation/

defines it as “a form of performance art that arises from within the Deaf community and is distinct and evolved from both ASL poetry and from translated signed songs which initiated from spoken language. It may incorporate ASL literary poetic features such as lines, meter, rhythm and rhyme and also incorporates basic elements of music such as harmony, rhythm, melody, timbre, and texture, which is expressed as a visual-gestural artistic form” (Signed Music Project, n.d.). Pamela Witcher’s “Experimental Clip” immediately struck me as musical even though I had no knowledge of the genre. I likened it to experimental films, such as Dziga Vertov’s famously musical but silent 1929 film Man with a Movie Camera, in which tempo, repetition, rhythm, crossfading and overlapping images evoke musical rhythm and counterpoint. But signed music is more than an aesthetic proposition. It embodies a politics that critiques our society’s audism and insists on the legitimacy and force of Deaf cultural expression. As I took baby steps in learning ASL and educating myself about Deaf culture, my own engrained audism became more apparent to me. I had long been accustomed to teaching my students the twentieth-century composer Edgard Varèse’s (1966) famous definition of music as “organized sound”—an open definition that is intended to allow for an endless range of sonic manifestations as music. Encountering signed music, however, made me realize that the unquestioned primacy of sound in discourses of music and listening is no longer tenable. And to honour that position, I needed to explore the roles that my other senses play in my embodied experience of music. As ethnomusicologist, musician, and dancer Tomie Hahn (2021) notes, “If we consider that we inhabit different sensory worlds—personally and culturally—then building awareness of the sensibilities someone else might be experiencing can expand our knowledge of self/other and open communications” (p. 2). But I want to emphasize that my developing intersensory approach to musical improvisation is not an attempt to enter into the experience of a Deaf musician or to adopt elements of signed music; rather, my desire is to decentre and reorient audition within my practice. Improvisation is my musical métier, but it is also an important research-creation methodology. Rebecca Caines (2021) describes improvisation as an interdisciplinary research methodology that requires an ethos of a “perpetual state of fragility” through a “commitment to move through, and with, mistakes, admit naiveté, and to let go of control to create together with others” (p. 325). Instead of starting from a defined research question, prompts, themes, and research questions emerge through improvisation, a relational methodology that encompasses “risk, active listening, collaborative response, and the reconfiguration of mistake into creativity” (p. 325). Similarly,

Sara Ramshaw and Paul Stapleton (2020) understand improvisation in terms of an ethics of cocreation that embraces "failure and error as a source of learning" (p. 305). As a research methodology, then, improvisation focuses on process and experimentation, a receptive state in which participants' bodies become "excitable tissues for gathering up the energetics and movements of the world, and manifesting these as perception, affect, and action" (Myers and Dumit, 2011, p. 239). Above all, it is deeply relational. In my approach to improvisation-based research-creation, relationality is fostered through what Oliveros called Deep Listening™, an expansive practice of focal and global attention and responsiveness. For Oliveros (2016), listening "lies deep in the body and is as yet a mysterious process" (p. 75). Although sound is clearly central to Deep Listening, in my experience of her workshops and performances, Oliveros paid careful attention to diverse stimuli, from bodily movement to the acoustic and atmospheric dimensions of space, including the psychic dimension of dreams. Significantly, such an expanded concept of listening-as-attention takes on an ethical dimension of relationality to all aspects of the environment, biotic and abiotic, including time and space. As Ramshaw and Stapleton (2020) note, "Listening with respect, openness, and responsiveness necessarily enables the listener to meet otherness as otherness, without the need to reduce it to "the order of the same" (p. 305).[16] What would it take to reorient audition in my own musical practice? How might I express an expanded concept of listening through improvisation, and communicate it to others? Artistic director of NAISA Darren Copeland's invitation to create an instructional score for improvisation to share with other people for World Listening Day 2022 provided the opportunity to explore these questions. In preparation for a residency at NAISA (May 2–9, 2022), during which I wrote the score and recorded several realizations of it, I embarked on a series of consultations with Paula and Tiphaine, in which we exchanged creative offerings, discussed our experiences, and explored the intercultural space between hearing and Deaf cultures.

[16] Ramshaw and Stapleton (2020) here draw on Cobussen and Nielsen (2012).

**Paula's and Tiphaine's Perspectives**

*No worldview ever encompasses or covers the plenitude of what is actually lived, felt, imagined, and thought*.

—Michael Jackson, The Politics of Storytelling

Tiphaine and I come to a creation process for different reasons and in different ways but, fundamentally, work together with art as a creative product and process of human communication and interconnection. We oscillate between David Howes's (2022) concept of "sense" as being both sensation and signification, feeling and meaning, that includes a spectrum of referents (p. 10), and Ruth Finnegan's (2002) concept of communication as something that is found in the creative mutual interacting of individuals or groups in specific contexts rather than in abstract systems of codes or the transmission of bounded "messages" (p. 7). Tiphaine, deaf since birth, born in Paris, France, to hearing parents, first understood interhuman communication by flipping through the pages of her father's graphic novel collection at age five. Life became alive in this visual pictorial form. Not only did she appreciate understanding the social world around her, but she began to draw, rooting her drawing practice as the modality to enable the world around her to understand how she experiences the people and things in her environment. I, Paula, am hearing since birth. Born in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, to hearing parents, I grew up engulfed in the language and culture of the majority. Then, at age sixteen, I learned that sign language existed and walked into the Deaf Community for the first time. It was a world where I could not speak, in either spoken or signed language. Communication, once taken for granted, was no longer there, and I needed to find new ways to reach beyond language, to connect to people, to deaf people. To do this I first had to relearn to "listen" in new and different ways—visually, haptically, and relationally. These early experiences formed Tiphaine's and my relationship to ourselves and with our world, and we infused these experiences into our collaborative approach to art creation. We call our approach cocreation and it forms the philosophical underpinning of SPiLL.PROpagation, a non-profit arts organization focusing on creation, collective process and research-creation projects, and public presentations.

Our methodology continued to evolve and later brought together the audacious artistic work of two other women. Jolanta Lapiak is a Canadian Ameslan[17] artist whose multimedia work is influenced by philosopher Jacques Derrida's (2016) concept of phonocentrism—a critique of society's rules that reinforce how sound and hearing oneself speak are collapsed into the meaning of presence itself (p. 13). Lapiak's art installations expose and resist the subordination of sign languages to both spoken and written languages. As part of her resistance, however, she demonstrates how the boundaries of language modalities are fluid, and not categorically fixed (Lapiak, 2007). Lapiak's work influenced our desire to work in spaces beyond identity politics (deaf people vs. hearing people). We sought to develop her ideas of a language continuum further and to show how different language modalities (sign-spoken-written) are connected. We combined these ideas of language continuum and connection via different modalities with the artistic work of Josette Bushell-Mingo, a Swedish-based English theatre actor and director of African descent. Josette's work in theatre production brings people from different backgrounds together and unites them by speaking one common (artistic) language. Her work with deaf and hearing ensembles, in Sweden and Canada, has been particularly influential. We watched as she explored the advantages of a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic ensemble in a production of The Tempest, saying that at the place where these two points meet something new emerges (Bushell-Mingo, 2019). Josette's work influences us to interweave cultural backgrounds in critical art making and what we find emerges at this art production-communication boundary is that, in their desire to interconnect, people "switch."[18] The switch is a new relationship formation that helps to seed different connections between yourself and others. For example, Tiphaine worked as assistant director with Josette on The Tempest, with its cast of hearing and deaf actors. To create the switch, all the actors needed to work more visually, with more and different movements. The directing team also brought water into the experience of the performance so that audiences could feel the wetness and further imagine rain and splashes from the ocean waves. Tiphaine's contribution thus went beyond standard translation. Often, integrated performances with deaf and hearing ensembles are written about by the majority group who claim that deaf and hearing people can have the "same" experience at the "same" time (Edmonton Arts Council, n.d.). This

[17] "Ameslan," a word that combines the concepts of person and language (American Sign Language), is an obsolete term coined in the 1960s that Lapiak (2007) revitalizes.
[18] Signed in ASL and LSQ by taking your right hand like you are holding a key, placing it the middle of your forehead and turning quickly to the left and down.

characterization, however, misses the significance of the piece, and of Tiphaine's contribution to its creative process and presentation. Tiphaine works to honour the creators in the room and their respective cultural and linguistic norms (Girault, 2019). This creation process brings forward what Tiphaine and I call, not an experience of sameness, but a "parallel" experience: different experiences occurring in relationship to each other and at the same time. Tiphaine also worked closely with the other assistant director and Métis actor Valerie Planche, and with the written Shakespearean text, to decolonize language and communication in ways that honoured values brought forward in sign language. This honouring means that two actors (deaf and hearing) would recite simultaneously the same Shakespearean text on stage, yet in different cultural ways. One scene shows how the text in spoken language sounded dramatic, while the text in sign language was visually bold and humorous.

**Figure 3**

*Visually Interpreting Text in The Tempest (2019). The Citadel Theatre's The Tempest, featuring Ray Strachan, Troy O'Donnell, Elizabeth Morris (seated) and Hodan Youssouf. Directed by Josette Bushell-Mingo. Set and costume design by Drew Facey. Lighting design by Bonnie Beecher. Sound design by Dave Clarke. Photo by Ian Jackson/epicphotography.ca.*

The sign language, in particular, was no longer confined and conforming to language-experiential norms established by written or spoken languages. What emerged was how a deaf and hearing ensemble of directors and actors experimented at these artistic-communication boundaries and expanded our normative ways of performing and experiencing stories. Interhuman relationality is thus no longer limited to ideas of language and translation, or even enhancing the visual aspect of the work, but is about how, through a process of self-integrity and cocreation, we are each able to learn to feel the work differently and to experience the world, including our stories and the stories of others, through a variety of sensory ways such as sounds, lights, movements, vibrations, natural elements (e.g., rock, water, or wind), and material objects in combination. Tiphaine and I work at the interstitial spaces where deaf and hearing people meet and where dominant social ideas, beliefs, and social structures are lived, felt, and discussed. In this way, we advance an interrelational concept we call signecology: a felt awareness of sign language co-existing with its environment. Signecology is a relationality that exists, or is uncovered, between sign language, yourself, other people, and natural or institutional environments (Girault, 2017). We find that this felt awareness includes all senses and is a concept that helps to establish the linkages among people, their histories, experiences, senses of place, and environments. Tiphaine and I are from different sensory-constructed life worlds, deaf and auditory, but we have both also learned four languages: English, French, ASL, and LSQ. Over the years, however, we have found that, in relation to the variety of ways we can know and experience the world, working within the confines of any one language is limiting, and this includes working between one language and another language through the process of normative translation. To move away from this confinement of language and to stretch into the senses, we understand the senses as not just a means by which we receive a stimulus that is generating in our environment; rather, we acknowledge that our senses play an active role in our overall sense of our world (Rodaway, 1961/1994, p. 5). As such, our creative process calls on participants to consider all of the human senses and to work with different communication modalities, employing sound, sight, touch, smell, and taste, and working multi-dimensionally with material, narratives, and movement to achieve diverse experiences of communication and interconnection. In addition to multi-modal and multi-dimensional methods, we also work cocreatively. This means we work with a sense of “home” in ways that offer alternatives to the established oral/auditory/sound normativity in society, and to the idea that meaning is created and structured

around centres, such as a deaf centre or a hearing centre. Rather, we create meaning together in an interstitial space, in our own ways and in relationship, while abandoning a bias toward contained and symmetrical meaning and instead valuing interhuman connection as asymmetrical experiences. Our approach is further illuminated by cultural anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992), who question the "assumed isomorphism of space, place and culture" (p. 7) and call for an anthropology of space to be grounded in an understanding of the realities of boundary erosion, diasporas and dispersal, mobility and movement (cited in Feld and Basso, 1996, p. 4). Metaphorically, one could say that instead of a defined centre versus margins, or an entanglement, our approach is like a weave. Each individual material has its own integrity and plays a part in the creation process and final structure that then becomes a part of a new integrity of a whole. The cocreation process, then, must not be prescriptive, but responsive to the relationships produced in the time and space in which it was created in relationship to the materials, tools, time, and creative forces at play. Our co-creative process resonates with the concept of improvisation as an ethics of cocreation, discussed by Ellen above. For the project Bodily Listening in Place, each creator, Ellen, Tiphaine, and Paula (each thread), found themselves on both a language spectrum—spoken and written English, ASL, and LSQ—and on a sensory spectrum. Ellen, a hearing flutist, was in one place with a sound whose register/vibration is high and unpalpable by Tiphaine, a deaf multi-media artist. However, this story is not about Tiphaine's inability to access sound, or other common notions of accessibility. We don't consider this to be a "gap" and find it a mischaracterization to establish our social world based on a series of differences and social disconnections. Rather, we find it to be evidence of how the senses are constructed and lived differently in different periods and societies, and how this reflects the ways in which people understand their environment and the people and things in that environment (Howes, 2005, p. 399). In the early creation stages, Ellen and Tiphaine connected as artists, working with and through Paula, who facilitated process, language, and cultural knowledges, in ways that were not about working to form a bridge of understanding from one person to another person, but about working interculturally in a weave that honoured the cultural integrity of each person. This meant maintaining each collaborator's individual senses of "place" and "home" in balance, while expanding their sensory range, informed by new sensory perspectives offered by the other person's sense of being in the world. Here, the concept of home follows Michael Jackson's (2013) notion of home, as a way of being-at-home-in-the world, where one must work

out a kind of balance between acting and being acted upon (p. 32). As we discuss in the next section, working at home was both a pragmatic response to collaborating during the COVID-19 pandemic, and an important evocation of bodily listening in place.

**Reflecting on Moments of Discovery**

In this section, we reflect on several "aha" moments that occurred during our iterative process of collaboration. Between February and May, we exchanged and responded to each other's artistic prompts, both through Zoom calls and by delivering materials to each other's homes. For example, Tiphaine and Paula asked Ellen to record a short improvisation and send it as an mp3 file. Ellen recorded a short flute improvisation using a painting by Michael Waterman hanging in her music studio as a graphic score. *Audio example: Ellen for Tiphaine, improvisation for solo flute, February 24, 2022*.[19]

**Figure 4**

A is for Asparagus *(2000), Michael Waterman, acrylic on canvas. Used by permission. Graphic score Ellen used in improvising flute piece Ellen for Tiphaine*

[19] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TS06YWJNhc5wERhYmkl_b1CEOW0zylRF/view?usp=sharing. [Please note that for formatting purposes, links to various online media, which appeared in the original essay as in-text hyperlinks, have been shifted, as in this case, into footnotes. —P. B.]

Tiphaine played the recording through the Woojer vibrotactile vest, which has six transducers that express sound as vibration. Paula also acted as a sort of "human transducer," interpreting the piece through dialogue, using analogies with nature (e.g., "sounds like the slow start of rain tapping on your face") and, at times, through touch on Tiphaine's back, shoulders, and hands. Tiphaine, in turn, described her experience of Ellen's music through narrative and drawing.

*Video example: Tiphaine with Woojer Vest*.[20]

**Figure 5**

*Tiphaine drawing her perception of Ellen for Tiphaine (2022)*

Using Tiphaine's drawings as graphic scores, Ellen then improvised while consciously employing movement and facial expression in addition to sound.

[20] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jmoAsErSs3CuLbbJv4Z2tvScOgz9-VPy/view?usp=sharing.

*Video example: Ellen improvising to Tiphaine's drawing of Ellen for Tiphaine as graphic score, March 20, 2022.*[21]

**Haptic Dexterity**

Paula particularly liked seeing how, during the early phases when Ellen and Tiphaine were sharing their respective perceptions or "listenings" of various musical notes and rhythms, they communicated their perceptions back to each other in different ways. For example, Tiphaine explored haptically, though the vibrations of the Woojer vibrotactile vest. The decibel limitations of the vest's transducers are such that only lower range sounds are captured and transformed into repeated vibrational movements. As described above, in the spaces of vibrational absence, Paula experimented with listening to the higher frequencies, auditorily, and interpreting the piece not into a visual signed language but rather into a tactile combination of shapes, speeds, and pressures moving along Tiphaine's back, shoulders, arms, and fingers. Tiphaine communicated back that same piece in drawn pictorial and material forms to Ellen. However, neither Ellen (nor Paula) was able to sense or derive substantive meaning from the music emitted from the vibrotactile vest at Tiphaine's level of sophistication and detail. For Ellen, this was a humbling experience. Despite decades of musical training and experience, she realized that her sense of touch is seriously underdeveloped. She is working to increase her dexterity with haptic sensation.

**Material Sensation**

One of the early pieces we listened to was Ellen's performance of Temple on the Lake (Pura Ulun Danu Beratan), for solo flute and Sundanese gamelan by composer Bill Brennan (2016).[22] The piece includes melodic material on flute and the stratified and interlocking gong and metallophone sounds of the gamelan. Tiphaine was again able to translate her perception of the piece in both pictorial and sculptural media, capturing phrasing, rhythm, texture, and form with great accuracy (especially impressive since she was unfamiliar with gamelan, the traditional ensemble of Indonesia). She offered Ellen her Tibetan singing bowl as an assemblage, with instructions to fill it with water and one or two basalt rocks before striking the edge of the bowl

[21] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/12lQhuiBadR4hPC81KHA_1dWA18DrapRH/view?usp=sharing.
[22] Available at http://www.ellenwaterman.ca/performance.htm. [Please note that since publication of this essay, the link in this note has become inactive. —P.B.]

with a wooden mallet. Tiphaine said that, for her, the piece was like watching the series of ripples that formed from the centre to the edge where the water meets the bowl.

*Video example: Singing bow with rocks and water*.[23]

These visual and material representations of Temple on the Lake could be "listened" to and sensed by both Ellen and Paula. Indeed, Ellen found the experience of putting her fingertips into the water while striking the singing bowl to be intensely affective, perhaps because of the way her fingertips are attuned to touch through flute playing. For her, these watery vibrations were more intense, specific, and meaningful than those generated by the Woojer vest. This illustrates our point that sensorial interconnection is asymmetrical. People come together from different backgrounds but also with different sensory frames, yet interconnection still exists. This intersensory exchange of music is a powerful means for people to communicate their lived experiences and their sense of being in the world.

*Video example: Ellen improvising kinetically and haptically with singing bowl, rocks, and water*.[24]

When Paula saw Ellen's response, she reflected on something Josette had once told her in Sweden while with the artistic director for Riksteaterns Tyst Teater[25]—a sign language theatre department in Sweden—watching an ensemble of deaf and hearing actors rehearse their performance of the Odyssey in 2009. There was no translation from the sign language on stage into spoken language for the audience. She asked Josette, "How will people understand what is being said in sign language? The audience may be confused." Paula remembers Josette replying, "let them." This was a pivotal moment for Paula. Rather than attempting to impose structure,

[23] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hxglnhCaNoAAbO2DP2sD395grHUNQKCf/view?usp=sharing.
[24] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fPK5Co2SEE4bovIAMj_R0Cg7l9EwZObP/view?usp=sharing.
[25] Now known as RIKSTEATERN CREA.

Josette released people's self expression to encourage our different modes and capacities for "listening" and "hearing." In the same way, Paula and Tiphaine wanted Ellen to experience ambiguity and uncertainty while exploring and expanding into new sensory listening experiences.

**Home as Place**

Tiphaine particularly liked how collaboration could be done from "home," an idea we originally adopted because the Omicron variant of COVID-19 was active in Ottawa/Gatineau during the winter of 2022. Working together with masks would have seriously impeded our ability to communicate in sign language. But home was more than a consideration of convenience; it holds our most intimate senses of place. Each of our inner circles, our living environments, consists of materials and tools that express how we best sense and relate to the world. Therefore, instead of meeting in an unfamiliar or neutral place, we chose to stay rooted in the times and spaces that best reflect the integrity of who we are. Working at home enabled us to "listen" to the music, to engage in sign language and, most importantly to Tiphaine, to engage during the project with her children, who both hear and sign. Her children are multi-lingual and multi-modal being children of a deaf adult, known as CODA.[26] The transducers in the Woojer vest are calibrated so that they transmit vibrations without an auditory signal, but it is also possible to connect headphones and listen to the audio signal. Tiphaine's son, Léoghan, would sit next to her. Tiphaine felt the music, while Léoghan listened to it. Then with each sound Léoghan would sign back in sign language (LSQ) what musical instruments he imagined made each unique sound in the piece. This provided more cultural insight for Tiphaine into the auditory-music and hearing world of her son and a medium of connection between mother and son through music by way of co-listening.

*Video example: Listening at home – Tiphaine and Léoghan*.[27]

[26] CODA: Children of Deaf Adults, https://www.handspeak.com/study/146/#:~:text=A%20Coda%20is%20a%20child%20of%20Deaf%20adults,of%20children%20born%20in%20Deaf%20families%20are%20hearing

[27] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1P_8tFN93xxajuZGN_3OOXax6iDrHYNVi/view?usp=sharing.

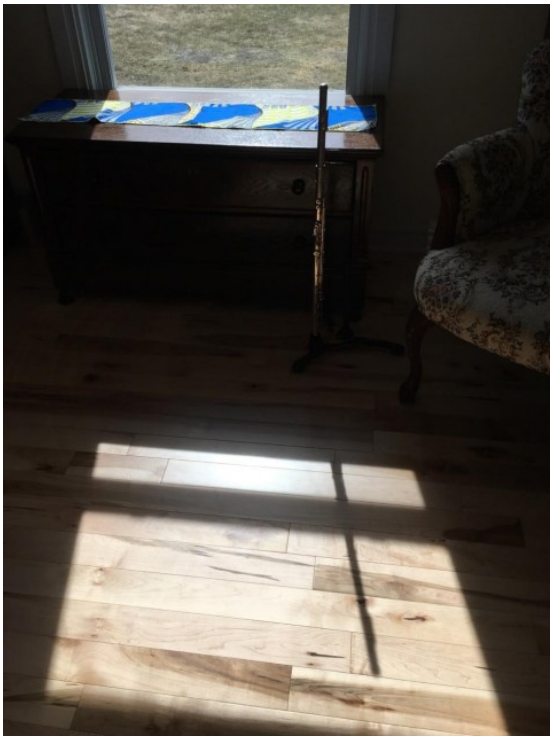
And while we shared objects (such as the Tibetan bowl and basalt rocks, and Tiphaine's drawings) with Ellen, we also wanted Ellen to explore our offerings and discussion from within her own chosen sensory world, from her "home," where she could use familiar materials to communicate back to us and make offerings of her own perceptions of the music we were exploring together. This iterative and relational process brought forward a nourishing way to self-express and cocreate that aligns well with maintaining the "felt self" while also engaging with people from different backgrounds. It allows for expanded sensory exploration and greater access to "listening" and ways of knowing and relating to people and to the world.

To explore this intimate role of home as place, Ellen began regularly to improvise in a patch of sunlight from a south-facing window that often spills over an old wooden chest and the variegated maple floor of her music room. She experimented with concentrating on the visual and haptic qualities of sunlight, how it intensifies colours and warms the skin, and she focused her improvisation on minute and controlled movements of her feet. Documenting the process in the form of a score, she shared it with Paula and Tiphaine:

> *Improvisation with Sunlight, for Moving Player with Open and Closed Eyes*
>
> Go to a window through which the sun is directly shining. Explore the space delineated by the patch of sunlight streaming through the window. Treat what you can see and feel—both in front of your open eyes, and behind your closed eyes—as a graphic score. Focus your attention on feeling your body present in this space. Move around in the patch of sunlight. Make music, but let it be a by-product of your exploration of the space.

**Figure 6**

*Sun Patch Place (2022)*



In discussing this score with Paula and Tiphaine, Ellen realized that the experience of improvising repeatedly in this sunny spot turned a defined "space" into a familiar and welcoming "place." This insight carried over to the final instructions for Bodily Listening in Place, which has four sections.

## Bodily Listening in Place

Our focus in this critical reflection is on the iterative collaborative process that preceded Ellen's writing of the score for Bodily Listening in Place. As we've already noted, the score and several realizations of the piece, are available online. Here is a basic summary of the score.

1. Select a place, spend time in it, document it, and get to know it through your senses over several days.

2. Before improvising in response to your place, orient your body by moving and warming up in any way that is meaningful to you.

3. Listen (the piece starts now). Listening is not hearing—it is active attention. "Listen" beyond audition—with your eyes, skin, heart, emotions.

4. Improvise in response to the place in any way that makes sense to you.

a) Sing or play an instrument

b) Move/dance

c) Draw

d) Write

**Figure 7**

*Ellen Performing Bodily Listening in Place at Warbler's Roost, South River, Ontario, May 8, 2022. Amplified flute, pitch shifter pedal, and maple syrup barrel*

As both a process and a composition, Bodily Listening in Place is deceptively simple. Like many exercises in meditation and mindfulness, and within a tradition of instructional scores for improvisation, it calls the participant to pay active attention to their surroundings and to focus on sensory data.[28] Considered in terms of improvisation as a research-creation method, however, performing Bodily Listening in Place raises complex questions that merit continued thought, dialogue, and musicking. What does it mean to "make" music? How does music engage the

[28] See, for example, Oliveros (1971).

senses asymmetrically across different modalities of perception, across different bodies? How does the privileging of a particular sense (hearing) and a particular medium (sound) work to limit our conception of music? By attending to the diverse ways in which we "listen," and by expanding our own inter-sensory ranges, we, in turn, expand our opportunities for interconnectedness across both arts practices and human cultures.

## Chapter Seven: Developing Further Inter-Sensory and Co-Creation Research Design

In this section, I describe how the *Bodily Listening in Place* research-creation project was a means for me to explore certain ideas fundamental to this PhD project's methodology, but on a smaller sale and in a collaborative environment. *Bodily Listening* provided insight into how two people, deaf and hearing, can communicate beyond language to share their experiences multi-modally through music and vibrations, visual paintings, sketches, and objects. But, more so, how points of sensorial interconnection are asymmetrical, such that although people may come together from different backgrounds and with different sensory frames, interconnection still exists. This inter-sensory exchange is a powerful means for people to communicate their lived experiences and sense of being in the world.

This PhD study furthers the concept of co-inquiry by applying inter-sensory approach and using creative scores to maintain a sense of listening and a sense of *home*. This PhD study builds upon the methodology used in the *Bodily Listening* project by working with a larger group of deaf and hearing participants. Participants came from diverse geographical regions, some identifying as artists and some not. Given the increased collection of multi-modal expressions of experience, this project utilizes additional theoretical constructs, analysis, and validation steps.

### A Sensewalk of Intersensory Experiences

In this PhD study, each participant was asked to conduct a *Sensewalk* that involved sharing narratives and mapping physical or institutional locations. The aim, here, was to reflect upon a moment in time and space when participants communicated across deaf and hearing spaces, urging them to consider their senses—what they heard, saw, touched, tasted, and smelled. Participants were then told to retell their experiences in their own words and in the languages of their choice, whether signed or spoken. This process is rooted in the concept of a Soundwalk (Boudreault-Fournier, 2017; McCartney & Paquette, 2012). A Soundwalk extends beyond merely walking and listening to sounds; rather, it functions as an exploration of the soundscape (the landscape of sound) captured in a given area, guided by a score. In this context, a *score* is defined as a map upon which one may annotate the different sounds encountered while

traversing the territory. My use of the Sensewalk enables participants to employ multiple senses, as well as the intersectionality between the senses, to describe their own *Sensescape*.

Sensewalking has been conceptualized as a qualitative research method designed to permit exploration from new vantage points, both physical and mental. This approach has most often been adopted within feminist and ecological disciplines (Henshaw & Cox, 2009). Soundwalks are identified as one specific type of Sensewalk. Although sensewalks typically focus on one sense at a time, research on urban environments reveals their inherently inter-sensory nature. This underscores how perceptions through our senses play a major role in understanding health and well-being (Henckel, 2019). Notably, although Sensewalks have traditionally been conducted in real time, this project employed the Sensewalk as a method for accessing and describing inter-sensory experiences stored in a person's memory.

**Situational Mapping and Relational Analysis**

For this PhD project, I also applied a situational mapping technique and analysis as presented by Adele E. Clarke (2005). Applying techniques such as situational mapping and relational analysis grounds experience in real, lived situations that can be described vividly and concretely. These techniques will be described further in the next section. Clarke presents a postmodern, innovative approach to grounded theory, initially developed by Glaser and Strauss in the late 1960s, as an empirical approach for studying social life through a qualitative lens (p. xxi). Clarke identified, however, the need for a new method, pointing to methodological challenges at a time when de/repositioning the researcher was crucial in response to a "crisis of representation" (p. xxvii). This shift was accompanied by a growing concern for the complexities of "situatedness," including the instability of situations, perpetually changing characteristics, and porous boundaries that distinguish social worlds (pp. xxvii–xxix). These transformations challenged the assumptions of grounded theory, which traditionally aimed to study a particular social phenomenon by constructing analytic codes, generating categories, and then integrating them into a theoretical framework focused on the research area (p. xxxi). According to Clarke, traditional grounded theory accounted insufficiently for the intricate complexities of social worlds and failed to address the modern methodological and ethical concerns of researchers.

Clarke (2005) proposes a supplement to basic grounded theory with a situation-centred, symbolic interactionalist approach that studies action and includes analysis of the full situation, including discourses and narratives—visual and historical (p. xxxii). Clarke's situation-centered approach grew out of her work as a student of Anselm Strauss, who was deeply interested in codifying social worlds/arenas/discourses/negotiation frameworks (p. xxxiv ). The distinction, in Clarke's case, is that she centres analyses of situations that include difference(s) and variations. There is an emphasis on heterogeneous positions and the complexities within relations are discussed. Clarke peruses vivid contrasts and resists urges to homogenize or simplify data as some common traditional, positivist social science is sometimes criticized for doing in the context of qualitative research (p. xxxiv). This project embraces situated complexity and seeks to access this complexity via its multi-modal design, by collecting a variety of modes of data, including signed and text-based narratives, images, videos, court transcripts, signed poems, material objects, and illustrations.

Clarke's (2005) situational analysis approach serves as a meso-level analysis of social words, addressing their tensions, negotiations, similarities, and differences. Instead of turning the focus to different centres, either deaf or hearing, cultural or otherwise, my approach is person-centered and recreates a situation as the participant describes it. This emphasis is particularly relevant in cases where participants experience communication across deaf and hearing spaces. For this study, I employed situational maps as a strategy to "articulate the elements in the situation and examine relations among them" (p. 86). The main goal when mapping a "situation" is to describe the human and nonhuman elements related to the analyzed event. To initiate this relational analysis, I began by generating an abstract situational map, or "messy map" (p. 95), which allowed for an unrestricted openness, not one guided by preconceived notions but rather that would present opportunities for new meanings and significances to emerge. To create my first messy map, I took one visual representation of each participant's creative scores and placed them randomly in a collective collage on the wall.

Next, I proceeded with a second messy map. From the collection of scores, I began to articulate each situation further. To achieve this, I asked questions such as: Who and what is present in this situation? Who and what matters in this situation? What elements "make a difference" in this situation? (Clarke, 2005, p. 87). Next, I compiled all the elements listed, typed

and photocopied them, and taped them to the wall. Following this, I created another relational map by taking each element in turn and reflecting on how each related to the others. This marked the beginning of another layer of relational analysis. This map identified individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, needs, cultures, policies, and languages for each element listed.

Subsequently, I converted this second messy map into an "ordered map" (Clarke, 2005, p. 90). Upon examination of the random elements included on messy map #2, I identified similarities and differences between the various related concepts. Many elements were interconnected with several other elements, in various ways. I categorized these elements, defining categories and assigning each a unique title, and then listed each element under its respective category. Considering the ordered map, I explored how each categorized element addressed my initial research questions: How does communication echo and resonate across deaf and hearing experiences? How is communication experienced as an emplacement and as an interconnected relationship to the world (to the self, to others, and to one's sense of place)? How are sensory experiences expressed by hearing and deaf people communicating? How does establishing the sense of home at the site of listening promote diversity in aural and oral expressions, contributing to an enhanced sense of well-being in the world? I then translated the ordered map into a text-based narrative, which was presented to the research participants.

In this section, the method of the Sensewalk was described as the means by which the participants in this study described their own Sensescapes, to explore their inter-sensory relationships to themselves, to others, and to their environments. The situational mapping technique, and the relational, situated approach to analysis, was also described, setting out the roadmap to analysis for this study.

## Chapter Eight: Data Collection: Multi-Phased and Multi-Model

In this section, I identify how many participants were involved in the different phases of this research, including their languages and geographical locations in Canada. I will describe the methodology for each phase of the research, including both the semi-structured interviews and the two focus groups, as well as the questions guiding the participant engagement. In addition, this section discusses the process for member checking and the validation phase.

The research method recreated two social contexts: *social-institutional*, by reviewing legal transcripts and conducting semi-structured interviews; and *social-creative*, by way of focus groups. The project involved fifteen (15) participants, encompassing perspectives from both deaf and hearing people. Among the participants, five (5) lived in western Canada, four (4) were from central Canada, and six (6) from the francophone province of Quebec. There were nine (9) deaf participants and six (6) hearing. Regarding languages, five (5) were francophone and ten (10) were anglophone. Two (2) hearing participants did not know a signed language (either ASL or LSQ). One (1) hearing participant exhibited fluency in both spoken languages, English and French, and in signed languages, ASL and LSQ. All deaf participants used one (1) sign language for communication and none were bilingual in ASL and LSQ. The researcher communicated with each participant in their preferred language. During dyadic or group sessions, simultaneous interpretation teams were provided to bridge the concurrent use of signed and spoken languages.

### Phase One: Two Semi-Structure Interviews

I carried out two semi-structured interviews with the two deaf complainants in the two human rights case laws related to sign language interpretation that I detailed in an earlier chapter, Nigel Howard (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993) and Jessica Dunkley (*Dunkley v. UBC and another*, 2015). Howard's and Dunkley's court transcripts were reviewed and excerpts from each court transcript were extracted. These excerpts only included moments described in the text relating to communication between deaf and hearing people. They did not include passages where other people discussed Howard's and Dunkley's issues, judicial analysis, discussions of earlier cases, or communications occurring during the court proceeding. The excerpts were intended to capture only those moments of communication that described real

exchanges between deaf and hearing people leading up to the two complainants' respective human rights complaints (see the Appendix for a list of excerpts). Howard and Dunkley were asked to select the excerpt most significant to them and to explain why. Then, Howard and Dunkley were asked to remember the moment and explain how it resonated with them. This was a retrospective Sensewalk, in which we sought to identify what each deaf participant remembered seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and feeling during the moment. Lastly, Howard and Dunkley were asked to choose their most poignant feeling from that moment and to select an object that best represented that feeling. This process is called sense transference and allows for a sensory experience that a person has occurring internally, in visible, to be brought out and into the environment, made visible. The object allowed me, the researcher, to see other nuanced meanings of their experience of communicating beyond what was understood by a discourse-based narrative.

**Phase Two: Two Focus Groups**

In the second phase, I established a social-creative community context by conducting two focus groups. In this, I collaborated with Spill.Propagation, an artist-run centre specializing in sign languages in Quebec, Canada to assist in connecting and recruiting research participants. I have been involved with this organization since its founding in 2009, co-directing it and supporting research-creation activity as a fundamental ethic of co-creation. Spill.Propagation provides access to a network of deaf and hearing artists.

Participant groups were structured in two ways: first, a didactic pairing of deaf and hearing artists and, second, a group of solo deaf and hearing individuals. We distributed a call for participants in English, French, ASL, and LSQ, and used a snowball sampling procedure, where recruited participants redistributed the call and assisted in reaching other participants. This process was particularly useful given that there did not readily exist a population list from which to draw a sample.

For the first focus group, criteria for artist participants included having an established public practice in art creation and access to an art studio. Six (6) artists took part. Four (4) were francophones from Quebec and two (2) were anglophones from Ontario. Dyadic pairs were randomly formed between deaf and hearing participants, with no specific consideration for

aligning art discipline or language. Each dyad was tasked with creating a cross-cultural, cross-lingual partnership for expressing communication experiences (rather than recreating real-world experiences). Sign-language interpreting services were provided. The group focused on sharing their experiences of communication across deaf and hearing spaces, with specific exploration of Michael Jackson's (2013) concept of "the senses communicating" and Howes and Classen's (2014) concept of "emplacement." The process involved producing a "creative score" and an "echo score." One participant created the creative score and shared it with their partner, thereby initiating a multi-modal communication exchange between the two participants. The partner then replied with their own creative score, producing a multi-modal feedback loop, or echo. This practice challenged normalized ideas of listening. During an all-day session, two participants requested to join remotely, which was accommodated, and the session was facilitated by two teams of interpreters (English to ASL and French to LSQ) and recorded. The recordings were later transcribed. Additionally, the sessions conducted in French (LSQ) were first translated into English and then transcribed. All participants' creative scores and echo scores were collected for further data analysis.

The second focus group comprised individuals who were deaf and hearing, and convened for three hours via remote videoconferencing. The group consisted of seven (7) people from Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, and Ottawa. The group included three (3) hearing people and four (4) deaf people, of which four (4) were women and three (3) were men, with one (1) being francophone and six (6) anglophone. Due to personal and logistic considerations, three (3) participants joined the online group session while four (4) could not attend and participated asynchronously, receiving the same instructions shared in the group session via email and submitting their creative score on the same deadline as the other online group participants. Participants used French, English, ASL, and LSQ during the online session. Two groups of sign-language interpreters were present to facilitate communication across the four languages. Given that sign-language interpreters frequently navigate the spaces between deaf and hearing people, they were invited to participate and contribute scores as well. Two interpreters joined the project. During the live group session, a knowledge presentation took place. Two artists from dyadic groups, Viktoriya (deaf, ASL) and MAP (hearing, French), shared their score/echo score creation process, conducted a knowledge-sharing session on creative scores, and offered insights on creating scores related to communication. After this, the group spontaneously collaborated in

creating a score, engaging with concepts of communication, deaf and hearing spaces, and senses of freedom.

In both groups, participants were prompted with three key instructions: 1) Remember a moment when you felt a sense of communication or freedom in communication; 2) describe that memory in words or signs; and 3) translate the sense into a "score" (i.e., an object, drawing, video, image, etc.). Some scores were created on the spot during the session, while some were completed and submitted prior to a two-week deadline. The session was recorded and transcribed (using spoken language interpretation) and the scores were collected.

**Validating by Member Checking: Creating the Researcher's Echo Scores**

According to Shawn Wilson (2008), an essential aspect of Indigenous epistemological thinking is the concept that "the world around us is a web of connections and relationships" (p. 77). In this perspective, nothing exists alone; rather, everything is interconnected and exists in relation to everything else. Furthermore, Wilson emphasizes that research, within Indigenous epistemology, is the ceremony of maintaining accountability to these relationships. In this context, research is viewed as a form of reciprocity and respect, and this respect includes the element of usefulness to the communities from which the knowledge originates. Considering this perspective and the notion that "stories go in circles," (Tafoya, 1995) I asked myself: How are my research methods contributing to building a respectful relationship between myself and the research participants? Upon reflection, I recognized that I needed to work collaboratively in a manner that offered means of "listening" to the research participants and creating an environment in which they felt heard. In the context of this research project, this realization prompted me to slow down the process, temporarily suspending the process of writing about my findings and assessing the representativeness of my analysis in alignment with the viewpoints of the research participants—the co-researchers.

Member checking, a recognized method for validating qualitative research data (Creswell, 2008, p. 191), presented challenges for my study. A language barrier emerged due to the diverse languages spoken by participants, including English, French, ASL, and LSQ, and the fact that my research was conducted in written English. Although sign-language interpreters were present during the live engagements, translating all the research transcripts into each

participant's mother tongue for purposes of validation proved impractical. To provide a sense of listening, I created an "echo score" for each participant (see "Researcher's Echo" in the Appendix). In these scores, I summarized each participant's narratives in English, including images from their creative scores. Subsequently, I answered my research questions based on my understanding of each participant's words. Each echo score was 2–3 pages long and incorporated the keywords or signs used by participants to describe their experiences. The fundamental goal of each echo score was to ask the participant: "Did I understand you?"

I met with each participant individually to review the echo score I had created for them and discussed its content in the participant's chosen language. Regardless of which language they used during the project (English, French, ASL, or LSQ), the participant was accorded the authority and freedom to influence the specific English words I was using to represent the concepts they shared with me during the research project. This choice was deemed essential for me to achieve better alignment between my listening and the participant's intended meaning. Responding to my representation of their narratives and meanings, most participants made minor adjustments. One participant, however, made a significant adjustment. Where I had initially interpreted a creative score to mean "movement," upon verification I learned that it meant a "solid bone structure." The ultimate goal of these meetings was for participants to sense that my echoed scores accurately reflected their concepts and ideas. I shared the English document on a computer screen and we edited the document together. Importantly, no new data was introduced during this process; each change simply brought my understanding closer to the participant's communicated experience. Notably, the adjustments I needed to make came mostly from deaf participants, with whom I navigated through layers of translation. Then I summarized how each participant's input contributed to addressing my original PhD research questions. I expressed this summary in my own words, illustrating the connection between the participant's experience and the two key concepts of my research: an *echo* (an external response to a communicated message) and *resonance* (a visceral sense of oneself following an external response). I authored this section with the participant present, listening, asking questions, and giving me the space to generate this part of the research narrative. Throughout this validation process, I received a lasting impression that the validation process is a critical element of communicating; it serves as a ceremony of reciprocity and listening. After each session, I explained to participants that as I write and disseminate this research, I base my representation of their statements on the content of

this echo score. At the end of the meeting, we recorded a session in which I reviewed the consent form together with the participant, recording their agreement on confidentiality preferences, and establishing how they wished to be referenced in the research dissemination. Each participant chose to include their proper name (no pseudonyms). However, in a final decision prior to publishing the research, I used only the participants' first names. This choice was made as an aesthetic measure, in the aim of allowing these personal narratives to be relatable to a broader audience while remaining personal to the deaf community from which the participants originated.

**Public Presentation and Engagement**

I had planned my methodology such that upon completing the research project, I would present the work to a public audience. Here, it is important to understand how oppression is held in place. Various forms of power can create injustice; one such form of power, which I chose to resist in this project, is private ownership of information. In my view, this is a crucial step in our collective fight against injustice. Sharing this research with the public was designed into the research process as a means for me, the leading researcher, to be accountable for the information I gathered during this process and to share this information with the project participants who are contributing not only my personal career but to the very foundation of this project: the academic world, the communications industry, and deaf and interpreting communities.

**Ethics Protocol for Incentives and Confidentiality**

This study received certification for ethical acceptability for research involving human subjects (Certificate Number 30017792, valid March 28, 2023–March 27, 2024). During Phase One, participants were recruited through targeted solicitation—specifically the two deaf individuals named in the two aforementioned human rights cases. In Phase Two, participants from the two groups involved in the creative community sessions were solicited through advertising and snowball sampling. Regarding participation incentives: during phase one, each participant received an honorarium of $100 for time spent in the interview along with subsequent reviews and confirmation of data summary accuracy. In phase two, participants involved in the dyadic group session were compensated with a flat artist fee according to the pay scale

established by CARFAC-RAAV (Canadian Artists Representation/ Front des artistes canadiens and Regroupement des artists en arts visuels). Names of the participants in the individual group session were also entered into a random draw of $50 upon completion of their creative score.

None of the research procedures necessitated special training or involved discussions of sensitive information. To ensure informed consent, I revised the general consent form into plain language and provided translation into American Sign Language (ASL) and the Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ). During the data collection and online sessions, I described the research process, its purpose, the questions involved, and the consent form. After completing the data collection phases, I met with each participant individually, repeated the confidentiality clauses, and recorded their agreement to include their name and real identity when disseminating the results. Participation in this project was voluntary. To address any ethical concerns regarding my collaboration with members of the deaf culture and community as a member of the dominant language and cultural group, I endeavoured to maintain transparency. This involved stating my research objectives in solicitation messages, translating messages into signed languages, conducting in-person meetings to discuss research progress and future objectives, and promoting knowledge sharing through creative workshops. I adopted collaborative approaches when working with research participants. The data collected was securely stored in an online cloud folder owned by the principal investigator, Paula Bath. Upon project completion, all data, artwork, and materials collected will be transferred to Spill.Propagation for a period of two years. This transfer is aimed at supporting additional artistic creation projects, programming, grant solicitation, and public relations activities.

Each participant in this project was given the option of anonymity, yet everyone chose to use their names. I found this practice of including participants' names, even if only their first names, enhanced my accountability as the researcher; I wanted to ensure that I represented these named individual participants accurately and respectfully. Recognizing this relationship between the data and the participants' names further reinforced my thinking of how one's sensory experience in communication begins with the various ways in which we listen. In the end, I chose to use only the participants' first names, for two reasons: my concerns for the participants' privacy and my desire to generate a circular relationship between the participants, their stories, and the reader. Throughout the project, when a participant shared their story in a groups, it was

common for another participant to acknowledge having had a similar experience in addition to sharing their own story. This illustrates that the diversity of communication experiences does not necessarily mean that each is unique and isolated; often, although varied, they are also shared.

Therefore, I chose to establish connections between the findings and the participants, using their first names to respect their desire to maintain a link to their story and to prevent those stories from becoming decontextualized. Additionally, by removing the participants' surnames, I aimed to depersonalize the experience slightly, resisting interpretations whereby a story is understood as an isolated case specific to a particular individual. Instead, this approach allows for circular communication between participant, researcher, and reader, enabling the reader to relate to the experience uniquely.

In this section, I reviewed the composition of the group of participants involved in this research, and the methodology and guiding questions for the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. I described how I established various researcher accountability measures such as member checking, public presentation and engagement, and ethics protocols.

# Chapter Nine: Findings

In this section, I present the findings from the data collected during this research project. First, I review the two semi-structured interviews, conducted with the deaf complainants from the two legal cases described in Chapter 3: Nigel Howard (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993) and Jessica Dunkley (*Dunkley v. UBC and another*, 2015). Each interview includes a Sensewalk exploration of an excerpt from that participant's respective legal transcript, representing a moment of communicating across deaf and hearing spaces; a mapping of their Sensescape in describing the transcript; and an object selected by the participant to represent the sensory experience of that moment of communication. Next, I describe the sensory results gathered from the two focus groups. The first focus group comprises deaf and hearing artists working in paired groups. The second comprises deaf and hearing individuals. The themes from both focus groups are reviewed.

## Sensory Results from Two Semi-Structured Interviews

The two semi-structured interviews with Nigel Howard and Jessica Dunkley provided materials, both narrative and tangible, for understanding their experiences in a social-institutional setting.

### *Howard's Transcript Excerpt: A Sense of Violation and Institutional Pressure*

Howard selected an excerpt from p. 10 of the case transcript (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993), which described how to obtain sign-language interpreting services and the funding that needed to be secured. To undertake this process, the student, Howard, was required to apply for financial resources from VRS (Vocational Rehabilitation Services) in Vancouver, British Columbia. The excerpt reads:

> He [Mr. Howard] testified that when he spoke to Dr. Leslie about interpreters, he told Dr. Leslie he did not think that he should have to fill out an application form to VRS [Vocational Rehabilitation Services]. He testified, "…it should be as simple for me as it is for other UBC [University of British Columbia] students to get in there…."

> Q [question to Mr. Howard] How did you feel about filing that [application] out?
>
> A [Mr. Howard's answer] I didn't really like it. I felt, what was the point, the service should be there, I should be able to get an interpreter, it should be equal access, I shouldn't have to do all the paperwork and waste all this time when I could be concentrating on my studies, getting ready for school. And they know what my needs would be, they knew that I would need an interpreter, the professors should have been informed before so they could be comfortable with it, but there was no time to do any of that, it was all very pressured, and I felt looked down upon, and I felt like I had no privacy. (p. 10)

When I asked Howard why he picked this excerpt, he said it was the one thing that vexed him the most about his experience. He has not forgotten this experience—the degree of pressure the system exerted on him, requiring him to complete this application form to secure funding for interpreting services, and how much he did not want to have to do this. As he explains:

> They were requiring me to complete an application for a grant to finance my sign-language interpreting services, but this would mean divulging all my personal finance information, work salary, monthly spending budget, and savings details. It was not something that hearing students had to do—just to get into their classes at their university. Why did I have to do this very invasive additional step? Their solution was for me to first decimate all my personal savings, then apply for a government loan, then receive this grant, and, at the end, what little difference in cost was left—the University would pay for that. (personal communication with N. Howard, June 1, 2023)

### *Howard's Sensewalk Map: Navigating an Interconnected Web*

Next, I asked Howard to perform a Sensewalk based on that moment. Howard mapped his relationship to his physical space from memory, recalling the time and space in which the events described in the excerpt occurred and seeking to remember sensorily what he heard, saw, touched, tasted, and smelled. Howard mapped his Sensewalk and

described it as a memory of moving between various agencies and offices in search of a solution. His map is below:

**Figure 8**

*Mapping a Sensewalk of "Being Communicated To"*


Howard described the map's features, stating that the dots indicate two places where communicating and making decisions was happening, but that he was not present in those places. Howard's articulation of his relationship to his environment took the form of a moving, interconnected web, encompassing people, power, institutions, policies, and processes. He drew himself as an element directly influenced by the various drawn activities or conditions within this interconnected web, positioning himself, however, at the outer edge, the last link in the web. Howard did not draw himself at the centre of the network but rather away from its core, at its margin, as though he was an observer watching the activities unfold in and about his life. He illustrated the various activities occurring in his environment by tracing arrows in straight and dotted lines. Dotted lines indicate where communication was taking place but he was left out of it, thus remaining unaware of what was said or decided. Straight lines indicate messages directed at him. No direct message originates from Howard and points to anyone or any other entity. In explaining his map, Howard asked me to remember an important social ethic: "Nothing about us without us." I would argue that this map describes an experience of communication quite remote from this ethic. Thus, the title of Howard's map is "About Us, Without Us."

### *Howard's Sense Object: Cold Metal Ruler*

Next, I asked Howard to consider the Sensewalk and "translate" its sensory experience into a material form (i.e., an object, movement, artistic creation, etc.). This technique, called *sense transference*, serves as both an art practice and a tool for disrupting and transforming internalized struggles into external objects for discussion and analysis. In his final score, Nigel characterized his overall sense of communication across deaf and hearing spaces as being like a metal ruler—cold, ridged, and measured.

**Figure 9**

*A Cold Metal Ruler*


Moreover, he titled his score "Cold Metal Ruler." Nigel describes his experience as a metal ruler:

> That metal ruler is how I feel. It is made of metal, so cold. It is a grey, sombre colour. It is firm. It has strict, calculated measurements. Just like those people who say things like: Do you meet this criterion? Yes—good. Do you meet that criterion? No—oh, no good. (personal communication with N. Howard, June 1, 2023)

### *Dunkley's Transcript Excerpt: A Sense of Deep Pain*

Dunkley hesitated at paragraph 204 of her case transcript (*Dunkley v. UBC and another*, 2015) because it described the moment when she felt that the onus in the situation had been placed upon her. In the transcript, Dr. Rungta, Associate Dean for the Postgraduate Medical Education office, testified that the *Globe and Mail* had contacted UBC as it intended to do a feature on Dunkley. Dr. Dunkley said she intended to state that there was a flaw in the system

whereby disabled medical students were unable to obtain the necessary accommodations in Postgraduate Medical Education. As Dr. Rungta testified:

> I really took to heart what Dr. Dunkley said, which is that her assumption, I think, had been because that had always been the case for her, which is that her—all her undergraduate training both at the University of British Columbia and the University of Ottawa have always been provided with no specific obstacles or barriers. And when she matched to the residency program, it was a whole different landscape. And I think it was my impression that Dr. Dunkley was operating on the fact that she was at a university and why should you know, why should it not be just as it was, but it was not as it was. And I think that was somewhat difficult to begin to change, so to speak. (para. 204)

Dunkley also hesitated to include paragraph 233, because it described the moment when the university began to conflate the main issue—providing sign-language interpreters—with new issues such as their safety concerns regarding Dunkley being deaf. However, Dunkley noted that the university had always treated her as an individual and did not consider the wider environment or seek ways to make that environment safe for everyone. Paragraph 233 states:

> Dr. Dunkley testified that Dr. Rungta read from a script. Dr. Rungta sent Dr. Dunkley a letter summarizing the October 12 meeting. A few excerpts follow:
>
> > […]
> >
> > 2. You [Dr. Dunkley] must understand that financial considerations, while not the sole considerations, do play a significant role in determining whether the full accommodation you seek can be provided. This is reality we must face. We have to be able to identify a source of funding this accommodation, particularly the cost of providing interpreters, as the office of the postgraduate dean does not have a budget for matters of this nature. We are working to resolve this matter but it could be a serious barrier to proceeding. Our duty to accommodate is not open ended and is limited to the point of undue hardship—financial hardship is a consideration. (para. 233)

Dunkley described this excerpt as significant, because "they were saying that I am arrogant. This pissed me off. It would take change [to treat Dunkley inclusively], and they did not want to change. They were rigid" (personal communication with J. Dunkley, June 1, 2023).

In the end, Dunkley chose paragraph 249, as it was at this specific moment that she felt that the entire experience was over. It was the most emotional moment that she remembered—the moment when the university simply walked away. No solution was going to come. Dunkley was alone. The transcript excerpt reads:

> January 20: Dr. Dunkley was invited to attend a meeting with the postgraduate associate deans. Attending the meeting were Dr. Rungta, Dr. Webber, Dr. Kernahan, Dr. Dunkley, a PAR-BC representative, an interpreter, and a scribe. At the end of the meeting, Dr. Dunkley was placed on unpaid leave. Afterward, UBC provided Dr. Dunkley with a summary of the meeting. It stated that Dr. Rungta opened the meeting and read a form letter verbatim.[29]
>
> > …It had been estimated that the costs involved in providing interpreter services necessary to accommodate Dr. Dunkley's training requirements in the program would be at least $500,000/year for a total of 2.5 million dollars for the five-year program. Dr. Rungta explained that he fully recognized the obligation of UBC Postgraduate Medical Education to accommodate Dr. Dunkley's disability, but stated that the requirement to do so is only to the point of undue hardship. Given the cost of providing the interpreter services that Dr. Dunkley will require, UBC has concluded that this represents undue hardship as UBC cannot provide the accommodation she has requested. (para. 249)

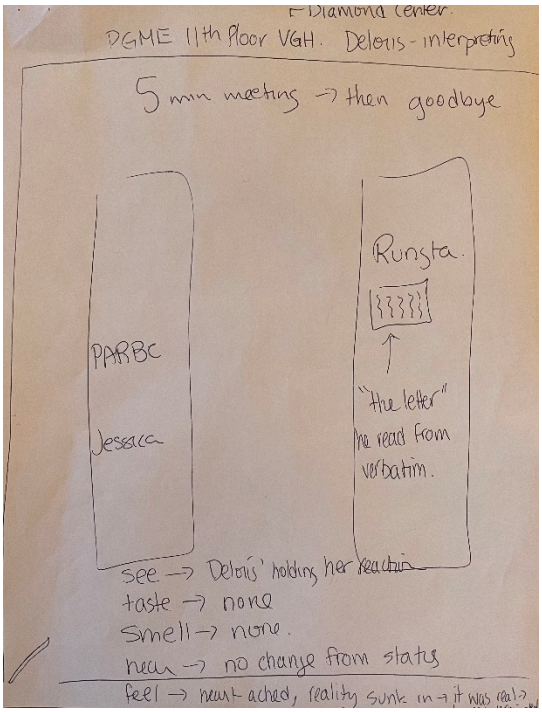
Dunkley stated that this quote was powerful for her because it was the most emotional moment of the entire proceeding. Dunkley described the feeling that it was all over, and she cried. In American Sign Language, Dunkley assigned specific sign terminology to describe her feelings:

[29] The entire letter is not reproduced here, only the section relevant for analysis which included a communication exchange between a deaf person (Dunkley) and a hearing person.

heart–sink–ache[30]. It describes a deep pain, as though her heart drops (personal communication with J. Dunkley, June 1, 2023).

**Figure 10**

*Mapping a Sensewalk of "A Quick Goodbye"*




### *Dunkley's Sensewalk Map: A Sense of Dehumanization and Being Alone*

For Dunkley's Sensewalk, she drew the boardroom in the Diamond Centre outpatient building at UBC, where her final meeting with the university representatives took place. Dunkley remembers walking into the room with a feeling of anticipation and relief that there was finally movement on her case. As Dunkley recalled: "I still had hope that a solution was going to be found … one day" (J. Dunkley, personal communication, June 1, 2023). Dunkley's Sensewalk describes being in an institutional building, UBC's Diamond Centre, in a board room on the eleventh floor. There are two opposing tables—one at right (for the university people) and one at left (for Dunkley and a union representative). It also includes certain other significant factors in

[30] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BB8opNSkgvOPoNOQPkJnvS_q0PH56GEg/view?usp=drive_link

Dunkley's environment: that communication in the meeting was not conversational (Dr. Rungta read verbatim from a form letter) and that the meeting ended very quickly, after what felt like only five minutes.

The map implicates the internal, social, and environmental conditions surrounding her last meeting with the university deans. In drawing herself inside the room, Dunkley positioned herself next to the representative from her union (PARBC) and in opposition to the university (represented by Dr. Rungta). However, no lines of communication are drawn, indicating a lack of communicative interaction. This corresponds with Jessica's narrative, in which she described the meeting as one without discussion. Instead, the university representative read from a form letter stating that the university would not provide sign-language interpreters. After reading the letter, the Dr. Rungta left the room. This moment was a pivotal one for Dunkley, as it determined her future. She felt the meeting, which had lasted only five minutes, ended abruptly without even a goodbye. When asked what was her most dominant feeling at that moment, Dunkley described it as *sight*. She remembers watching the face of the sign-language interpreter (naturally, as she watched the interpretation of the proceedings, the interpreter was the person Dunkley was looking at). The interpreter's face remained neutral, as did Dr. Rungta's expression. The moment Dr. Rungta finished reading out the letter, he got up and left the room.

### *Dunkley's Sense Object: A Sense of "Heart–Sink–Ache"*

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Dunkley was placed on unpaid leave. She described the communication at this final meeting as cold, impersonal, indirect, unclear, and confusing. She also described the moment in sign language:

> I remember Dr. Rungta reading a letter. Then, when he was done, the way it ended, I didn't understand what it meant. If you [Dr. Rungta] are not providing interpreters, does that mean I am kicked out of the program? Or what? I remember him not being able to answer. … So, then I asked: Does it mean I can still participate, like go to a conference and access funding for that? Can I go to academic sessions—because I wasn't kicked out of the program, according to him. But he kept answering: no, no, no. … It was then that I realized that I was cut off. Truly cut off. Because, even though I was on unpaid leave, I could no longer go to academic sessions. I couldn't socialize with other residents. I

> couldn't access academic funding. So, I realized—so I am cut off from the program. But he never actually said it. (personal communication with J. Dunkley, June 1, 2023)

During this meeting, Dunkley was never explicitly removed from the program. However, she could not continue in it as her accommodation request for sign-language interpretation was denied. To further demonstrate her sense, signed as "Heart-Ache-Sank," Dunkley chose the medium of collage. She chose a clipping with the text "Western Union" to symbolize the central role of money, along with three other key objects: a thumbtack, symbolizing Dunkley's pierced heart; an image of trees on black paper, representing solitude; and a wooden ring, indicating the feeling of hope while working to figure out her situation, and, ultimately, profound grief from losing a great opportunity.

**Figure 11**

*Collage of Dunkley's Experience: "Heart-Ache-Sank"*


## Sensory Results from Two Focus Groups

The next section includes the data collected from the two focus groups conducted. While above the data collected from the two interviews was intended to further our understanding of the experience of communicating across deaf and hearing spaces in social-institutional contexts,

the two focus groups described below are designed to further our understanding of communicating in social-creative contexts. The first section will describe the data collected from the focus group, involving deaf and hearing artistic pairs. For both groups, participants described their narratives and experiences through visual, tactile, and auditory mediums, including narratives, maps, collages, video, sign language poetry, objects, and illustrations.

## Focus Group #1: Deaf and Hearing Artistic Pairs

The first focus group was comprised of six (6) artists—three (3) deaf and three (3) hearing—who were randomly paired. Each pair interacted for seven days and created a series of artist scores that described their individual inter-sensory experiences of communicating across deaf and hearing spaces. Sign-language interpreting was provided, as needed. This process provided a series of echo scores. Each individual's score entails more than simply a response to the other artist; they also show the interconnectedness of communication and the interrelatedness of people and their experiences. During the echo-score process, one participant would start by sharing their first score about their experience, then the second participant would reply with their interpretive score, and so on. These echoing scores became like oscillating expansions of experience between two artists communicating in multi-lingual, multi-modal, and inter-sensory ways.

### *A Sense of Oneness*

The first pair was Anselmo (deaf, anglophone) and Jessica M. (hearing, francophone). Anselmo's scores compared two different settings and communication experiences: one positive (in Malta) and one negative (in Canada). While on location as a member of a video production team, working as an ASL coach, Anselmo described the feeling of when different people, hearing and deaf, come together to connect in real time and space across linguistic, technological, and geographical barriers. Anselmo juxtaposed this experience with flying back to Canada at the end of the project and how communication feels when interpreters are not provided or unavailable, or when the responsibility to struggle to arrange interpretation gives way to a sense of being apart from others, like "lost souls." Anselmo felt like a colour square on the side of a mixed-up

Rubik's cube and expressed a longing for unity with those around him. However, the social context forced these colours to move, to shift out of position, making it nearly impossible to reunite them without tremendous effort.

Anselmo emphasizes the importance of feeling connected to people, without barriers to communication, as though in "one world." To do this, Anselmo said he must be "seen-able" in communication, so that two people, both deaf and hearing, can merge from different perspectives yet enjoy the conditions necessary to merge their focus together, to see, and thus engage, with the same landscape and share the same experience.

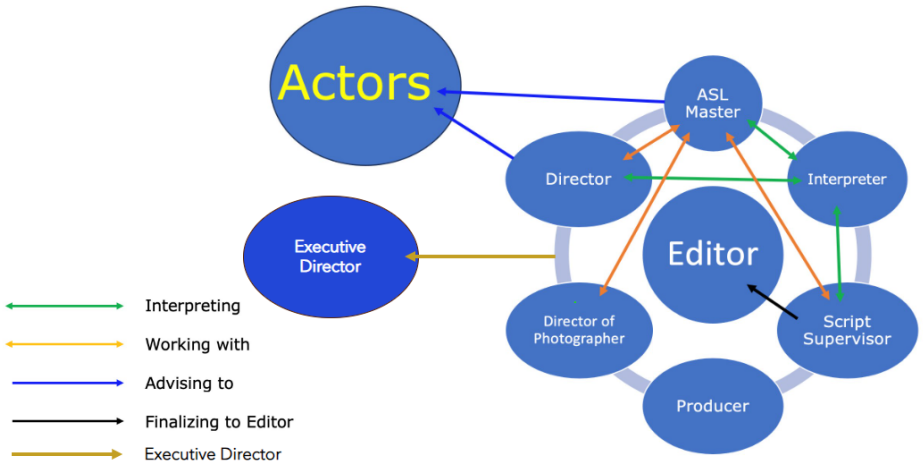
**Figure 12**

*Two Lost Words*

Anselmo discussed the interconnections among the people involved in his film production team in Malta. The team included actors, directors, editors, script supervisors, producers, and sign-language interpreters such as himself, an American Sign Language master. On this map, Anselmo positions himself as part of a network of team members, each with a specific role. Each member depends on communication and uses different languages and modalities at different times, due to the varied geographical locations and nationalities represented among the team members.

**Figure 13**

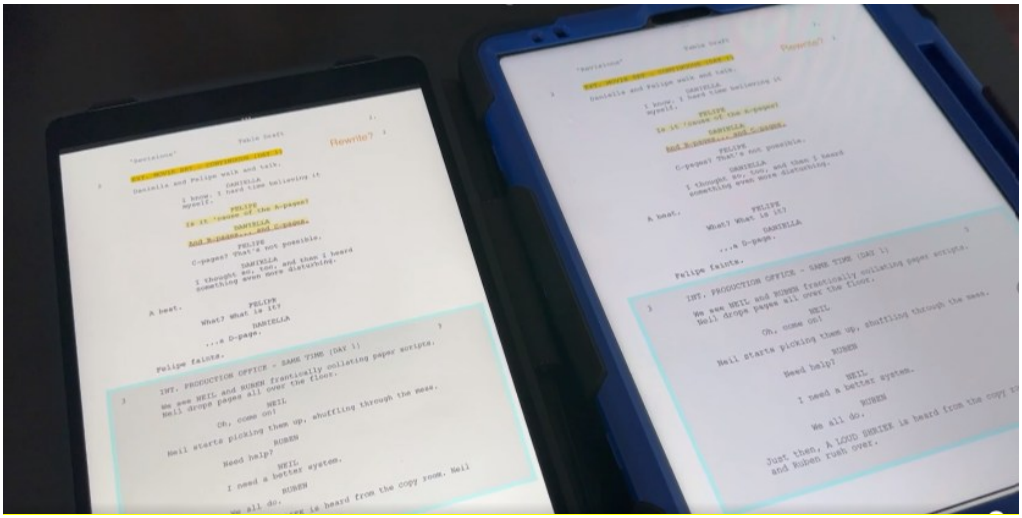
*Existing Web of Interconnected Social Connections*




In Anselmo's web of social conditions, he positioned himself as an equal to everyone else in the network, with lines of communication flowing in multiple directions, connecting to multiple people. Anselmo attributes this sense of connection to the availability of several communication technologies: 1) simultaneous; 2) real-time; and 3) accessible to all. One of the key communication technologies in Anselmo's experience was working with Scriptation, an app for mobile tablets. Scriptation is an annotation application that enables people to collaborate on the same text document, such as a film script, in real time. This technology allows multiple people to work together on the same document and offers multiple communication modalities—signed, spoken, and written—available to each team member equally and simultaneously. Access to different communication modalities was necessary, depending on the activity and the environment. Sign-language interpreters were available via FaceTime and text comments could be posted in the app, along with audio messages and notes that could be voice-translated by the interpreter.

**Figure 14**

*Scriptation: A Technical Solution Fostering Senses of Freedom*



Anselmo described the sense of connection and freedom experienced by team members as they accessed the same document, allowing each to communicate their feedback using multiple languages and modalities. He leveraged diverse modes of communication to engage with his colleagues. The team interacted by exchanging text, audio, and video sign-language messages. They could also request brief telephone calls for discussions. They used voice recognition, voice-to-text translation, online conferencing, video calling, and live and pre-recorded sign-language translations. Anselmo describes this as full and unlimited access to diverse means of communication in real time. With these communication tools in place, Anselmo described a profound sense of working in proximity and connection with others and his environment. He expressed that communication in this experience felt "fluid and easy like we are from the same world … it feels collaborative…. It does not feel like I am alone and independent." In their scores, both Anselmo and Jessica M. expressed feeling a sense of "oneness." Anselmo described his ability to communicate with the project's wider network in real time as "circular communication," adding that this type of communication felt "fluid and like we are from the same world." Anselmo's score and his description of the experience of circular communication underline his feeling of everyone being from one world.

**Figure 15**

*One World*

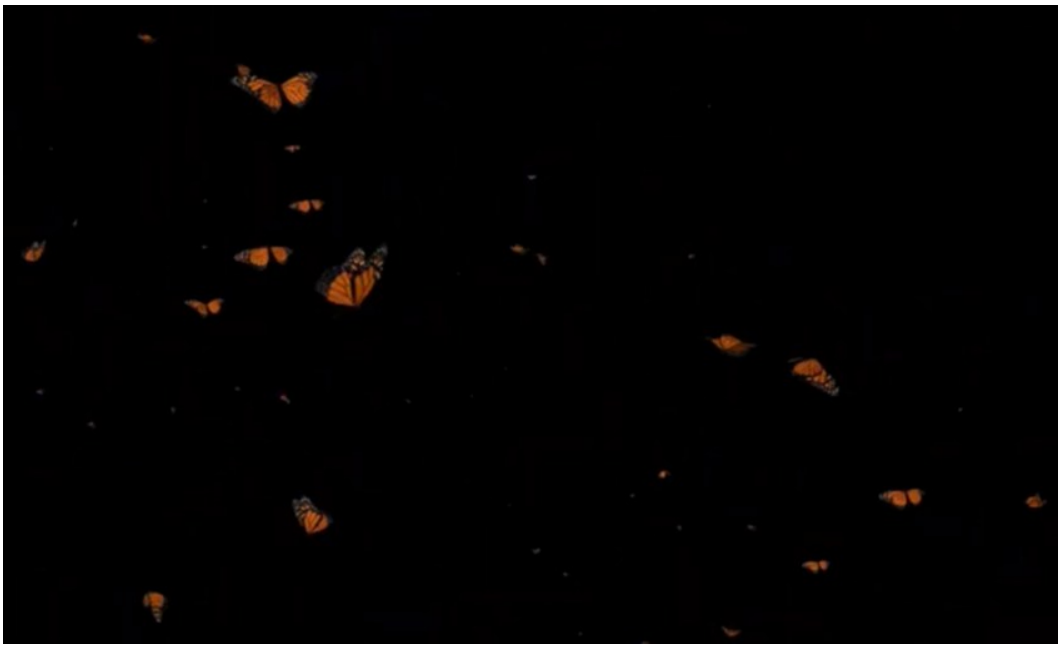
In ASL, Anselmo described *circular communication*: the index finger (a person) is encircled by many fingers (many people), which move to encompass the person. This gesture envisions communication as a process in which social elements in the environment enfold and include the individual. One of Anselmo's scores captured this sense of circular communication or communication freedom, describing the sense as moving like a butterfly in life. As Anselmo puts it:

> It is like being a butterfly flying within a kaleidoscope of other butterflies. I am not looking out at life, as if to look at my life happening inside a snow globe. I can feel the feeling of freedom in the movement of communicating within life itself. I become life and can move freely. (personal communication with Anselmo, June 17, 2023)

Anselmo articulated this sense of fluid movement together with others in a video of butterflies in flight.

**Figure 16**

*Communicating with Spontaneity and Ease Like the Movement of Butterflies*



Another participant's score expressed a sense of communication between the self and the environment and described it as it unfolded in real time. This sense of butterflying in communication with others includes the element of working together, and describes conditions in which working together with others in real time is made possible when technology and other resources are provided.

Jessica M. and Anselmo stressed that inclusive communication offered participants a sense of "oneness." In response to Anselmo's Malta experience, Jessica M. shared her experience working on a collaborative curatorial project that involved two teams of curators at two different galleries. One team, in Ontario, was predominately anglophone, while the other, in Quebec, was francophone. Jessica M. expressed the sense of "slow going" because, in order to work together, various barriers to communication needed to be overcome; eventually, however, the teams were able to work as one. In her score, Jessica M. described an ideal communication experience characterized by a sense of "oneness." She also explored the concept of oneness in a video installation, describing how this condition already exists in nature and demonstrating the relationships between natural elements. Jessica M. said that her score, titled "Oneness," was influenced by her experience working on the co-curation project. Throughout the project,

collaboration was integrated into every decision point. Although Jessica enjoyed the project a great deal, she also struggled somewhat as the pace of the project, which she described as

**Figure 17**

*Observing Division and Obstacles*

moving "very slowly," felt unfamiliar to her. This slowness that Jessica M. identified underlines the need to resolve conflicts or communication barriers in order to engage all parties in curatorial decision-making processes. In this context, inclusion, not time, was made the priority. Interestingly, Jessica found her own internal sense of struggle intriguing because she knew it meant she was learning a new way of being that fosters inclusion for others.

Jessica M. explained that such divisions arise as conditions of the external environment, just as water in a stream flows and rushes over separate rocks. The barrier, she elaborated further, only emerges when human beings need to navigate from one rock to the next to reach the other side of the stream. Jessica M. observes that satisfying this need becomes particularly challenging when additional conditions complicate crossing the river, such as if the water's current is particularly swift.

**Figure 18**

*Observing Movement and Barriers*

When needs and conditions collide, Jessica suggests that the necessity for unity may act as a bridge. In French, Jessica M. describes this condition is a *trait d'union* (see the "Inventory of Key Signed and Written Terminology and Definitions" in the Appendix). This is translated in English as *hyphen*, but this misses a more nuanced, symbolic meaning perhaps better understood as *a line creating a connection*. Jessica M. drew a parallel between observing connections in nature and in human relationships. In her score, for example, she described a bridge as a *trait d'union* to create connections between people and their environment. In Jessica M.'s video installation[31], she embodies a sense of oneness by walking through a covered bridge. On the bridge, she reflects on the strength of connections represented by the crisscrossing of the wooden planks, which for her represent an internal condition of interconnection.

[31] See https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JNQmsihvAZqDeAIKQAU0oIfWfM7XILV2/view?usp=drive_link

**Figure 19**

*Observing Connections*

Both Anselmo and Jessica M. focused on their environments and on the environmental elements that impacted their experiences when communicating: people, languages, language modalities, technology, etc. However, the inclusivity of the environment can also be evaluated in terms of an individual's sense of "oneness" and of connection to others, often through these same environmental factors.

### *A Sense of Honoring Your Sensorial Integrity*

The next deaf-hearing pair was Viktoriya (deaf, anglophone) and MAP (hearing, francophone). Together, they brought forward the theme of finding and honouring one's sensorial integrity in communication. In Viktoriya's various scores, she described her manifold experiences of communication, which were contingent upon her circumstances and the languages she used, i.e., sign language versus spoken language (lip reading). In a score titled "Sign Language in Code," Viktoriya shows how communication in sign language engenders the sensation of fluidity and free-flowing movement. In her score, communications between herself

and others are represented as moving inward and outward freely, in the form of a figure eight. In discussing interactions between deaf and hearing people, Viktoriya described the significant effort she made as a deaf woman to communicate with hearing people using spoken language, primarily lip reading. In her score, Viktoriya illustrated the strain on her senses, both visually and mentally, stating that “communication is like putting together a puzzle of words”. Such feelings of stress and anxiety were coupled with the responsibility placed upon her when navigating spoken language via lip reading to avoid mixing up or misinterpreting similar words (e.g., bad, mad, sad). Viktoriya emphasized that the burden fell upon her to read lips accurately and not make mistakes: “My parents told me to lip read and would speak to me. Their lips were always on my face. I needed to find how to apply this to my inner voice.”

**Figure 20**

*The Effort of Reading Lips*


In contrast, Viktoriya describes her feeling when communicating in sign language as multi-dimensional and “free-flowing”—a sense of freedom.

**Figure 21**

*The Sense of Free-Flowing Communication in Sign Language*

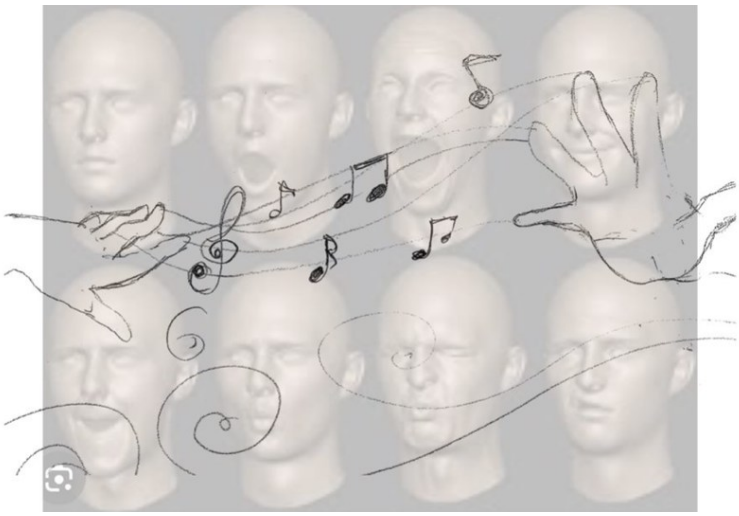


**Figure 22**

*The Locus of Communication*

Viktoriya explained that communication is not transmitted from the bodily locations typically associated with the senses and language—the mouth and ears, for spoken languages,

and the eyes and hands, for signed languages. Instead, Viktorya, who is deaf, stated that every person possesses a *locus of communication* that is located at the base of the neck, where the neck meets the chest. She elaborates further that each person has their own internal "voice," one that is not necessarily related to spoken language or sound, but rather functions as a "home centre" connected to one's self-identity and expression. She illustrates this locus of communication through the metaphor of "voice" in the form of a mandala, which acts as a portal, a nodal point of exchange between oneself and one's environment.

When communication is healthy, according to Viktoriya, the mandala is depicted as open and vibrating. Healthy communication is described as forming a figure eight. In sign language, Viktoriya describes this figure-eight movement as proceeding from a person's locus point, at the base of the neck, and extending outward as communication into the environment. The movement is smooth and fluid. At the farthest end of the figure-eight movement, it reaches a point of contact in the environment before being reflected back to us in a way that is aligned and in balance with the original emission. Viktoriya describes the movement in sign language:

> [The movement of communication] builds at the base of one's throat and emits outwardly into the environment, and the environment expresses back and receives it in the same point, and the pattern continues. (personal communication with Viktoriya, 17 June, 2023)

When communication, in the form of a figure eight, becomes unhealthy, the locus or mandala of communication wilts and closes. This unhealthy communication and closure is accompanied by an impact or response felt at the bodily level. The locus of communication, to regulate itself, changes how it relates to the world through self-protection: wilting.

Although a hearing person, MAP shared Viktoriya's sense of communication as stressful and exhausting. She described experiencing a sense of strain, to the point of exhaustion, in her interactions. To communicate effectively with others, MAP had to make great efforts to integrate and decode messages, and thereby create connections. MAP indicated that she related to Viktoriya's (deaf) experience of lip reading, as she, too, uses it as a tool for decoding spoken language. She attributes this need to her experience of autism. MAP conceptualizes communication as being comprised of encoded messages that are constantly in motion throughout ones' life, just like Viktoriya's score. MAP described her inner feelings of exhaustion

when socializing and communicating with people through the image of the death of Marat, as depicted in Jacques-Louis David's famous painting (1793).

**Figure 23**

*Sensing Exhaustion Communicating*


Similarly to Viktoriya, MAP describes communication as consisting of unique codes that must be decoded everywhere and all the time. This decoding is a continuous effort that moves between states: seeing/can't see/seeing/can't see. Although MAP is not deaf, she identified that she is an autist and that, for her, lip reading represents a significant effort, burdening her social interactions and exhausting her well-being. To illustrate how our unique voices (or codes) translate into a communicative exchange in the social environment, MAP provided some of these codes, in the form of email exchanges between herself and Viktoriya, and superimposed this coded exchange onto Viktoriya's mandala image.

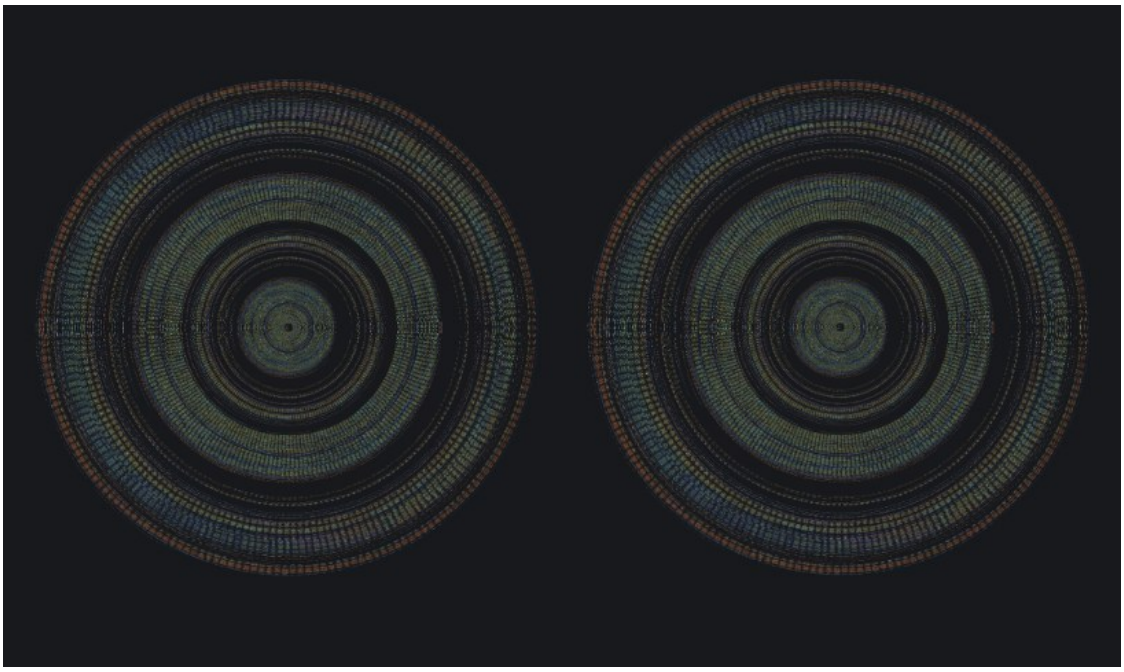
**Figure 24**

*Communicating as Visible/Invisible Codes*

Finally, although MAP expressed identification with Viktoriya's sense of exhaustion, she also described how communication is in constant motion, oscillating between visibility and invisibility, a continuous movement, a pattern, like a series of circles. MAP's score, created out of solidarity with Viktoriya's score, serves as an encoded message formed from her typed conversations with Viktoriya throughout the project. MAP noted that in communication there are always "unseeable" elements and described this as an integral part of the process of communicating, not as something erroneous, overlooked, or in need of correction. Moreover, the unperceivable may also be a tool for reclaiming and redefining what can be made perceivable (outwardly) and what can be perceived (inwardly), thereby developing our sense of agency.

**Figure 25**

*Encoding*



### *A Sense of Strain and Grabbing at Communication*

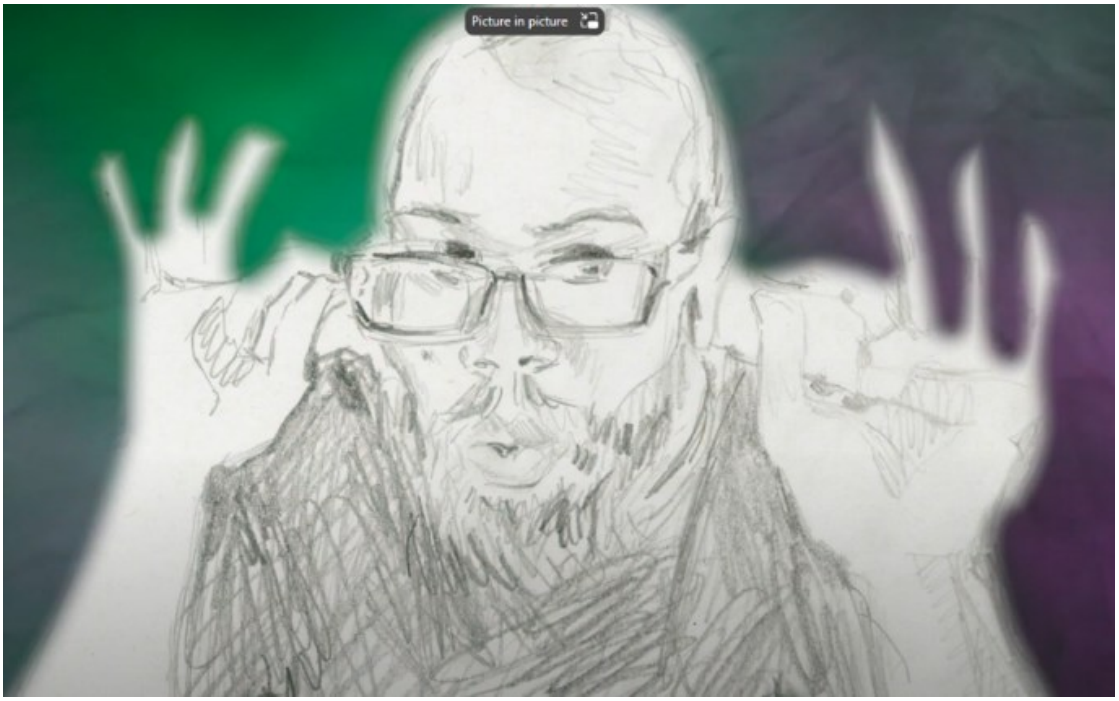
The next pair was Matthew (deaf, francophone) and Emmanuelle (hearing, francophone). Matthew, described a similar a sense of strain, particularly feeling the burden of lip-reading during interactions with people who can hear and who use spoken language. Matthew described this experience as "a lot of work. I need to grab what I can in the communication to make my own sense." This fatigue, which stems from an action Matthew describes as "grabbing at communication," underlines the constant effort he must exert to make his own sense within spaces of communication with people who hear. Matthew described the sense of moving from "grabbing communication" to "ease in communication" when he uses the Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ).[32] In Matthew's score, he created a video installation titled "Speaking in Silence."[33] Here, silence is preferable and is neither an absence of sound nor the result of an auditory disability. Instead, it allows for a rebalancing of the senses. It disrupts the dominance of

[32] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R-EqYYvmoMtL-fNq0vU-NlNJB92XZ_n0/view?usp=drive_link
[33] The title of the French original, by Matthew and Emmanuelle, is *Parler en Silence 2* (2023). See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=940Enb7q1RM

sound and reshapes the dynamics of visual and sound-based communication in a manner that allow people to relate to each other in different ways. Matthew's experience here is similar to that of Viktoriya (deaf), who described a sense of lightness, fluidity, and multi-dimensional freedom when using sign language.

**Figure 26**

*Speaking in Silence*




Matthew described his communication experience as being less about the flow of logic and reason within a particular language, and more about the sense of spontaneity and montage, an edited collage of frames, a thread of sense. However, to embrace communication as a montage, one must be prepared to assign a certain priority of the absurd. Allowing for the absurd in communication brings out one's ability to find new "frames" of meaning across multiple mediums of communication, which permits a more multi-modal and complex understanding and a variety of meanings. He emphasized, however, that this frame does not constitute simply the totality of what either party has expressed; rather it is built collaboratively by the people communicating and through a shared understanding. These frames consist of words, concepts, and signs, which are grabbed and shared between the communicating parties. Further, Matthew

**Figure 27**

*Strain Felt in the Eyes: Watching Lip Reading*

described how, in communication between people using signed and spoken languages, nuances can go missing. As he related, often nuanced meanings expressed in sign languages, due to its visual dimensions, go beyond what words can say. Consequently, they are missing from the shared frame established during communication, because some visual details cannot be articulated to the same extent as they can in sign language. In Matthew's process of working with Emmanuelle, the pair began with a written personal story based on Emmanuelle's childhood, when she met a deaf person for the first time—a fellow elementary school student. Emmanuelle had handed her story, in written French, to Matthew as her first score. Similarly, in this project, Emmanuelle, a hearing participant, described a sense of being challenged by a change in her normal pace, which she perceived as she navigated between the deaf and hearing spaces. Emmanuelle noted that her typical pace tends to be slower and this project required her to move more quickly to keep up with the group's dynamics and the demands of collaborative space. Despite this adjustment, Emmanuelle found the project fascinating, prioritizing her interest above her preference for a more comfortable sense of pace. Matthew suggests that in order to accommodate this different perspective, the angle of the frame must be adjusted to allow for the nuances of visual meaning to shift from spoken languages back into sign language. This adjustment enables his relationship with the environment to feel more complete:

> By changing the written story into sign language added a visual dimension to that story that goes beyond words and that did not exist currently in the story itself because of the language it was said in. (personal communication with Matthew, 17 June, 2023).

Matthew explained that in this project, his artist partner, Emmanuelle (who is hearing), shared her story in written French. Emmanuelle's story described two moments in her life when she interacted with a deaf person. The first, was when she was young and in elementary school. There was a deaf girl in her grade 4 class. Emmanuelle remembered watching the movements of sign language, not understanding the movements, as well as observing the dynamics between the deaf student, interpreter and teachers in class. Years later, as an adult, Emmanuelle described again meeting a deaf person. This time a deaf woman. The two experiences connected in her mind as Emmanuelle remembered her first deaf friend from elementary school and continued to not fully understand the sign language, but was still curious and interested in engaging with the deaf people coming into her life.

Together Matthew and Emmanuelle endeavoured to take the French written text and reintegrate the nuances into LSQ as they were necessary to convey a deeper visual meaning. In their collaborative video installation, Matthew focused on changing the frame to bring forward more fully these nuances in visual meaning, which exist beyond what is available in the auditory, sound-based dimensions of language. Matthew said that working with Emmanuelle, who does not know sign language, required them to work in several communication mediums: meetings with sign-language interpreters, email, exchanges of written stories, video clips, and sketches. Emmanuelle recounted her experience of "listening" to her deaf collaborator, Matthew, as he retold one of her personal stories in LSQ.

**Figure 28**

*Identifying Places in Text Lacking Visual Sense*

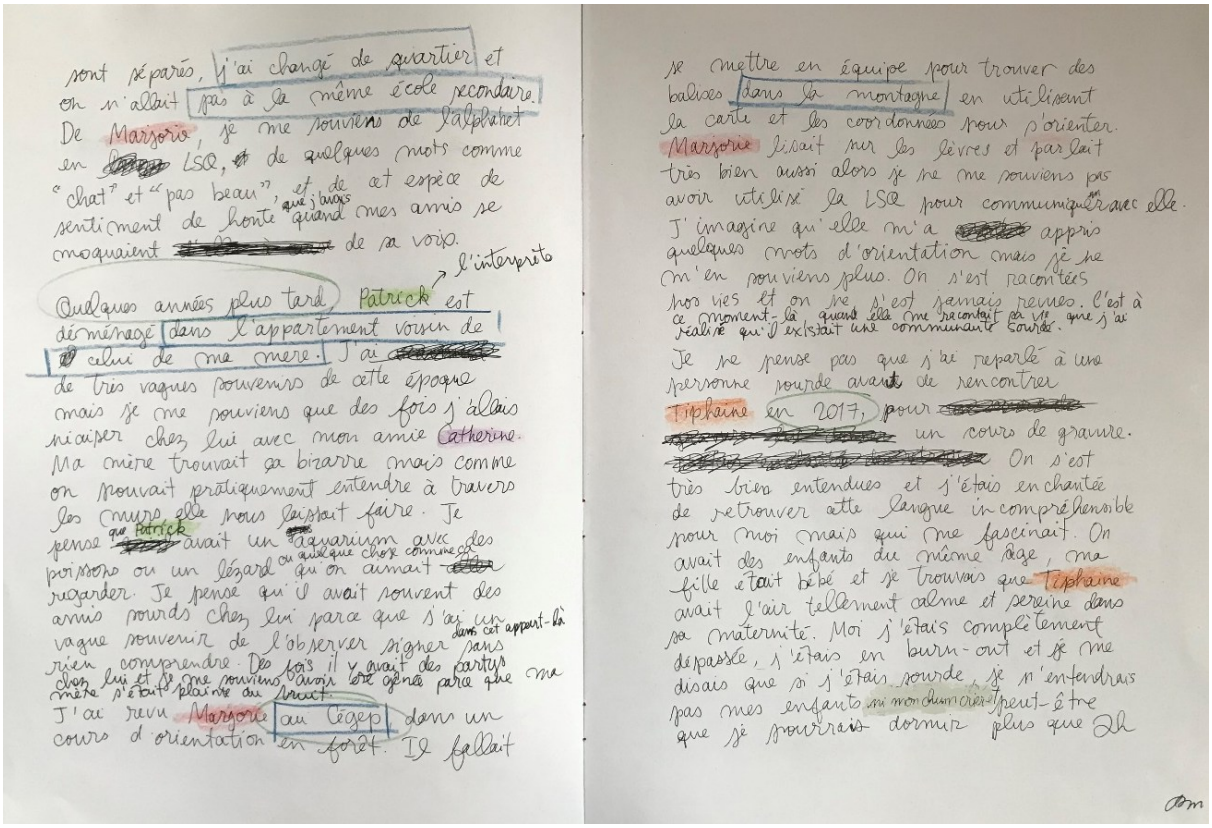



**Figure 29**

*Moving Words into Visual Meaning*

Without proficiency in sign language, when watching Matthew signing in LSQ, Emmanuelle faced ambiguity and a lack of shared communication. Consequently, in her response to Matthew, Emmanuelle could only express herself directly to him via her artistic language: drawing. She captured what she could understand—the blur of hand movements.[34] In Emmanuelle's score, she drew this sense of blur, symbolizing the sense of only *grabbing pieces* of communication. Emmanuelle did not describe this, however, as a stressful, frustrating, or fatiguing experience, but a fascinating one. To expand her exploration, Emmanuelle began to draw images of Matthew based on his video, using her trusted drawing tool, a fine-point marker. However, she observed that her marker could not capture adequately the "blurring image" that impressed itself upon her as she witnessed (yet without understanding) sign language in motion. She struggled on paper, therefore, with the absence represented for her in the *transitions and movement* of sign language.

Emmanuelle discovered what she needed was a change of drawing implement. To capture the movement—the "blur"—Emmanuelle needed to use a coloured pencil. Changing the tool enabled her to broaden how she conveyed the nuances of sign language on paper. At the end of the two-week project, Emmanuelle had not acquired sign-language proficiency; however, Matthew remarked on how, through their collaborative process, his signed movements (captured on video) and Emmanuelle's final drawings "became one." This sense of *oneness* resonated with and echoed similar experiences in the collaboration between Anselmo (deaf) and Jessica M. (hearing); as well as the story (described in the next section) of Conner, who is deaf, working with his hearing artistic partner.

[34] Emmanuelle originally told the story in written French. It was thus a familiar story, only retold in LSQ (Langue des signes Québécoise), a language Emmanuelle did not know.

**Figure 30**

*Emmanuelle Struggles to Capture Blur*

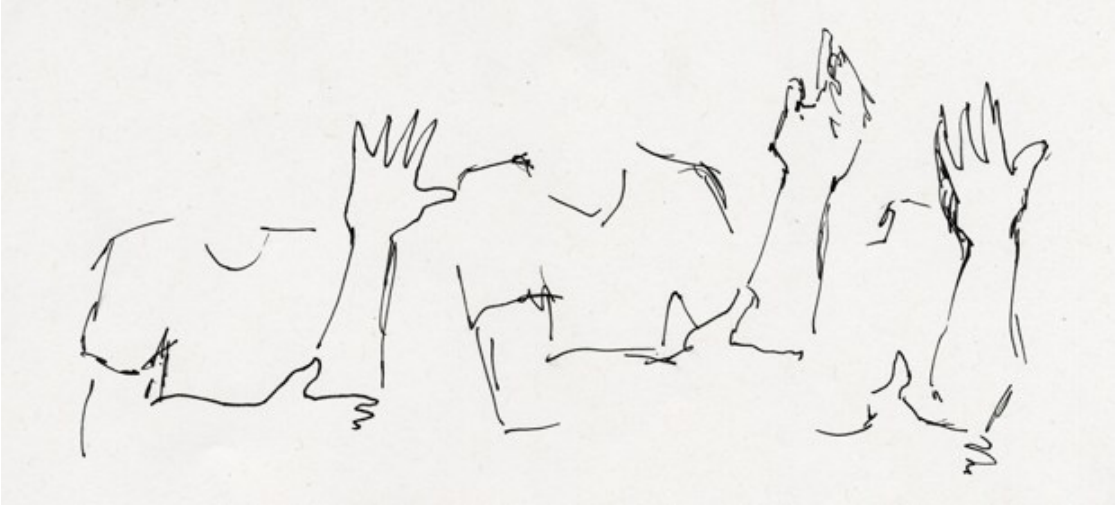
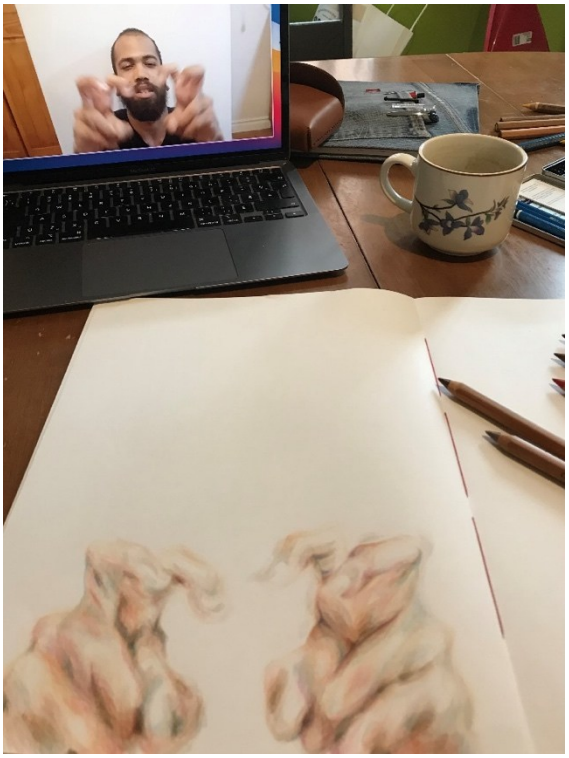


**Figure 31**

*Emmanuelle's Sensory Expansion (Perception and Expression) and Capturing Blur*



## Focus Group #2: Deaf and Hearing Individuals

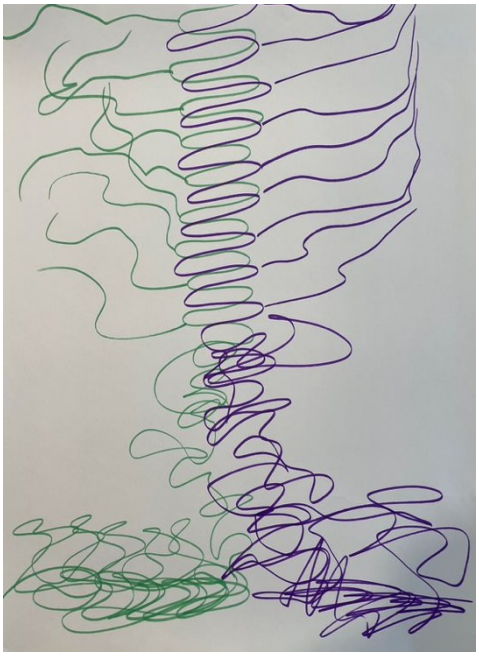
The second focus group continued to explore the social-creative context by gathering experiences communicating from various deaf and hearing individuals. Each individual shared a unique experience they had when communicating with either a deaf or hearing person during the course of their life. To start there were a total of seven (7) individuals (four (4) deaf and three (3) hearing), but only five (5) participants made it to the data analysis phase four (4) deaf and one (1) hearing. The scores of these five participants are described below.

### *A Sense of Common Ground Enabling Movement Forward*

Conner, who is deaf, shared a story about participating in a dance project. During this project (which took place prior to this research project), Conner collaborated with a hearing artist who knew a few basic signs but lacked the proficiency sufficient to carry on a sign-language conversation. Yet, by the end of the two-year collaboration, Conner noted that they had formed a "true allyship." Conner's score described the necessary element of structure, akin to "bone structure in the human body," which served as the foundation enabling their dance movements and overall collaboration to unfold. Conner emphasized that collaborating via movement alone is not the foundation of interaction. Instead, what is needed is a solid structure within which the movement can happen.

**Figure 32**

*A Social Bone Structure*



In Conner's illustrated score, two colours are used: purple, representing himself (the deaf artist), and green, representing his hearing artist collaborator. The colours enter the frame from different angles, symbolizing how different people bring their different languages and experiences into the collaborative process. Particularly striking is the "centre" of the sketched structure, represented by a spine moving vertically up the middle of the page. Conner intentionally did not draw himself in the centre of the page, but rather as one element of an interconnected web of structure and movement. This portrayal highlights both the entanglement and the independence of Connor and his hearing collaborator. As Conner put it,

> communication was not about the other person's message or myself, but the space we build together that forms the foundation of our collaboration. While time can elapse and distance between the collaborators can exist with the shared foundation, the collaboration can still come back together and start from the same structure and gain and continue. There exists a synchronicity, a feeling of moving in tandem with another movement in life. (Conner, personal communication, 17 July, 2023)

Conner emphasized the crucial importance of having a shared foundation. With such a foundation, a collaboration may move beyond the confines of a specific project in time and space, and expand into the future.

### *A Sense of Synchronicity Between Myself and Others*

Synchronicity, manifested as a sense of thriving while in a state of communication, was also documented in a score produced by Jordan (hearing). Jordan described a sign-language game which he had played with a group of deaf people, in which he recalled playing as a pleasant sensation. It was a game that could only be played by persons who know sign language. For a hearing person, who learned sign language later in life, to be able to participate in this game means that you know sign language. The game involves participants standing shoulder to shoulder in a circle. One player begins by signing a single sign (e.g., “my”), after which the next person repeats that sign and adds a second one (“my” and then “home”), and so forth, with players adding words in sequence around the circle. Jordan recalls the game taking place at night under a streetlamp, near the water in Montreal’s Old Port, the difficulty of perceiving visual language amidst the darkness complicating the game further. The group played the game for about an hour and attained a chain 70 signs long.

Jordan’s score, like Conner’s, included a profound sense of *synchronicity*—a sense shared, in this case, between himself and the deaf participants who came together to play this game. At certain points, the players even helped one another to navigate the increasingly long and complex sign chain. Jordan recalled the sense of play and fun, characterized by laughter and smiles. Jordan’s score includes concepts such as language codes, playfulness, and fluid movements in circles.

**Figure 33**

*Senses of Play*

### *A Sense of Balance or Unbalance*

"Balanced or unbalanced" was how Wissam, who is deaf, described his daily communication experience with hearing people in his ASL narrative.[35] Wissam used a metaphor of a burning candle: to keep the flame alive, a perfect balance of conditions must be maintained. One critical condition is the presence of oxygen. If the candle becomes too contained, the flame will suffocate and be extinguished. Similarly, if there is too much wind, the flame will also be extinguished. The burning candle demands balance. Wissam says that awareness leading to understanding behaves like oxygen fuelling a flame. Insufficient awareness can lead to cross-cultural mistakes, diminishing the sense of being understood. Likewise, excessive awareness—presuming to know how communication should occur and taking control—also undermines understanding. Allowing deaf people to lead and guide the process, in a way that best meets their needs in that moment, creates the conditions to attain understanding and a sense of balance.

[35] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aiQTKMUzmq79gn9_m54OlbioeV9fGZoa/view?usp=drive_link

**Figure 34**

*Elements of Balance*

In his score illustrating a burning candle, Wissam writes about his daily interactions with hearing people. The social context for these interactions occurred in various environments: stores, hotels, or simply random interactions with hearing people on the street or in an elevator. He describes his different experiences on the receiving end of communicating, after articulating his communication requirements or desires, noting how the environment reacts either by imposing restrictions or making allowances. He represents this distinction between imposing and allowing via two different movements. Wissam describes such instances in sign language as: "myheadheart and yourheadheart gone." This may be roughly translated as a feeling I have that is not being reflected back to me: "We are not understanding each other. Our mutual connection is broken."[36] I find Wissam's description of his experience to be in line with, yet also the antithesis to, what Nigel described as the sense that is critical for communication to occur. In Nigel's interview (above), conducted in ASL, he describes a sense that was absent in his experiences with the university, namely the sense of communicating "where their heart understands my heart" (personal communication with Nigel, June 1, 2023). This ASL concept,

[36] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/13aw-pUs5OOA0FeoNpccbygtHQyHC2vB9/view?usp=drive_link

noted by both Wissam and Nigel, can be described as “me—you care,” and functions as a social, interconnected echo originating in social and institutional contexts and running throughout the web of communications that reach the individual. What is absent are echoes that align with the individual’s communication needs and foster a sense of social caring and “humanness.”

### *A Sense of Being Controlled and Powerless*

In her score, Jodi, who is deaf**,** described her environment, which entails communicating with hearing people through sign-language interpreters. The interpreters serve as intermediaries between deaf and hearing people. Jodi articulated the challenges of depending on interpreters, emphasizing her inability to express herself directly and choose her own words. Instead, she must rely on others to construct her messages, often without the means to verify each word or adjust them for nuances that might reflect better her sense of self and identity.

For her creative score, Jodi selected a digital image of a ventriloquist’s dummy, calling it a portrait of herself describing those moments when she felt herself to be, “The Dummy.”

**Figure 35**

*The Ventriloquist’s Dummy: A Self-Portrait*

Here, Jodi describes this experience of being mediated and having no control:

> I have zero control over what choice of words are used, and I have no idea what words are said. I stand there smiling and acting along, like a dummy. I have little to no connection with others except the interpreters, the ventriloquists. I am not, and never will be, as powerful as the ventriloquist. Hearing people usually look, smile, coo, and laugh at me, the dummy. But they always listen to the ventriloquist and are in awe of their talent. I am just an empty vessel for people to make up what they think I am thinking and saying. No one can ever get me, unless they become a dummy like me. (Jodi, personal communication, 8 August, 2023)

Jodi's sense score, titled "The Ventriloquist's Dummy," seeks to evoke this echo and its distortion. It is a self-portrait illustrating her sense of communicating with hearing people and not being able to communicate directly and having her voice controlled by others.

Jackson (2013) argues that storytelling serves as a fundamental human strategy for evoking a sense of agency when confronted with disempowering circumstances (p. 34). In this research project, participants presented, in their respective narratives, their unique experiences occurring at different times, in different locations, and under different conditions. A common feature among the participants' narratives was that the circumstances surrounding their various experiences, comprised of different conditions that were a combination of internal or external (social/environmental) factors, conveyed either a sense of thriving or of surviving. Furthermore, such conditions were never static and were evolved continuously, depending on the people, location, and other circumstances. To gain a better understanding of the participants' various senses of thriving or surviving, it is essential to grasp the intricate interplay of these circumstances, which together consist of an interconnected web of different social and internal conditions.

Jennifer, who is deaf, addressed this relatedness in her signed poem. She described the relationship between her mind, her body, and her environment, and the interaction existing

between them in real time. Jennifer used sign language to describe this interaction as a flowing electrical current.[37]

**Figure 36**

*Internal State as Fluid Movement*

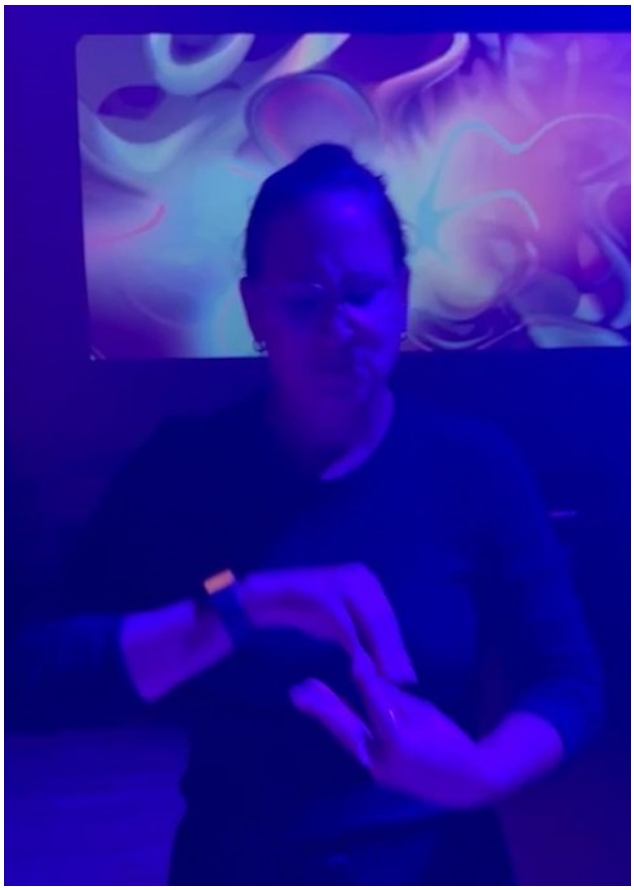


**Figure 37**

*External Conditions Causing Disruption*

She explained that while interacting, the feeling she experienced was a smooth, calming energy (in the video, she deals mostly with the internal interactions, in the body and mind). However, in the face of negative external stimuli from her environment, the sense changes to one of shock and pain, experienced as sudden attacks directed toward her person.

[37] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zft4oqs7M1n60IkZF8ilGN377_eD3YAu/view?usp=drive_link

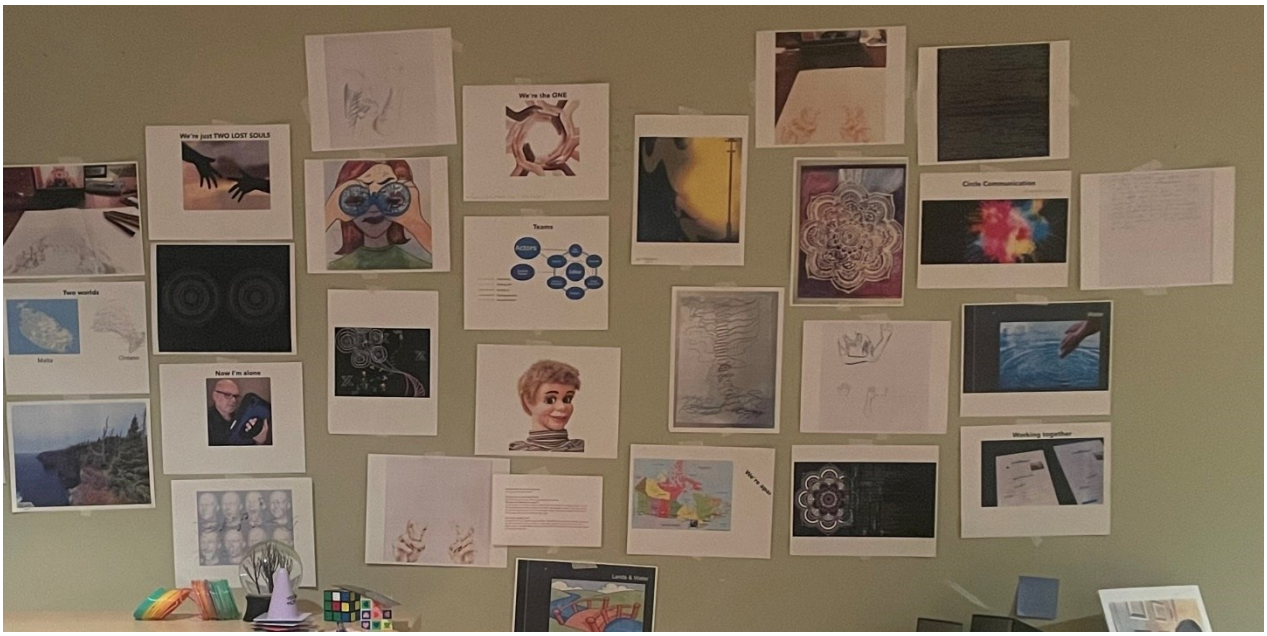
***Mapping All Creative Scores into Relationality Maps***

From the interviews and the two focus groups, altogether forty (40) creative scores were collected from fifteen (15) participants, each accompanied by a narrative. The scores represented unique, individual experiences and were presented in diverse forms. During this process, I identified two (2) participants' scores that distinguished themselves from the rest. These represented narratives that reflected a sense of freedom but were unrelated to communication or the act of communicating in spaces between deaf and hearing people. Consequently, these two scores, and the participants' narratives, were excluded from the dataset for further analysis. This resulted in the final total number of participants of this study being thirteen (13); these participants' respective scores thus proceeded to the data analysis phase. The creative scores fell into five (5) different categories: visual arts including illustrations and images, sometimes digital (27); material objects (5); video installations (4); sign-language poems or narratives (3); and collage (1). Of these forty (40) scores, each participant was asked to identify 1–2 scores that represented a critical point in their narrative. From this triage, nineteen (19) scores were kept and went on to further analysis phases (15 from deaf participants and 4 from hearing participants). Each of these scores was given a title.

This chapter described these interconnections of the scores and their narratives as they represented relationships between the participants, other people, and their environments. Identifying these relationships is what Wilson (2008) describes as "relooking at the world" and understanding that there exists no one, singular world exists but many versions, depending on the points of view of the observers (p. 33). During the mapping analysis process, the scores did not represent any one specific experience of communication; instead, they embodied**,** in material form, either the impact of circumstances involving communication between deaf and hearing people or the overall impact resulting from many similar circumstances in a participant's past.

**Figure 38**

*Messy Map: Building a Collective Score*




By back-translating each participant's score, we can better understand their respective experiences, as each score responded to the same question: "My communication experience was like *this* for me…." The scores served as metaphors for the experiences. During the mapping process, when the scores were placed side by side, they formed an interconnected visual and social web of experiences. From the beginning, most of the participants' experiences could be categorized into two broad categories: those who *thrived* in the communication and those *survived* the communication. This dichotomy is represented in the form of a map.

### *Senses of Thriving or Surviving*

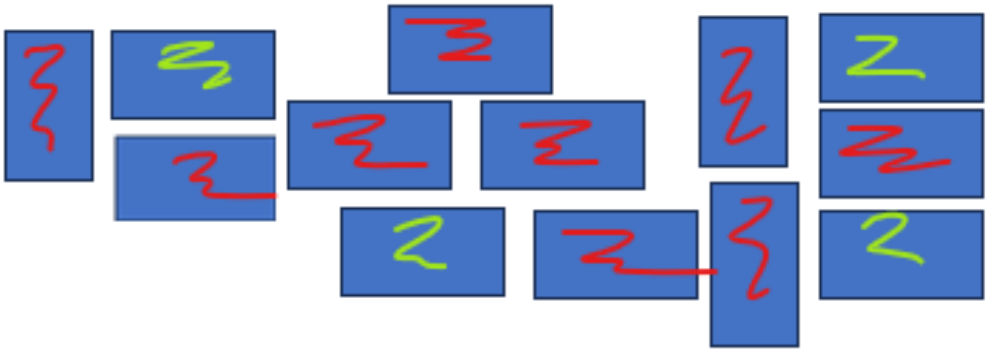
Of the nineteen (19) creative scores analyzed, a greater number were categorized as *surviving* (11) as compared to *thriving* (8).[38] When comparing deaf and hearing participants, the majority of hearing participants' scores (3) were categorized as *thriving*. Conversely, ten (10) of the scores from deaf participants were categorized as *surviving*—which represents the majority

[38] Two scores presented a metaphor that represented experiences of *both* thriving and surviving, and was thus counted twice (2). One participant produced multiple (21) similar scores, all representing thriving in communication; thus, all these together were counted as one (1).

of the scores. Next, I will delve more deeply into the circumstances surrounding the participants' experiences that contributed to these overall impressions of thriving or surviving.

**Figure 39**

*Relational Map: Seeing Senses of Thriving or Surviving*



In this section, I reviewed the outcomes and themes from each method of data collection: two semi-structured interviews with two deaf individuals as well as two focus groups comprised of deaf and hearing people. I described the creative scores collected from each participant and how these were placed into a relational map, making visible a larger, overarching theme of communicating as a sense of either thriving or surviving.

All that is not information, not redundancy, not form and not restraints—is *noise*, the only possible source of new patterns.

—Gregory Bateson

# Chapter Ten: Discussion

In this section, I apply the multi- and inter-sensory experiences described by the research participants to my critique of the transactional model of communication. I then build a case for how communication is inter-sensory and relational, and, using this idea, propose a new nomenclature for signed and spoken languages that better elucidates the concept of communicating that is the centrepiece of this research. Finally, I describe in detail my reflections on how the data-validation process, and the opportunities and strategies that I discovered, afforded me, as the researcher, greater accountability in my listening and to the research participants.

## Section 1: Rethinking Transactional Models of Communication

### *The Starting Point of the Sense of Communicating is Perception*

In the literature review, I argued that conventional communication models, such as the Shannon and Weaver (1964) model and other cognitive models fall short of capturing the multi-modal, inter-sensory, and inter-relational aspects inherent in experiences of communication between deaf and hearing people. Nonetheless, I find myself searching for a visual representation of the communication process to describe the new ideas generated from this work. To create an entirely new communication model that is relational, multi-modal, and sense-based, I will begin by overlaying the narratives from this study onto the Shannon and Weaver model to enhance their relevance and visual clarity.

To begin we must first take a close look at the Shannon and Weaver model itself, being one of the most influential models of communication. Claude Shannon initially developed the model in an engineering context to represent communication as a process in the context of telegraphy and telephony. Thompson (2022) breaks down the components of the transactional model and describes its six key components:

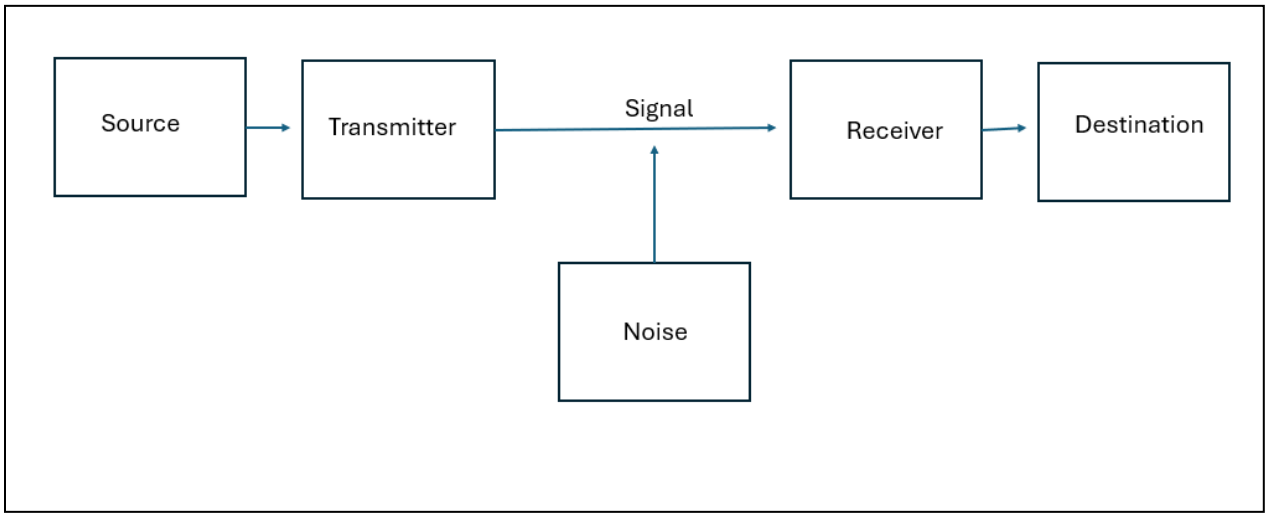
1. *Information source* that produces the message.
2. *Transmitter* that puts the message into a signal.
3. *Channel* that carries the signal.

4. *Receiver* that puts the signal back into a message.
5. *Destination* that receives the message.
6. *Noise* that disrupts or affects the signal transmission. (p. 49)

The schematic diagram below positions these components, beginning on the left and moving toward the right.

**Figure 40**

*Schematic diagram of Shannon and Weaver's (1964) Cognitive Model of Communication*



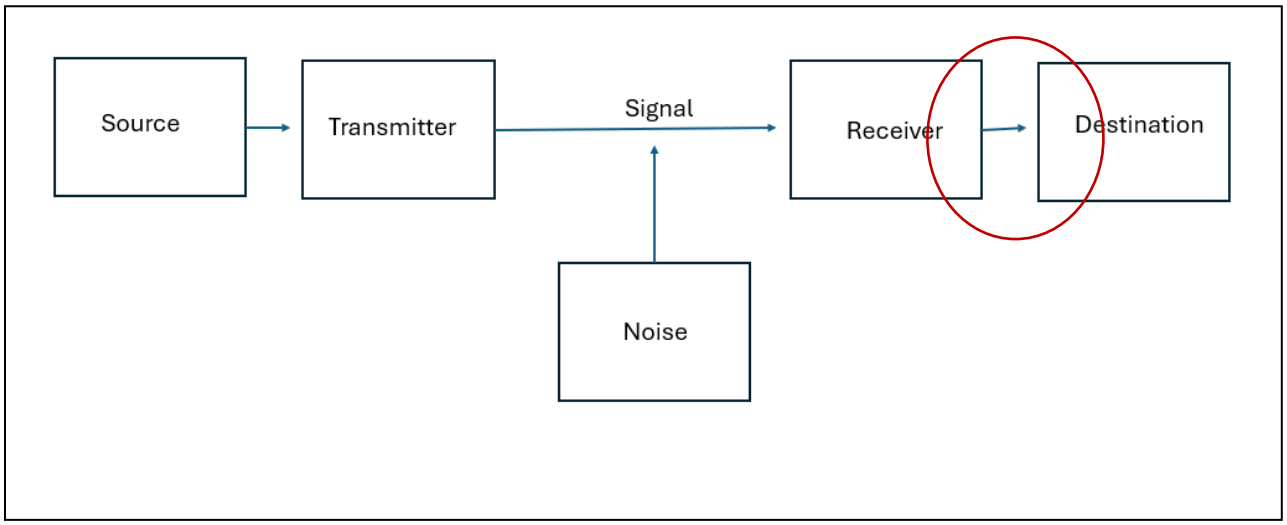

To commence the critique, we must define what an *echo* is in communication. In the context of this research work, an echo is an external response perceived by a person in a relationship to the echo's sender or to the message they are communicating. Before delving into a discourse on how deaf and hearing people experience communication as echoes, and identifying where such an echo might fit into the above model, we must first acknowledge an assumption: that both deaf and hearing people are in a position in which they are capable of "emitting" a message.

For the sake of clarity, I will begin by categorizing all the study participants as occupying the communication role of "Sender." Therefore, the precursor to the experience of an echo is the emission of communication itself. Although I am employing the concept of the echo, which is sound-based, I am using it in a broader sense that ventures beyond spoken language; it is crucial

to grasp this assumption before moving forward. If we agree that communication entails an interconnected relationship between the emission and perception of an echo, then, according to the Shannon and Weaver model, the location of an echo experienced in communication resides at the point where the "feedback" is received from the receiver by the sender. In the interstitial spaces where people communicate, this echo (the site of perceived feedback) is the point at which feedback reaches the sender. Having come so far, we can understand communication as an experience—a relationship between body and environment grounded in our perceptual sensory range. This is the starting point to communication, not the end point.

**Figure 41**

*The Starting Point of Communication Is Perception*



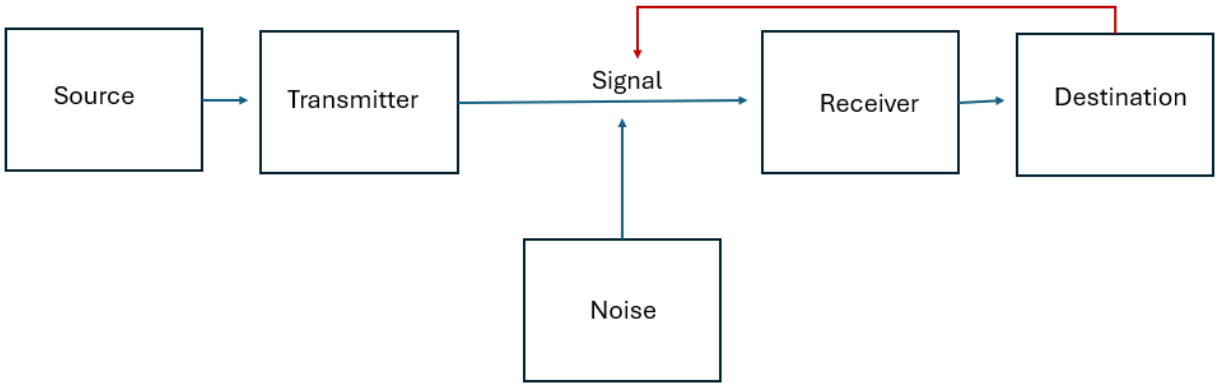

### *The Destination Determines the Signal*

The next point for discussion pertains to a second assumption: that it is the encoding and the Sender that determine the channel. However, narratives given by participants who identified as deaf or as having a disability suggest a different scenario. It seems that often it is the receiver—the hearing or non-disabled person—who determines the communication channel, while the deaf or disabled individual adjusts their communication encoding accordingly. In the deaf participants' narratives, it appears that the receiver is typically a hearing person who does not know sign language. The hearing individual determines the communication channel, often

opting for spoken language. This choice significantly impacts how the Sender, the deaf person, encodes their message. The model assumes that communication is self-determined, but this did not appear to reflect the experience of most of the deaf participants in this study, as they described their experiences of daily communications with hearing people.

**Figure 42**

*The Destination Determines the Channel*




Both Nigel and Jessica M. reported encountering barriers when they requested sign language, often being expected to rely on lip reading and speech instead. Jennifer and Wissam shared similar experiences, noting that the particular tools that were made available to them in moments of communication were often determined by others. Anselmo likened the process of establishing the necessary means for communicating with hearing people to attempting to solve a Rubik's cube puzzle on a daily basis. Viktoriya, Matthew, and MAP reported that encoding messages into communication channels determined by the majority group was exhausting. Here, we see a convergence of communication and experience, affording us an opportunity to examine David Howes's (2005) concept of *emplacement*. Emplacement encapsulates the intricate web of relationships between oneself, others, and the environment in which communication occurs. Howes characterizes emplacement as the feeling that one is connected and at home in the world—as opposed to *displacement*, the feeling of being disconnected and unrooted (p. 7). This dichotomy correlates with other relevant dichotomies—listening and receiving, grounding and

ungrounding—that may allow us to assess or measure the spaces of communication between deaf and hearing people, and diverse lived experiences occurring within them. Next, it is important to consider an emphasis on listening or attending to messages instead of speaking or emitting them. Reframing the flow or movement of communication can allow us to place a new focus onto the act of listening.

### *Absence of Internal and External Environmental Conditions*

In the transactional model, *noise* is a component that affects the transmission of a message. Based on this research, however, noise may be more appropriately considered as part of the message itself—as an integral part of the communication process. The transactional model, however, fails to consider noise sufficiently and in the context of the interconnectedness of internal and environmental conditions within the communication process. The only site where these conditions might be acknowledged and addressed is typically relegated to the concept of "noise."

That said, in the field of sound studies, noise has been identified as no longer being a useful concept. Marie Thompson (2017) says that two reasons for this are, first, that the reference to noise is a catch-all, such that it is never clear specifically what it refers to in any given setting; and second, that noise perpetuates ideas of a separation of sounds into categories of meaningful and meaningless. Thompson (2017) remarks that noise is more than simply unwanted sound and that it plays a role in auditory and material culture more generally (p. 4). I draw such linkages to sound studies, across disciplinary boundaries, to demonstrate the relevance of these concepts for understanding communication between spoken and signed languages. Speaking in the categories of the accompanying diagrams, both Destination and Noise, as well as the interconnectedness of the communication environment, are integral to the experience of communicating. Although noise denotes a disruption within a communicated message—a gap or a distortion—this research underscores that internal and environmental conditions constitute integral components of the communication experience itself.

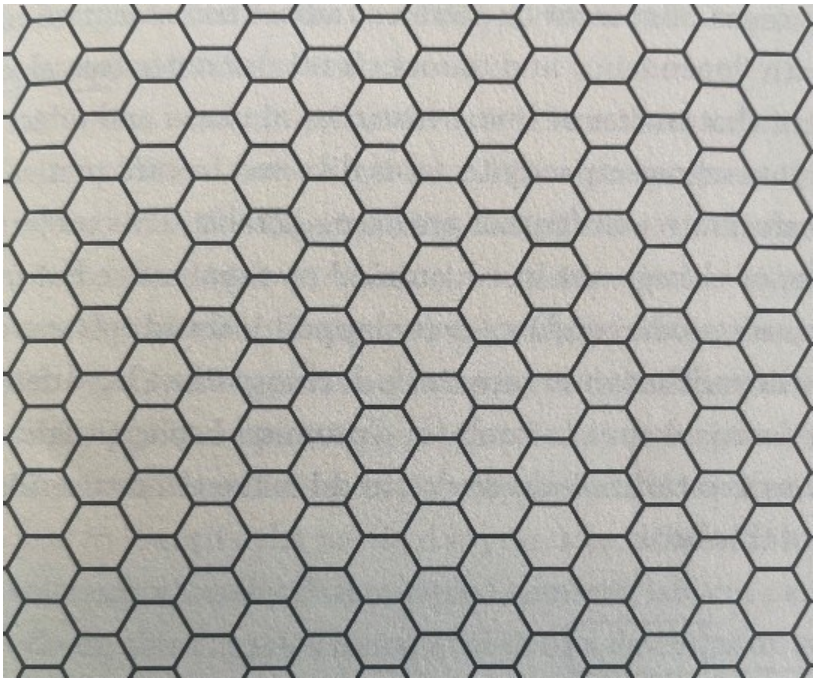
This notion supports Pauline Oliveros assertion that, "if we also listen to so-called background noise, we better perceive our relationship to place. All sound provides us with information and forges connections" (p. 6). I would take this a step further to say that these

internal and external conditions can be sonic, visual, and tactile, and may come into contact with any number of our senses, or even multiple senses at once.

Perhaps the most representative model for understanding this interconnection is one proposed by Andrea Ballestero (2019) in her ethnographic work analyzing the tensions existing in the complex socio-legal contexts surrounding water. Ballestero describes this model—a network of relationships existing between the element of water and its legal, economic, organizational, and social contexts—as a "mesh of never-ending bifurcations" (p. 7).

**Figure 43**

*A Mesh of Never-Ending Bifurcations*



As Ballestero indicates, these connections are not always harmonious; rather, they are tenuous due to the competing and conflicting meanings and significances generated by those involved. Likewise, in the debate over place in cultural geography, Feld and Basso (1996) look at the boundaries of power relations and point to Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson's (1992) question of the "assumed isomorphism of space, place and culture," meaning assumed

corresponding or similar form (p. 7), and call for an anthropology of space to be grounded in an understanding of the reality of boundary erosion, diaspora and dispersal, and movement (p. 5).

In seeking to understand communication, what becomes more apparent is the necessity to understand the importance of our bodies and of maintaining ourselves as sentient beings. I am particularly interested in the active movements toward convergence, rather than the bifurcations or the sites of linkages themselves. Communication involves movement and exchanges occurring along a network—the convergence into that moment and the bifurcation after it. The network makes visible the interconnected elements experienced by the Sender as either emplacing or displacing, depending on how the self engages in communication and experiences its connections to the network's social, legal, economic, and organizational elements. Referring to his human rights case (*Howard v. University of British Columbia*, 1993), research participant Nigel discussed a bureaucratic application form and expressed his belief that the provision of sign-language translation should not be linked to the requirement to complete the form and disclose his financial details. This form, a material object, would be considered as falling outside the realm of traditional communication models, that focus primarily on the exchange of signals and messages; however, the form held central importance with regard to Nigel's communication experience, his relationships with others, and his environment. At this point, we can begin to conceptualize communication as something that emanates and echoes along an interconnected web between the self and a variety of social, legal, economic, and organizational network relationalities. In developing a relational communication model, it therefore becomes imperative to include Ballestero's network. This integration of a tenuous, interconnected network is crucial for understanding the second aspect of my primary research question—*how communication resonates*. Resonance encompasses all the senses, so concepts of communication must include this broader idea of inter-relationality. One of these environmental conditions is an element of the Shannon and Weaver model, namely the Channel.

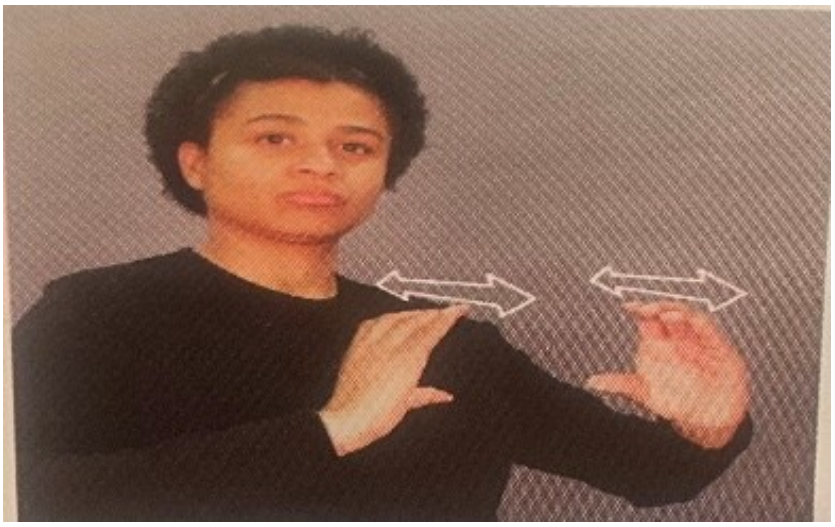
### *Re-Naming "Communicating"*

Following the conclusion of this multi-phase research project, participants began discussing how to communicate this work to the public. During the planning process, we realized that the common hand sign we had been using for "communication" since the beginning of the

project was now insufficient. The sign did not capture the totality of the echo and of the felt, lived experience of communication—namely an infinite, multi-modal movement of echo vibrating between oneself and the environment: an echo as an external response to a communicated message. The sign for *communication*, which everyone used unquestioningly at the beginning of the project, was this:

**Figure 44**

*Sign for "Communication" in ASL (it is similar in LSQ)*



The sign is used in both ASL and LSQ. The group found that these hand shapes, which form the letter *C* (for *communication*) and the movement of this sign back and forth, referred to two entities—the self and another—exchanging meaning through messages over a single channel. That kind of movement is linear, reciprocal, and repeated, and this sign aligned with a transmission-based model of communication, an everyday view of communication in industrial cultures in which one uses terms such as "sending," "transmitting," or "giving information to others." In other words, communication is a process in which messages are transmitted and distributed in space and across geography for the purpose of control (Carey, 2008, pp. 13–15). What was visibly absent, however, was an account of how our senses and lived experiences in communication are inter-sensory, multi-modal, and relational. The sign we had been using did not reflect the sensory geographical perspective of communication that Rodaway (1994, p. 3)

describes, which moves the concept of the senses into something far more contextual and interconnected:

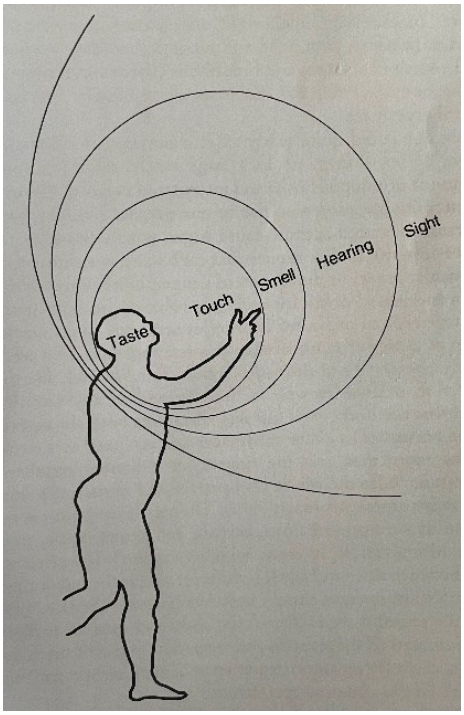
> The sensuous reality is determined, therefore, not merely by raw sensations or naïve experience but within the context of a complex of a culture's systems of beliefs and the confines of its technological prowess. (p. 145)

This aligns with David Howes's assertion that the senses are not merely passive receptors of environmental stimuli or data, but active elements in and of themselves. As Howes (2011) writes: "The senses are interactive; they mingle with their objects and are not merely reactive to external stimuli" (p. 2). As such, the senses actively structure that information into our sense of the world. Rodaway (1994) proposes that communication establishes an active relationship with the world, transforming abstract spaces into meaningful places and, perhaps, through the social dimension of touch, gives us roots in place (p. 45). To achieve this, we need to account for our perceptual systems.

Rodaway (1994) organizes our senses into five classifications: taste, touch, smell, hearing, and sight, and describes our bodies as having a sensory range (p. 27). This sensory perceptual range is where the echo meets the human body. This is how the body encounters language and material, either in close proximity or at a distance, in its environment.

**Figure 45**

*The Range of the Senses*

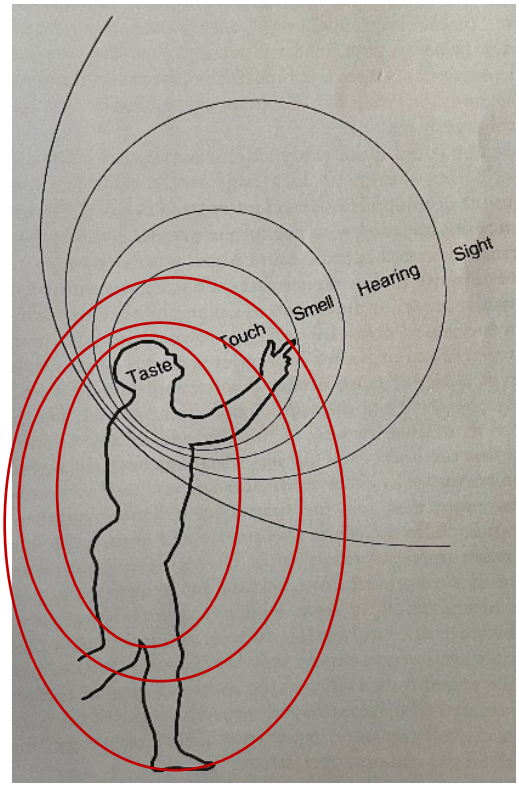



There is debate among scientists about the legitimacy of separating certain senses, such as taste and smell (Gibson, 1968), as well as new research examining the inter-sensory relationship between the senses. However, what is of concern here is that these perceptual systems mark the starting point for communication and for our sense of being in the world. Next, we will discuss the interaction that occurs at these convergence points within the interstitial spaces between deaf and hearing people.

The equilibrium of the body (depicted in the diagram below) seems not to be accounted for in Rodaway's work. Instead, measuring divergence, based on narratives, from a grounded sense of self is essential, serving as a baseline for evaluating one's sense of being or well-being in the world. A balanced state is well-being, while an unbalanced state is ill-being.

**Figure 46**

*Overlaying the Range of the Senses with Ideas of Balance and Full-Body Being*




In this diagram, the body is central to a balanced state of equilibrium, with the perceptual senses extending outward to form a perceptual radius that reaches into the environment. This radius implicates the environment and the interconnected conditions that affect our lived communicating experiences. Among the narratives emerging from this study, both Wissam's and Conner's describe an essential component of a healthy communicative state as including a sense of equilibrium and balance, and as a description of one's perceptual senses. Moreover, having considered this sense of equilibrium and balance may lead us to consider, in turn, the metaphor of walking backward proposed by Robert T. Sirvage (2015), mentioned above, as a means to gauge one's sense of equilibrium/disequilibrium and measure the qualities of spaces based on deaf experience. Sirvage suggests that by walking backward, one navigates a space without access to the visual cues to which one is accustomed, thereby evoking alternative sensory perception to assist in apprehending what is outside our perceptive field. This requires additional effort and strain to achieve. Focusing on the sensuous geographies of the body also throws light upon other aspects of Sirvage's work, such as considering the dorsal sensory experience or what

one perceives via one's senses from behind the body. Sirvage writes that dorsal experiences are often accorded less value in society; however, they have much to contribute in terms of uncovering different perspectives and measuring one's relationship to the environment. To enlist Sirvage's dorsal experience in the service of deaf experience raises questions about Rodaway's diagram and its forward-looking orientation. This orientation naturalizes the ability to foresee the environment and be prepared for sensory perception. However, in what has become part of a dorsal turn, it is now proposed that a forward-looking orientation is the illusion of a conscious economy and that society needs to begin thinking not about its front but with its back (Wills, 2008). Dorsality is increasingly theorized as a displaced point of view (Colvin, 2017). There is an implication, I would argue, that the frontal sensory range perceives with a sense of ease, whereas the dorsal does so from a displaced standpoint. A dorsal sensory experience, however, though more commonly associated with our backs, can occur anywhere in our perceptual range, particularly in people with disabilities.

In addition, our sense of touch, or haptic sense, is described as not merely a passive contact but as involving action. The haptic perception describes the body engaged in "a combination of contact and movement" (Driscoll, 2020, p. 2). Ashley Montagu (1971) also describes our haptic sense as a touch geography:

> Touch geographies are the sensuous geographies arising out of the tactile receptivity of the body, specifically the skin, and are closely linked to the ability of the body to move through the environment and pick up and manipulate objects. Touch can be both passive and active, as a juxtaposition of body and world and a careful exploration of the size, shape, weight, texture and temperature of features in the environment. Touch is above all the most intimate sense, limited by the reach of the body, and is the most reciprocal of the senses, for to touch is always to be touched. (as cited in Rodaway, 1994, p. 41)

Our sense of touch is ascribed to end at the limit of our skin; however, Lauwrens (2024) speaks to its sensory complexity, which involves both physical and somatic systems (p. 10). I agree with Juhani Pallasmaa (2002), who writes that "all senses, including vision, are extensions of the tactile sense" (p. 10). I would argue that our haptic sense extends beyond our skin and reaches the very limits of our sensory range. The narratives emerging from this study described how participants' communications resonated back to their felt bodies, regardless of which sensory

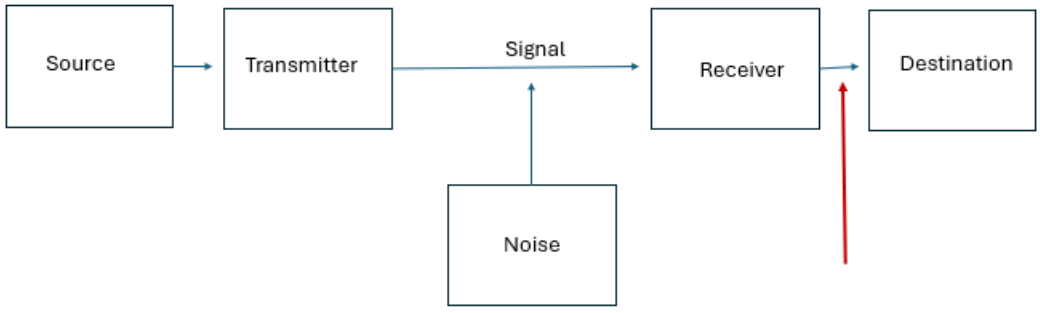
portal was implicated. From this perspective, the interconnection between the senses and the body may be considered haptic. This enables us to think beyond language and acts of translation, and even beyond defining the sense of touch as limited to the tactile sign language of DeafBlind people. Rather, this haptic sense occurs at a social level—it is a social touch.

### *The Receiver is the Starting Point in a Relational Communication Model*

As discussed earlier, in a Relational Model of Communication, the starting point is not at the site of expression (sending) but at the site of listening (receiving). To begin building a Relational Model of Communication, we need to understand communication as inter-sensory.

**Figure 47**

*The Receiver as the Starting Point to Communicating*




During this study, participant Emmanuelle recounted an intriguing experience in which she shifted her sensory perception at the intersection of sound and the visual. Emmanuelle, who is hearing and has no knowledge of sign language, described receiving a story from another participant, Matthew, who is deaf. Matthew conveyed his story to her in LSQ, via video (no interpretation into spoken or written language was provided). A member of the subordinate sensory group, Matthew selected the channel and encoded the message into a signed language. Emmanuelle, the receiver, had to adapt her listening methods atypically, as she was used to listening with her eyes. Instead, Emmanuelle acknowledged the experience of missing pieces of information. There were points she simply could not understand, which fell outside of her perception. The Shannon and Weaver model would classify such a message translation

disruption as “noise.” In this context, the noise originated from an internal factor: the absence of a mutual language shared between communicators, without interpretation provided. However, understanding such communication gaps as noise underscores the necessity for a remedy. Addressing translation issues alleviates the need for members of the dominant sensory groups to broaden their sensory range and cultivate various ways of sensing and relating to other people and their environment.

In this study, Emmanuelle chose to deprioritize the need to understand each linguistic element provided by Matthew in his story, and the reflex to translate his signed message into another language form, whether spoken or written. Instead, Emmanuelle sought to remain within the complex realm of communication, a messy middle, and attempt to broaden her internalized sensory range. Through this approach, Emmanuelle described her ability to see and appreciate the movement of sign language and, to her visual sense, what she could perceive as the movement between clarity and blur. Had spoken language translation been provided, Emmanuelle would have continued to prioritize her sense of hearing rather than shift her experience to sensing through her eyes. The sense of blur which she described, which traditionally would be deemed as noise or an interruption of a communicated message, was, in fact, a fundamental shift in sensory perception and prioritization, which gave way to an authentic, inter-sensory communication experience that connected Emmanuelle and Matthew in a direct relationship. As Emmanuelle attempted to document and describe her experience by way of an illustration, she encountered yet another barrier: her primary tool for illustration, a fine-point marker, proved unsuitable for representing the experience of blur. Unlike her own experience, the fine-point marker could not produce blur, only clarity.

Emmanuelle had not only to expand her sensory perception comfort zone, she also had to examine her new communication tools with which to articulate her discoveries from that experience. Based on this research, therefore, the concept of “noise” actually becomes a site for reflection, experimentation, and transformation in our communication with others. By acknowledging noise as a valid experience, Emmanuelle embraced the blur and altered her relationship with Matthew. In turn, Matthew, a member of the subordinated sensory group, maintained his authentic sensory expression and connection to the world.

Most anthropological discourses describe this process as *cultural acculturation*, wherein an individual from a particular culture integrates into another language or cultural group. However, in the context of deaf people navigating both deaf and hearing spaces, a unique intersection occurs whereby cultural acculturation meets sensory regimes. From the narratives presented in this research, it is evident that deaf people continually adjust themselves to the dominant sensory regimes. This process is explained as "emotional acculturation" (Barrett, 2018, p. 150). In an example of this, Barrett elucidates the experience of her friend Batja Mesquita, a cultural psychologist. Having been brought up in the Netherlands and later immigrated to America for her postdoctoral training, Batja recounts how her emotions seemed "natural" to her. However, she felt a misalignment with American culture. To Batja, Americans appeared to be "unnaturally happy" (p. 140). David Howes (2005, p. 7) would describe this as *cultural displacement*. Nonetheless, maintaining what I describe as communication aligns with Finnegan's description of it as an activity that mobilizes the social ecology (Finnegan, 2022, p. 7). Emotional acculturation can be described as the experience of displacement—it is more frequent and ongoing over a longer period. In Barrett's (2018) account, the more time Batja spent in America, the more closely her emotions adjusted to the American context (p. 150). In the context of the narratives provided by the deaf participants in this study, it would be valuable to explore how deaf people have adjusted to an oral-normative, phonocentric society. (This, however, falls outside the scope of this research.) These ideas call to mind two compelling metaphors employed by participant Anselmo, which connect Barrett's concept of acculturation and Howes's ideas of emplacement/displacement. In the first metaphor, Anselmo recalled looking at life as though through a snow globe; and the second, he spoke of flying alongside butterflies within the essence of life itself.

These insights from the field prompt new questions about how senders adjust themselves to sensory norms, leading to their cultural and sensory displacement. Looking forward, a crucial question emerges: How can understanding the resonance of communication serve as a measure of our experience of communication, enabling us to attune ourselves to and allow diverse sensory needs in our social environments? Next, we will take a closer look at how to measure our experience of communication by understanding it as both individual and collective well-being.

**Section 2: Communication as Inter-Sensory and Relational**

This work's findings contribute to language and communication research that contrasts with or moves beyond cognitive approaches (Langacker, 2008; Fauconnier & Turner, 2008). Some non-cognitive approaches focus on practice-based methods (Edwards, 2012) and examine how relationships between historically situated actors and social fields are embodied, giving utterance to its relevance (Hanks, 1996, p. 231). Others, particularly in sound studies, maintain that voice, listening, sound, and music are inter-sensory phenomena and are rethinking sound not as an object but as an event through the practice of vibration (Sun Eidsheim, 2015, p. 3). However, these approaches limit themselves to language. This research, however, extends such discussions across languages and through the senses, and considers the presence and impact of non-linguistic elements, such as diverse modes of communication and materials, reflecting a variety of relationships and experiences.

This project's literature review began by delineating two prominent theoretical concepts: oral normativity and phonocentrism. Both concepts were essential to begin to elucidate the power dynamics inherent to the experiences of communication between deaf and hearing people. The arguments presented in Jessica Dunkley's human rights case exemplified the prevalence of oral normativity in society. In that case, tribunal member Tyshynski underscored the significance of considering the structural dimensions of society and how spoken language is strictly embedded into the design and delivery of education services (*Dunkley vs. UBC and another*, 2015, para. 680). *Phonocentrism* thus emerged as a key factor in perpetuating oral normativity's naturalized position of dominance within society. Derrida's criticism of societal norms governing language—namely phonocentrism—featured prominently in several discussions regarding sign-language subordination made by researchers in Deaf Studies and critical deaf art (Ladd, 2003; Bauman, 2004; Lapiak, 2009). The prominent position of language may well be expected, given the linguistic turn of the 1960s, which influenced numerous fields of study (Howes, 2005, p. 1). Both frameworks, however, are constrained by a positionality that portrays language as the primary means of comprehending the world (Bauman, 2008a, p. 3). Nevertheless, as demonstrated in this study, transcending language and exploring various modes of sensory perception provide access to alternative ways of engaging with and, thus, understanding the world. This is the point from which I departed—a juncture I continue to maintain—to awaken

our senses and engage in conversations that promote an understanding of the variety of human experiences while communicating.

Throughout this research, not only did the participant testimonials shared with me through various non-language-based modalities—nonverbal, visual, and material—open up new ways to connect to our senses, offering different modes of communication; but from these different modes emerged new ways of conceptualizing communication itself. At this point, I refer back to central question of this research project: *How does communication echo across deaf and hearing experiences?* To describe a communication echo, I will need to reconceptualize the process of communication based on the narratives gathered in this research. The shared experiences of communicating throughout this research underscore the necessity to reconsider communication models and to begin describing communication from a grounded and relational perspective.

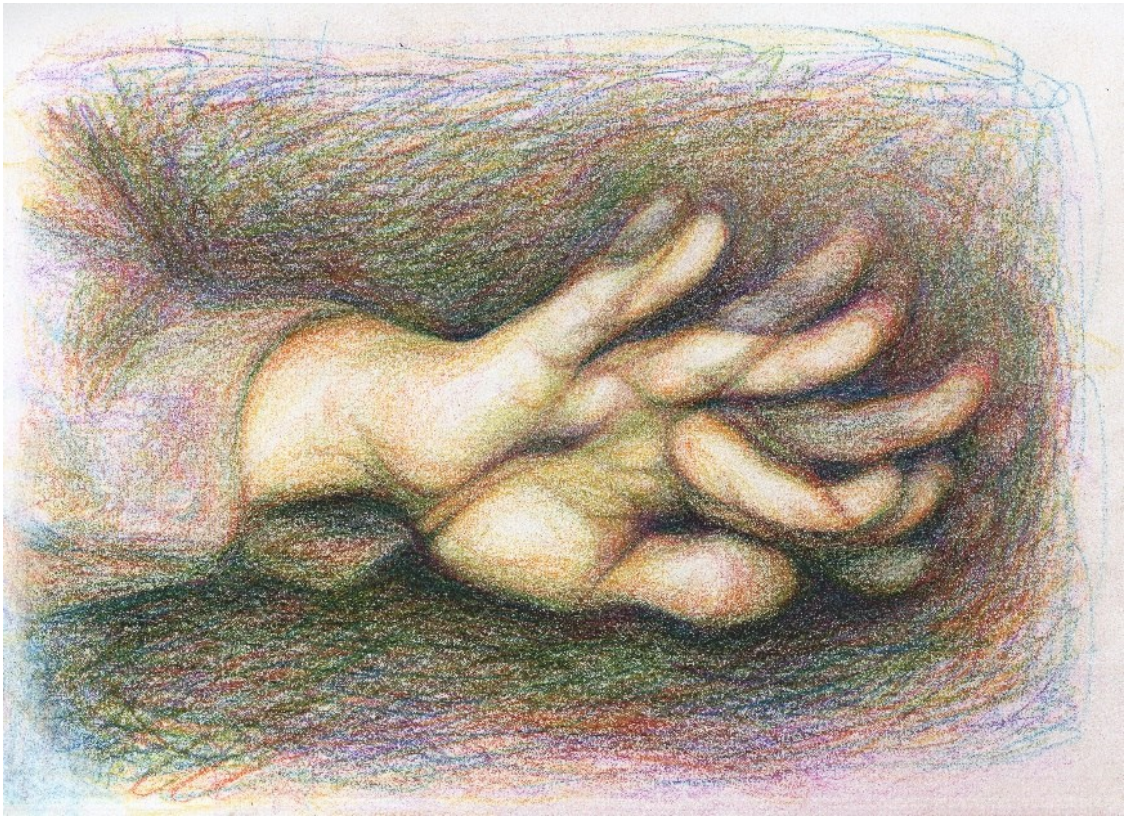
### *Defining the Social Touch of Communicating*

This concept of social touch is fundamental to understanding the variety of communication experiences. Social touch can be visualized through our perceptual systems as a person connected in a figure eight with their environment. Recognizing this social touch as an integral part of the communication experience laid a foundation for the creation by participants of a new sign in both ASL and LSQ to represent this touch. The new sign begins with an indication of the felt body, symbolizing balance. It also brings forward the sense of communication occurring in a balanced, well state. Although the typical sign for *communication* is a neutral one, which neither indicates an adverb nor describes how the communication is experienced, the new sign sets out an expectation as it includes a sense of well-being as a fundamental component within communication. This new sign is depicted in the illustration below.[39]

[39] To see the sign in use, see: https://1drv.ms/v/s!AkpDMKf4u1bQv1nO9-vOshcYFDtE?e=eVjJ09.

**Figure 48**

*The Sign for "Re{verbe}" (ASL and LSQ) Transposed into an Illustration*



The new, unique perspective this sign embodies also includes new concepts for communication:

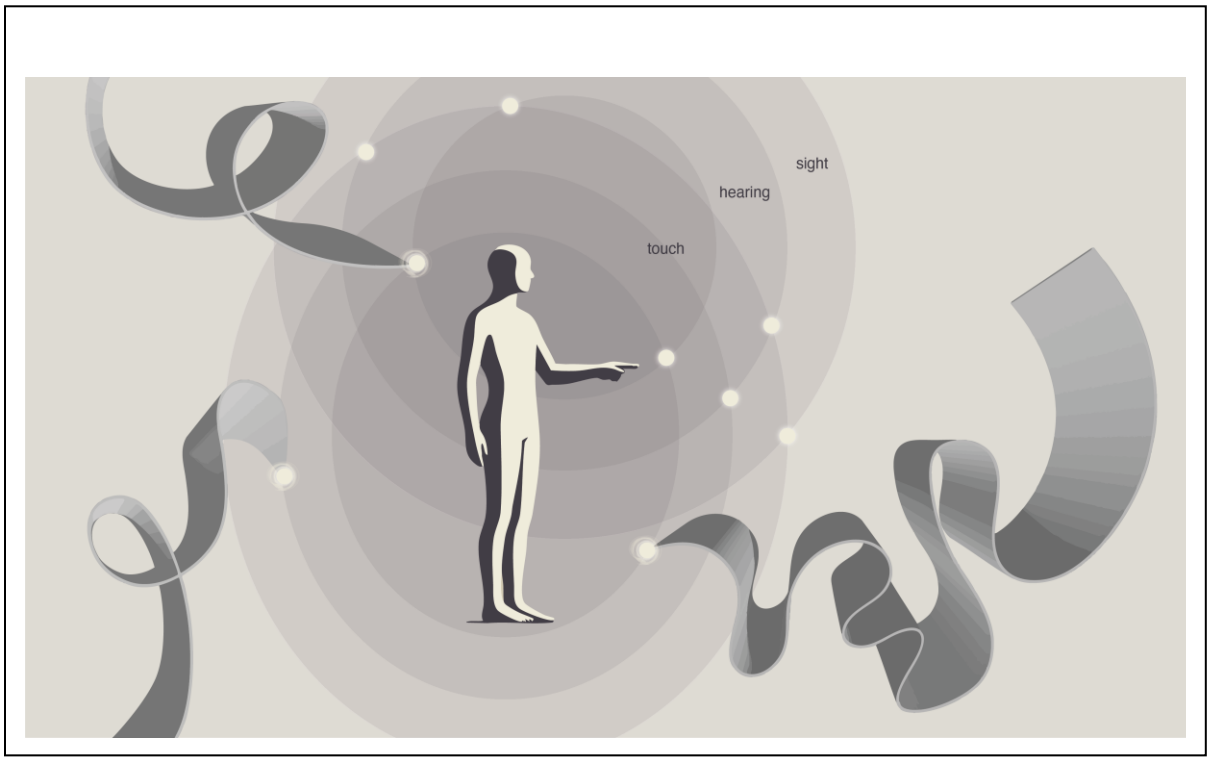
1) Communicating as sensory perception: extends out into our environment.
2) Communicating as vibrations: involves vibrations received from the environment and transmitted to our bodies.
3) Communicating as an ongoing interaction: this is a continuous interaction across languages, materialities, times, and spaces.
4) Communicating as an emotional impact: resonates with our bodies and minds.

In short, the narratives in this study identify communication as an interconnected series of circular connections between the self and the environment, linking to others and to material entities. These connections are perceived through our senses, impacting the messages sent back to the environment. The connections are infinite and ongoing.

Bringing together the various critiques of the transactional model based on the findings of this research, the new Relational Model describes a simultaneous, interconnected web, which exists within our sensory range and connects us to ourselves and our environments in communication. A schematic diagram for these concepts could be drawn like this:

**Figure 49**

*Relational Communication Model*




This model, which we may call a *relational communication model*, has five major components: the body, sense circles, sensory range, nodal points, and echoes. The communication receiver's *body*. The *sense circles* represent continuous interaction across languages, materials, times, and places. The individual is seen in engagement with the environment, with interconnection between the individual's sensory range (most commonly touch, hearing, and sight) and their environment in communication. Next, in a critique of Rodaway (1994; see Figure 45), circles of one's *sensory range* are centred on the person's body, representing a full-body experience of communication that includes both frontal and dorsal experiences of sensory perception. The intersecting circles form *nodal points*—the intersections

between a person's senses and the environment. Not every intersection is perceived, and those that are are represented as vibrational and multi-directional. Finally, *the echoes*, the extending connections between our body and the external environment are connected to nodal points. They are experienced as they are shaped, non-linear, precarious, and unpredictable.

Further research in communicating as a relational phenomenon may build upon the collected sensed experiences with which this project began. Further exploration of the multiple dimensions of relationships will allow for new conversations about how we can be accountable to these relationships and influence fields such as communication accessibility policy and interpreting and translation. It is my hope that further research will be done to turn a deeper focus onto how the senses of freedom and restraint in communicating, as well as communicating in signed languages, is experienced from the standpoint of well-being; and for including wellness in evaluations of the effectiveness of communication models and policies.

### *Communicating as Movement: Reciprocal versus Circular*

It is important to consider the overall interaction between all elements of the communication relationship. Rodaway (1994) argues that relationships between a person and their environment are reciprocal, and identifies such reciprocity as asymmetrical in the case of a person's relationship to inanimate material (p. 44). I agree that relationships in communication are reciprocal; however, this relationality should not be misunderstood as implying linearity.

Based on a relational communication model grounded in the senses, communication is more than simply an activity; it is embodied, and the relationship can be observed in regard to movement. For example, the narratives in this work, together with the resulting new signed lexicon for the term *communication*, describe communicating as an unending series of reverberating and interconnected circles connecting a person and their environment; these move in the formation of figure eight, which, being in movement, originates first from elsewhere the environment, then to a person's body, and finally reverberates back out into the environment. This places the receiving body in a position where listening forms the starting point for communication.

### *Communicating as Well-Being*

In participant Jodi's narrative, she emphasizes that she felt like a ventriloquist's dummy during events for which sign-language interpreters were employed. This metaphor implies theatre, with one person's voice being under the control of others, resulting in a lack of authentic presence in that person's life. Although Derrida (2016) examined the concept of "voice-as-presence" and systems of "hearing oneself speak" (p. 13), Bauman (2008b) questions whether Derrida was addressing deaf people and sign language directly (p. 41). What is crucial here, however, is that it is irrelevant if Derrida was referring to deaf people explicitly. As demonstrated by Jodi's narrative discussed above, a complex, interconnected network of communication echoes and resonates across sensory perceptions. In specific spaces, this can restrict freedom of communication of deaf people and diminish their presence, which suggests key aspects of a social structure and are worthy of further examination. By itself, emotion is a broad category, but what is needed is a deeper understanding of the particular emotions that are central to social processes, because the sense of emotion can be regarded as an outcome or verdict of those processes (Barbalet, 1998, pp. 8–11). I put forward that emotions can serve as our barometer to measuring the effectiveness of strategies of accessibility and inclusion. As is shown in the creative score of Jodi. Jodi's narrative describes her signing ASL in front of a mixed audience with both deaf and hearing people present. Sign language interpreters were hired to interpret her ASL into spoken English. From a limited language perspective, one might argue that no language barrier was present in Jodi's narrative, since interpreters were provided and, thus, access was provided. So, why did Jodi mention feeling like a ventriloquist's dummy in her communication experience?

Looking past language and toward the senses, we can delve deeper into the sensory nuances of these spaces and identify how the mode of communication access is perceived and experienced. In Jodi's environment, people were engaging with messages produced by the interpreters which, although not her own, but rather are assigned to her. This is not simply a language barrier but a communication barrier, and it is a site of concern due to a lack of attention to care. The connections in communication resonated with Jodi as an attack on her well-being and her body's equilibrium and voice. Deaf Studies scholar Tom Humphries (2001, p. 104) writes about voice from the perspective of deaf experience: "A self cannot exist if it is not heard.

Deaf people have had to create voices, learn to hear their voices, and now it remains to compel others to listen" (as cited in Bauman, 2008a, p. 4).

Jodi described her experience in an ASL poem, shown in her video[40]. The movement of her arms represents the mouth movements of the hearing people speaking, but there is no shape to the movement, no real relationship to the words. What Jodi describes is an empty, repetitive opening and closing of the mouth. Then, Jodi describes herself, smiling and chuckling, but it feels inauthentic. Arlie Russell Hochschild (2012) would describe this as *deep acting*, which is how a person manages their feelings in relation to social narratives about what and how we are supposed to feel (p. 38). The expectation is that individuals ought to feel satisfaction and gratitude when interpreting services are in place, as these are deemed sufficient to bridge the gap between spoken language and sign language, and to provide deaf persons with a sense of liberty and equality in communicating. Yet, from a sensory relational communication perspective, achieving a sense of liberty and freedom is more complex, and additional elements need to be uncovered and considered. Jodi did not achieve these senses of liberty and equality, even though sign language interpreters were present and, as such, the traditional means of accessibility were in place. There still existed tension between Jodi and her environment. This tension can be seen as located at the intersection between her self-expression and the echoes she perceived from her environment when communicating.

[40] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1I48eoulTHRQacPMtcuu0BG4s-wTOFqe3/view?usp=drive_link

**Figure 50**

*Describing (in ASL) the Sense of Loss when an Interpreter Controls Your Words*

At the same time, it has been argued that phonocentrism is at the root of the primacy of speech, which is currently imposed upon everyone and informs policy. Also extant, though largely unrecognized, is a standardization of enforced communicative norms that operate authoritatively and restrict how deaf people's bodies move through space and interact with others in communication (Sanchez, 2017, p. 155). Jodi's story illustrates what Hochschild (2012) describes as emotional labour, which can involve "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display." (p. 7). Emotional labour is like physical labour inasmuch as there are costs and benefits associated with managing one's emotions. In Jodi's case, to feel grateful for the communication accessibility provided, which included the presence of sign-language interpreters, would be considered a typical response. As seen in narratives from other participants, however, feelings of gratitude for communication accessibility, such as in the form of sign-language interpreters, is not always a given. In many environments, the absence of such measures may cause stress and anxiety for deaf people, particularly when they must perform lip reading. As such, with sign-language interpreters present, the expected response from Jodi would be gratitude. But internally, she did not feel grateful; it was not her authentic emotion. Hochschild (2012) describes two ways of managing feelings: surface acting and deep acting (p. 35). Pain avoidance and advantage-seeking in the social arena influence emotion management efforts (p. 62). There can be conflicting feelings about what emotions are owed to others,

depending on social rules (p. 79). This underlines what de Courville Nicol (2022) describes as the painful moral-emotional tension that urges us to pay attention to our agency. As such, we are constantly rearticulating our capacity for freedom and belonging, adaptation and direction, and life and success (p. 2). De Courville Nicol argues that experiences of anxiety implicate these tensions, where one's existing capacity to overcome emotional pain is dissatisfactory. Moreover, Howes and Classen (2004) write that social control over perceptibility determines who is seen, who is heard, and whose pain is recognized (pp. 65–66). This plays a key role in establishing power structures in our society.

In Jodi's narrative, the perspective of translation is insufficient for discussing the senses of communication freedom. Measures and accountability are needed to foster environmental conditions, allowing for people to have an authentic voice and agency. What is important here is identifying who gets to enjoy a sense of presence and communication agency and who does not. This knowledge may also be used to measure the relationship between a person's intent or desire, and whether their environment reflects that intent or desire.

**Section 3: Developing Accountability by Validating Our Listening**

This project brought deaf and hearing people together to explore their experiences communicating at the interstitial spaces between deaf and hearing communities. The intention was to engage in a process in which one's own language and culture were not decentralized for another but, rather, taken forward and integrated as something co-experienced.

This project sought to apply the core tenets of Wilson's (2008) Indigenous research methodology based on the understanding that all things are related and, therefore, relevant (p. 58). Additionally, it embraced an axiology of being accountable to these relationships (p. 7). Wilson writes that relational accountability can be put into practice through a researcher's choice of research topics, methods of data collection, forms of analysis, and presentation of information (p. 7). Although this project did not study Indigenous populations, I found Wilson's approach applicable to holding myself accountable for my dominant position of communication privilege. As a person who hears and uses a spoken language in an oral-normative society and whose native spoken language is English—the world's most widely spoken language—I recognized the ethical need to pay attention to my methodology. Taking the position of relationship and

accountability provided me with an ethical research framework. There is debate as to whether dominant system researchers can move past dominant system thinking and conduct respectful research, or should be conducting research that includes minority groups at all (Wilson, 2008), and such ideas are debated in Deaf Studies with regard to hearing researchers (Kusters et al., 2017, p. 20). As I proceeded with my study, I committed to Wilson's relational and accountable model, striving to be reflective and bring respect. Cora Weber-Phillwax emphasizes: "A researcher must make sure that the three R's—Respect, Reciprocity, and Relationality—are guiding the research" (as cited in Wilson, 2008, p. 58). Evelyn Steinhauer explains further:

> Respect is more than just saying please and thank you, and reciprocity is more than giving a gift. According to Cree Elders, showing respect or kihceyihtowin is a basic law of life. Respect regulates how we treat Mother Earth, plants, animals, and our brothers and sisters of all races…. Respect means you listen intently to others' ideas, that you do not insist that your idea prevails. By listening intently, you show honour, consider the well-being of others, and treat others with kindness and courtesy. (Steinhauer, 2001, as cited in Wilson, 2008, p. 58)

With a commitment to ensuring that these "three R's" guide my research decisions, I moved past my own limitations by continually asking throughout the process: *How can I build respectful relationships between myself and other research participants—now?* Although respectful and accountable relationships were practised throughout each phase of this research project, I examine the insights that emerged from one particular phase of the project: data validation.

### *Data Validation: Accountability to Listening*

The validation process aims to enhance the reliability of findings generated from the data in qualitative research studies. As a means to validate the data collected, I had originally chosen a method called *member checking*, which is intended:

> To determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to the participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate. (Creswell, 2008, p. 191.)

Due to the multi-lingual nature of this project, I planned to complete my member check by conducting a follow-up interview with each participant and allowing them an opportunity to comment on the findings I had generated. That said, after the data collection phase and reflecting on my relational and accountable research process, this standard approach to member checking seemed to me to omit an aspect of accountability. While I would be validating the findings and final themes of the work, in this space of signed and spoken language, the process did not validate the authentic participant's telling of their experience against the layers of translations or interpretations offered in the participants' non-text-based, multi-modal creative scores.

Without this additional validation step, there would be no measure of the distance between, or alignment with, what the participants sought to express and what I, the researcher, had understood them to say. This distance or alignment forms the foundation for generating the findings and final themes. Reflecting on my process, I decided to build further accountability by validating my understanding of the participants' stories. This was not because this validation was left out initially, but because, as I grew in my awareness of relationality, the means for bringing accountability to these relationships became more visible to me.

I titled this additional phase of member checking the "Researcher's Echo" and it consisted of a document of one to two pages. Such brevity demanded high accuracy to demonstrate comprehension while facilitating ease of readability and discussion between researcher and participant, given that we were working between multiple languages and modalities. In the Echo, I captured the totality of the participant's contribution through direct quotes, paraphrases, and images. The Echo asked the participant: "Did I understand you?" and, even more importantly, left the necessary space for the participant's response: yes or no. The overall objective for each participant was to see the Echo and "sense" their authentic messages and selves within it.

The feeling of lacking the time and the desire to expedite the project's process toward completion weighed heavily on me and left me with a desire to skip this additional validation phase. It was not part of the original research plan and I had no obligation to do it. No one aside from myself was aware of it. I also had other legitimate concerns, such as the risk that not all participants would agree to a follow-up interview, leaving my data vulnerable to validation inconsistency. Another concern was that, although my intent was only to have participants verify

their original messages, the elapsed time might tempt participants to change their original messages in ways that could alter the meanings and disrupt the final themes that had already emerged from the overall data set. Ultimately, however, the gap I had noticed could not be ignored. The participants had expressed *their* experiences and I had not reciprocated or echoed back to them anything more than a simple thank-you. Now, the thank-you felt insufficient. So, I created an Echo for each participant.

### *Expanding Our Senses and Capacity to "Listen" Differently*

The Researcher's Echo first identified the participant and the research phase in which they participated, along with detailing what that phase had accomplished. Then, as specifically and as carefully as possible, I "echoed" back the participant's experience back to them. Although the participant's original language could have been English, French, ASL, or LSQ, I echoed the experience in written English—the target language for this study—rather than revert to the participant's original language. I had considered this to be a limitation; however, I prioritized achieving the closest alignment between the participant's experiences and the language of my dissertation—written English. This tension does not stem from a decision to oppress minority languages but, rather, from a concern for being accountable to my representations and use of meanings in English based on the participants' stories, given that my final dissertation would be written in English.

To paraphrase the participants' experiences, I catalogued the images, videos, and sketches they submitted as their creative scores. Each submitted item was listed separately, and a title was provided where none had been submitted to me. Additionally, I included a one- or two-line summary of each non-text-based item to ensure I understood the participant's intended meaning for each item. Following this, I listed a few (1–3) key terms representing the participants' most important concepts. These key terms were mostly represented in English. However, where the limits of language led to the realization that even the most equivalent English term available lacked substantive meaning compared to the original language, I defaulted to the original language and described the specific meaning in English. Because sign language has no written form, where the original language was a signed language I initially described the precise movement and configuration in English (a method known as a *gloss*). Finally, I paraphrased the

salient points from each participant's stories about their experiences into a single paragraph. I did my best to represent what had been communicated to me as authentically as possible.

In that moment, I shifted from viewing research merely as a process to recognizing it as a ceremony. The participants' words became sacred. I felt a deep sense of gratitude as I perceived the participants' data as sacred gifts from the field. According to Lewis Hyde (1983), the term *gift* encompasses the concept of "nourishing hau," which translates to *feedback* (as they say in cybernetics). Without feedback, the cycle is broken. Reciprocity, as described in the social sciences, is a form of gift exchange characterized by a sense of back-and-forth (p. 19); however, it represents the simplest form, where only two points establish a line. In contrast, the exchange of sacred gifts moves in a circle, among people. A circle lies in a plane, which demands at least three points; this is why most stories of gift exchanges involve a minimum of three people (p. 19). What distinguishes circular giving from reciprocal giving is that in circular giving, the gift passes out of sight; thus, it cannot be manipulated by a single individual or a pair of gifting partners.

> When the gift moves in a circle its motion is beyond the control of the personal ego, and so each bearer must be a part of the group and each donation is an act of social faith. (Hyde, 2007, p. 20)

Returning an echo back to the participants established a third point along the communicating continuum. This point exists beyond my control, between sender (participant) and receiver (research) yet outside the minds and bodies of both—a point of *confluence*. This confluence begins to establish a sense of what Sean Wilson describes as "a common ground." The sense of common ground is fostered outside languages and in connection to one's relationship to one's own words.

### *A Relationship to One's Words*

In addition to establishing a relationship with the participants' names, there was also a need for participants to develop a relationship with the English words used to convey their stories. For the deaf participants, I would fingerspell specific English words in ASL or LSQ, and display them on a screen upon request, often through screen sharing. Participants desired to see

the English words used to represent their signed discourses. Since signed languages do not have a written form, and, as mentioned earlier, sign language is not simply a visual-gestural representation of spoken language, there are multiple ways any given signed message could be transcribed into written form.

This process was an act of attunement that involved measuring the distance between participants' "voices" and my ability to reflect their voices accurately in a different language and modality—written versus spoken or signed. Notably, those participants who communicated using sign language during the project, deaf and hearing, requested more text adjustments. Participants who spoke for themselves, choosing their own words without being interpreted, requested fewer adjustments as their words were transcribed verbatim.

During this process of echo validation, participants would occasionally request specific word substitutions for synonyms. One notable occurrence involved a participant named Conner. After reading his echo, he kindly pointed out that I had misrepresented his key theme. I understood his perspective; signing in ASL, he experienced communicating across deaf and hearing spaces in the sense of "two people dancing in movement." However, he insisted that communicating is like "the bone structure of a human body" rather than continuous, fluid movement. This struck me as the opposite of my conceptualization, emphasizing fluidity and continuous communication movement. My interpretation likely stemmed from my understanding of communication models, which prioritized the movement of messages and content as the key elements of communication. However, Conner's point focused more on the structural aspects surrounding and connecting the content of communication itself—the structural environment of communication.

Conner's perspective aligns closely with Marshall McLuhan's concept that "the medium is the message," which suggests that the form of communication becomes integral to the content (McLuhan, 1964). Conner's point, however, extends beyond mere consideration of the channel; he implicates every non-message-based structural element within the sphere of the communication experience. Conner explained that a person's potential for movement exists only due to the rigidity of bone. Human bone structure conveys a certain inherent level of predictability and dictates how movement will occur. Therefore, arrival at this reflection on the structure and predictability of moments came about by conducting additional member checks and

through further alignment of my listening to perceive the nuanced meaning, thereby more accurately reflecting this participant's voice. This attunement process fostered a sense of establishing a co-creation process of knowledge and forged a common ground between myself and the research participants. The implications of this extend beyond accessibility questions, such as arranging for sign-language interpreters. It raises broader questions about how accessible communication environments can foster the deaf person's sense of choice and voice.

The final section of the Researcher's Echo reflected the traditional member validation process wherein I described, in my own voice, how I integrated the participant's experience into answering my research questions and, thereafter, into generating the project's larger findings and key themes. Each participant witnessed how I established a connection between their stories and how I used their stories to answer my research questions. Very few changes were made to this section of the Echo. At the end of the validation phase, however, a final, unexpected outcome emerged: a heightened sense of trust. Although there had been no earlier sense of distrust, the heightened sense of trust entailed an added dimension. The Echo provided a means for me to be accountable to my own listening, to co-create knowledge with the participants, and to produce insight into how communicating spaces must not only be accessible but also provide the conditions that empower individuals to have a sense of choice and voice.

In this section, I critiqued the transactional model of communication and, along with my research participants, described the creation of a new word (in English and French) and sign (in ASL and LSQ) the more accurately to represent the inter-sensory, relational aspects of communicating that this research project investigates and describes. I defined a new framework for a Relational Model of Communication, which included a schematic drawing and presented the importance of continuing this work toward understanding communicating as relational, and presented further research into how communicating is not only about the transmission of messages but is linked intrinsically to an individual's sense of well-being. I provided a reflection section about how I, the researcher, not only utilized the data validation phase to verify that the data collected from participants was accurate but designed a creative-exploratory means by which I could validate my own full-body-listening in regard to the participants, and acknowledged my accountability to their stories, meanings, and messages. Thereby, I created and demonstrated the interconnected sensory link that exists between my engagement with my

research participants and collaborators, as well as my engagement with you, the reader of this text.

*The sensual revolution* in cultural studies has precipitated an intense new focus on the senses as mediators of experience, eclipsing the role formerly played by ‘discourse,’ ‘text’ and ‘picture.’

—Dr. David Howes

## Chapter Eleven: *Re{verbe}: A Video Documentation of A Sensory Ethnography of Communication*

In this section, I describe working in collaboration to transform the stories, creative scores, research themes, and sensory tensions from this PhD research into video documentation, a multi-modal exhibition, and a research participant panel discussion.

### Post-Research Reflection

With the end of the data collection and member validation phases of the project, participants and colleagues asked me "what is next?" and, more so, what are the implications of this research that might extend beyond this project? The research participants had said, "But this can't be over." Thus, I promised to bring the narratives, creative scores, and our collective story into the publishing sphere and continue the conversation with a broader audience. The opportunity—now in a more applied sense—was to consider *how minority cultural traditions suggest and challenge alternative sensory assumptions in ways that can influence dominant sensory and legal systems*.

Prior research has been done on similar issues. I agree with Paul Stoller, who writes in the field of sensuous scholarship that researchers must take the "reflexive" and "embodied" turn in social theory further, and that anthropological practice is a corporeal process that involves the ethnographer engaging not only in the ideas of others but in learning about their understandings through their own physical and sensorial experiences (Stoller, 2004). As well as Stoller, Michael Jackson (1989, p. 14) writes that ideas must be tested against the whole of our experience—sense perception as well as our moral values, scientific aims, and communal goals (Csordas, p. 149). To begin this test involves working to release the stories gathered during this research from the pages of this thesis and bring them together in a collective dialogue in the public sphere. To do this, I used the 4th Space Gallery[41] at Concordia University, which was made available to me through the university's 2023–24 Public Scholars program. I collaborated with curator Elizabeth Sweeney and deaf artist Tiphaine Girault, as well as all of the deaf and hearing research

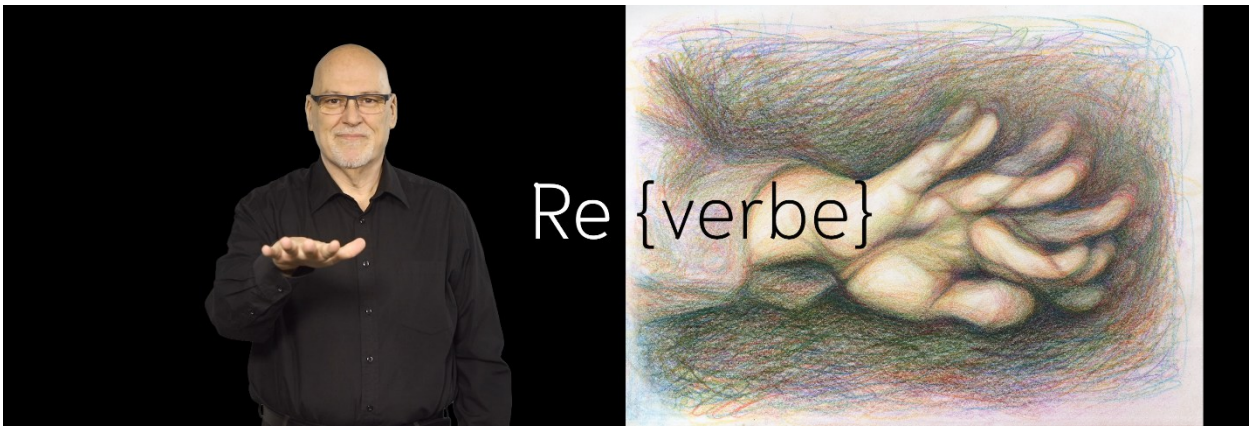
[41] See: https://www.concordia.ca/cuevents/offices/provost/fourth-space/2024/04/12/re-verbe.html.

participants, to create a video documentation, an exhibition, and a screening and research panel discussion. The video and public engagement events are described in the sections that follow.

## Video Documentation

**Figure 51**

*The New Term "Re{verbe}" Shown in Two Modes: Sign Language and Illustration*




The video, titled *Re{verbe}: A Video Documentation of A Sensory Ethnography of Communication*,[42] utilized multiple and at times overlapping languages and communication modalities: text, signed languages, spoken language, and illustrations. The video brought together the narratives and creative scores of the deaf and hearing research participants from this PhD research project. It is designed to frame particular experiences and give the audience a sensory experience linked to the tensions found in this research—tensions such as: What language is privileged at this moment? Which parts of a message are accessible to you and which are not? When you are not understanding, what does that make you feel?

The title *Re{verbe}* is a redesign of the concept, word, and sign for *communication*. It is not just a name but also a verb—bringing emphasis to communicating as a felt experience of reverberations that interconnect between oneself, others, and the environment. In the introduction to the video, footage of hands executing the new sign is rendered in slow motion to elucidate the

[42] See: https://youtu.be/L3FJv5LigUk

hand and figure configurations and their coordinated movements. This is intended to allow the audience time to watch the handshape and movements, and thereby learn the sign.

Next, I introduce myself, Paula Bath, the researcher. I describe the project and provide the audience with background on the research questions and the co-research and co-creation methodology.

**Figure 52**

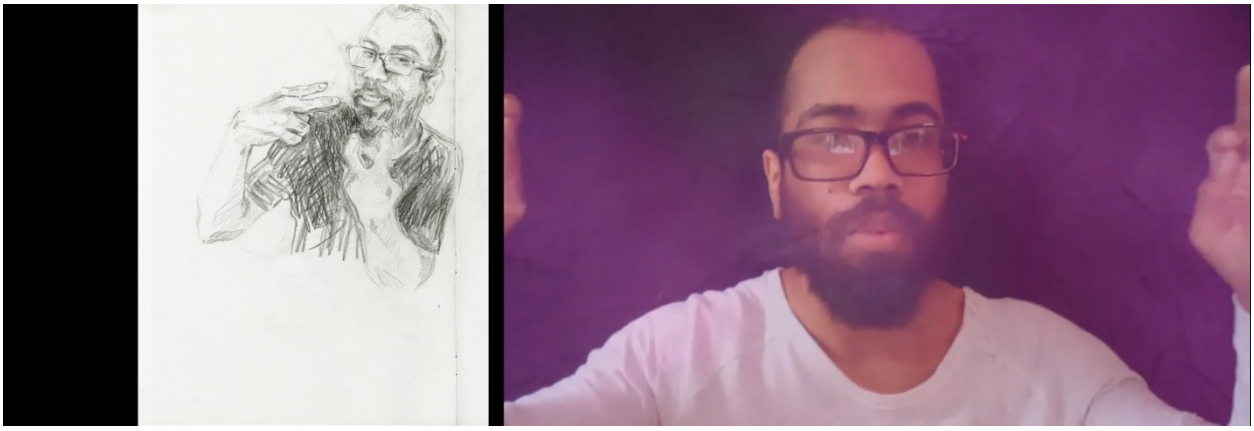
*Researcher Paula Bath Introduces the PhD Project in ASL*


In the next section, frames fade in and out, introducing each of the 13 participants. Where a co-creation existed, the frame blends the two participants' creations to illustrate the linkages. Each frame considers ways to retell the original story through a multi-modal experience.

Matthew and Emmanuelle's video ran simultaneously with Emmanuelle's sketched images as a means of uncovering ways to capture sign-language movements on screen. The piece is visual only, with no spoken language or translation.

**Figure 53**

*A Story Told via Illustrations (left) and LSQ (right)*



Conner, Wissam, Jordan, and Nigel each describe their experiences in sign language and in relation to their selected objects. If an image of the object was provided, we included it, along with a text-based summary at right.

**Figure 54**

*Simultaneous Display of Sign Language (left), a Visual Creative Score (centre), and Written Text (right)*

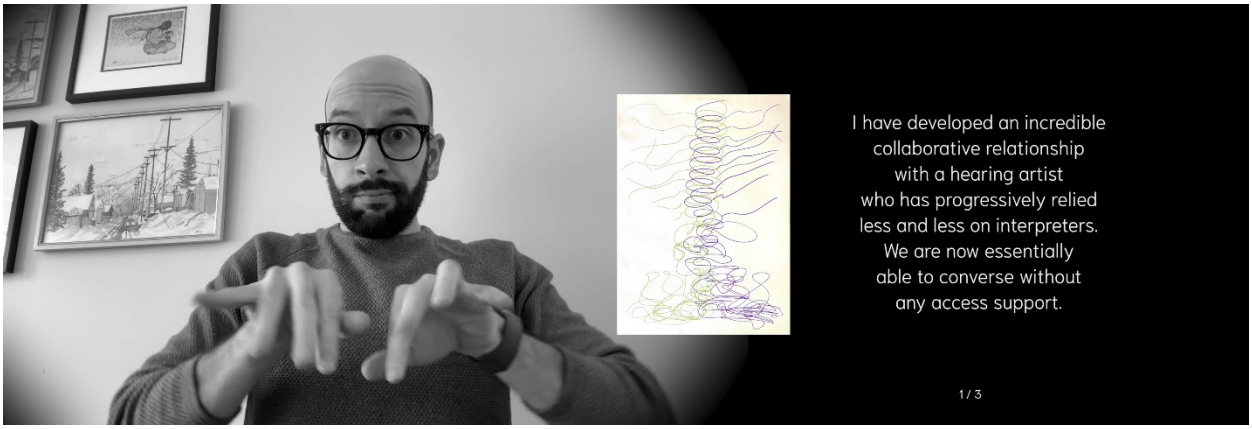


**Figure 55**

*Displaying a Static, Multi-Page, Text-Based Summary, Not a Word-for-Word Translation or Closed Captions)*


**Figure 56**

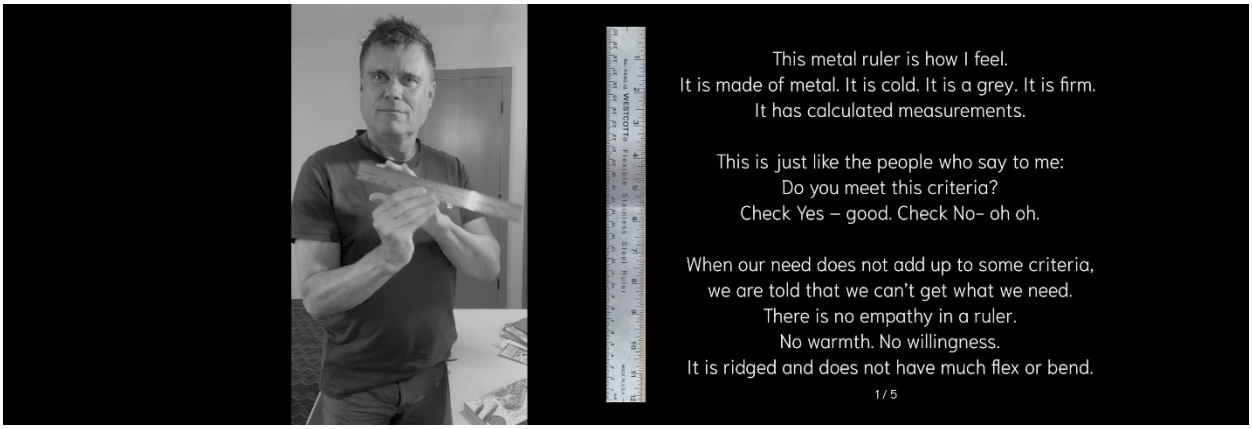
Hearing Participants Sign, Deprioritizing Identity and Prioritizing Communication Relationality


The text-based summaries are not direct transcriptions or interpretations of the signed story; rather, they are condensed poetic summaries, which, in only a few frames, relay the most poignant elements of the messages. Full-length transcripts would have been too long, convoluted, and impossible to read in the space and time provided in the video. Also, no spoken language translation was provided, which meant that only those who knew sign language were able to access the original message in its entirety. And privilege falls to those who know multiple languages, sign and written.

The placement of the sign-language video in the left-hand frame, with text on the right, was also intentional. This was by design, to privilege the people who perceived the sign language. The frame is also kept large, not reduced or placed in a bubble in the corner of the screen, instead filling the screen and providing more natural signing dimensions. In Western culture, we read from left to right. As such, our eyes quickly look leftward for information. By placing sign language at left, the extra strain or effort falls to those who do not know the sign language being used (whether ASL or LSQ). The eye's gaze needs to scan farther to the right to access the information it needs.

**Figure 57**

*Video Privileges Audiences that Know Sign and Written Languages. Messages are not symmetrical*

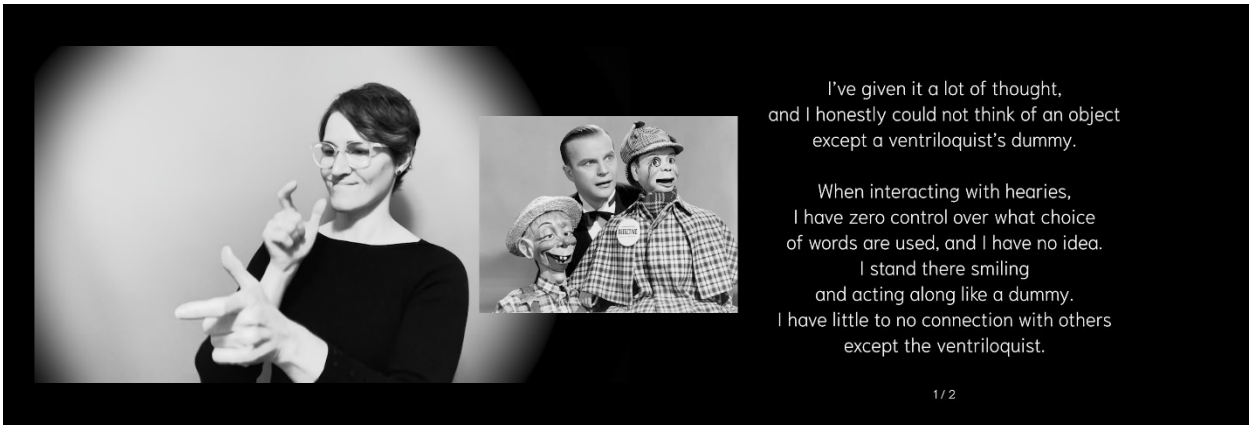



The text-based summary at the far right is likewise not a word-for-word translation of the signed message. This was done for two reasons. First, there were limitations: a word-for-word translation would have been too heavy, the text too long, too convoluted. This would make it extremely difficult to read (if not impossible) in the time allowed with each frame. Therefore, I summarized the key points of the signed text and took some creative liberties in the text-based language mode to bring forward deeper, more nuanced meanings.

As mentioned above, in this design, privilege falls to those who are multilingual. The more languages and language modalities they perceive and understand, the more meanings and angles of the participants' experiences they are able to glean.

**Figure 58**

*Sharing Stories about Experience, Not Only in the Form of Narratives but Also Through Sign Language Poetry*




Jodi's frame was designed similarly; however, instead of providing me with a narrative to describe her score of the ventriloquist's dummy,[43] she also gave me a second creative score—an ASL poem.

The poem was about Jodi as she performed her lived experience in the moments when she felt transformed into a dummy. This performance added another layer of perspective for the audience to see and feel. Next, Jennifer provided a score in the form of LSQ poetry describing the experience of communicating as feeling like a series of electrical shocks. Jennifer's piece is a solo and spontaneous improvised movement.

[43] Given that Jodi's initial creative score was a Google image found on the Internet, with no means of obtaining the permission to reproduce it, we instead used a another, copyright-free image of a ventriloquist's dummy as a stand-in.

**Figure 59**

*Embracing Blur by Including Abstract Sign Language Poetry (LSQ) and Not Providing a Text-Based Interpretation*

I chose not to ask Jennifer for a text-based narrative description to accompany her signed piece. Thus, no such interpretation or translation was provided. This places the viewer on a level playing field, watching the movements and flowing in and out of understanding and not understanding.

At times, when a participant summarized their experience using one specific sign, I asked them to record that sign on video. This I included in the video, together with a gloss of the sign at right. For Jessica Dunkley's signing of the concept "Heart–Sink–Ache," I found there to be no sufficiently equivalent English word translation. As such, I chose to have viewers read the text in a way that was as close as possible to the concept in sign-language gloss: Heart–Sink–Ache. The words resonate with emotion.

**Figure 60**

*Including Sign-Based Concepts "As Is" and Translating an ASL Sign as a Hyphenated Compound Word*


We chose to play one of the videos signed in ASL, created by Anselmo (depicted below, at left), in its totality, by itself, without a text-based summary. At 6 minute in length, Anselmo's signed piece is long enough that viewers who do not know sign language may dart their eyes to the right in search of a helpful text translation[44]. However, no such translation appears. Anselmo is a deaf actor, so his way of communicating is highly visual and expressive; as such, we left the viewer without any aid to comprehension. The intention was for the viewer to sit in a privileged place of unknowing, without distraction—only their eyes, focused on the message, seemingly incomprehensible. Certain audience members who did not know sign language, but knew Anselmo to be an experienced deaf actor and highly expressive, shared after the screening that they felt that they had understood him. Beyond our preoccupations with language and linguistic barriers, comprehension and relatedness can still appear and do exist.

[44] See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/11Iv9ASm-9dsnK0Cf05o_DLJOHBGTs-r3/view?usp=drive_link

**Figure 61**

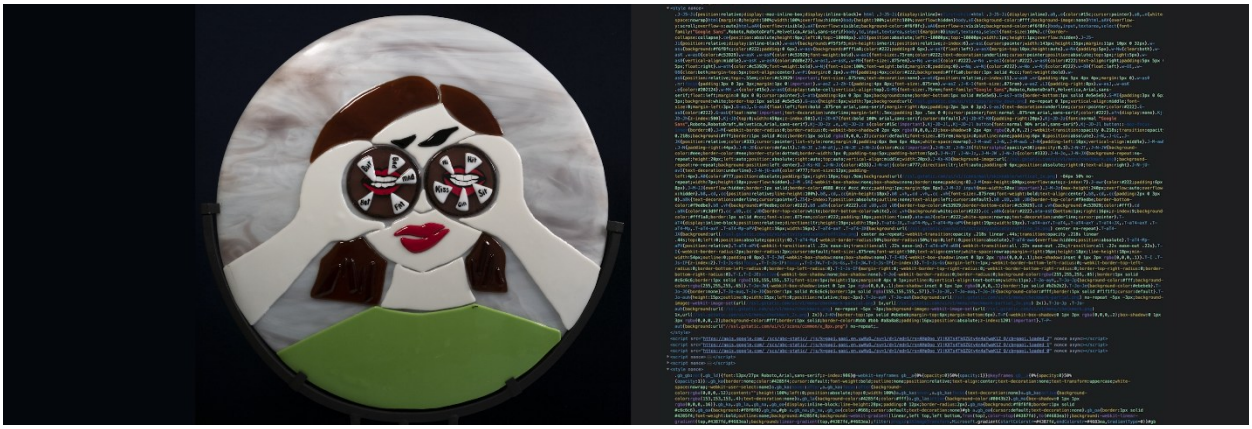
*Running Two Videos Simultaneously. One video is in ASL (left) and one is silent and visual (right). Prioritizing the synchronicity and asynchrony of visual meaning in simultaneous interpretation*

In the latter half of Anselmo's piece, we simultaneously played his artist partner Jessica M.'s film "Oneness," to allow the audience to watch two calls for oneness in communication, expressed in two very different ways.

MAP and Viktoriya were another artist duo who chose to co-create their score. The interrelatedness of the co-creation experience can again be seen, as Viktoriya shared a story about the stress and strain of lip reading, and MAP responded with scrolling text, in very small type, drawn from the pair's email discourse.

**Figure 62**

*Showing Harmony Between Different Experiences and Strain in Understanding Language*



There was a decision not to increase the type size of the text, which scrolls down the right-hand side of the screen. It is for practical purposes illegible, and attempting to read it provokes a feeling of strain on par with what Viktoriya experienced when reading lips.

In closing, I, as the researcher, offered my personal story of experience across deaf and hearing spaces. I introduced myself as hearing and married to a deaf person, and related the story about how our midwife threw our sign-language interpreter out of her office. I told this story in ASL. I also asked that same interpreter to join the project and create a creative score about how she felt being on the other side of the door on that day. I added her image to my story.

**Figure 63**

*Researcher Paula Bath and Sign Language Interpreter Josée Combine Creative Scores to Re-Tell their Experiences of the Same Moment from Different Perspectives. (Paula's in ASL, with voiceover in her own voice, and Josée's is in a photograph)*

I also chose to speak my story in English. I did not translate between English and ASL. I told the story in two different languages intentionally, and in two slightly different ways, to be more aligned with the culture and norms of each language rather than sacrifice such culture and norms in the name of translation.

It was significant to speak about this moment because, up until this point, the video had no spoken language. I supposed that the hearing audience would be fatigued from so much reading and that hearing an audible voice, all of a sudden, would be a jarring awakening, as if to abruptly release the hearing audience from a cultural sojourn through a space of language strain and deprivation. To deaf people in the audience, this audio intervention would be insignificant, given the layers of meaning available visually on screen. However, spoken English is my mother tongue; for me, it feels authentic to tell stories in English, and, at that moment, with my voice, I intended to reach my fellow people who hear.

**Exhibition**

The exhibition and panel discussion focused on the point of communication uncovered during this research: the sense of reverberation. As such, we titled the event "Re{verbe}" to make the element of social touch, which exists at the point of sensory perception within communication, the starting point of our discussion. A reverberation is like a repercussion. It is the continuing effect of an event, sound, or experience. Musicians use reverb machines to capture the vibrations of sound bouncing off the walls of the space in which it is made. In this exhibition, we expanded on this concept and considered how we might capture the continued inter-sensory effect of our past experiences for ourselves and others. This ethnographic research-creation project served to move us beyond limiting ideas, such as language gaps and translation, to discover how communicating is relational and inter-sensorial. To do this, this project mapped resonance interculturally by tracing the senses across the spaces between deaf and hearing people in communication. The one-day exhibition was designed to present the creative words of deaf and hearing artists exploring their sensory experiences of communication as generated through this research-creation project.

Our objective was to create a one-day, public pop-up exhibition to present the creative works of deaf and hearing artists and participants generated through this research-creation project, initiated by myself, Paula Bath. The goals were to:

- Create an accessible and fun exhibition that creates opportunities to better understand the experiences of communication across deaf and hearing spaces;
- Create presentation materials that may be remounted or shared beyond the one-day exhibition; and
- Create a buffet of exhibition options to mix and match based on participants' interests and available resources.

The exhibition centred around the large multi-channel video documentation (described above), two public displays, and creative tables. The two displays exhibited the objects and creative scores generated by the participants over the course of the project. These included, among other items, a slinky, metal rulers, drawings, and transcripts of legal cases. The creative table was reserved for craft activities inspired by the participants' artistic works and collaborations produced during this project: collages, mandalas, drawing activities, etc. The exhibition opened with a 30-minute video screening, following which attendees were encouraged to form a circle to play research participant Jordan's "Game." For this game, Jordan invited one of his deaf mentors, from whom he had learned the game, to join him to lead the game jointly with those attending.

**Video Screening**

**Researcher – Paula (ASL):** Hello everyone. My name is Paula Bath. I am a PhD student here at Concordia University with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and I am also a participant in the 2023–24 Public Scholar program. Thank you for coming to 4th Space, as well as to the 4th Space team, to Spill.Propagation, and to the Centre for Sensory Studies for partnering in this event—and, in particular, the Public Scholar program, because this program gave me this space so that we could host this event together today. Also, I thank each and every one of you. I have been looking forward to this moment for a long time, because I love it when deaf people and hearing people come together in space to exchange, communicate, and share

experiences. When I look out into the audience, I can see people from the different groups I work with intermingling: people from the research and academic community, people from the deaf and interpreting community, people working in the communication industry to develop systems and services to enable communicating to happen, and people who are artists and creators who are always giving me fresh perspectives on things. Thank you all for coming.

**(Switched to spoken English):** My research looks at spaces where deaf and hearing people are communicating. I say *are communicating* very specifically, because many times people assume that they are not. Or they can't, because there is a language barrier. Deaf people are deaf, and they use sign language. Sign languages, by the way, are not universal. There are many of them. Hearing people use spoken languages and, in general, do not sign. However, deaf and hearing people are in spaces together, just like we are now. There are two reasons why I care about these spaces.

One: I did not set out in my PhD journey to search for communication barriers. I did not want to go looking for communication barriers. Do you know why? Because I would find them. So, I have never been interested in barriers. I will tell you why. I was in Mexico—training to do a mountain bike race. Standing at the top of that mountain, I looked down at the trail in front of me and said to myself, "well, this is impossible." There are so many barriers. I got rocks. I got trees. I got twists and turns. Logs. There was absolutely no clear path down. So, I looked over at my instructor and said: "So, how do I do this? This is absolutely impossible. How do I not hit a barrier and then throw myself into the woods?" He said to me, "Paula, don't look at barriers. Look at the spaces in between." So, my eyes went from space to space to space to space. And I got down that mountain. That is why I focus on spaces where deaf and hearing people are communicating.

The second reason is that I am a hearing person married to a deaf person. One day, we went to the midwife clinic to welcome our new firstborn child. We were very excited. We had been planning this for a long time. We brought our sign-language interpreter because we knew nobody else would. We walked into the midwife's room, and she threw her out. Just threw her out. People say to me that that is a communication barrier. But I say, no, it is not. Communication is still happening. I am saying that we, as a society, need to understand what we are saying. As a person, I need to say how am I doing.

**(Switched to ASL):** I agree with another researcher named Paul Rodaway, who says that spaces themselves are abstract, but communication changes this. Communication builds an active and meaningful relationship between us and the world around us. Rodaway refers to this relationship as a social dimension of touch, and this is what gives us a sense of being, grounded in our roots. So, I set out to ask, what is your experience communicating?

I embarked on an ethnographic research-creation project and partnered with Spill.Propagation, a center for arts and sign language in Canada that I co-founded and directed since 2009, with Tiphaine Girault. Spill.Propagation has been bringing deaf and hearing people together in an ethic and process of research and co-creation. It is not a DeafSpace. It is not a hearing space made accessible to deaf people—but we wanted to create spaces where we can each be our authentic selves, build a common ground of understanding, and create new ways of thinking and doing together.

**(Switched to spoken English):** For this PhD project, I needed people. I agree with Michael Jackson, the anthropologist, who says: "No one worldview is enough to capture all of the worldviews that exist." For my project, people came. Deaf and hearing people. And they shared their stories. Along with their stories, I also asked them to take the most predominant sense that they had and to show it to me. Show it to me in material form. They gave me objects, illustrations, poems, videos. I wanted to take these material forms and show them to you. I found they got us a bit closer to the resonance, the reverberation, and the feeling from the story itself from the experience of that person. I wanted you to get beyond conversations about language, culture, barriers, and even accessibility. I wanted us to enter a new conversation about our senses. To get back into our body. What we see. What we hear. And what we feel. So, the video you will see here today, along with the larger exhibition, is a weaving of these stories. Weaving of these experiences. They are gifts from the field, from my fieldwork. And they are showing us these different perspectives of communication. These stories make visible these social touches. These relationships in real time and space perform what I think Sean Wilson, the Indigenous scholar, says: that these relationships form the basis of our understanding of reality and in creating reality. And that these relationships are what form a common ground between us. This common ground is the prerequisite to examining our own accountability for these relationships.

[Video screening begins: 30 minutes.]

**Panel of Research Participants**

Following the video screening, we hosted a question-and-answer session with the audience. Seven (7) of the twelve (13) research participants attended the event and were invited on stage to engage with audience members and their questions. This next section will present these questions and how the participants addressed them. The steps to getting the discourse onto the page are also included; for example, if the participant spoke in English, the written transliteration did not occur until after the event. For those who used ASL, there was spoken language translation into English at the live event, and then transliteration of the audio-recorded spoken English into written English after the event, to produce the text on these pages. In this text, when errors were present in the recorded live translation, this transcript was edited to reflect the meaning of the Sender's original message.

***Question 1: How do we achieve a sense of balance in communication between deaf and hearing people?***

**Public Participant (woman, spoken French):** Hello and thank you. I have a very specific question. There was something that really impressed me. Well, there were many things that impressed me, but one in particular was the metaphor about the candle. That it is important to have the tools and to decide whether, or not, I speak since I am a hearing person, and if I am with a deaf person, to take the time to choose what communication tools we want to use in that moment with that deaf person. That really threw me for a loop, because he was also talking about oxygen that feeds the flame of a candle. I would like to have more examples of this. When this moment is happening, are we going to communicate this way or that way? I think this is a very important moment for me to listen to. Thank you.

**Deaf Panelist – Anselmo (ASL to spoken English):** Sure, I can speak to your question and to the relationship between hearing and deaf people, and what that looks like. As I worked for a project, we used the technology Scriptation in the film industry. When I work on projects, they are highly collaborative and with individuals located all over the word. However, we still are

able to be connected to one another. This one application has what is called a “live layer,” which means each collaborator, in different physical locations, can collaborate on one document simultaneously. In this case, I do not need to depend on sign-language interpreters to physically come to where I am. Any adjustments made can be seen by everyone in real time. Someone can leave a comment in spoken language, a voice note. Of course, I don’t hear it, so then I call the interpreter on FaceTime and she interprets the voice note for me into sign language. And the interpreter interprets my sign language on FaceTime into a new voice note. Then all the collaborators are able to hear my voice note. And the communication is shared among the team, really bringing everyone together through this communication and collaboration tool. I think this tool is leading the way and is the future of the film industry.

**Researcher – Paula (spoken English):** And if I could add: the piece about the candle, what that participant also said was that the key was to ask “what do you need?” and then just go with what that need is together.

***Question 2: What does “whole body” communication feel like?***

**Public Participant (man, spoken English):** My name is David Howes. I am the director of the Centre for Sensory Studies. I have a question for the butterfly man, which is the only way in which I can express my admiration. It made me so happy watching you communicate. It was extraordinary. The upsurge of emotion in me was just so joyous with your expression and communication. One time, what Paula (the researcher) told me about what she admires about sign language is precisely that it is a whole-body communication. So, I just talk with my mouth and sometimes I can make a few gestures, but not like your gestures. So, I wonder about that idea—a whole-body communication. And when, for example, you have at the bottom of the screen the written text—that just cancels that [the whole-body communication]. Can you tell us what it feels like, from within, to express oneself in a whole-body way and not to just be a talking head, like me?

**Deaf Panelist – Anselmo (ASL to spoken English):** For us, it is our language. It is so visual. For you, your language is about sound. Even if you watch something visual, like a movie. The meaning from action is secondary to the meanings from sound, because you depend so much on

the sound, on the tones of voice, the modulation of sound. For us, it is the opposite. We only watch the action. Every piece of the physical movement. We are taking those images in and it becomes like a film in our minds. Then, our language is able to express, in a visual way, that film we can see in our minds. Whereas what you take in by hearing is then what you express by speaking. These two processes are linked. It is like a communication cycle—in and out.

**Deaf Panelist – Matthew (LSQ to spoken English):** I agree with what you just said. For example, in our video, when we referred to the forest and to a tree. When we sign the tree, we can also see and connect to the tree. When people say the word *tree*, or *arbre*, in French, it does not offer the same visual experience. This additional visual experience is known as a deaf-gain. Some deaf people like to read and others not. But reading does not offer the visual experience that signing offers. Other times, the signs not only are visual, but we also must act or personify the action as well, such as when we say "running." We must generate the movement of running, along with the sign. It is a language and experience that is unique.

**Deaf Panelist – Viktoriya (ASL to spoken English):** I will speak, too, to the example given of the tree. I think for deaf people, we can show the way the tree moves, sways in the forest. This movement is produced by energy. How the movement of the leaves and branches from the wind catches your attention, just as a sound of a crack may for a person who hears. Looking at the movement also takes energy. When we say, see, hear—it's all energy.

***Question 3: Is there a role for instinct and intuition in these interconnected, communicating spaces?***

**Public Participant via Zoom (man, spoken English):** Hi Paula. Thank you. That was a very informative video and I love the area of research that you are involved in. I am wondering if you think there is a role of instinct and intuition and, if so, to what extent?

**Researcher – Paula (spoken English):** Hi David, thank you. Great question. I will say the first words, but then I am going to ask Vikka [Viktoriya] to prepare to answer too, because it is actually Vikka's story that made me think of this very thing. One of Vikka's pieces is a mandala. And she talks about how each person, or rather, how communication is not happening *out there*,

that it is actually happening *in here* [gesturing to throat chakra]. And that each person has a communication centre of their being, and that it opens when we are in sync with ourselves and with the people and environment around us [gesturing so that all five fingers open like a lotus flower] and that it closes and constricts when we are not. And, if we are not aware of that or if our instincts are not attuned to that, then we are in an ill state and an unhealthy way of being. So that attunement, as I call it, needs to be heightened, so that we can focus on that communication centre. So, I would like to ask Vikka to add a few words.

**Deaf Panelist – Viktoriya (ASL to spoken English):** Yes, that is right. I use the drawing of the mandala to show this. The repetition of the mandala shows patterns and rhythms that I believe this communication centre produces. It is like a form of music. Sometimes it can be black-and-white, other times we can add colours and shades to the mandalas of communication. The options are limitless. The vibration and energy of other people and other spaces impacts our communication centre. Sometimes you can just walk into a space, a restaurant event, and you get a sense that something is off. That is the work of your communication centre. These vibrations inter-influence and have an impact, whether to encourage our communication centre to bloom and open, or to restrict and to close.

***Question 4: If you, as an interpreter, got kicked out again—what would you do? What should we do as allies?***

**Public Participant (woman, spoken English):** Hello, my name is Farah. This is a question for Josée. I am curious to know if you, as an interpreter, have learned now what to do if you get kicked out. And to the group: if you see that barrier come up, what would you like us to do as allies?

**Hearing Panelist – Josée (ASL to spoken English):** I need to pick what language to use. (Josée asks the interpreter: Are you okay if I sign in ASL?) Thank you for your question. Honestly, like it shows in my picture of that moment, there were a lot of emotions happening at once. But the one thing I could think of is to trust the two of them [the deaf and hearing person still in the Midwife room]. That I trusted Paula [sign name “Bath”] and Tiphaine [sign name “Art”]. They are both wonderful people and I wanted to follow their decision. If they had wanted me to come

back in the room and interpret a strongly worded message directly to the midwife, I would have. And that they would have opened the door to come and get me if they had wanted to. So, if this happened again, yes—I think I would have to hold off and stand at that closed door, sending positive thoughts and support through the door to those on the other side, and just—stay ready. As a response to your second question, what can we do to support you as allies: I hope it is conversations like this that will reverberate into society, so that there is more awareness and understanding. So that they can see the importance of communication.

**Curator – Elizabeth (spoken English to written English):** I am curious as to how you experienced the ways in which we brought these stories to you? We did not necessarily choose captions in the ways you may be used to. We didn't use voiceover in the ways that you may be used to. Hearing folks in the audience may be used to things being easy, so we made some choices there in terms of how these works were brought together. Even just positioning sign language first. We read left to right. So, for us it was important that sign language was seen first [on the left], and then a visual image and then the words. Which is not necessarily prioritizing hearing access. It was prioritizing signed access. So, thinking about the ways in which even we default to the hearing norm (I say *we* as being a hearing person and referring to hearing people) and then we add on an access. There is a scholar called Jolanta Lapiak who talks about phonocentrism and centering the spoken. I think that is an important concept to be constantly thinking about when we are thinking of spaces we are engaging in, whose language and culture is being centered, whose bodies. Whose experiences. So, these are the elements we were thinking about when we edited the video. Some of you may have noticed or even experienced discomfort or waiting. Things did not happen as quickly as you might expect. So, I am curious if anyone felt that. Things not working the way they are used to. Any thoughts, or comments or questions—we would love to hear.

***Question 5: How can I ask "what do you need?" to a deaf person when I don't know sign language and I don't want to offend?***

**Public Participant (woman, spoken English):** Hi, I am Valeriia and am from the Centre for Sensory Studies at Concordia University. I just started my PhD. I don't understand sign

language. So, I felt very biased in my decision to *first* read [the text] and *then* watch. And I don't know how to start communicating if I don't know sign language. And I would love to know how to ask what you need in a way that doesn't make me look entitled, and closed if I feel open. It's a very hard question. I feel vulnerable in admitting my inadequacy, but I am here precisely because of that. Thank you.

**Deaf Panelist – Matthew (LSQ to spoken English):** Yes, I understand you. You want to read first, then try and attach pieces of the signed message back to what you just read and make links between the two. But, in fact you can't. The structure of the different languages: in French, you will often see sign language referred to as "le langage des signes," but it is not. It is "la Langue des signes québécoise." My suggestion is similar to what I do. I know four languages. I need, to the best of my abilities, to match the meanings up and move between them.

**Deaf Panelist – Anselmo (ASL to spoken English):** What you have said makes perfect sense. You don't understand sign language, and so you are looking and relying on the text because that is what you will understand. But now you see—in this moment—what it is like as a deaf person. Growing up, we search for what we need—for that sense, for captioning or text—but it is not there. In this moment, you were given the captions. If there were none, you would be completely left out. For us, for deaf people, that is not always the case. What you have seen today gives you a taste of what we have lived through as the deaf community. I am glad that you brought this up.

**Curator – Elizabeth (spoken English):** I will add, also: I was telling a story this morning, in the car ride here, about one of the first times I had actually met Tiphaine, Paula's partner and good friend of mine. It was in a work context and I had hired sign-language interpreters. And as soon as I saw Tiphaine come into the room, I turned and I ran. Because I had to go find the interpreter. Because I didn't want to be rude, to present myself to a deaf person without my interpreter present. But what I didn't realize is what I was communicating. I was communicating: I am scared, I don't want to see you. I am leaving. I am not here to greet you. That was precisely the wrong way to communicate and greet someone. And so, it was actually on the first day of me learning sign language in a class, and where my teacher is deaf and we were taught to use our eyes to connect with another human being. With our face. With our body. Not knowing signs, but knowing how to communicate with another human being and not to turn and run away. So, that is one vulnerability I will offer you also. But what I will say is that the power of eye contact, the

power of being in your whole self—as you, Paula, were talking about—and being vulnerable in what you can and can't do, is important. Anyone else? Thank you for that.

**Deaf Panelist – Viktoriya (ASL):** I was born in Russia and Ukraine, and moved between both countries. They have similar languages and cultures. Then I moved to Canada. I knew no English or ASL at that time. Communication is a two-way street of understanding of different cultures and histories, and, for myself, my background was very different. For me, coming here in English, I didn't have enough language to stand up for myself or complete an argument. I could barely hang on to a conversation. I find my experience, being new and coming to Canada, relates to the experiences between deaf and hearing people—that even though people can hear, they do not share in the same background experience as the deaf person and that is why I go back to the idea of understanding each other. It may take a little bit of time, depending on one's background as a factor. Just give it time. It might take a little bit of time.

**Curator – Elizabeth (spoken English):** I would like to ask anyone else—Matthew, MAP, Jordan Emmanuelle—does anyone else want to add a comment about their experience?

**Hearing Panelist – Jordan (spoken English):** I am going to respond in relation to the question that was asked related to not offending deaf people, and wanting to communicate in a way that is the least offensive. I think that is a great goal to have. And since being an interpreter, and being an interpreter for eleven years, I am still learning. Deaf people teach me every day. And so, give yourself permission to make mistakes and learn. Give other people the opportunity to teach you. And be open to having to apologize for having not known. And I think that was a great story that Elizabeth shared. It is okay to make mistakes, so long as you are open to having it pointed out and wanting to make amends afterward. If you never made a mistake, that would be weird. That would be unusual. Let yourself make mistakes and then let yourself learn, and you will be better for next time.

**Deaf Panelist – Matthew (LSQ):** I would like to add to what Jordan said. For deaf people, too, we are learning all the time. There are words, and how to say things, that we need to learn are offensive. Just like in sign language, when someone is learning, they need to learn what signs, and how things are signed, that can equally be offensive in our culture. It is the same thing. So, we are both learning in each other's language and culture. And over time, as language and cultures evolve, we need to learn again and evolve with it.

***Question 6: How does your work support DeafBlind people? And how can sign-language interpreters be accountable for the role they play in being the voice for others?***

**Public Participant (woman, spoken English):** I wonder how your work supports deaf and blind people? And I also wanted to ask about the burden of responsibility that translators have and if there is any kind of standard. Or, in other words, when people are hired to translate for another—essentially speak on the other person's behalf—there is a burden of responsibility on the translator to get what they are saying correct. I believe translators have a standard where people can register and know that this person is indeed a certified translator and will do their best to translate into different languages. I wanted to know if there is something similar for ASL and LSQ translators, so that deaf people can have the confidence to know that when they go to hire an interpreter from a certain website or registry, that those people will interpret to the best of their ability. I learned from a CBC radio show that a deaf activist was saying that—I think she was from the Black Lives Matter movement—and she felt that she was not being translated properly.

**Researcher – Paula (spoken English):** For the first part, about people who are DeafBlind: There were no participants in my study who were DeafBlind. But I will say that a dear colleague of mine who is DeafBlind, Robert T. Sirvage, gave me a quote once, and I will share it with you because I take every opportunity—I have to share it with everyone. And since you asked, I will share it with you. He says that if you want to know what being deaf is like, it is not to plug your ears. If you want to know the experience of being deaf in this world, it is to walk backwards. Walking backwards. So, I did that when he told me that. I felt awkward, tentative, worried that I was going to hit something. It kind of freaked me out. And it reminds me of Anselmo's story, specifically. He was talking about a Rubik's Cube. Are we doing this now? Or that now? Trying to figure out life—all the time. For your second piece: Absolutely, there are standards, and it is very important to be working with professional sign-language interpreters. There are professional associations and reputable companies that hire and can provide sign-language interpreters to your events, when you are unsure or you don't know. I am happy to give those contacts out to you. Any comments on this to the panel?

**Deaf Panelist – Anselmo (ASL):** Yes. It is like when becoming a doctor. There is a specialized program of study they need to complete, and obtain their degree or diploma. Then they go on to complete specialized screenings. Then, just like doctors, interpreters become a member of their professional association. One association is CASLI—Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters. The association has standards to become a member, and, once registered, the interpreter's name and contact details are included in CASLI's interpreter directory.

**Researcher – Paula (spoken English)**: And in Quebec, there is AQUILS. This is another association as well.

**Hearing Panelist – Josée (spoken English):** I'll be brief. I think what you asked is really important—about responsibility. And that is not something that interpreters should take lightly. We have a huge responsibility, and, in fact, with every sign or with every word that we choose, we are making decisions about someone else's message. It is a lot of responsibility and humility, and, as Jordan said before, being open to recognizing your errors—because we all make errors. Because it is a lot of decision-making. Because it is a decision every single second, every time we work. That is probably the most important aspect to me, when I am looking to work with colleagues. And I think, too, of another thing, to add to what Paula was saying. Having accredited interpreters is important, but if you are booking—but also to ask the deaf person if they have a preference for which accredited interpreter they would want to work with. We [interpreters] all come with certain filters. We also come with a specific tone, as well. We also come with certain dynamics or knowledge of a particular situation, and, when someone else is making the decision that represents your message, you may have an opinion about who that person is. To me, that is really important as well.

**Researcher – Paula (spoken English):** I will add to what Josée was just saying. Thank you for that. The concept of *voice* comes up in Jodi's story about the [ventriloquist's] dummy. That story really hit me—because one could say that all of the accessibility was present in that moment. There were deaf and hearing people, the event organizers booked interpreters, and we can presume that the interpreters were accredited—but still there was something missing. So, I offer Jodi's story back to the entire interpreting profession, to continue to look at that story. Watch it again, and let's have a conversation about what was that experience for her [Jodi] and how we

can do better. To be able to shift that experience into something else—into something that is *reverberating*.

***Question 7: Who curated the video and what were some of the decisions behind the choice of colour, etc.?***

**Public Participant (woman, spoken English):** So, I have a question for both Elizabeth and Paula. Elizabeth, you helped create this space. But with the video, did you also help curate that as well? Paula, did you two work together? I am curious about your process as well as the difference in colour, because I noticed some images were black-and-white and some were in colour. Could you speak to that?

**Curator – Elizabeth (spoken English):** When we knew we would be here for one day, that also influenced our choices. When we looked at all of the samples and the objects and the stories, making a video made the most sense for us. Plus, we knew there was this giant screen in the middle of the room. So, we thought, let's use that. There are pieces missing from the video—for example, the beautiful journal that Emmanuelle wrote, that is not part of this video version of the story. There are all kinds of pieces that were part of the outcome of the collaborations or this research process, but did not make it into the video. But these were the pieces that we drew together, some of them were collaborations and others more solo pieces. This version looks different, then, from our first version. We did get some feedback from Tiphaine early in the drafting process. The earlier version had a lot of reading. But what we were looking for was that—tension. We are used to having all the interpreting, all the captioning, and all the things. But the point of this project was actually, we're talking about the moments when all the things *weren't there*. All the levels and all the layers weren't there, and we were conscious of that tension. And we did not necessarily want to have all the layers. So, that was very intentional. But at the same time, we didn't want to be jerks. So, we offered *some* layers. We offered time to look at images. At first, we had the video with captioning, but we found it to be too distracting—scrolling and moving all the time, especially for those looking at the sign language or who wanted to look at images and who didn't want to read. So, that is why we chose the big sheets of text. Because it was less distracting for the people watching the sign language. The black-and-

white piece was [included] because everyone was in different places and at different times when they filmed their story and so, aesthetically, there was a bit of a smorgasbord. So, by making it black-and-white, it harmonized the aesthetic and the moments. But Matthew's video had such rich colours, which we left in.

**Researcher – Paula (spoken English):** Along with the choices made about colour, I also chose only to use first names and to make the colours the same. One reason was because these stories are very personal. All the stories I got were from people who had these experiences in a real time and in a real place. But the stories can be applicable to so many different people. So, I wanted to use a neutral colour and name, so that people would relate, but to see and connect themselves to the stories they were seeing, hearing, feeling. So, I wanted to have that experience, too, for the people watching.

***Question 8: What is next?***

**Public Participant (woman, spoken English):** Moving forward, what would you like to see happen?

**Researcher – Paula (ASL):** Okay, get ready, panelists—I will come back to you so that each of you can take a turn to share what you want to see happen next.

**(Switch to spoken English):** My first wish is that you [the audience] will still stay, because we have an exhibit behind this screen. We have objects and conversations that started in the video [and will] continue back on the tables. Okay, thank you. That makes me feel better. You will also be getting a gift—they are postcards. You will see them lying around. You will see a postcard of the "ruler." I ask you all to take home with you that "ruler." Please pick them up and bring them home. Give one to your friend, think about them. Because I want us to keep this reverberation conversation happening. That is what I would like next. And now, I will turn it over to the panel.

**Deaf Panelist – Matthew (LSQ):** What I would wish for is to be a filmmaker. I would like to make a trinity film, because I think it would be great to include my identities as deaf, non-binary, and Black. I want people to see the connections between these identities.

**Deaf Panelist – Anselmo (ASL):** Well, I have many wishes. I would love to see empathetic hearts opening and minds opening all over the world, and, in particular, influence scriptwriters. I want people to become involved in deaf culture so that communication becomes fluid and easy everywhere. I can see these doors starting to open. My second wish is to meet and to work with each and every one of you. My wish would be for even one of you to work with us. Maybe I should say ten? Ten of you to work with us!

**Hearing Panelist – Emmanuelle (spoken French):** I was the artist that during this project drew the hands of Matthew and Anselmo. I really liked doing this because I realized, as a hearing person, that we look a lot less at people's hands. It was interesting to see that Anselmo could recognize his own hand. I would like to continue to draw portraits of hands, and hands moving in sign language.

**Deaf Panelist – Viktoriya (ASL):** My wish is that I just started college to learn English. I've gone through speech language pathology, to learn to lip read. I have had a hearing aid, to learn to hear. I have gone through an oralist education, but I still struggle to be able to describe my art, and the meaning of my art, to people in English. I want to be able to do this. I want to have the words to be able to describe my art.

**Hearing Panelist – Josée (ASL):** I have a few ideas that I will try and summarize. I want to say *thank you so much* to Paula. I know this project was a lot of work—and I know, also, in your work collaborations with Spill.Propagation. I wish for more events like this. I want more collaborations. I love languages, many languages. I would like to learn more languages. But forums like this give us the chance to learn and exchange our ideas, and allow for that opening of our minds and our hearts.

**Hearing Panelist – MAP (spoken French):** Does it break the linguistic translation chain if I speak in French? My name is MAP. I would like to see that in addition to art, from primary school up to CEGEP, that it is required by everybody to take sign-language courses—ASL or LSQ—and have this course in the province's curriculum. And that these mandatory courses would be taught by deaf people. And not just offered to deaf people but to everybody, so that everyone could learn to sign. For myself, since the beginning here, I have had difficulty to hear and to understand what is being said. Although I am hearing, the interpreter is also helping me better understand what is being said. I am also currently studying to become a sign-language

interpreter. Just to add to a comment raised earlier about the responsibilities of the sign-language interpreters, I also wanted to bring light [the fact of] interpreters working in school systems, and being put in the position of being not only an interpreter but a language role model for deaf children. When we talk about decisions being made moment by moment, these decisions are having an enormous impact on deaf children. That is why it is critical to hire a qualified interpreter for the position. Because these decisions have a big, and often negative, impact on children.

**Deaf Panelist – Anselmo (ASL):** Great comment, MAP!

**Hearing Panelist – Jordan (ASL):** Going forward, I want to think about the title of this event [makes sign for Re{verbe}] and how it relates to communication. Because Paula has a good point: that communication is always happening; whether specific messages are being understood, or it was successful or not successful, is not the point here. There is still communication happening. The reverberation is still happening. When you look at the sign for Re{verbe}, it is neither positive or negative; it is, in a sense, neutral in its description of the activity of reverberation. But when we walk up to someone and ask for sign-language interpreting services and they say no—what is that, in terms of reverberation? What kind of reverberation is that? In what ways would we sign it? When the interpreter I asked for is then thrown out, what kind of reverberation is that too? Does the sign [for] *reverberation*, which here is neutral, *stay* neutral? That is a question I want to think more about, going forward. And lastly, I want to thank you so much, Paula, for welcoming me into this project. I am thrilled to have been able to work with everyone and with all of these artists. I want more of *this*—just as Josée said. More of these conversations.

**Researcher – Paula (ASL):** I am married to a deaf person and my work is always advocating for mixed families—of hearing and deaf people—to experience a sense of welcome in society. This young boy, child of a deaf adult, would like to answer the question as to what comes next for him.

**Public Participant (young boy, spoken French):** I would like to become an astronaut, to be able to go into space.

# Appendices

## Categorizing Score Titles: A Sense of Thriving or Surviving

### *Thriving (8)*

- Oneness (deaf)
- Movement of butterflies (deaf)
- Play (hearing)
- Sign language in code (hearing)
- A candle flame—in balance (deaf)
- A mandala—open (deaf)
- Bone structure (deaf)
- Blur (hearing)

### *Surviving (11)*

- Heart–sink–ache (deaf)
- Parler en silence (deaf)
- Encoded (hearing)
- Electricity (deaf)
- Rubik's Cube (deaf)
- Cones (deaf)
- A candle flame—snuffed out (deaf)
- A mandala—closed (deaf)
- Cold metal ruler (deaf)
- Reading lips (deaf)
- The dummy (deaf)

## Inventory of Key Signed and Written Terminology and Definitions

### *Signed Concepts*

Seeable: When two people (deaf and hearing) come from different perspectives, but the conditions are present so that they are able to blend their fields of vision to see the same landscape and share in the same experience.

Circular Communication: When communicating is "fluid and easy, like we are from the same world." It feels collaborative, not like working alone and independently.

MYheadheart–YOURheadheart–don'tunderstand: An undesirable state of communication, when the other does not achieve a simultaneous sense of empathy from the mind/understanding and heart/caring, and when the conditions required to foster an empathetic communication exchange are not present.

Heart–Sink–Ache: A sense of deep solitude that occurs in the moment when your sense of hope for solving an accessibility issue fades, and as you watch everyone else walk away from the issue.

Grabbing at Communication: When not all pieces of the communication are perceivable, and you must make an effort to find as many of the pieces as possible and make your own sense with what you have.

Communicating as Reverberation: Communication as an interconnected relationship to the self, to others, and to the world is perceived through all of our senses. The question is, how well are we doing?

### *Written Concepts*

*Trait d'union* (-): Indicates the concept of a union, like a bridge. People create this union when one person speaks another's name, and then names where they are from. These gestures are like bridges within a social place.

Blur: The suggestion that blur in communication is natural and beautiful. We never understand each other perfectly anyway—whichever language we use.

## Selected Interview Transcripts (Original Long Form)

### *Am I terminated or not?*

*I remember at the Tribunal, the Dean was saying when my Lawyer asked—we were talking about that last meeting, when he read from the paper saying, you are not a part of the program anymore, and I remember asking him, does this mean that I am terminated? And he said yes. But at the Tribunal, Dr. Rungta, from what I remember, he said we put her on unpaid leave and my lawyer cross-examined him and asked, well, that is the same as terminating her from the program. And he then replied, no, we didn't terminate her. But I just remember my lawyer talking about that was the end of it, there was no continuation of figuring it out after that. It was terminated. I remember the debate over that, whether it was a termination or not a termination.* (Jessica)

***Realizing I am on my own***

*I remember Dr. Rungta reading the letter. Then, when he was done—the way it ended, I didn't understand what it meant. If you are not providing interpreters, does that mean I am kicked out of the program? Or what? I remember him not being able to answer. That's when, I remember my Executive Director sitting next to me asked, so does that mean now she is on unpaid leave? And Dr. Rungta then confirmed, yes, to being on unpaid leave. But it still was not clear. So, then I asked, does it mean, can I still participate, like go to a conference and access funding for that? Can I go to academic sessions, because I wasn't kicked out of the program, according to him. But he kept answering no, no, no. So, I was like confused. … Then my Executive Director rep said, well, she is on unpaid leave. She is still part of the program, so why can't she be involved in the activities that are part of the training? But Dr. Rungta just shook his head and said no, I couldn't. But he never explained why I couldn't. Just that I couldn't. It was then that I realized that I was cut off—truly cut off. Because even though I was on an unpaid leave, I could no longer go to academic sessions, I couldn't socialize with other residents, I couldn't access academic funding. So, I realized—so, I am cut off from the program. But he never actually said it. But I had to realize it myself. Even if he never actually said it to my face, that I was actually cut off. And even when the Executive Director rep asked him to clarify, he wouldn't. Then he just got up, walked out, and left me, the Executive Director, and the interpreter. And that was it. (Jessica)*

***No empathy***

*The situation felt like a cold wall, hard like concreate. There was no care (ASL: hand over heart, head shaking -no). No empathy for what I was needing (ASL: my-heart-understands-your-heart). Nothing. No "humanness." They weren't looking at the person. I was just a student number on a piece of paper. They would give two options—this option or that option. Nothing more. Zero empathy. No attempt to understand what each individual would need. No. They just lump us all together, separated themselves from us and made decisions for us. (Nigel)*

***It is a funding scheme***

*At that time, Dr. P. said to me, go ahead. VRS [Vocational Rehabilitation Services] looks like a good option, go and complete the application. He was trying to shirk the issue. He said that VRS will take care of the interpreting service issue. But he then said, when you apply, you will, for sure your application will be declined. He said I would be declined because I have personal savings, I have good employment and that, with this, I was financially comfortable. They, from the outside, were looking at me as if to say, you are fine, as if to subtly say, why was I looking for more? I don't need more and don't need to go back to school. But that is not okay. They can't decide my life. They can't decide what I can do. I wanted advancement in my career. I wanted to become a phycologist. Because I could see clearly that is what the Deaf community very much needed at that time. The VRS application form asked questions like: what was my annual income, what my expenditures looked like, what money I had in the bank, what my investments were—everything. They wanted me to pour my private financial history out onto the page. And they*

*were encouraging me to divulge this personal information, even though they knew, and I knew, that I would be declined. And with all of this, all I wanted was just sign-language interpreting services. That's all. But they kept insisting. Their logic was, when I was rejected, then I would qualify for a student loan. So, their idea was, I would first need to use my personal savings to pay for the interpreting services first, then supplement the rest with a student loan. I would never see the funds for the loan. They would go directly to the university, who would use the loan to pay for the interpreting services. And then, at that point, if any difference remained, the university would cover that cost. They would decimate my personal savings while using my student loan funds, and top up the rest with their funding. So, that was why they insisted on me applying for VRS funding—to trigger this wanted chain of events, because they knew I would never be accepted for VRS funding. (Nigel)*

***A cold metal ruler***

*That [metal ruler] is how I feel. It is made of metal, so it is cold. It is a grey, sombre colour. It is firm. It has strict, calculated measurements. Just like those people who say things like: Do you meet this criteria? Yes—check. Do you meet that criteria? No—oh, no check. Then, when our need somehow does not add up to some criteria, we are told that we can't get what we need. The ruler is a perfect example! There is no empathy in a ruler, no warmth or willingness. It is rigid and does not have much flex or bend. I cannot pick anything that you [Paula] have brought here for me to create my object. The items you have brought are too creative. The ruler is structured and rigid—like when they said to me to go apply for VRS funding. That was the end of it. They didn't say, what do YOU, as a person, need? What can we GIVE you (ASL: 5 fingers of the open hand put on the person) to make sure you have what you need? I just needed sign-language interpreting services. That was it. They could have said, okay, and that we would figure it out together. That would have been what I needed to succeed through the program. But no. They were a ruler. They hesitated. They said they needed to check into their policy. They said they needed to check a manual or check a criteria—what they did were the measured notches on this ruler. Criteria. Policies. Decisions. If I was able to meet their criteria, for example, I could then achieve one centimetre on this ruler. But there are so many centimetres. The first centimetre is, they need to check with someone in charge first. Then the next centimetre is, that person now needs to check with another person of higher seniority. And again and again. Then, there is a governance committee that needs to be consulted. These institutional layers are like each centimetre on this ruler. I need to move up, layer by layer. Centimetre by centimetre. What it is not like is, I meet with an administrator and they say: Okay, you are admitted into the program. What do we need to do to make sure that we are accommodating you fully? I would say, I just need interpreters. And their reply would be: "OK GREAT." It wouldn't be a problem and the interpreter would just show up from that point onward. If this happened, I would become involved and a productive member of society. With the layers and barriers facing me, I can't. I couldn't get the career that I wanted. I wanted to become a phycologist and work with the Deaf community, or the interpreting community, or any community. The barrier blocked everything. It blocked my ability to contribute to my knowledge, my experience, my skills. When the barrier goes up in front of me, it stings like when someone takes this ruler and slaps your wrist. You are given no choices. I was given one—to complete this VRS application form. That was not a*

*choice. You need to do as you are told—without question. If you do not, you will be barred, as if slapped on the wrist and punished. (Nigel)*

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