

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

The College Choice Process of Deaf Students at a Residential School for the Deaf

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for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By

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Abstract

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

With an increasing number of students pursuing a postsecondary education, colleges are looking at how to attract and keep students in school as states have increased accountability on colleges ensuring students are successfully obtaining degrees. One of the keys in this process is understanding how college choice may affect students' ability to successfully graduate with degrees. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how Deaf students come to a decision on which college they attend. Many studies have examined the college choice phenomenon for first-generation students, Students of Color, students of low socioeconomic status, and undocumented students. These studies have investigated how parent education

background, cost of attendance and financial aid, reputation, location, and majors offered affect the decision-making process. With only 17% of Deaf individuals obtaining a bachelor's degree compared to 32% for their hearing peers (Garberoglio, Cawthon, & Sales, 2017), there exists a clear need to see how this college choice process may affect their long-term success in college. Through individual interviews with high school students and staff, Deaf students' college choice process was examined through the combined framework of Critical Race Theory, intersectionality, and Community Cultural Wealth.

Findings revealed that participants generally aspired to pursue higher education at the encouragement of their families, but were limited when creating their college choice sets. Participants were not knowledgeable of the various types of colleges to choose from and did not know the names of specific colleges that had large Deaf student populations. Campus visits had a significant impact on participants' final college choice, but completing applications became difficult for some due to challenges with writing. Participants and their parents also had little understanding of the finances involved with a college education. The significance of the findings can perhaps lead to different educational settings of Deaf students, particularly schools for the Deaf, to reevaluate how they support students as they navigate the college choice process to ensure they persist in college and graduate.

CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The number of Americans pursuing a postsecondary education continues to rise overall with an enrollment of 18.1 million undergraduates in 2013 (National Center of Educational Statistics [NCES], 2016). Reasons for the increase likely include widespread knowledge that obtaining a college degree comes with benefits. Citing a range of literature, Crellin, Kelly, and Prince (2012) identify some of those benefits: “increases in personal earnings, improved job productivity, greater civic engagement, better health, and reductions in social costs” (p. 35). Approximately 18,600 of those undergraduates identify as Deaf or hard of hearing; however, the exact number is likely to be higher because many students may choose not to self-identify as Deaf or hard of hearing (Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2002). Marschark, Lang, and Albertini (2002) further note how the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, along with a push in advocacy by the Deaf community, has allowed more Deaf individuals to pursue a college education. For this dissertation, the term Deaf will be used as an all-encompassing term to represent the unique individuals within the community: those who identify as Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deafblind, Deaf Disabled, and Late Deafened. The acronym DHHDBDDLD has been recently gaining traction through social media as a way to recognize these different individuals, but this acronym was not seen in the review of the literature.

Problem Statement

College degree attainment comes with its perks, but approximately 70% of students with a hearing loss leave college before obtaining their degree (Schroedel, Watson, & Ashmore, 2003). Furthermore, 35% of Deaf students in postsecondary institutions in the United States

graduate with two-year degrees compared to 40% for their hearing peers while the rates for four-year degrees are dismal; 30% for Deaf students and 70% for their hearing counterparts (Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2002). A more recent study, however, shows that only 17% of Deaf individuals obtain a bachelor's degree compared to 32% for their hearing peers (Garberoglio, Cawthon, & Sales, 2017). The statistics reveal a disparity with persistence and retention in college for Deaf students.

College Access, Persistence, and Retention

Tinto (1987) has studied persistence and retention of college students extensively and acknowledged some factors that impact students' ability to stay in school and graduate. He suggests that the notion of "educational communities" in which students feel involved academically and socially, particularly in classrooms, is the key to retention (p. 73). Gallaudet University in Washington D.C., the world's only liberal arts university for Deaf students, is viewed as the ideal place for students to learn and grow as the university is tailored to meet the needs of those students. Gallaudet typically enrolls about 1,000 to 1,500 students every Fall semester giving students the opportunity to create communities to support each other throughout their undergraduate years on its small campus. Yet, the highest graduation rate came from the entering class of 2007 with a six-year graduation rate of 48% (Graduation and Retention, 2014). It appears that even at a university that is designed to cater to the needs of Deaf students, they are not persisting through college to obtain a four-year degree.

Two other universities in the United States are widely known in the Deaf community for having large Deaf student populations where they take classes alongside their hearing peers; Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in New York and California State University, Northridge

(CSUN). On RIT's campus, one of its nine colleges is called the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), which is the world's first and largest technical college for Deaf students (About NTID, 2018). NTID issues its own degrees and certificates and can be viewed similar to a community college, but it also acts as a bridge to RIT where Deaf students can obtain four-year degrees. Together RIT and NTID (henceforth RIT/NTID) serve more than 1,100 Deaf students. According to its website, NTID has a first-year persistence rate of 69% for students obtaining two-year degrees, but only a 38% graduation rate (Annual Report, 2018). On the West coast, approximately 150 of the 38,000 students at CSUN are Deaf (About Us, 2018). Between 2009-2016, the graduation rate of Deaf students at CSUN was 74% (M. Reinig, personal communication, December 6, 2018) while the university has a general six-year graduation rate of 54% (EdSource, 2019). Gallaudet, RIT/NTID, and CSUN are sometimes referred to as the "big three," or the top three institutions serving large populations of Deaf students.

Persistence has been found to be an issue in other underrepresented communities. Witkow, Huyng, and Fuligni (2015) did a longitudinal study on a diverse group of students from their last two years of high school through their first two years of college and found first-generation Latinx students to be the most affected group. The researchers concluded that connections between K-12 schools and colleges need to be established to ensure students receive information on the costs of college and financial aid to increase the likelihood of persistence, especially for underrepresented groups.

There seems to be a desire for many to enroll in college across all groups of people, but Dyce, Albold, and Long (2013) recognize that, "A large percentage of students and families aspire to go to college, and early in their high school careers, have confidence that a college

education is within their reach. Statistically, however, early aspirations are not realized for the majority of low-income, first-generation college students, even when academic performance is comparable to their more affluent peers” (p. 163). Students and their families need to be informed about what going to college entails, which means high schools need to do more in providing college access information as students go through the college choice process. College access information can impact persistence and retention in college.

College Choice

The college choice model developed by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) has been used in multiple studies as a baseline for exploring how students experience the college choice process (Bergerson, 2009a). Based on their own review of the literature, Hossler and Gallagher found that students experienced three stages when deciding on a college to enroll: predisposition; search; and choice. The predisposition phase consists of students deciding whether or not they want to pursue a postsecondary education. During the search phase, students who do choose to go to college then seek out information about prospective institutions. Finally, the student makes a choice of which college they intend to enroll after considering the advantages and disadvantages of each potential college. The college choice process has been investigated with underrepresented groups, particularly Black and Latinx students, but no research has been done on how the college choice process impacts Deaf students. Deaf students are a group with unique linguistic and cultural attributes that can affect how they navigate the college choice process.

The Deaf Community

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDOC), about one in six adults 18 years of age or older in the United States report some

trouble hearing, which amounts to about 37.5 million people, or 15 percent of the population (2016). About two to three out of every 1,000 children are born with a detectable level of hearing loss in one or both ears. Furthermore, more than 90 percent of deaf children are born to hearing parents (NIDOC, 2016). While the hearing loss of a person is easy to measure, it is more difficult to count how many are affiliated with the Deaf community. Some Deaf people do not use American Sign Language (ASL) or participate in Deaf organizations and events (Holcomb, 2013). Many others do not become deaf until later in life where they may eventually become involved with the Deaf community.

To avoid ambiguity, Holcomb (2013) notes that, “the practice of capitalizing the ‘d’ in Deaf has been utilized in the literature since the 1980’s to make a distinction between people who do not hear but who choose not to participate in the Deaf community and those who embrace Deaf culture” (p. 38). In other words, deaf with a lowercase “d” refers to a person with the “physiological condition of not hearing” whereas a capitalized “D” is used to show that a deaf person identifies with Deaf culture and the community and uses ASL as their primary language” (Holcomb, 2013, p. 38). The terms “culture” and “community” are often used interchangeably, but Holcomb (2013) explains that “community” can also imply a specific geographic location, typically places with large Deaf populations where there are educational and employment opportunities and access to the Deaf culture. As a community, Deaf people will always lead “hybrid lives” in which they navigate between their Deaf selves and a world comprised of people who do not hear or sign (Holcomb, 2013).

Audism

Considering that Deaf people make up only a fraction of the population in the United States, they are prone to experiencing audism, or “the notion that one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears,” a term first coined by Tom Humphries (1975). Definitions of audism have expanded to include concepts of institutional and individual oppression. Lane (1992) defined audism as “the hearing way of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the deaf community” (p. 43). Bauman (2004) ties the systems of oppression together by suggesting that the term audism incorporates an understanding of historical constructions of language and being, and how the use of speech was perceived as being more human. This ideology established years ago is now rooted in social, cultural, political, educational, economic, and medical institutions that impact how Deaf people navigate their lives in a hearing-centric society. The term did not become prevalent within the Deaf community until the early 2000’s (Bauman, 2004), but it appears a decolonization movement is occurring through use of technology and social media as Deaf people continue to resist oppression and prevent the perpetuation of how they are viewed as a group. Because they are viewed as being disabled, able-bodied people assume Deaf individuals are isolated and incapable of achieving educational and employment goals (Holcomb, 2013).

Employment

Based on data compiled from the American Community survey in 2014, conducted by the United States Census, compared to 72% of their hearing counterparts, only 48% of Deaf people are employed in the United States. Educational attainment; however, does have a direct impact on the employment of Deaf individuals. Rates of employment increased from 28% for those

who did not complete high school to 74% for those with a terminal degree (Garberoglio, Cawthon, & Bond, 2016). Additionally, a study on vocational rehabilitation counselors' perceptions of how public policy, particularly the ADA, impacts Deaf people's ability to obtain jobs showed that it is more challenging for Deaf individuals without a postsecondary education to become employed (Houston, Lammers, & Syorney, 2010).

Education

Lane (1992) describes how Deaf education in the United States has been ineffective from years of teachers using oral language, either through speaking or writing. As a result, "the average sixteen-year-old Deaf student reads as poorly as an eight-year old hearing child" (p. 130). While Lane (1992) identified some progress in returning to the type of education the Deaf community views as being superior where there are Deaf administrators leading Deaf schools and Deaf teachers and students teaching and learning through ASL, Holcomb (2013) notes that the majority of Deaf children in the near future will be educated alongside their hearing peers, also referred to as mainstreaming. This is significant for the type of institution Deaf children attend can impact their ability to succeed in school, which in turn, affects how successful they will be in terms of gaining employment and living independently.

Institutional type. Deaf students typically experience one of two types of K-12 educational settings; mainstreaming or a school for the Deaf (Lane, 1992; Marschark et al., 2002). In a mainstreamed setting, the Deaf student is often the only one or one of a few at the school. They attend classes with their hearing peers and utilize supports such as hearing aids or cochlear implants, note-takers, and sign language interpreters. On the other hand, these supports are not necessary at a school for the Deaf because students have complete access to the

curriculum through their native language, ASL (Marschark et al., 2002). From a sociocultural perspective, studies show Deaf students in mainstreamed settings often describe feelings of being left out or lonely and may have difficulty developing relationships with their hearing peers and teachers (Angelides & Aravi, 2006; Hardy, 2010; Marschark et al., 2002; Stinson, Liu, Saur & Long, 1996).

At a school for the Deaf, all students are Deaf in addition to some of the faculty and staff. Students at these schools often share feelings of being more involved not only in the classroom, but also with sports and extracurricular activities (Schoffstoll, Cawthon, Dickson, Bond, Ocuto & Ge, 2016). Schools for the Deaf are viewed as one of the most fundamental experiences of Deaf people where they gain a strong sense of identity, learn from Deaf role models and peers, and learn how to live a successful life (Holcomb, 2013; Marschark et al., 2002). Interestingly, an informal compilation of the names of superintendents, presidents, or directors of schools for the Deaf in the United States today show that there are 23 Deaf individuals holding an administrative position. In contrast, 41 hearing people hold such administrative titles. Only three superintendents are Deaf and belong to a racial minority group (J. Baer, personal communication, September, 20, 2017) showing that schools for the Deaf do face challenges with ensuring their administration and staff reflect the student body.

The combination of individual factors, schooling experiences, and systemic oppression, all intertwine in a way that impacts the ability for Deaf people to navigate life as Deaf beings. Being employed is essentially required to be able to live independently, which relies on obtaining educational degrees (Crellin, Kelly, & Prince, 2012). Although retention and persistence have already been shown to be barriers Deaf students face while in college, this study aimed to

investigate what is occurring prior to college enrollment to see how college choice may affect success in college.

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the college choice process for Deaf high school seniors at a school for the Deaf. “College” was defined as any type of college the students were interested in attending whether it be a community college, four-year university, or a trade-tech college. As part of the research, students’ perceptions of college were investigated to gain a holistic understanding of their thoughts and feelings as they navigated the college choice process. More research has been done on Deaf students’ experiences while they are enrolled in college or after they have obtained a degree, but very few studies have addressed how the college choice process may affect the persistence and long-term success of Deaf students in college. Based on the results of the study, recommendations were formulated that hopefully contribute to how schools and teachers support Deaf students on their journey toward a postsecondary education, one that puts them on a track toward success.

Research Questions

This study attempted to understand the various individual and institutional factors affecting the students’ college choice process at a school for the Deaf and how it formed their perspectives of postsecondary educational attainment. The following two research questions were addressed in the study:

- 1) What factors shape Deaf student college choice?
- 2) How does a residential school for the Deaf shape Deaf students’ perceptions of college?

Theoretical Framework

Employing a critical theory framework allowed me to discover what factors contributed to the college choice process for Deaf students, a historically oppressed group of people. With critical research, “the goal is to critique and challenge, to transform and empower” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The aforementioned statistics show an achievement gap in which Deaf students are least likely to attend college and graduate. A deeper understanding of what Deaf high school students think and do as they begin the college choice process is needed to see how it may be affecting their ability to enter college and successfully graduate. Through critical lens, transformational change can occur in how schools support Deaf students through the process of choosing a college that best fits their interests and needs. This study was done through the frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT), intersectionality, and Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to discover how Deaf high school students, as intersectional beings, navigate the college choice process within systems that work for, or against, them.

CRT as applied to the field of education challenges the dominant ideology on race and racism and examines how “educational theory and practice subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 2). Within the framework of CRT is the concept of intersectionality, which examines how different classes including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, and class intersect in different educational settings to create privilege for certain groups (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). In addition, CRT contends that oppressed populations have CCW that provide them with the knowledge, skills, and resources they use to resist oppression (Yosso, 2005). Within these frameworks, this study looked into how Deaf

students, as intersectional beings, navigated the college choice process even in the face of barriers that could prevent them from pursuing higher education.

Overview of Methodology

The qualitative study was done at a residential school for the Deaf in California. Schools for the Deaf are specifically designed around the educational needs of Deaf students; however, Marschark, Lang, and Albertini (2002) suggest that other educational settings may better fit some Deaf students depending on some factors such as level of hearing loss and parental support (p. 148). Despite the fact that some Deaf students do succeed in mainstreamed settings, the Deaf community views schools for the Deaf as the best place for educating Deaf children (Lane, 1992; Marschark et al., 2002). For this reason, the site was purposely chosen to explore how this type of institution affects students as they navigate the college choice process, but it would be a great contribution to the field of Deaf Education if this study is replicated in other schools for the Deaf in addition to other educational settings Deaf people experience.

Participants chosen included nine students and two staff closely involved with assisting students through the college choice process. Semi-structured interviews were the primary method utilized to gain a sense of students' perceptions of college, what factors they were considering in terms of which college to attend, and what they were actively doing to apply to those colleges such as seeking college information, completing applications, and visiting campuses. Likewise, semi-structured interviews were used with the staff participants to see how they thought their students were doing as they planned their postsecondary career and what support they were providing them. Making connections and disconnections between all the

participants, along with the use of memos and coding of data, assisted with triangulation and data analysis.

Limitations and Delimitations

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) describe limitations as “constraints regarding transferability, applications to practice, and/or utility of findings that are the result of the ways in which you chose to design the study.” Because the research was a phenomenological study at a specific school, the results may not be generalizable to similar institutions elsewhere. Studies at those institutions would need to occur to allow for comparison. Additionally, the sample size of the study was a limitation. According to staff at the school site, only about 25% of the senior class at the school was considered to be college-bound, or approximately 30 students. Obtaining parental consent for participants under the age of 18 also posed a challenge, so more effort was used to recruit participants aged 18 or older, further decreasing the sample size of the study. Distance to the school site in addition to scheduling conflicts made it difficult to do in-person interviews. As a result, first-time interviews with student participants were conducted in person with subsequent interviews taking place via a videoconferencing application for follow-up questions. Interviews with staff also took place through videoconferencing.

Utilizing interviews as the primary method of data collection are not without its limitations. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) acknowledge that facilitation of interviews require skills as participants can be unpredictable in what they say and how they behave. Furthermore, “interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering; they are the result of the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee and the context in which they take place” (p. 155). For instance, because I am Deaf and have experience as an educator in a secondary setting, a

conscious effort was made to note areas in the data where advice or personal experiences were inadvertently shared that could have skewed the students' responses to the questions.

Adjustments were made, as necessary, to the questions asked to make sure I remained neutral and allowed the participants to respond to questions on their own terms.

Personal Connection

Growing up in an environment where I was taught and encouraged by my hearing parents and teachers to work hard impacted my ability to go to college and graduate. It was not until years later that I realized that my college choice process was largely guided by what hearing people thought was best for me. Through my mainstreaming schooling experiences, I had internalized the idea that my Deafness was just a unique part of me and that I needed to prove it did not affect my ability to be as successful as my hearing peers. I made the choice to attend the University of Iowa, but looking back, I often wonder how my decision-making process would have been different if I had Deaf role models guiding me or if I had visited campuses with large Deaf student populations. I am grateful for the education I received and the experiences I gained living as a young adult in Iowa, but it has also led me to recognize the importance of looking into the dynamics of the college choice process of Deaf students.

When I moved to California and began teaching at a day school for the Deaf, where students are transported daily rather than live on campus during the week, I was perplexed at the very low number of students going to college. I made the assumption that because the school was specifically designed to cater to the needs of Deaf students that teachers and staff knew the best ways of encouraging and preparing students to go to college. This eventually sparked my

interest in pursuing this study because it became clear that many factors can affect what can be viewed as one of the most significant decisions one can make in their lifetime.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation includes five chapters outlined as follows: introduction; review of the literature; methodology; findings; and discussion and conclusion of the study. This chapter introduced the study and described the problem statement, purpose, research questions, an introduction of the theoretical framework, an overview of the methodology, and the limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter two includes the literature review and covers studies that have examined factors impacting other groups of students' navigation of the college choice process. Studies that outline the experiences of Deaf students at residential schools for the Deaf and mainstreamed settings at both the secondary and postsecondary level are also described. Chapter three further describes the methodology of the study including the research design and tradition, setting and sample, instruments and procedures, data collection, data analysis, and role of the researcher. The findings are presented in chapter four and answers the two research questions. Finally, chapter five summarizes the findings and presents recommendations for future policies, practice and future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the college choice factors of Deaf high school seniors as they considered and planned which college to enroll. More Deaf students are attending college nationwide, but a high percentage of them are unable to finish college with a degree despite having access to various supports during college. Only 17% of Deaf individuals obtain a bachelor's degree compared to 32% for their hearing peers (Garberoglio, Cawthon, & Sales, 2017). The rates are similar for the state of California; 18% for Deaf students and 33% for hearing students. The statistics, however, are more alarming for Deaf people in underrepresented groups. Only 11% of Deaf Californians who identify as African American graduated with a bachelor's degree while 8% of Deaf Hispanics/Latinos did so compared to 24% for Deaf individuals who are White (Garberoglio, Cawthon, & Sales, 2017). Different studies use the terms Hispanics and Latinos interchangeably, but for this study, Latinx is the chosen term that will be used to describe those who identify as Latino, Latina, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican-American, Central American, South American, Chicano, Chicana, and Chicanx. In general, bachelor's degree attainment rates have remained relatively the same for Deaf individuals in the United States since 2008 at 16% compared to 18% in 2015 (Garberoglio, Cawthon, & Sales, 2017).

This study examined what is occurring at the high school level to discover what students are thinking and feeling as they navigate the college choice process in addition to who is involved in the process. While there is a range of studies on the college choice process of other underrepresented groups including African Americans and Latinx, very little research has

focused on Deaf students. The research questions being addressed are twofold. First, what factors shape Deaf student college choice? Secondly, how does a residential school for the Deaf shape Deaf student perceptions of college?

The literature review will begin with an overview of the factors students other than Deaf students consider when deciding where to attend college. I will then introduce intersectionality, CRT, and finally, CCW, and apply it to the literature.

College Choice Factors

Some researchers are finding that Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-stage college choice model does not apply to other groups of students, particularly those who are Students of Color, low-income, or first-generation as the studies Hossler and Gallagher (1987) reviewed to create the model were done on more privileged groups. Cox (2016), for instance, challenged this three-stage model with her study of Black and Latinx low-income students over the course of three years when they were first juniors in high school through one year after graduation. She found that the majority of students did not follow their intended postsecondary plans first shared by them in high school due to life situations that ultimately derailed their plans. Cox shared, "The logic of these students' decision making was frequently based on urgent and immediate considerations. Each decision impacted the available postsecondary options, until students' college expectations became less and less viable." McDonough and Antonio (1996) identify the following areas as being the general factors considered during the college choice process: race, socioeconomic status, parents, size of college campus, location, academic program, reputation, prestige, selectivity and alumni, the student's peers and guidance counselors, and financial aid. These factors can be grouped into individual and institutional factors that shape prospective

college students' selection process. It should also be noted that almost all studies (Bergerson, 2009b; Freeman, 1999; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2016; Smith, 2008; Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004) examined several factors together, most commonly race and socioeconomic status (SES), which suggests that one factor cannot be singled out as being the determining influence in selecting a college, but rather, some factors may play a larger role compared to others.

Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal's (2001) review of studies on college choice suggest that the three stages proposed by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) "interact with one another, each affecting the others in subtle and complex ways" (p. 6). The predisposition stage may begin as early as seventh grade with parental encouragement being a major driving force behind students' aspirations to attend college. Parental and sibling educational attainment, high school resources, and college information access also influence a student's decision to pursue higher education, and "by the ninth grade, most students have developed occupational and educational aspirations" (Terenzini, et al., 2001, p. 6). In the search phase, parents again play a pivotal role in helping students create a set of potential colleges to enroll.

Individual Factors

Race. Freeman (1999) stated "the very fact that African Americans lag behind the participation rate of Whites in higher education is an indication that race does factor in the college choice process" (p. 6). In her study of 70 African American high school students in the five U.S. cities with the highest African American populations (Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington D.C.), she found three categories in which race factors influenced their college choice: family or self influences, psychological or social barriers, and cultural

awareness. While family played a significant role in how students perceived the value of higher education, Freeman also noted “negative motivation” from the students, or their perceptions of what they did not want to become, as motivating them to pursue higher education. For some participants, going to college was never presented as an option or they did not fully understand the benefits of a college education. In other cases, students felt intimidated by the idea of attending college after seeing how predominantly White campuses are during their college visits. Lastly, Freeman found that participants felt their high schools were not culturally aware of African Americans. When curriculums are typically designed from Eurocentric perspectives and not inclusive of all races, it can affect their ability to excel academically, which impacts higher education attainment rates (Freeman, 1999). Interestingly, Pitre (2006) noted that White and African American high school freshmen have very similar college aspiration rates despite the African American students not doing as well as their White peers academically. It is easy to have dreams; however, reaching those goals can be difficult once realities are realized, which appears to be the case for African American students.

Like Freeman (1999), Perez and McDonough (2008) found that Latinx students rely heavily on their social networks when considering a college to attend. They are more likely to seek college-related information from family, friends, and acquaintances referred to them. The researchers also note how the college choice process was not linear for these students compared to more advantaged students, particularly because many of the Latinx students also identified as being low-income or first-generation. In addition, Latinx students may be undocumented, where family, peer, and school networks are instrumental to their college choice process. Due to their

legal status, students sought information from their networks in order to create opportunities themselves (Perez, 2010).

For African American students who aim to attend specifically a historically Black college or university (HBCU), Tobolowsky, Outcalt, and McDonough (2005) report that they relied on obtaining information from others who had attended a HBCU because they had difficulty obtaining information themselves; however, the reasons shared by the participants for choosing a HCBU varied. Some were convinced after a campus visit while for others it was a lifelong dream. It should also be noted that some participants used race as a reason to not attend a HCBU. One student shared how they do not live in a “Black world” and wanted to attend a college that was more reflective of society, or more diverse. HCBUs seem to also attract students of other races as well, including Asian American and Latinx students; however race was not a factor in their decisions (Maramba, Palmer, Yull, & Ozuna, 2015).

Socioeconomic Status (SES) and First-generation. With 51% of students in the nation’s public schools now identifying as low income (Southern Education Foundation, 2015), it remains a clear hurdle in students’ ability to complete college (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2016). McDonough (1994) argues that the college choice process is one that was socially constructed by upper-middle-class students and their families. Comparing seniors from two low-socioeconomic high schools with seniors from two high-socioeconomic high schools, she found the college choice phenomenon occurring only at the latter schools. McDonough and Calderone (2006) found that discrepancies in perceptions of affordability and costs of attending college between middle-income high school counselors and low-income families affected the students’ college choice. For example, counselors were quick to urge some students from families with financial

difficulties to attend a community college because it was seen as a more viable option, and therefore did not provide any information on the affordability of potential four-year colleges (McDonough & Calderone, 2016). On the other hand, counselors assumed families that had trust funds available meant students could afford to attend any college. The researchers recognized the need to research more in-depth the *habitus*, “a matrix of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that shapes an individual’s expectations, strategies, and actions,” of such underrepresented groups in terms of affordability and money and what can be done to mitigate the concerns of going to college.

Parental income also affects students’ college choices. Bergerson (2009b) points out that college costs are a sensitive issue for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, especially when their parents are not informed of the best ways to support their children financially for college. Furthermore, “this challenge was even more pronounced for students who were also the first in their families to pursue a postsecondary degree” (Martinez, 2013). Parents of first-generation students, however, do play a significant role in aspiring them to attend college (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Messer, 2016) and diminishing the potential effects of a “college culture shock” (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006, p. 546). For Black students and their families, they also need assistance with finding information on the costs of college as well as financial aid, particularly those of low SES (Smith, 2008). Despite differences in SES in subpopulations of Asian Pacific Americans, college affordability was seen as an important factor in deciding where to go to college (Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004).

Other Factors. Race, SES, and being first-generation can directly affect a student’s college choice process. In addition, some students face additional factors when choosing a

college. Burleson (2010) examined sexual orientation in terms of the college choice process and concluded that “GLBTQ students may not consider a gay-friendly campus the most important factor in deciding where to go to college, but many students do at least consider the campus climate when selecting a school.” When choosing a college based on the fields of study offered, there are significant differences between males and females. Zafar (2013) contended that most of the gender gap in college major choice is due to gender differences in tastes and preferences for various outcomes rather than due to low levels of self-esteem and confidence in women compared to men as previous researchers suggested.

Understanding that a range of factors can impact a student’s college choice, a study by Nora (2004) quantitatively investigated the extent of psychosocial factors, namely *habitus* and cultural capital, on 893 first-year students’ college choice. The study focused on three southwestern colleges and measured students’ sense of belonging to their college of choice. Based on Hossler and Gallagher’s (1987) three-stage model, Nora found that the final stage (choice) seems to have the strongest impact on students’ college choice. Despite institutional (tuition, reputation, location, etc.) and individual (parental and peer encouragement, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, etc.) factors, students who felt accepted at their college of choice were more likely to be satisfied with their decision. Nora also recognized the critical role campus visits play in triggering the psychosocial factors that influence their college choice.

The literature suggests that several factors are at play simultaneously when students consider potential colleges to enroll. However, very few studies examine what Deaf students consider when thinking about pursuing postsecondary education. There are numerous studies that look into the educational experiences of such students both in secondary and postsecondary

settings, which could provide a better understanding of what could and should be of significance when they first think about going to college.

Institutional Factors

Financial Aid. Kim (2004) looked at different racial groups in terms of how likely they are to attend their first-choice college and saw an increased likelihood for Asian American students when they received loans or a combination of loans and grants, followed by White students. Loans and/or grants, however, do not impact African American and Latinx students in deciding to enroll at their first-choice college, also evidenced by McDonough and Antonio (1996). Lack of information on financial aid options combined with the perception of college costs being higher than they realize has led to Blacks, and particularly Latinx students, to largely ignore financial aid as a factor in their college choice process (Kim, 2004; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). Financial aid is seen by low-SES students and their families as being “insufficient rather than ineffective” (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004, p. 280) and as a result, explains why many Latinx students opt to enroll in community colleges because it is seen as the most affordable option (Arbona & Nora, 2007). Terenzini, et al. (2001) reinforced this finding with the lowest-SES students being more likely to “single out financial aid as a key factor in making a final decision” (p. 10) on where to enroll in college.

Other Factors. In addition to community colleges being viewed as a more viable path toward pursuing a postsecondary education, they are also chosen because of proximity to home for Latinx students in particular (Arbona & Nora, 2007). Asian American students consider reputation of the college to be a major factor in the college choice process (Poon & Byrd, 2013),

which holds true for Chinese Americans and Korean Americans in particular (Teranishi et al., 2004).

Theoretical Framework

The frameworks guiding this study drew from the concept of intersectionality, CRT, and CCW to see the dynamics affecting Deaf high school students' ability to choose a college to further their education. CCW helped identify capital Deaf students use to navigate the college choice process as intersectional individuals. Although CCW was initially applied to the Latinx community (Yosso, 2005), it has been used to look at how other groups navigate and resist oppression, including Deaf people (Fleischer, Garrow, & Friedman Narr, 2015). This study used CCW as a lens to investigate how Deaf students persevere in the context of college choice.

Intersectionality

The courts have historically defined discrimination in classes, most frequently in terms of race or gender, but not both. When five black women filed suit against General Motors in 1976 (DeGraffenreid v. General Motors), they alleged discrimination based on the company's policies when they were laid off during a recession; however, their claim was dismissed because they were not able to prove discrimination solely on the basis of race or gender. Crenshaw (1989) contends that "the courts' refusal to "acknowledge that Black women encounter combined race and sex discrimination implies that the boundaries of sex and race discrimination doctrine are defined respectively by White women's and Black men's experiences" (p. 143). Such perceptions of Black women ignored the concept of intersectionality; that the experiences of Black women differ than those of white women and black men. Furthermore, Hill Collins (2012) posits that women of color became the "forefront of raising claims about the

interconnectedness of race, class, gender, and sexuality in their everyday lived experience and that their intellectual production provides a foundation for race/class/gender studies and intersectionality” (p. 450). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) describe intersectionality as “the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings (p. 51),” and how critical it is to identify who has the power and voice in studies involving intersectional individuals. With Deafness being the common identity among the students in this study, it is important to recognize their intersectional identities and how it may be contributing to the college choice process.

The intersection of people with disabilities with race, gender, and class are frequently subjected to oppression. Students of Color with disabilities in particular are continuously overrepresented in special education (Erevelles & Minear, 2010) and frequently harassed in the workplace (Shaw, Chan, & McMahon, 2012). Oppression is existent within subordinate groups, where *intersectional invisibility* can occur, or “the general failure to fully recognize people with intersecting identities as members of their constituent groups” (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Furthermore, it refers to “the distortion of the intersectional persons’ characteristics in order to fit them into frameworks defined by prototypes of constituent identity groups” (p. 5). Thus, Deaf women of color may experience intersectional invisibility since they do not fit the prototype of the White, Deaf and female identity despite both groups being victims of oppression as Deaf females. This essentially renders them invisible, which makes it more difficult to have a voice in their community. A study by Dunne (2013) of high school students at a school for the Deaf revealed that participants needed clarifications on terms like audism, sexism, discrimination/ oppression, and queer during the interviews, implying that discussions of such concepts are not

embedded into the school's curriculum and/or are not occurring in the classroom. While her study focused on Deaf Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) students, Dunne (2013) describes accessibility as being crucial to students' understanding of their identities; access to resources, role models, and most importantly, language. Because many Deaf students come from hearing families (Lane, 1992; Marschark et al., 2002), settings such as schools for the Deaf ideally provide opportunities for cultural exchange of information in their shared language, ASL; however, that is not always the case for some students as Dunne discovered. Dunne (2013) contends that there may be "an institutional issue with access to developing age-appropriate conceptual knowledge" (p. 139). Thus, exposure to such vocabulary is crucial in helping students with multiple identities in understanding the various systems of oppression and gaining more control of their lives. Garrow and Fleischer (2016) define oppression as:

isms are the diachronic societal constructs that oppress people based on the ideological stance that humanizes specific perceived characteristics (e.g. hearing, white, masculinity, etc.) while simultaneously dehumanizing the opposite perceived characteristics (e.g. don't hear, person of color, other sexes and genders) that manifest itself in a complex weave of micro, meso, and macro- aggressions that creates both real and perceived barriers which leads to a system of overprivilege for specific groups and underprivilege for the perceived opposite groups.

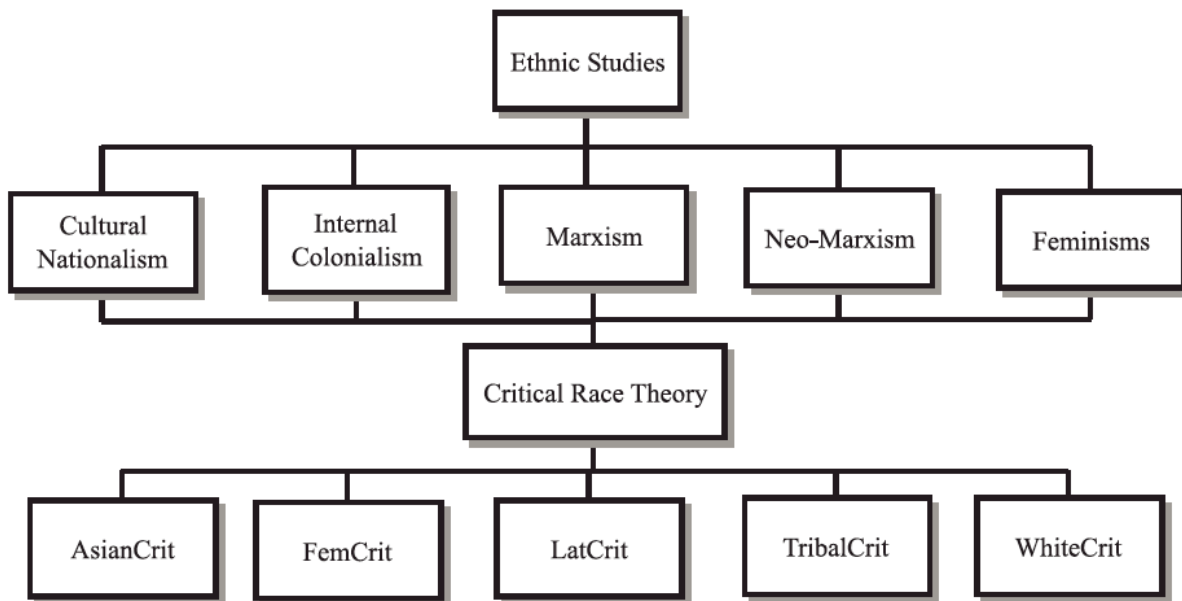
Marginalization of groups within the Deaf community can occur if they do not fit the characteristics of being White, heterosexual, and male. The concept of intersectionality could explain how educational institutions have been designed to work for or against its students,

especially in settings where Deaf students are taught and guided by mainly hearing teachers and administrators (Simms, Rusher, Andrews, & Coryell, 2008).

Critical Race Theory

CRT is a theoretical framework, but also a movement initiated by Derrick Bell, that challenges the dominant ideology on race and racism, which “initially critiqued ongoing societal racism in Black and White binary terms and focused on the slow pace and unrealized promise of civil rights legislation” (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Although historically applied in areas of law (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), today, CRT has been expanded and applied to the field of education and other marginalized groups to study the way they experience race and

Figure 1. An intellectual genealogy of critical race theory (Yosso, 2005).



racism, including Latinx, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans. Figure 1 portrays how CRT studies have grown over the years since its separation from Critical Legal Studies (CLS), which restricted scholars from creating strategies for social change through the “lived experiences and

histories of those oppressed by institutional racism” (Yosso, 2005, p. 71). For instance, Latinx Critical Theory, or LatCrit, provides the lens of analysis in how Latinx resist White supremacy by expanding CRT to address factors nonexistent in the Black-White model, particularly the impact of colonization of Latin America by the United States on such communities (Trucios-Haynes, 2000).

The parameters surrounding CRT have also been further expanded and applied to include other identity groups like sexual orientation, religion, and disability (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Valdes, 2014,). DeafCrit, or Deaf Critical Theory, a term coined by Gertz (2003), provides the perspectives of Deaf people as they experience audism, the oppression of those based on the inability to hear. García-Fernández (2014), expanded on this term to acknowledge the importance of preserving multiple identities since Gertz’s DeafCrit theory defines Deaf “eurocentrically, without acknowledging the importance of preserving multiple identities historically seen and sensed in the Deaf community” (p. 11). Thus, she proposed a new branch to DeafCrit, Deaf-LatCrit, by examining the lived experiences of Deaf Latinx high school students. Stapleton and Croom (2017) used both CRT and DeafCrit to gain a better understanding of the experiences of d/Deaf Black students in college by looking at how race and disability intersect to provide yet another lens of how those individuals navigate their lives.

The intersection of race with other forms of subordination is the premise of the first of five tenets identified by Solórzano based on a culmination of CRT research (Yosso, et. al, 2009). The *intercentricity of race and racism* contends that race will continue to be a prominent factor that drives the inequities that exist in the United States. Furthermore, audism will always play a central role in the lives of Deaf people as they experience oppression individually and

institutionally (Gertz, 2003; Stapleton & Croom, 2017). As applied to education, CRT “centralizes race and racism, while also focusing on racism’s intersections with other forms of subordination, based on gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, immigrant status, phenotype, accent, and surname” (Yosso, 2006).

Challenging the dominant ideology makes up the second tenet in which CRT “challenges claims of objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity, asserting that these claims camouflage the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups,” (Yosso, et. al, 2009, p. 663) particularly White and/or hearing individuals (Stapleton & Croom, 2017; García-Fernández, 2014).

The third tenet, *commitment to social justice*, uses education as an avenue towards achieving the larger goal of eliminating racism, sexism, and classism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, et. al, 2009). Furthermore, DeafCrit and Deaf-LatCrit, along with other intersectional identities, commits to recognizing and legitimizing Deaf people’s identity, culture, and language (Gertz, 2003; García-Fernández, 2014; Stapleton & Croom, 2017).

Centrality of experiential knowledge, the fourth tenet, recognizes that the narratives of radicalized groups are critical to learning and understanding their lived experiences and how to address such racial oppression (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, et. al, 2009). Similarly, DeafCrit draws from storytelling, family history, and video documentaries to gain an understanding of Deaf people’s experiential knowledge with facing audism (Gertz, 2003). Deaf-LatCrit, however, “recognizes that the dominant groups, White hearing and Deaf people, tell stories or even make claims about Deaf-Lat students that are based on their own reality which are

often distorted and untrue” (García-Fernández, 2014, p. 80). A Deaf-LatCrit framework provides a reality that is distinct from the White version.

The final tenet, the *interdisciplinary perspective*, asserts that “CRT extends beyond disciplinary boundaries to analyze race and racism within both historical and contemporary contexts” (Yosso, et. al, 2009, p. 663) and “utilizes the transdisciplinary knowledge bases of ethnic studies, women's studies, history, sociology, linguistics, law, and other fields to better understand the ‘isms’” (Gertz, 2003, p. 425).

Community Cultural Wealth

The concept of cultural capital was first developed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) who suggested that people gain an “accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society” (Yosso, 2005). Because Bourdieu deemed the family and the school as the only avenues towards accumulating cultural capital, and since educational institutions serve as a mediator to social mobility, success in school was dependent on the possession of higher-class cultural capital (Sullivan, 2002). In other words, schools possessed cultural capital and was the reason why lower-class students could not perform well academically, and as a result, also explained why there was a gap in educational achievement. Yosso (2005) is critical of Bourdieu’s work for it “exposes White, middle class culture as the standard, and therefore all other forms and expressions of ‘culture’ are judged in comparison to this ‘norm’” (p. 76). Furthermore, Yosso describes Bourdieu’s work as promoting deficit thinking where People of Color are viewed as “lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities and cultural capital” (p. 70).

Through a CRT lens, Yosso (2005) contends that marginalized groups do possess valuable cultural capital through what she refers to as “community cultural wealth.” Yosso outlined at least six forms of capital that together provide the knowledge, skills, and resources that People of Color have and use to resist oppression. Fleischer, Garrow, and Friedman Narr (2015) expand on community cultural wealth through the lens of Deaf people as they, too, possess a distinct set of tools that help them live in world designed for those who hear, or what they refer to as Deaf community cultural wealth (DCCW).

Aspirational capital includes “the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Despite being aware of such circumstances, People of Color resist and preserve. Similarly, society has “inherently low expectations” for deaf people which “sends the message that their futures are limited” (Fleischer, Garrow, & Friedman Narr, 2015, p. 290). Deaf people have proven otherwise by continuing to show they can aspire and achieve their dreams.

Linguistic capital refers to “the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). People of Color often have the tools to communicate utilizing language registers with different audiences, which could include storytelling, visual art, and translating in two or more languages. Language is especially critical for Deaf people since communication occurs spatially, rather than auditorially, through use of signed languages. This plays a significant role in schools where the goal is often to “mitigate hearing loss” instead of “helping kids capitalize on their spatial strengths” (Fleischer et al., 2015, p. 288). Nevertheless, Deaf people are acquiring and using language, both ASL and English, unlike before due to advances in technology such as being able

to watch signed stories on video (Mueller & Hurtig, 2010), which contributes to their ability to navigate a hearing-centric society linguistically.

Familial capital refers to “the cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (p. 79) in which People of Color maintain relationships with communities and its resources. Likewise, kinship provides Deaf people the ability to receive feedback and encouragement from their families and peers to overcome challenges and be reminded they can become successful individuals (Fleischer et al., 2015).

Social capital includes the “networks of people and community resources” that provide instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions (p. 79). Such networks are beneficial for educational attainment, legal justice, employment, and healthcare. For most Deaf children, they do not have access to a full and natural language, which can impede their ability to form their social relationships (Fleischer et al., 2015), particularly with Deaf adults who can serve as role models and offer guidance as they navigate their lives as Deaf people (Parasnis, Samar, & Fischer, 2005).

Navigational capital refers to “the skills of maneuvering through social institutions” (p. 80). People of Color use strategies to navigate institutions not created with them in mind, especially racially-hostile university campuses. Likewise, Deaf people have found ways to live in a hearing-centric world where many day-to-day activities have been designed on the basis of sound (Fleischer et al., 2015).

Lastly, *resistant capital* includes “the knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (p. 81). In other words, Communities of Color pass on the

different facets of community cultural wealth to maintain resistance to subordination. Together, the capitals are necessary for Communities of Color to fight and challenge oppression. Resistant capital is taught, so Deaf people often do not have the necessary skills to challenge the status quo since opportunities to learn from other Deaf peers or adults who possess such skills are scarce (Fleischer et al., 2015).

Summary

The combination of intersectionality, CRT, and CCW are the lens in which the study examined how Deaf students navigate the college choice process. Furthermore, a deeper investigation of how institutional and individual factors shaped their final college choice can help better understand what students are thinking and experiencing as they go through this process.

Research Gap

Despite all of the studies that examine how Deaf students' well-being academically, emotionally, and socially in mainstreamed settings and schools for the Deaf, Shaver, Marschark, Newman, and Marder (2014) point out that "there is now broad international agreement that there is no single school placement that will be optimal for all DHH students." Interestingly, they share that many attributes between the two types of settings were actually more alike than different and "whether one kind of setting or another is more appropriate for students with particular characteristics remains to be determined." It is for this reason that I attempted to explore the college choice process of Deaf high school students, with a focus on those at a residential school for the Deaf, to see if they fully understand what college entails. Perhaps those involved in their college choice process, particularly counselors and teachers, are not upfront of

the expectations and experiences of going to college, information that can be critical in determining the college that best fits the students' abilities, needs, and goals.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the factors Deaf students at a school for the Deaf consider when choosing to pursue higher education and what led them to their final college choice. In addition, the study looked into how the institution, the school for the Deaf, impacted this process. The high school environment Deaf students experience can affect how they perceive, think about, and plan their postsecondary education. Their knowledge of postsecondary options and their perceptions of which is ideal for them can ultimately determine their success in college and whether they graduate with a degree. Deaf students are enrolling in college in increasing numbers, but still struggle to graduate (Garberoglio, Cawthon, & Sales, 2017; Marschark et al., 2002).

There is a need to investigate whether Deaf students are appropriately choosing a college that best fits their goals despite the various supports that are available to them during college that several studies have indicated (Napier & Barker, 2004; Ward, 2015; Smith, 2004). If resources available to students while in college are not helping them persist, perhaps it begins with an understanding of students' perceptions of college and what it is they look for when choosing a college. No studies were found that attempted to apply Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) college choice model to Deaf students as other studies have done nor is there sufficient research that captures what these students do and think when they begin the decision-making process of where to go to college. With this study, the following research questions were investigated: 1) What factors shape Deaf student college choice? and 2) How does a residential school for the Deaf shape Deaf student perceptions of college?

This chapter will describe the methodology employed in this study. First, my reasoning for choosing a qualitative approach as a research tradition will be explained followed by descriptions of the research setting and sample. Then, I will explain the data collection and analysis procedures with a concluding section on my role as a researcher.

Research Tradition

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state, “The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 15). A qualitative approach allowed a deeper understanding of the unique experiences of Deaf students as they navigated the college choice process.

This was a phenomenological study done through a critical theory lens to examine the factors that affected their decisions as they began to plan their pursuit of a postsecondary education. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) observed that, “Phenomenologists are committed to understanding what our experiences in the world are like, experience is to be examined as it actually occurs, and on its own terms” (p. 48). Because I attempted to look for patterns in regards to how students think and perceive the concept of going to college and what and who is involved in their college choice process at a school for the Deaf as it is occurring, a phenomenological approach was appropriate.

Employing a critical research perspective allowed me to discover what is occurring during Deaf students’ college choice process. With critical research, “the goal is to critique and challenge, to transform and empower” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 10). The aforementioned statistics show an educational achievement gap and potentially a societal construct rooted in

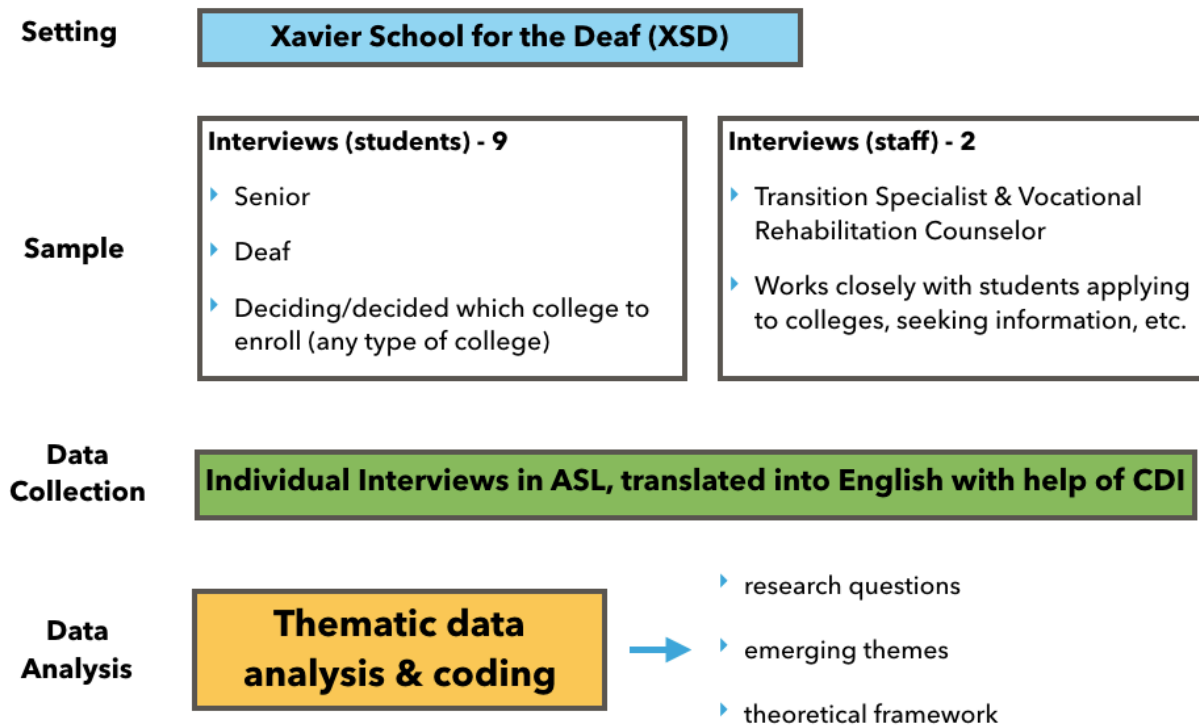
oppression. Through CRT, there is a shift in centralizing White, middle class norms to those of Communities of Color (Yosso, 2005), which allowed me to discover the impact of the college choice process on the participants as intersectional individuals. An investigation of the capital Deaf high school students utilize as they go through this process is needed to see how it may be affecting their ability to succeed in college and graduate. Through a critical lens, transformational change can occur, leading me to use CRT, intersectionality, and CCW as the theoretical frameworks of the study. Based on the results of my study, recommendations were formulated that hopefully push for change in how schools and teachers support Deaf students on their journey toward a postsecondary education, one that puts them on a track toward success.

Research Setting

Site

To make the scope of the study feasible, and taking into consideration proximity and time constraints, purposeful sampling was utilized. The study was done at a residential school for the Deaf in California, the Xavier School for the Deaf (XSD). While Deaf students attend various types of school settings, this study focused solely on a school for the Deaf, which typically serves at least 100 students from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. A school for the Deaf was chosen for this study to address the research question on how this particular institutional type affected students' college choice process. Figure 2 provides a visual overview of the methodology for this study to be explained in further detail.

Figure 2. A visual graphic of the methodology of the study.



Site Demographics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2018), of the approximately 40 million residents in the state of California, its racial breakdown consists of 39% Latinx, 37% White, 15% Asian, seven percent Black or African American, two percent American Native and Alaskan Native American, and less than one percent Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. At XSD, the student population is 57% Latinx, which is slightly less than the 60% average of schools in the city of Xavier. The remaining numbers are 24% White, 11% Black, four percent two races, three percent Asian, and less than one percent Pacific Islander. There are more male students (53%) at XSD than female students (47%) while there are more female teachers (58%) than male teachers (41%) at the school. Interestingly, a high proportion of the teachers at XSD are White (82%) followed by Latinx (10%) (K. Norman, personal communication, October 23, 2016). This

particular demographic does not reflect the student body of XSD nor the surrounding community. Other than gender and race, a notable statistic is that 56% of the staff at XSD identify as Deaf.

Sample

Student Participants

Purposeful sampling was used for the study to answer the research questions within a specific context with the “objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 148). The criteria for choosing the student participants were as follows: 1) they identified as a senior, and 2) were actively in the process of deciding where to go to college whether it be a community college or a four-year university, which was explicitly defined according to their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or by self-reporting an interest in going to college. Additionally, seniors were intentionally chosen to increase the likelihood they would be 18 years of age thereby making obtaining consent (see Appendix C) to participate in the study easier. All participants were 18 years old with the exception of one whose parents gave consent to take part in the study. Although students may begin to think about college as early as middle school (Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001), seniors were preferred since they were more likely to be fully engaged in the college choice process as they neared high school graduation. In other words, they were consciously making an effort to make a decision of where to go to college. There were about 40 seniors at XSD and only 10-15 students were considered college-bound according to head of the Department of Assessment and Intervention Services at XSD who closely tracks students (K. Norman, personal communication, November 20, 2017). Table 1 shows the number of students who enrolled in

any type of college in the year following graduation from XSD since record keeping began during the 2009-2010 academic year.

Table 1

Students attending a four year college/university or community college in the year following their graduation from XSD

<u>Academic Year</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
2016-2017	22
2015-2016	12
2014-2015	14
2013-2014	14
2012-2013	24
2011-2012	19
2010-2011	8
2009-2010	23

The number of students going to college after graduation from XSD fluctuated for several years, then held steady between 2013-2016 with a major increase in the 2016-2017 academic year.

On average, 17 students from XSD attend college each academic year, but nine seniors were ultimately chosen to participate in the study. Table 2 portrays the participant profile of each student participant of the study. All participants were 18 years of age with the exception of John who was 17 years old. Based on their gender expression, five females and four males took part in the study. All identified as Deaf with Amy stating she was hard of hearing. Seven of the nine student participants are People of Color with six of the seven identifying as Hispanic and/or Mexican. Ernie identified as Black. Just over half of the participants are the only Deaf member in their families. Claire, Hillary, and John have Deaf families while Ernie has one younger Deaf

Table 2

Participant Demographics

<u>Participant (Pseudonym)</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Deaf Identity</u>	<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>Family Description</u>	<u>First-generation</u>	<u>Sibling attended college</u>	<u>Length at XSD</u>
Amy	18	F	Hard of Hearing	Mexican & Spanish	Only Deaf in family	No	Yes	Pre-K/K
Bonnie	18	F	Deaf	Mexican	Only Deaf in family	Yes	Yes	Pre-K/K
Claire	18	F	Deaf	Hispanic	Deaf family (one hearing sibling)	Yes	No	Transferred 11 th grade
Dixie	18	F	Deaf	White	Only Deaf in family	No	Yes	Transferred 11 th grade
Ernie	18	M	Deaf	Mixed (Black & White)	Deaf sister	Yes	No	Transferred 11 th grade
Hillary	18	F	Deaf	White	Deaf family	No	No	Transferred 11 th grade
John	17	M	Deaf	Mixed (Hispanic & White)	Deaf family	No	No	Pre-K/K
Jason	18	M	Deaf	Hispanic	Only Deaf in family	Yes	Yes	Pre-K/K
Randy	18	M	Deaf	Latino	Only Deaf in family	Yes	Yes	Transferred 6 th grade

sister. Five of the nine student participants had attended a mainstreamed school setting before transferring to XSD. Claire, Dixie, Hillary, and Ernie all transferred to XSD during high school

while Randy made the switch to XSD during the sixth grade. The other participants essentially grew up attending only XSD. It is significant to note that Claire and Hillary, who both have Deaf families, have parents who experienced mainstreamed schooling. Additionally, these two students are the oldest child in they families, so when they made the decision to transfer to XSD, their younger siblings followed suit. A notable observation is that five participants are first-generation students. Of those five, three either had an older sibling who graduated college or is currently attending college.

Staff Participants

Staff designated with the role of supporting students throughout the college choice process were also chosen to be participants of the study. Their perceptions provided insight into any potential institutional attitudes or behaviors that affect students' decision to go to college and where. Two staff members, a Transition Specialist, Eve, and a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor, Cathy, consented to participate in the study. Both work closely together to support students as they transition to a postsecondary education and/or career. Eve works full-time at XSD with her job responsibilities consisting of supporting students during this transition. This includes providing services to gain work experience, helping them complete college applications and essays, and gathering information from various universities and community colleges to share with students. Eve also works with parents to answer any questions they have in regards to their child going to college, particularly in the area of financial aid.

Cathy, on the other hand, works for the state through the Department of Rehabilitation where they provide services to people with disabilities to assist them in achieving their employment and/or educational goals. Both Eve and Cathy identify as Deaf and use ASL as their

primary form of communication. Eve identifies as Latinx and Native American and Cathy identifies as White. Both are also alumni of Gallaudet University.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) point out how interviews are frequently chosen as the primary method for qualitative research for its ability to draw “rick and thick” descriptions from the participants that help the researcher live through their experiences (p. 154). Interviews were the primary source of data collection for this study and allowed me to gain a better understanding of what Deaf students are thinking, doing, and feeling as they moved through the college choice process. Through the interviews, I was able to go beyond what can be observed and learn more about the participants’ perceptions and feelings.

Interviews with Students

Based on my personal experiences teaching Deaf students, they tend to respond to questions with simple answers and little elaboration. For this reason, interviews were done in a semistructured format to assist students in staying on topic, but also allowed flexibility so as much information as possible could be extracted. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, semistructured interviews “allow the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 111). Appendix A shows the interview questions used with the student participants; however, additional questions were needed during the interviews to obtain the most information possible.

Due to unforeseen scheduling conflicts with XSD, one in-depth interview took place with each participant on XSD’s campus. The in-person interview was an opportunity to establish a positive rapport with the participants and allow them to become comfortable with me.

Subsequent interviews took place via a videoconferencing application only to ask additional questions or to clarify responses from the in-person interviews.

Interviews were done in ASL, the primary mode of instruction and communication at XSD, and video-recorded. A challenge with the interviews was translating the participants' responses from ASL into English. Unlike transcribing in English, which simply consists of every word and utterance from the interview in a written format, *transcribing* in ASL incorporates the use of symbols to portray the various parameters of the language being used including fingerspelling, repetition, classifiers, and topicalization. Such transcriptions are typically utilized to analyze linguistic aspects of ASL. Because I was more interested in the information shared by the participants and not how it was expressed, ASL *translations* were more appropriate for this study. A Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) was used to help with the translation process to produce the most authentic translations possible. Holders of this certification “possess native or near-native fluency in ASL” (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2015) and “are extremely effective at bridging the sometimes vast and persistent gaps that exist between people who are Deaf and those who can hear” (Callis, 2017). Simply put, because CDIs are Deaf themselves, they are seen as a more reliable source for translating ASL to written English accurately.

The student participants did not check for accuracy after translations were recorded into English because they were still taking English high school courses and it was difficult to know their English skills. For many Deaf students, they did not have adequate language models as young children because their hearing parents may have opted to use spoken language only or they used some signs only for communicative purposes, which causes students to experience significant delays in acquiring English (Holcomb, 2013; Marschark et al., 2002). The National

Association of the Deaf made a statement explaining how an increasing amount of research is showing the benefits of early exposure of ASL to Deaf children, similar to how numerous studies describe the first four years of a hearing child's life as a critical period for language development (National Association of the Deaf Position Statement, 2014). When Deaf children learn ASL later in life, it has an extraordinary impact on their ability to acquire English and perform well academically.

Interviews with Staff

Interviews with the two staff participants were semistructured as well, however, additional conversations were initiated as adults are more likely to share more information compared with students. Interviews were done via FaceTime and video-recorded due to scheduling issues. Appendix B includes a list of questions the staff were asked as a starting point to ensure conversations stayed on topic. Similar to the students, Cathy and Eve used ASL since they are Deaf themselves and use the language to communicate on a daily basis. The data provided from the staff participants allowed for comparison with what the student participants shared and helped with finding discrepancies in their narratives.

Data Analysis

With qualitative studies, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) share that it is considered best practice to analyze data while it is being collected. After each interview was translated, notes were made on the interview transcript, which was then turned into memos to keep information organized. My written reflections of the interviews as it related to the research questions and theory “captured my analytic thinking about the data, but also facilitated such thinking, stimulating analytic insights” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105). For instance, I noted areas of the

interviews where questions were repeated or rephrased to acknowledge potential misunderstandings by the interviewees. This particular strategy of using memos helped to remain focused on the research questions, but also with finding similarities and differences within the data. As patterns and themes emerged from the data, categories were formed and coded. Coding allowed for comparison of things within the same category. Specific quotes from the participants were then selected to fit those themes and patterns as it aligned with the six CCW capitals to paint a picture of how participants were navigating the college choice process.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) point out that finding “ambiguities and inconsistencies” is another approach to data analysis and also requires comparing the findings to previous literature (p. 240). They indicate this as a critical step; making connections between the interpretations of the data and previous studies so data is seen as “persuasive, plausible, reasonable, and convincing” (p. 242). Several rounds of analyzing the data was necessary to make sense of the data as it related to the literature, but to also consider my own biases and not attempt to “project” my inherent beliefs and experiences onto the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The combination of interviews with the student participants, interviews with the staff participants, and memos helped in achieving triangulation. By using different methods, it allowed me “to gain a more secure understanding of the issues being investigated” (Maxwell, 2016, p. 102).

Once the data reached saturation, or when I was no longer able to find new information, I made sense of the data and tied it with the research questions, emergent themes, and theoretical framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) share that there is no one correct way of analyzing data, but it is essential that the interpretations are logical and coherent,

which will be detailed in the next chapter. All information was kept confidential and data was destroyed at the completion of the study.

Role of the Researcher

As a person who identifies as Deaf and has experienced a mainstreamed environment in both high school and college in addition to working in the field of Deaf education for several years, I bring some biases to this study. Thus, it is important that I recognized my “subjectivities” rather than attempt to eliminate them as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe. While I am a strong advocate for Deaf children and the education they receive, I am also aware that various factors can work for or against Deaf children based on their school setting. Where Deaf children are placed can affect their ability to succeed in school as well as in the long-term when they pursue a postsecondary education and career, which in turn, can significantly impact their quality of life. As a Deaf person who has successfully navigated high school and college, I want to find ways to best support Deaf students as they begin to think about college.

Because about 90% of Deaf children come from hearing families (Holcomb, 2013; NIDOC, 2016), parents are often not aware of the various educational options available to Deaf children. When they seek advice from professionals including audiologists, speech pathologists, and teachers, who are frequently hearing, they may not be informed of all options, including educational settings where ASL is not a priority or not utilized (Holcomb, 2013). Parents are not always encouraged to learn ASL along with their Deaf child, and this can be detrimental to their ability to succeed in school, and consequently, the likelihood they will attend college. The ideal approach to how Deaf children should be educated is consistently debated, but because I am passionate about helping Deaf students go to college, I want to focus on how the college choice

process can be streamlined in a way that guides them through the process to ensure it is a choice that will lead to success. This study attempted to address what schools for the Deaf can do, specifically XSD, but it is also my hope that this study can be replicated at other schools for the Deaf in addition to other educational settings Deaf students experience.

This study was conducted at a school I had no relationship with and I also have never experienced such an educational setting. Although I have learned what it is like to attend a school for the Deaf from peers, in essence, I am an “outsider-insider” because while I have no direct ties with the site or participants I interviewed, I am still a part of the Deaf community.

Summary

With this study, I aimed to explore the college choice process for secondary Deaf students. In particular, I looked at what factors impact their decision-making process in addition to who is involved as they explore potential colleges to enroll. The research setting and sample were described along with the data collection and analysis methods. Like many qualitative studies, interviews were the primary source of data. Analysis and synthesis of the data were done through memos, categorization, and coding to find themes and patterns that answered the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study guided by the following research questions: 1) What factors shape Deaf student college choice? and 2) How does a residential school for the Deaf shape Deaf students' perceptions of college? The purpose of the study was to understand how Deaf students at a specific type of institution navigate the college choice process. The findings are organized in accordance with Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-stage college choice process as applied to Deaf students as they navigate the process; (a) predisposition, (b) search, and (c) choice.

Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal's (2001) review of studies on college choice suggest that the three stages proposed by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) "interact with one another, each affecting the others in subtle and complex ways" (p. 6). The predisposition stage may begin as early as seventh grade with parental encouragement being a major driving force behind students' aspirations to attend college (Terenzini, et. al, 2001). During the search phase, parents again play a pivotal role in helping students create a set of potential colleges to enroll depending on the thoroughness and sophistication of the search process (Terenzini, et. al, 2001). This stage "usually begins during the tenth grade and ends by the middle of twelfth grade" (Terenzini, et. al, 2001, p. 8). Finally, the choice stage is when students have finalized a choice set and begin applying and enrolling at those colleges. High school seniors develop mental images that lead them to "form predispositions and commitments toward certain institutions" with cost of attendance and availability of financial aid largely influencing the final choice, particularly for low-SES families (Terenzini, et. al, 2001, p. 10).

After interviewing nine student participants in addition to two staff participants who closely worked with the students in searching, applying, and enrolling at postsecondary institutions, the following themes became clear: 1) family had the strongest influence on participants choosing to pursue a college degree, 2) participants generally had a preference in attending a college out of state and at an institution where they feel they could fit in as Deaf students, and 3) participants had limited knowledge with some aspects of pursuing higher education, particularly in the areas of financial aid and the types of colleges available.

Predisposition

During the predisposition stage of the college choice process, students decide if they want to pursue a postsecondary education based on their educational and occupational goals. It is during this stage when the “student comes to value a particular occupation and to see college enrollment as instrumental in securing such an occupation” (Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001, p. 6). Stage and Hossler (1989) found that several studies show students making the decision to attend college before the start of their junior or senior year of high school, with one study finding that 61% of students had made the decision by ninth grade. Furthermore, a review of the literature by Terenzini, et al. (2001) show parental encouragement to be the strongest factor influencing students’ decision to enroll in college along with family background and academic ability. Results from the study revealed that the participants had varying reasons for aspiring to go to college. Some participants appeared to be influenced by parents, particularly those with parents who received higher education, but participants generally explained a desire to leave the state of California while also recognizing the long-term benefits of obtaining a degree.

Parent Influence

In an attempt to understand the impact the participants' parents had on their decision to attend college, participants were asked about their parents' educational attainment as well as their feelings toward the participants on choosing to go to college. All the participants identified as Deaf, but CRT reminds us that racism harms Students of Color's ability to have long-term aspirations in a society in which White students can navigate education and educational institutions with systemic privilege. As Yosso (2005) describes, the first tenet of CRT, the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination, centralizes race and racism while also recognizing how it intersects with gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality.

Aspirational capital. Dixie, who identified as White and whose parents had the highest educational attainment of all the participants, was strongly influenced by them in seeing the value of obtaining a degree, especially her father. She shared:

My mom's a teacher, she already graduated with a master's in teaching, my dad went to college. He's had the most influence on me because after high school he went straight to work, and he did well, good pay, and he was better than others, but he never got promoted and he asked why; because he didn't have a degree. Then that's when my dad went back to school in his late twenties, got a degree, then when he got back to work, he kept moving up. That's one of the main reasons why he was a big influence on me. That's what I learned, even if you have a great job you still need to have a degree to keep moving up at some point.

Dixie shared her father having an impact on her decision to go to college, but it is likely Dixie's mother was also a strong influence as someone working in the field of education. As the only participant in the study to have a parent who earned a master's degree, Dixie also expressed an interest in eventually going to graduate school, showing she has goals that extend beyond her undergraduate years. Knowing how her father navigated higher education and its impact on his career helped Dixie realize the benefits of having a degree that can lead to potential promotions and increased pay. This inspired her in deciding to go to college.

Hillary, the only other participant who identified as White, shared her mother being a source of encouragement for aspiring to go to college. She jokingly shared, "My mom pressured me to go to college since birth." Hillary's mother is a former teacher and received her undergraduate degree from CSUN, which interestingly served as a reason for Hillary omitting the school from her list of potential colleges:

It's my mom's college. I wanted to go somewhere different. I didn't want to follow her footsteps, even though I do look up to her, and I'm inspired by her. But I want a different story; a different story to tell.

Hillary wanted to be as successful as her mother, but under her own terms. Nevertheless, her mother instilled in her the value of pursuing higher education, and it effectively inspired her to decide to go to college. Like Dixie, Hillary also aspired to pursue a graduate degree and was likely exposed to the idea by her mother's friends who she stated are "college-educated people; teachers and professors." As the only two White participants in the study, it was interesting to see the topic of graduate school be introduced when describing their long-term goals and

aspirations. The remaining participants, all Students of Color, did not mention the possibility or desire of going to graduate school.

Bonnie, identified as Mexican, was the only participant who shared their parents having an impact on their decision to enroll in college that did not have a background in higher education. In fact, Bonnie's parents never attended high school. She mentioned her father expressing a desire for her to go to college to ensure she leads a successful life despite Bonnie becoming a mother during her last year of high school. Bonnie and her father were aware of how Latinas often face challenges when choosing to pursue higher education. She described why her father pushed her to go to college:

He wants me to be successful. I noticed that many Mexicans nearby [her home], they don't graduate at all, and many parents are born in Mexico, and they are limited, they only finish school in middle school, and that's the last of their schooling. I want to give my daughter a better life than mine basically. I want to encourage her. Good future, better money too.

Like her father, Bonnie also wanted to ensure her daughter has a bright future. Even in the face of real and perceived barriers, they both wanted what was best for their child, which meant finding ways to encourage them to aspire to go to college. When asked on when Bonnie first realized she wanted to pursue higher education, she replied:

Really, from the beginning. I had always wanted to go to Gallaudet because of Washington D.C. My dad supported it and then found out I had a daughter, he got upset because he didn't see my future in staying home, and that I would go to college. My father always wanted me to go to college. So I had decided I wanted to go to college.

So I'm going to move up in this college [Mountain View Community College], then transfer there [Gallaudet].

Bonnie added that her older sister also has a baby and is a stay-at-home mom, likely preventing her from going to college even though she was initially not interested in pursuing higher education. Bonnie described:

One [sister] is at Bayside Community College (BCC). She used to not want to go, but realized that our dad encouraged her, then she changed her mind and went. The second one [sister] didn't want to go to college, she's a mom, stays at home to take care of the house, with her daughter.

It was clear Bonnie's father strongly encouraged all his daughters to go to college, successfully convincing one daughter to change her mind and enroll at the local community college, and he hoped Bonnie would not follow her other sister's footsteps in choosing to be a full-time mother. He, however, seemed to know it was ultimately up to Bonnie to act on her aspirations as he was unable to persuade one daughter to go to college.

Familial capital. John, who comes from a Deaf family and identified as Mixed (White and Hispanic), shared that the reason he was going to college was to "get a degree," but also because his parents are alumni of Gallaudet. He showed an interest in pursuing higher education, but wanted to enroll at the same university his parents attended. In other words, while he acknowledged the importance of obtaining a degree to pursue his goal of working in either the fields of Physical Education and Recreation or Business Administration, the possibility of attending other colleges was out of the picture. When he was inquired on why he had not considered other colleges such as CSUN or RIT/NTID, he replied:

I just want to get out of here. Just have a new experience. I did consider RIT/NTID, but a lot of my peers aren't going there. I was thinking I'm better off going to Gallaudet.

Plus my parents, you know, have a lot of historical connections there.

Gallaudet was his only option. With a history of family members attending Gallaudet, it was evident his parents, extended family and peers helped him in choosing the best path to pursue after high school, and there was no doubt that Gallaudet was the best option. Through his parents' connections within the Deaf community, they have acted as John's resource in leading him to decide to attend a college they felt was the best fit. John leveraged familial capital by taking advantage of their guidance and investment towards him. For John, the college choice process began and ended at the predisposition stage.

Summary

As Terenzini, et al. (2001) found in their literature review of various studies on college choice, parental encouragement was an influential factor in Dixie, Hillary, Bonnie, and John deciding to go to college. Parent educational attainment also impacted the participants' aspirations for enrolling in college except in Bonnie's case in which her parents' highest level of education was middle school. Despite being aware of barriers that could affect Bonnie's ability to matriculate, her father made every effort to motivate Bonnie in achieving her dreams, beginning with a college education. As Yosso (2005) contends, through aspirational capital, People of Color have high aspirations despite persistent education inequities.

In John's case, it was his Deaf relatives and peers that banded together to usher him toward attending Gallaudet. As alumni of the university, his parents and other members in the

community already knew what route John needed to follow after graduating high school. Familial capital helped John realize the benefits of going to college, specifically Gallaudet.

A noteworthy observation is that Dixie and Hillary's ability to have aspirations in furthering their education beyond a baccalaureate degree exemplifies the systemic privilege they experience that grants White students access to "educational structures, practices, and discourses" (Yosso, 2005, p. 74). Their parents' own collegiate experiences and networks with college educated peers allowed Dixie and Hillary to have long-term educational goals not seen by the other participants, all Students of Color.

Sibling Influence

Participants who had older siblings that graduated from college or were currently enrolled influenced their decision to follow in their footsteps. This was particularly evident for participants whose parents had no background in higher education. Their parents may have been a source of encouragement; however, it was the siblings who contributed to the participants deciding to go to college.

Aspirational capital. Randy, who identified as Latino and the only Deaf member of his family, is the youngest of three. His brother graduated from a mechanics college and now works for a reputable automobile company while his sister attended BCC, the local community college, before dropping out. Randy recognized the hardships his parents endured as they only have a middle school education and immigrated to the United States from Mexico to make a living and fulfill their dream of having a better life, but it was his brother that inspired him to pursue higher education. He shared:

Growing up, I always wanted to go to college. My parents worked, which is great, yes, but my family isn't that great financially. No one in my family has gone to college.

Only one, my brother, did go to college and graduated. I wanted to do the same thing. I knew I wanted to go to college.

Despite the circumstances, Randy demonstrated resilience in aspiring to go to college. The prospect that a dream could become a reality was solidified by seeing his brother accomplish the feat.

An interesting observation with Randy was that he was able to see that college may not be for everyone. When questioned on why his sister decided to drop out of college, he said, "I think she wasn't motivated enough and decided to drop out. And my parents thought it was a waste of money to spend on her." Dixie's older brother also had a similar experience:

My brother went to community college, then dropped out and went straight to work.

Said that college wasn't for him; he's not an academic person. He's more direct with people, not a paperwork sort of guy. He'd rather work with people, like right now he's working at a nursing home. He works with different people and he loves it. He enjoys hearing their stories.

For Randy and Dixie, having an older sibling who was not successful in college did not deter them from pursuing their own aspirations of going to college. Instead, it helped them realize and accept that college may not best fit everyone. Despite the outcome for Randy's sister, she was supportive of Randy deciding to go to college. He shared how his siblings felt:

My sister, or actually both, are excited about me going to college. She dropped out of college, and doesn't want that to happen to me. When she learned I was going to college, she was excited for me to go. Same goes for my brother.

Jason, who identified as Hispanic, has two older sisters and a younger brother, with his sisters currently attending BCC:

My sister goes to BCC for training to be a barber for a certificate, or a degree. My other sister is focusing on classes. It looks like she's more involved in math, and she's moving up. I could see for myself that it was complex and tough.

Prior to explaining why he made the choice to attend BCC, he was asked how he first discovered BCC, he replied, "My older sister. Plus my other sister, and then me. So I'm going." It should be noted that communication with his family is a challenge for Jason. As the only Deaf member of his family, he shared he sometimes resorting to typing on his phone when signing with his family is insufficient. He was not quite sure whether one sister was working toward a certificate or a degree and did not seem to know what his other sister was studying despite seeing she was taking math courses. Yet, he still aspired to go to BCC simply by seeing his sisters taking college courses. He felt he could do the same.

Familial capital. Jason's mother did not go to college, so the responsibility of assisting him throughout the application process was with his sisters. When he was asked who helped him with applications and other type of paperwork, he replied, "Mostly my sister." Although Jason's sister assisted him with applying for BCC, it raises the question as to whether his choice to attend the local community college was an informed one. It appeared he decided to go to BCC at the directive of his sisters; however, Jason accepted the choice because he knew it would help in

eventually securing a job in welding or machinery. It was clear Jason was adamant about attending BCC because even when he was questioned on why he wanted to go to college in general, and not BCC specifically, he replied:

Really, I'm just going to BCC, and I live here [in Bayside], and it's just like 10 to 15 minutes away. Colleges are expensive so I can't afford them. But BCC has all the equipment handy [for welding and machinery], and it was overall \$2K, so I thought I could swing that, so I didn't mind the idea of going.

Although Jason's immediate family was involved in his college choice process, familial capital influenced Jason's decision to follow his sisters's recommendations. Just as John was encouraged to go to Gallaudet, Jason was convinced to attend BCC, not allowing him to consider other potential colleges.

Summary

For some participants in the study, their parents undoubtedly inspired them to attend college, but were mainly a source of encouragement. When it came to providing support in completing rigorous college-related tasks, much of the responsibility was transferred to siblings who already had experience navigating the process. This was especially notable in Randy and Jason where their siblings served the dual role of pushing them to go to college and providing assistance throughout the college choice process.

Leaving California

An interesting observation from the study is that of the six participants who intended to attend a four-year institution the following fall semester, five expressed a desire to leave

California as a reason for going to college. Despite recognizing that they will miss home, that feeling was overridden by their excitement to be living in a new city on the East coast.

Aspirational capital. Hillary felt most strongly about leaving California as she responded with that reasoning first when asked why she chose to attend Gallaudet: “It’s far away, for one. I want to live in a different state.” Also, when she was asked to describe what she thinks she will like about being a Gallaudet student, she said, “Living far away from home.” Hillary added that she knows she will return to California after four years, so it was evident she viewed attending Gallaudet as an opportunity to experience a completely new environment.

Amy, Dixie, John, and Randy used leaving California as justification only when questioned why they had not considered applying to CSUN. It was clear these participants had a strong interest in experiencing life on the East coast. For instance, when Amy was asked why she did not consider CSUN an option, she shared, “Because I grew up here in California. So I want to go move to another state. If I stayed at CSUN, it would be kind of boring. I could go to CSUN, but I want to go to another state.” She added, “I want to break out into the world and experience it. I want to know what the East is like, their weather and all.” John replied, “CSUN basically requires you to stay. I just want to get out of here. Just have a new experience.” Randy also felt the same, responding, “CSUN, well, I just want to leave the state. My whole life, I haven’t been to---before I went to Gallaudet and all that [for the summer programs], I hadn’t been to any other state.” Similarly, Dixie commented,

I did start thinking about CSUN; at that time I was afraid at the idea of leaving home, and wanted to stay in California. But now I want to leave California and experience the East coast. I’ve been here in the West my entire life. I did think about CSUN.

Despite knowing CSUN as one of the “big three” colleges Deaf students choose to attend, the participants excluded CSUN as an option prior to exploring what the institution has to offer. Through aspirational capital, the participants shared their dreams of experiencing life on the East without any concern with distance from home.

Ernie was the only university-bound participant to not mention any urge to leave California, likely because he had just moved to the state a few years ago. His mother and siblings moved to California after Ernie finished his first year of high school in the Chicago area. Ernie shared,

It was dangerous. I had three friends who died from shootings. Not at the same time, all different times. My mom thought it would be a better life to live in California. I have two families, one in Chicago and one here in California. So California’s better.

It was during his sophomore year at his new school, which had a small Deaf program, that he discovered XSD. He then transferred to XSD prior to the start of his junior year. The move from Chicago to California in addition to the changing of several schools likely explains why he did not share a desire to leave the state like his peers, who all had grown up in California. He had become accustomed to moving around in a short period of time. Had he grown up in California, it would not be surprising if he also expressed a desire to attend college out of state.

Summary

Leaving the state of California was a strong incentive for all the university-bound participants, except Ernie, wanting to pursue a postsecondary education, but also as an opportunity to experience living in a different environment. It also served as justification for not

considering or choosing CSUN. Aspirational capital allowed them to follow their dreams in seeing other places and they saw attending Gallaudet as way to achieve this.

Summary of Predisposition

Family played a strong role in the participants' aspiring to go to college. For Dixie and Hillary, their parents' experiences with higher education helped in encouraging them to do the same. As the only two White participants of the study, their aspirations also went beyond their goal of obtaining a four-year degree. Bonnie's parents never went to high school, but her father pushed her to go to college because he knew that having a degree would lead to a more productive, stable life in the long-term. This thinking was transferred to Bonnie who wanted the same for her own daughter, which aspired her to go to college. For other participants such as Randy, seeing their older siblings successfully enroll in college had a profound impact on their desire to achieve the same. Finally, for John and Jason, their family provided guidance and created a pathway towards receiving a postsecondary education knowing it was the best choice for them. It led them to essentially skip the search phase and work on applying to their designated college. In addition, many participants expressed a desire to leave California as a reason to attend college. Aspirational and familial capital helped them believe they were capable of college attainment allowing them to consider colleges far from home.

Search

Terenzini, et al. (2001) define the search stage as the "accumulation and assimilation of information necessary to develop the student's short list of institutions" (p. 8). This stage is when students further investigate possible colleges to enroll by gathering information, which may be done through campus visits, conversations with friends, or browsing catalogs (Terenzini,

et al., 2001). The researchers also found this stage of the college choice process to generally begin during the tenth grade and end by the middle of twelfth grade. Some participants' families were involved in this phase of the college choice process, but the responsibility was largely left to XSD to help participants search for potential colleges to enroll.

The prevalence of audism in society has greatly affected how Deaf individuals navigate various institutions, including education and employment. In some cases, Deaf people may internalize audism by thinking and behaving in ways hearing people do. It became clear audism and internalized audism impacted how the participants navigated the search phase despite being students at a school for the Deaf. Access to college-related information hindered some participants' ability to make decisions on the best path towards obtaining a degree and eventually a job.

College Type

The type of college a student chooses to enroll should be factored into the decision-making process as they serve different purposes and help narrow the list of potential colleges to enroll. Community or junior colleges are postsecondary institutions allow students to take courses that parallel the first two years of four-year colleges and universities (myCollegeOptions, 2019). These colleges offer students the opportunity to transfer to a four-year university, but also provide certificates and associate's degrees for those with the desire in seeking immediate employment (myCollegeOptions, 2019). Vocational or technical colleges are similar to community colleges, but offer more specialized training for students to learn skills applicable for specific jobs (myCollegeOptions, 2019). Programs at these schools can range from a few months to a couple years. Four-year universities are more expansive as they often have several

colleges on its campuses including a college of liberal arts in addition to specialized colleges such as business, engineering, medicine, law, and nursing (myCollegeOptions, 2019).

In California, what a prospective student wishes to study can be the deciding factor on whether to attend a California State University (CSU), University of California (UC), or California Community College (CCC). CSU campuses are known to utilize practical-based curriculums while UC's are more research oriented (California Master Plan, 1960). Four-year institutions mainly offer bachelor's degrees, but often include some programs where students may obtain master's and doctoral degrees. Anyone can choose to attend a CCC, which provide an array of career and technical programs in addition to a path towards transfer to a CSU or UC (California Master Plan, 1960). Another option is an Art Institute where such schools grant Bachelor or Master of Fine Arts (B.FA or M. FA) degrees.

Perspectives of community college (university-bound participants). With an array of colleges available to choose from, it was surprising to find that some participants were unable to explain the difference between a community college and a four-year university. Interestingly, the participants that planned on attending a four-year university had the misconception that community college would lead to taking extra classes or a longer timeframe in obtaining a bachelor's degree. For instance, when asked why she did not consider attending a community college, Hillary stated, "I didn't want an extra two years. I just wanted to go straight to university." On following up as to why it would be an extra two years, she replied, "...usually most people who go to community college are there for two years, then go to university. I want the fastest route." Randy had a similar response stating, "I already decided on my college. Those [community] colleges are for those who need to take two years of classes for other

courses. But I'm already done with that, so I just want to go to the school with my major in it." Ernie saw community college as being more work and as a place to prepare for university, "That's [community college] for learning more, reading more, developing skills first, then going to university. That usually takes them [students] two years."

Although Ernie seemed to have a grasp on the idea of transfer, he did not mention that word. In fact, Dixie was the only university-bound participant who understood the concept of transfer. She understood that community colleges can be viewed as a more viable option due to affordability and proximity to home. She also recognized community college as an opportunity for students to "build confidence, to get a feel of the college experience and then be ready to transfer or go to work." However, Dixie mentioned, "I'd rather go to Gallaudet straight away. I don't need extra classes."

Amy had a unique perspective of community colleges. When asked why she thinks some students choose to enroll at a community college, she responded,

Sometimes... other students would feel that their [choice of] colleges would be tough, so they're afraid of going there, and feel that it would be easier to go to community college. I know... sometimes their families don't really teach that. So they want to go there [community college] instead.

When asked to elaborate on what she meant, she said, "If I go out in the world it'll challenge me more. I'll get more experience, going out to see more things, and that'll help me be more ready for jobs. Community colleges are not a good match for me." Amy had only visited one community college, BCC, for a tour of the campus during her sophomore year of high school, but she had written off the possibility of attending a community college because in her eyes, it

was a place she felt would limit her in terms of experience. She shared, “I want to take the opportunity to have four years of-- whatever college I go to, to have another life there, to get involved in events, sports, others, and all the organizations, just make the time to do that.” Amy does not seem to realize that community colleges offer opportunities to join sports, clubs, and other organizations. It is possible Amy’s family may have impacted her perception of community colleges, a place where students may not learn or grow as much compared with going somewhere out of their comfort zone. Amy’s three older sisters all currently attend a four-year university and her mother earned her degree from a UC.

The university-bound participants’ perceptions of community college is striking. It led them to omit community college as a possibility without exploring the possible advantages and disadvantages of attending one. Their lack of understanding in the functions and purposes of community colleges shows XSD failed to educate their students about the various college options available. Not knowing how the community college system works may have affected the search process of choosing potential colleges to enroll, and also an inability of XSD to ensure their students understand the various postsecondary options available to them.

Perspectives of community college (community college-bound participants). The three participants who intended to go to community college after graduation had a somewhat better understanding of why some people may wish to attend a community college, but did not grasp the concept of transfer. On why she decided to attend a community college, Claire said, “I would prefer to go to community college first, so I can save my money and still develop my skills before I go to an actual college or university.” When questioned on the difference between a community college and a university, Bonnie shared, “They [students] haven’t decided what

they want to specialize in. We can find what fits us, then go to Gallaudet.” Claire and Bonnie viewed community college as a place to explore potential majors and prepare themselves academically rather than an opportunity to also earn general education credits that could be transferred to a four-year university. On the same question, Jason responded, “Well, to compare, the community college is more hard labor, you work with your hands. For university, you focus on studying hard, it’s somewhat similar, but that’s the difference between the two.” Bonnie and Claire were the only community college-bound participants to show a desire to potentially transferring to a four-year university, but both viewed community college as a precursor to a four-year university where they learn the tools and skills to be “college ready” and then start fresh upon entrance to a university. Jason, on the other hand, expressed no interest in attending a four-year university, but recognized community college as a place to obtain vocational training.

Summary

All nine participants were not completely knowledgeable of the various types of colleges that are available to attend. Some participants understood why students may opt to enroll at a community college, yet could not quite explain the idea of transfer. Instead, community college was viewed as a way to gain academic skills and explore possible careers before deciding to go to a four-year university. Attending community college to take transferable credit courses was not known to the participants, which likely affected their search process of deciding where to go to college. Audism created a lack of access to information for the participants in terms of understanding how various college systems work, which prevented the university-bound participants from considering community college an option. In addition, it created misconceptions on the purpose of attending community college with the community college-

bound participants. XSD is a place where students have greater communication access, yet it is unable to completely educate students of their postsecondary options.

College Choice Set

Even in the face of audism, which led to having less information on college options, the participants navigated the search process by relying on their social capital. Rather than utilizing college-related information, campus visits heavily influenced the college choice set of the participants. Based on their review of college choice literature, Terenzini, et al. (2001) found the choice set to be “largely dependent on the level of sophistication and thoroughness of the search process” which appears to be determined by socioeconomic factors (p. 8). Students from higher SES backgrounds are more likely “to rely on several sources of information (including private counselors), are more knowledgeable about college costs, are more likely to broaden the search to include a wider geographical range, tend to consider higher-quality institutions, and have parents who planned and saved for college expenses” (p. 9).

To prevent embarrassment, participants were not questioned on their SES; however, the two participants who identified as White only, Dixie and Hillary, were notably more aware of the costs involving college, had strong support from parents, and considered more potential colleges to attend compared to the other participants. Because race and SES are closely associated, those observations were not surprising, but overall, SES did not appear to impact the participants’ college choice sets. It was evident the campus visits, funded through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), determined what colleges they were considering enrolling. With expenses covered, participants were able to visit RIT/NTID and Gallaudet and also knew they would be receiving financial support through VR to be able to attend. Table 3 shows that aside from Bonnie and

Claire, who intended to complete community college applications over the summer after graduation, all but two participants applied to only one college. Each participant, however, had been to more than one college campus.

Table 3
Colleges Participants Visited, Applied, and Plan to Attend

<u>Participant (Pseudonym)</u>	<u>Colleges visited</u>	<u>Colleges applied to</u>	<u>College planning to attend</u>
Amy	Bayside Community College & Gallaudet	Gallaudet & RIT/NTID	Undecided, either Gallaudet or RIT/NTID
Bonnie	Bayside Community College & Gallaudet	None	Mountain View Community College
Claire	Valley Community College & RIT/NTID	None	Pacific Grove Community College
Dixie	Gallaudet, Arizona State University & Boston University	Gallaudet, Arizona State University, RIT/NTID & CSUN	Gallaudet
Ernie	Gallaudet, RIT/NTID & CSUN	Gallaudet	Gallaudet
Hillary	Gallaudet, San Diego State University, UCSD, UCLA & Washington State University	Gallaudet	Gallaudet
John	Gallaudet, CSUN & RIT/NTID	Gallaudet	Gallaudet
Jason	Bayside Community College & RIT/NTID	Bayside Community College	Bayside Community College
Randy	Gallaudet & RIT/NTID	Gallaudet	Gallaudet

College choice set (university-bound participants). The only two participants to apply to more than one college were Dixie and Amy. Dixie completed applications to Gallaudet, RIT/NTID, CSUN, and Arizona State University while Amy applied to Gallaudet and RIT/NTID. Interestingly, Dixie was the only participant to apply to CSUN without having visited its campus. On the other hand, John and Ernie had been to CSUN, but did not apply to the university. John could not recall why he was on campus as it was an informal visit to meet friends. When Ernie was asked why he was not interested in CSUN, he said, “Meh. That one time, I went for career orientation, just for looking, that’s all. Career orientation, yeah.” His opinion of CSUN is based on the one time he thinks he visited the campus during his sophomore year of high school. He could not recall what he saw exactly during his visit. Another significant observation is for three of the other four university-bound participants, their college choice set was initially RIT/NTID or Gallaudet, but after visiting RIT/NTID’s campus, they opted to apply to Gallaudet only.

Social capital. Nora (2004) found that “student perceptions of a personal and social fit with a college are more likely to lead to a commitment to an institution. Students feel free to be authentic and believe that their social expectations will be met at the colleges they choose” (p. 199). Both institutions offer summer exploration programs for prospective students, Explore Your Future (EYF) at RIT/NTID and Discover Your Future (DYF) at Gallaudet. Three participants were able to attend both summer programs prior to the start of their senior year of high school with all three having similar views after visiting RIT/NTID. When asked what he thought about RIT/NTID, Ernie stated, “I thought it was nice, all that technology, nice buildings. But the people there... they didn’t quite fit me. Nobody.” When asked to elaborate on what he meant by that, he responded, “Like, I went to DYF first, then I went to EYF, people were nice,

we talked, and when I went to RIT/NTID, I felt like the people there were limited, you know? People there are not really... you know?" Inquired as to what was meant by "limited," he then said "oral." Randy echoed that sentiment saying, "RIT/NTID, from what I see, doesn't really- they're more of... hearing-minded. Yeah." John seemed to refrain himself from being critical of the people at RIT/NTID and instead mentioned his peers being a reason why he chose to attend Gallaudet. When asked of his opinion of RIT/NTID, he replied, "It was nice. Good campus. It had everything you wanted there. Good weather. It's just, you know, friends. None of my peers were there. I do have some peers there but not as much as Gallaudet." When he signed "you know," it was his attempt to see if it was understood what he meant so he could avoid mentioning outright his thoughts of the people at RIT/NTID.

The campus visits to both institutions seemed to trigger these three participants' "psychosocial reactions" as Nora (2004) posits. They recognized the disconnect they had with fellow peers on RIT/NTID's campus and used that as reasoning to reinforce their decision to apply and attend Gallaudet. It should be noted that Ernie and Randy both had mainstream school setting experiences between transferring to XSD, which may also explain why they chose Gallaudet. It would be unreasonable to relive those experiences at RIT/NTID when they realized the advantages of being in a setting without communication and social barriers. For instance, when Ernie was asked what he likes about being at XSD compared to his previous school, he responded:

Communication for sure. More friends. The hearing school tends to-- they have good education, for sure. But they don't fit me. In a classroom, I have to stare at an

interpreter and daydream all the time. I hate that. In a Deaf school, the communication is perfect. We can talk.

Randy shared similar feelings discovering ASL for the first time and realizing that other Deaf people like him existed:

I actually never knew that there was a Deaf school growing up, until the sixth grade, middle school. I didn't really like the people where I was, until my audiologist told me that there was a Deaf school. I never knew that there were more people like me, either. I found that out, then I came here [XSD] for a month, they asked me if I wanted to stay for a month. And if I didn't like it, I could transfer to another school. I stayed for a month, and I still didn't really know how to sign. Only fingerspell. I really did not understand anything. Then a month later, they asked me if I wanted to stay or move to another school. I chose to stay. I knew this would help me for sure; I just needed to take classes to learn to sign just to move through things smoothly. So I decided to stay, and it was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

It was also evident why he did not consider other colleges aside from Gallaudet:

I grew up, I didn't-- I don't mean to blame them or anything, but hearing people don't know Deaf people well, and they assume a lot. I don't want to go through that again. Being in the Deaf situation is perfect. Everyone knows what it's like to be Deaf.

The experiences of attending a mainstream school setting were triggering for Ernie and Randy when they visited RIT/NTID. Despite having a large Deaf student population on its campus, it was through social capital that helped them realize that Gallaudet was the best option after meeting different people at both colleges. Similarly, John's upbringing at XSD and being

around Deaf family members and peers, social capital allowed him to determine that RIT/NTID would not fit what he desired. Although he already had decided on attending Gallaudet prior to visiting RIT/NTID for EYF, the trip confirmed his decision.

Familial capital. Hillary, the fourth university-bound participant, did not visit RIT/NTID. Instead, she excluded the school as an option based on rumors:

I've heard that it's in the middle of a very rural area, nothing good there, just a school.

And it's a long distance to the city. I want everything to be right there. Because in college, I'll be very poor, I'll be relying on public transportation. I want everything to be easily accessible, and D.C. has that.

It was interesting to see that she did not take advantage of the opportunity to visit RIT/NTID's campus, especially when expenses are covered by VR, because Hillary was one of the very few participants who had visited several college campuses. She visited CSUN, UCLA, UC San Diego, San Diego State, and Washington State University. Despite visiting these institutions, she did not apply to any of them. When asked her opinion of Washington State University, she replied, "I thought it was really cool, but I didn't feel a personal connection to it. Like, in D.C., I love the city, and I love Seattle too, yes, but it didn't really fit."

With the assistance of her mother's friends, Hillary was able to make informed decisions on which colleges to consider. When she was questioned as to who provided the most help, she replied:

My mom. And my mom's friends. A lot of her friends are college-educated people who became teachers and professors. So she would have them come with me to visit colleges. We would all go and talk about it. Really helpful.

Hillary's mother is Deaf, but grew up oral and learned to sign at the age of eighteen. Her mother graduated from CSUN, but discouraged Hillary from even considering it an option:

My mom wanted me to go to a different school. When she was my age, she was very meek and quiet, and she felt that way at CSUN; she didn't open herself up there. She said she wished she could have done that at Gallaudet or a different university. She wants me to go somewhere where I can feel that one hundred percent fits me.

It was evident Hillary's mother understood the idea of choosing a postsecondary institution that would best fit Hillary as a Deaf person. Hillary seemed to recognize this as well. Her feelings aligned with those of Ernie and Randy because she, too, transferred to XSD from a mainstreamed setting and responded with, "I wouldn't change anything" when asked how she liked XSD since changing schools. Hillary spent her last two years of high school at XSD, which was long enough for her to acknowledge the importance of being in a learning environment with other Deaf people like her and communication access. However, she needed guidance from her mother and her network of college-educated peers to push her towards considering Gallaudet.

Resistant capital. Dixie was one of two participants who applied to more than one college. She applied to all the "big three" colleges in addition to Arizona State. Dixie also shared an interest in Boston University (BU), but did not apply. To get a grasp on why she was interested in ASU and BU, she shared:

Because I feel like anyone tends to come up to me, or any Deaf person in general, would ask me if I'm going to Gallaudet. I'm kind of sick of that and wanted to break that cycle. I wouldn't mind going to Boston University because they have a good interpreting program, which means there's definitely going to be ASL students there.

And Arizona State, because I've been there. I love the campus, the university, and the heat as well. It's 100 degrees everyday there, so that's perfect for me. But I changed paths to Gallaudet. Dang it. I'm back in that same cycle. Oh well.

When inquired as to why she felt compelled to break the cycle, she responded:

Because it's the same old thing. People assume that since I'm Deaf, I would go to Gallaudet. They don't think I can do anything else; I'm just limited to Gallaudet. I don't like that limitation. I just want to show I can do anything else, but I ended up wanting to go there anyway. That's life, I guess.

Dixie originally did not consider Gallaudet an option because she resisted the idea of doing what the Deaf community expected even though she had been to Gallaudet numerous times. She felt the need to prove herself in pursuing a different path, even if it meant attending a college where she may not have complete access to Deaf peers and ASL. Dixie may have internalized audism by ignoring her needs as a Deaf person and believing that there were better postsecondary options other than Gallaudet. She wanted to feel as if she could attend any university of her choosing; however, Dixie realized the Deaf identity and community being an important factor in choosing where to go to college:

With other universities, you're kind of forced to figure things out on your own, find friends, network... I don't feel like I have enough Deaf community or Deaf culture around me. I communicated in SEE (Signed Exact English) growing up, and knew the same people growing up, and didn't realize the world has more to offer. Gallaudet has all that. And I want more of the community before I leave that world to go work in the hearing world.

Dixie foresees herself being around hearing people on a consistent basis once she finds a job, so she wants to take advantage of what Gallaudet has to offer, where she will be able to feel fulfilled academically and socially. When Dixie was asked on what she thinks she will like the most about Gallaudet, she shared, “The Deaf community, having friends, being on the same page. Many will have the same shared experiences I do. Then those that are different, I get to learn their perspectives.” It is ironic that Dixie felt the need to prove herself to the Deaf community rather than wanting to break society’s expectation that Deaf people are unable to achieve certain milestones in life like obtaining a college degree.

Summary. Campus visits greatly impacted the college choice set for the university-bound participants. Several participants disregarded RIT/NTID as an option after visiting its campus through EYF. Through social capital, they realized the university was not the best fit due to similar experiences they had in their mainstreamed school setting before transferring to XSD. They preferred to go to a college without communication barriers and where there Deaf identify would be embraced. Hillary never visited RIT/NTID, but checked off the school due to rumors. Instead, through familial capital, her college choice set was created at the assistance of her mother and her college educated peers because they knew what was best. Dixie was the sole participant to resist the idea of attending RIT/NTID or Gallaudet because she felt the need to be different than her Deaf peers. She wanted to show hearing peers she could attend any college which led to her visiting and applying to several colleges. She eventually realized Gallaudet to be the best fit and included the university in her college choice set.

College choice set of community college-bound participants. Bonnie, Claire, and Jason were the three participants who chose to attend a community college after graduation.

Jason already made the decision to attend BCC at the direction of his sisters without considering other possible community colleges. Bonnie and Claire had not completed applications to any community colleges, but both expressed an intention to do so over the summer after graduation. All three participants were not completely aware of different community colleges available that may best fit their needs.

Social capital. MVCC and Pacific Grove Community College (PGCC) are two community colleges with large populations of Deaf students. Bonnie was the only participant who knew of MVCC even though she lives about an hour from the college. She first learned of MVCC from her Deaf peers who are alumni of XSD and current students at MVCC, “My friends told me that they went and it’s a fun place and that they enjoyed it a lot, and had a good social situation. So I confirmed that through my research, and it’s nice that they provide that.” She further explained her reasoning for her interest in attending MVCC, “They’re starting to have a bigger Deaf program. Before they didn’t, but I researched it and found out that there’s more Deaf people. They have graphic design as well.” She also mentioned, “I look forward to meeting new people there. It’s been the same old thing here [Bayside]. I want something different, and see what’s new out there.” While Bonnie has a sister attending BCC studying to become an interpreter, which is much closer to her home, she only considered colleges where she could be around others like her. It was clear she had a desire to further her education, but only at a campus where she would be able to meet other Deaf students and perhaps take classes and study with them. Bonnie only learned of MVCC through her social networks and the college happened to offer a field of study she is interested in pursuing, but it was clear Bonnie was persuaded by her peers to consider attending MVCC.

Resistant capital. Claire also shared feelings in wanting to go to a college that was as similar as possible to her current learning environment at XSD. She decided to attend community college, but did have the opportunity to visit RIT/NTID's campus. When asked to describe what she liked about RIT/NTID, she responded, "Big, cool. A lot of technology and graphic design. Mostly math. I love math, so. But did I feel like I fit in? No. I just have to go to [community college] first then possibly go there." When asked to explain why she felt she did not fit in, she said:

Mainly because it's mainstream, it was a mix of hearing and Deaf. I'm not used to that. I'm used to a Deaf school here for two years now, which I am happy with, then I saw it was a mix again. It would mean I'd have to go back to where I started. Just like old times.

It is interesting to note that despite such feelings about RIT/NTID, she still mentioned a possibility of attending there later. It was, however, evident that she preferred a learning environment where there was complete access to communication. She shared how she first felt when transferring to XSD during her junior year:

It was different. Like going into a different world. I was raised in mainstream school. I was raised with hearing people. There was a small group of Deaf people, but now I'm in a much bigger group of Deaf people, all Deaf here. Here, I'm given access, my needs are met.

Claire's previous high school had a small Deaf program, but she still felt excluded as a student. She provided examples demonstrating why she felt that way:

There's no access for me there. For example, there was none for tutoring. There were tutors for hearing [students], but not for Deaf. Sports, can we play fully? No. First, for example, this is from personal experience, I wanted to play track, because I love to run. I'm a runner. I tried to get on [the team], but they put me on hold because of the interpreter. I waited and never got in. When I transferred here, I made it in track, cross country, many different sports. That kind of thing.

Claire's school had challenges with securing interpreters for her, which explains her desire to go to a college where she could avoid facing the same barriers. Through resistant capital, Claire is fighting against the oppressive actions of her previous school by considering colleges where she does not need to face audism. Unfortunately, there are no Deaf community colleges, so she is only considering ones that have large Deaf student populations.

Gallaudet would be an ideal college for Claire to attend, but she shared the university also not being a good fit. When asked why, she replied, "Because that college [Gallaudet] is too education-based, it's more teaching, and I'm more of a work-with-your-hands type." Claire previously expressed a desire to become a math teacher, but then realized she wanted to pursue her interest in hairstyling, which explains why she knew community college would be a better option. Claire had never heard of MVCC when asked if she considered that college and only discovered PGCC, which also has a large number of Deaf students, when one of her teachers mentioned it to her the day before she was graduating high school. Claire knew what she was looking for in terms of the type of college, yet did not have a set of colleges to consider. XSD failed to provide such information and she was graduating without completing any applications.

Familial capital. Jason was the only community college-bound participant to apply to a community college, but with the assistance of his older sisters who were already students at the college. Like Claire, he was also unaware of MVCC. In fact, when asked to name other colleges he knew, he replied with Gallaudet, RIT/NTID, and CSUN, the three most commonly known colleges Deaf people attend. He could not name another community college. The only college campus he had visited other than BCC was RIT/NTID through EYF. Although Jason recognized RIT/NTID as being a more accessible college, affordability and family were important factors for him:

It's different, and it's far away. If it's RIT/NTID, or even Gallaudet, it would be easy to communicate with Deaf people there. But it's hard, because it's far away, and I can't afford it because I'd be losing money. But with my life here, I cherish my family, and I want to keep checking on them. I did think about it [going to RIT/NTID or Gallaudet], but with that in mind, I just dropped it and made my decision.

It is likely his family made the decision for him to attend BCC, or at least pushed him to choose attending BCC. Despite not knowing of MVCC or other potential colleges with large Deaf student populations, attending BCC does fit his goals in working with welding and machinery. BCC also has a small Deaf student population because of its proximity to XSD. Jason knew a few former students who were currently at BCC. When he was asked if they shared their experiences at BCC with him, he replied, "Yes, that they enjoyed it and it was very challenging, and required a lot of work and studying. As opposed to high school. I was surprised at that." He did not mention his peers encouraging him to attend BCC, so familial capital had a stronger impact on Jason's college choice set. His hearing sisters likely did not know of community

colleges with Deaf students, but were already determined to encourage Jason to attend BBC without considering his needs as a Deaf person.

Summary. The three community college-bound participants created their college choice set based on the recommendations of others. Bonnie's plan was to enroll at MVCC, a college she learned of from her peers that would fit her needs as a Deaf person. Claire intended on attending a nearby community college that was minutes from her home, but learned of PGCC, a college with a large Deaf student population, from her teacher who encouraged to go there instead. For both Bonnie and Claire, their desired community colleges were campuses they had never visited and were graduating XSD without completing any applications to those institutions. Finally, Jason was encouraged by his sisters to attend BCC because they were students themselves there and felt it best fit Jason's needs and career goal. It is interesting to note that two support staff who worked closely with the participants during the process of deciding where to go to college did not make the same suggestions.

Support Staff

During the search phase, the participants received the most direct support from two staff, a Transition Specialist, Eve, and a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor, Cathy. As previously described, both work closely together to assist students throughout the college choice process. Eve is the designated person at XSD who bears the responsibility of ensuring students have a smooth transition toward their postsecondary plans, but also acts as liaison between the students and the prospective colleges, particularly RIT/NTID and Gallaudet because of the high number of students enrolling at those schools. Cathy, the VR counselor, is essentially the person who takes care of any finances involved with students' postsecondary plans, most commonly a

college education. In addition, she is able to organize funding for students to visit campuses and take part in summer exploration camps. Receiving VR support is common for Deaf individuals. Once a Deaf student turns sixteen years of age, they can contact VR to open a case and learn of various services they can receive to help reach their goal of obtaining a job through vocational training or a college degree. Due to the large number of Deaf students at XSD, Cathy is on campus quite often to work with students in helping them transition from high school to their chosen path of education and/or employment.

Navigating the search process. To gain a sense of Eve's perceptions of how students think when they first begin to consider going to college and where, she was asked when students generally tend to start thinking about college. Her initial response was, "I wish that they started thinking about their future at a young age! They don't." Eve then gave an overview of what occurs during each academic year for students to guide them as they figure out their postsecondary goals. Freshmen are first exposed to the idea of going to college during XSD's Career Day where they meet different Deaf employees and learn about the work they do. It gives students the opportunity to ask questions related to the kind of education and experience they need for their potential careers. Freshmen also take a Career Preparation class, which Eve referred to as CP1:

Career Preparation (CP) class--- that's where it starts, CP1, that's for freshman year, and they work with teachers. And they find their assessment. It's an interesting assessment; finding out what their strengths are, and the students will find that. They should keep in mind what their strengths are, whether they're social, or conventional, or one of the four; there's four strengths, and those help guide the process of finding the right job or

interests, you know? And that's for the freshmen. Nothing for sophomores. For juniors, they have Career Prep 2. It's a follow up to their CP1 to see if their interests have remained the same, then they start doing work experience on campus or off campus. First they'll try to get work on campus, at the same time, they'll open a case with a VR. We encourage students to stay on track in their interests. When it comes to seniors, they'll need to review what career track they were on, and then apply to colleges that fit their choice of majors. When they're freshmen and sophomores, they're usually not ready. Most of them tend to know what they're doing when they're juniors.

A noteworthy observation from this information is nothing is occurring during sophomore year for students in relation to preparing for a career or postsecondary education, but Eve pointed out that a case with VR is not formally opened with students until they are sixteen years of age per state law (Student Services, 2019), or their junior year of high school. Because of the age requirement, students are not formally in contact with Eve and Cathy until that year when a case has been officially opened. Eve shared that the summer before students begin their senior year of high school is when they are encouraged to attend exploration camps at prospective colleges, tour local community colleges, and research information of colleges they may be interested in attending.

Eve's commentary gave the sense that activities related to searching for potential colleges to attend were occurring on a relatively last-minute basis. In fact, Bonnie and Claire were two participants who were about to graduate high school without having completed any applications for community colleges. This is supported by Eve's statement that, "I focus on universities first. Then I start pulling in students that focus on community colleges, because those applications can

wait more to the last minute.” According to California College Pathways (2015), “There is no specific deadline for applying to community college; however, it is strongly encouraged that students apply by January for the following Fall in order to complete matriculation requirements in time to access April priority registration.” Although universities have more stringent deadlines in terms of applications compared with community colleges, it seems likely the participants did not have the opportunity to receive support in completing applications while they were still in high school. Eve also shared:

The students need support from us, and the parents too. I think that some parents just kind of leave them be. Like me, at home, I’m very supportive of my son, and make sure my son knows what to do, and I’ll explain stuff. But a lot of parents out there don’t.

They tend to just leave them be up until the last minute.

It is interesting to note that Eve recognizes the significance of time in navigating the college choice process, making sure her own son is aware of the timeline for completing college-related tasks, but not ensuring students at XSD are doing the same. Acknowledgement of the issues of time and lack of parent support is a step toward addressing how students navigate the search phase, however, Eve is not taking action. It is evident students need support as they explore potential colleges, which may require more involvement by XSD in assisting them throughout each year of high school up until a final decision has been made.

According to Cathy, there are an array of services and options students have in figuring out what they may be interested in doing after leaving high school. The first time she meets with students, it is an opportunity to learn about them and their goals, and then they are required to participate in an orientation before officially becoming a client. She shared:

In the first appointment, the intake process, getting to know who they are, what services they need, what their interests are, what their goals, and that's when through the screening process, I can make some suggestions, and see if that's what they want. I would give them different programs that might fit them. I encourage all students, that no matter what they're interested or planning on, they need to take the opportunity to go to EYF or DYF, or different programs that might be offered out there. Now we're working on waiting for some programs to be approved, like Youth Leadership Camp (YLC), and we want to support them in that, because some jobs are relevant to things like YLC, because this will help them in the future with their jobs. They would become leaders and have different roles and work, like at the National Association of the Deaf, et. cetera. This would benefit them. There's also Space Camp, which would apply if they wanted to become an astronaut, or work in the military field; there are programs for that. Also, Oregon has a Deaf Sense camp, Camp Ollin, which has fields in marine biology, as well as a variety of other programs. I encourage students who may want to go there. So there's those options.

Cathy seems to understand the importance of students searching for what careers they may be interested in pursuing, which means seizing on opportunities like camps and college visits:

I want to see them have the opportunity to actually touch campus, and see it for themselves, meet people there, see what they do, what programs they have to offer. Maybe it doesn't match them, which is fine, but it's better off for them to actually see it, instead of dealing with all the "what if's." And we're paying for it. There's nothing to lose from it, so why not take this opportunity.

Cathy expressed an interest in pushing the initial meeting with students earlier to fourteen years old although student cases cannot be legally opened until students turn sixteen (Student Services, 2019). One reason for her interest in starting at an earlier age is due to a new requirement implemented by Gallaudet University's DYF program that will now limit a school to sending no more than four students a summer. Students who choose to participate in DYF must be a sophomore or junior per Gallaudet's criteria for attending, which means Cathy must now be more strategic in deciding which students can attend, and which year of high school. Because many camps and college exploration programs occur over the summer, it requires long-term planning to ensure students have an opportunity to attend.

As the person who is able to organize and fund the trips, Cathy recognizes the importance of students navigating the search phase by encouraging students to attend camps and visit colleges. She also knows the effectiveness of starting this process at an earlier age to ensure students have time in exploring their postsecondary options. Eve, on the other hand, may need to consider from their perspectives of the students the kind of assistance they need to navigate the search phase.

College choice set. Cathy and Eve were aware that most of the participants only applied to Gallaudet. When Eve was questioned as to why the participants made the choice to not consider CSUN an option, she replied:

The VR counselor [Cathy] and I talked about this; we agreed to push and support the students to apply to those three colleges, at least three, not one. It's been hard to chase each student to apply to three. Most of them just choose two. And we did have a few students who had their mind set on CSUN, and we went through the process with them,

and they would send their application and everything. CSUN actually has a very long process.

Eve provided more details sharing that often other colleges will have accepted students before CSUN has informed them if they have been accepted. Also, some students may not meet the minimum “A through G” requirements to be considered an applicant. In California, students wishing to apply to a CSU or UC must pass a set of 15 required “college-preparatory courses with a letter grade of C or better, with at least 11 courses finished prior to the beginning of your last year of high school” (University of California Admissions, 2019). CSUs, however, are flexible in terms of when courses are completed as they look at all A-G requirements “completed after the ninth grade” (The California State University, 2019). High school graduation requirements are not the same as A-G requirements, which means a student can graduate high school without the ability to apply to a CSU or UC. Describing in more detail as to why students do not show a desire to apply to CSUN, Eve said:

That’s one major issue with CSUN, their process is long. Yes, I always encourage the students to apply to all three colleges. And oftentimes they hesitate with CSUN because they have a very strict screening process, and they are required to take A to G courses. And they need to learn how to go through the grading system and see if their grades fit the A to G form. Also, if they have low grades, they don’t pass the application. CSUN has a very strict screening process. It’s harder. It’s much easier to make it into Gallaudet and RIT/NTID.

Like Eve, Cathy also mentioned some students showing a desire to applying to CSUN, but they did not meet the A-G requirements to do so. The fact that some participants were not qualified to

apply to California universities is a significant observation for it raises question as to why students at XSD might not be taking A-G courses. One surprising finding was a comment by Bonnie as to why students at XSD do not apply to CSUN:

Some people [students] wanted to apply for CSUN, but the deadline was November, so they didn't know. They [Cathy and Eve] didn't communicate about it in time. As soon as we [students] learned about it, the deadline had passed. They [Cathy and Eve] were set on Gallaudet. We were upset not knowing about CSUN.

These comments show Eve's expectation in students needing to know how to analyze their grades and classes to see if it aligns with the A-G requirements, but also the possibility that Eve and Cathy are intentionally preventing students from applying to CSUN. They both may know students do not have the grades or the appropriate courses completed to apply, but the reasoning is not clear to some as Bonnie noted students being upset.

Cathy was inquired as to why some participants like Claire were unaware of some community colleges with Deaf student populations. She shared that the reason Claire did not know about PGCC was because she never clearly shared her long-term employment goal:

She didn't really tell people about her real goal. She would say she wanted something, then we'd tell her that there was a program for it in one place and not the other. That's why she didn't know about it [PGCC] because she never mentioned her actual goal. She had a different one before. That's why she picked that college [PGCC] because they have the [hairstyling] program there.

Cathy added:

I always encourage them [students] to let their goal guide what they want to do, i.e. what the job requires, what it needs for the job to work out. This is how it determines where they should go, because it doesn't make sense for us to send them to a place that isn't required for their goal. So they should follow what's required for their job. And students are supposed to go into the college's website, to assess what courses they offer, and what the courses' content entails. So for some students, when they want something and move forward on it, I'll remind them to read what's on the website, and it looks like they just glanced at it, thinking that's all they need to do. When the time comes when they get accepted to that college, they'll usually realize by then that it doesn't fit what they wanted in the first place. Because of that, they'll change their major. So that happens.

Claire did share an initial desire to become a math teacher and then eventually switched to being interested in hairstyling. It is unknown when she made the change, but it seems Cathy and Eve only make recommendations of potential colleges to students solely based on their career goals, which could imply why participants of the study are not being informed of other colleges they could consider. In other words, Cathy and Eve may be limiting the scope of the search process by only providing names of specific colleges. Students are learning of colleges that pertain specifically to their career goal rather than receiving information on a variety of options available to them.

Eve shared an instance in which one student made the decision to apply to Gallaudet as a backup plan:

Last week, one girl was hard set on RIT/NTID, and I helped her with the application, although she still had to work on that essay, and she had been procrastinating it. That girl came up to me, and said she realized that she wanted to apply to Gallaudet. I saw that her chosen major was a much better fit for NTID. She chose Gallaudet anyway. I asked her why. She said she wanted a back up plan, and if she got accepted, she could go there. I informed VR, and they clearly felt frustrated with her because her major was fitting of RIT/NTID. Still, the students have a bit of peer pressure and they feel the need to apply to everything. I haven't started working with her on the Gallaudet application yet. She didn't really assess her major and stay with it or make a plan.

This commentary confirms that Eve and Cathy are trying to keep students on a particular path as it aligns with their career goal. When students do make changes or show a desire to apply to more than one college, Eve and Cathy become frustrated.

An interesting observation with Cathy is she pointed to XSD's teachers as causing students to make last-minute changes or decisions in terms of what they want to do after high school:

We had a meeting about it and it was explained that they had to remember not to intentionally change their paths or encourage them one way or another... They didn't mean to cause a problem; just need to keep in mind that some of them are not college-ready and you don't want to put them through that. It's best that they start with community college, and then transfer, which is fine. You don't want them to immediately fail once they enroll. Many of them [students] would make last-minute decisions, and it was out of the blue. I later found out it was the teachers who would

encourage them to go ahead, and the staff would help out with last minute applications and such. So it's much better if they plan ahead and this year, it feels a bit smoother, because the students are more aware of their own goals and more set with their decisions, and not going with what the teachers say.

She views teachers as being disruptive to students' long-term postsecondary planning, but some participants are learning more about their options from teachers instead of Cathy and Eve. The actions of Cathy and Eve are noticed by students, particularly Bonnie, who shared, "VR is just usually concerned about us being committed. What if we went to Gallaudet and then ended up withdrawing. They don't want us to waste their funding on that. If the student is committed, then they'd accept that."

Summary

Eve and Cathy are key staff that are instrumental in helping students transition from high school to their postsecondary education plans; however, there was a sense they try to keep students on a specific path. They do so by recommending a plan based on a student's desired career and academic skills. They appear to be able to identify students that are college-ready and those that better fit a community college where they can receive more career technical training. Because they are Deaf themselves and graduated from Gallaudet, they understand the learning needs of Deaf students, which explains why many choose to attend Gallaudet. This understanding, however, does not transfer to community college-bound students. It was evident participants were not informed of the different community colleges that could fit their learning preferences. They also invested more in the university-bound participants leaving the community college-bound participants without a plan. There is no doubt Cathy and Eve are

making an effort to assist students as they searched for possible colleges to enroll as many participants were able to participate in Gallaudet and RIT/NTID's exploration programs, but there is a clear expectation of students needing to take initiative for certain tasks like finding information on college websites and reviewing their transcripts.

Summary of Search

The search phase proved to be the most intensive for both the student and staff participants. An interesting finding was the perceptions of community college from the student participants as being a place that requires more work and leads to taking more time in obtaining an undergraduate degree. Despite those perceptions, campus visits undoubtedly played a critical role in the student participants creating their college choice sets. Many omitted RIT/NTID as an option after visiting its campus and realizing it did not fit their communication and social preferences compared with Gallaudet. For participants staying in state, they had made the decision to attend a community college, but XSD does not excel at ensuring its students are well informed of the various community colleges available to consider, particularly ones with many Deaf students. The participants were guided by Cathy and Eve in choosing the college that best fit their goals, but at the same time may have been limited by their guidance by not sharing all options for students to explore.

Choice

The final stage “involves applying for and enrolling in college. At this stage, students develop strong preferences among institutions, evaluate their own qualifications for admission, ponder alternative mechanisms for financing college, and apply to colleges” (Terenzini, et. al, 2001, p. 10). With the majority of participants deciding to apply to just Gallaudet University,

completing the application was a challenging task for some participants. During this phase, participants also discussed how to finance their college education, but did not have a firm understanding of the actual costs involved with going to college.

Writing essays

Completing the essay requirement for applications caused some participants to not finish applications in a timely manner. When Eve was asked why she thinks students avoid this task, she shared:

In terms of the reason, naturally some would say that they'd not have time, and they'd be too busy. They need to make it a priority. Their time management skills are substandard. "No time." Really? They'd prioritize other activities- and they'd say they're busy with Clerc [basketball tournament] next week. They just need to get started on the essay and do it little by little, at least. Until they're done. You know? It's not like they need to sit all day and work on the essay. Little by little. Their perspective is because of not having enough time.

Although the participants did not explicitly share frustrations with completing the essay requirement, it is likely they are using "time" as an excuse to avoid admitting their struggles with writing. In fact, they appear unable to ask for help and Eve expects students to find ways of receiving support:

I'd discuss with the students to at least get started on their own. Some would say they're waiting for either me or the teacher to help them out, and I'd say, "No, do it on your own time, get started writing the essay." Just write whatever, and then ask the teacher to

make an appointment, I don't know, say during lunch or after school, and have them take a look at it. Or during their free time, and show their essay.

It is clear students need direction with completing the essay requirement for applications, yet there is also discussion occurring within the school as to whose responsibility it is to help students with the essay requirement. Cathy also shared frustrations with students' inability to complete their essays and how she receives pushback from teachers at XSD in asking for their help in supporting students:

...the problem is almost always about the essay. The students always procrastinate that. And we always try to encourage teachers to get involved. They usually resist it because they think it means that it'll interfere with their class time. And that's not what I mean; I ask them to just try to support the students and be willing to help them out, correct their essays, after school hours, or before classes, depending on the instructors' time, and if they can find a window of time in their schedule, like during prep time. It doesn't mean that they would have to sacrifice their class time for that. The teachers tend to misunderstand me, and think that they have to sacrifice time to focus on their students' essays, and that's not what I meant. So I try to team up with the English department for that. We're trying to clear that up, smooth that process out. And now we're reminding the parents as well. We've asked them to please make sure they give support to their kids to start working on their essays as well. And that's the last thing they need to finish. That's all.

Cathy shared she hopes they can also help with writing needed to complete applications for scholarships. Writing is unquestionably a hinderance in students' ability to submit complete

applications. Writing is a struggle Deaf people often face in a society that favors written English over ASL, yet there does not appear to be a collective effort by the school to remediate the issue. The burden is on the students to ask for help. Despite challenges with this aspect of the application process, Eve explained that Gallaudet and RIT/NTID are occasionally flexible with deadlines and allow students to submit parts of an application late, including essays. Cathy similarly shared, "...because the essay itself deeply affects everything. Because last year, some were finally accepted in the middle of summer." Interestingly, CSUs do not require students to submit essays as part of their undergraduate application, so it is surprising participants were not encouraged to apply to CSUN with the exception of Dixie, who chose to apply to CSUN herself and not at the encouragement of staff at XSD.

Linguistic capital. Dixie was the only participant who shared not having issues with the essay component of applications because she is assertive in asking for help. She shared her parents and two English teachers providing assistance for completing applications and said, "I'm very independent, and if I need help, I'll ask for it." Other students will approach Dixie for writing advice, "I tend to be great with grammar, I tend to do well with essays. I would help with grammar, and if anyone needed help, I'd help." Dixie's writing skills made the application process easier; however, other students struggled, and through linguistic capital, they attempted to find ways to seek help from their peers, even as teachers and staff at XSD worked through who should be providing assistance and how.

When Cathy was asked if she feels XSD can do anything to better support students with the college choice process, her initial reply was "essays." She added:

It would be great if the school can help out, just remind the students and make sure they're doing it. They can make themselves more available to help out with the essays, so they can review the essays when they have time. So they can improve on that part for now. That essay part needs working on.

Financial Aid and Cost of Attendance

The participants' misconceptions of the true costs of attending college was another common theme that emerged from the interviews. Similar to not being able to differentiate between types of colleges available to enroll, some participants did not have an understanding of the various costs involved with pursuing higher education. Because all participants were receiving some type of financial support through VR, it skewed their understanding of the costs involved with going to college. In essence, they seemed to take VR support for granted believing they would need to pay little to no money towards their college education, which can include room and board as well as meals.

For instance, when asked how she would pay for college, Amy replied, "I met with VR, and whenever I plan to go to college, I would let them know and they would take care of it for me." Amy was then inquired as to how she would cover expenses for food or activities on or off campus and said, "I would save my money. Be wise with it, and ask for help. They [VR] would save money for me, and I would have SSI (Social Security Income) be increased and covered for me." Just days away from graduating high school, it was interesting to see Amy only mentioning saving money now and perceiving VR as having funds readily available. When Hillary was asked how she intended to pay for college, she commented, "VR and scholarships. I already have an honors program scholarship. So that, and VR will pay for free school for four years. I

don't have to worry about that." Several participants received some type of scholarship from Gallaudet, which appears to be a strategic approach by the university to attract students. Of the five participants who committed to attending Gallaudet in the Fall, Dixie and Hillary shared they were receiving a "full-ride" all four years due to being accepted into their Honors Program. It is not surprising both White participants were offered a full-ride scholarship by Gallaudet further demonstrating the inequities within education. Randy was awarded an "academic achievement" scholarship, which will cover a majority of the expenses as he mentioned only needing to find a way to pay the remaining \$1,500 towards room and board, but it is unclear whether the scholarship will apply to each academic year thereafter. Randy was also unsure of how he would pay the \$1,500 stating, "I'm actually not sure, because I'm still looking for scholarships if possible. If I can find some great, but if not, I'll work at Gallaudet."

Despite both Gallaudet and RIT/NTID being private institutions located out-of-state, affordability did not seem to concern students as they considered where to go to college. This is contrary to Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal's (2001) assertion that college choice set appears to be bounded by parental socioeconomic status and heavily influenced by parental encouragement. Instead, participants were encouraged by faculty and peers at XSD to attend Gallaudet with many being alumni of the university. Participants' recognition of Gallaudet as a college established to serve Deaf students took precedence over any consideration of how much it actually costs to attend the university. According to Gallaudet's website, tuition for the 2018-2019 academic year was \$17,038 or \$20,183 if students are not able to provide proof of health insurance (Gallaudet University, 2018). If students opt to live on campus, housing costs range from \$3,597 to \$4,469 per semester, depending on the building. Meal plans are an

additional \$2,260 to \$3,280 per semester (Gallaudet University, 2018). A student graduating after four years will have paid more than \$130,000 for a degree from Gallaudet.

The new DYF summer camp restriction of only four students being able to attend imposed by Gallaudet is not the only new change affecting students. Eve shared a new rule that recently went into effect on how students use money from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):

VR explained to us [XSD] that they found out about a regulation that had to be followed; it was that FAFSA money must go directly to tuition. In the past, VR would take the FAFSA money and make a choice with the student whether they would use it for room and board or tuition, and the students would often agree to it [room and board] and then VR would cover tuition in full. After the FAFSA amount, the remaining amount owed for room and board would be manageable financially. That's not the case this time around. FAFSA is now required to go directly to tuition, and then VR would pay the difference thereafter, which means, the room and board amount would have to be paid for [by students].

Eve commented that students were upset when they first learned of the new regulation, but it was also unclear how it would affect students' desire and ability to go to college. She admitted they may have to be encouraged to attend a community college instead, which is more affordable, and perhaps use the time spent at community college to save money to be used towards room and board expenses when they transfer. She also mentioned that there will likely be a stronger push for students to apply for scholarships to help in lowering the cost of room and board. It must be noted that the new change with VR did not affect the nine participants since the new rule had not

gone into effect yet. It will, however, affect subsequent years of college, so it is questionable the impact the regulation will have on the participants.

Parents also do not completely understand the costs involved with going to college.

When Cathy was asked the type of questions parents often ask her, she replied:

It tends to be about finances. Always about the finances. Most of the time. Finance. Or clarification about something, so I'll explain it out for them, in terms of the process, and different steps. When they [students] do decide on a program or college, they will receive an award letter, and that letter will tell them how much they'll get. That won't be confirmed until they announce where they're going. They [students] will know how much they will be getting to support them.

Cathy also added that she often has to explain how Pell grants work to parents since students do not typically receive the grants until well into the first semester of college. She stresses to parents that they need to consistently remind their child to do well in school since G.P.A. can affect their ability to receive scholarships, which is another way to cover college-related expenses. According to Cathy, how involved parents are in the process varies:

Sometimes parents will express their concerns to me, and I would insist that I had already explained to them [students] what to do, even remind the parents as well. It seems that parents... it would be nice if the parents were more involved with the process itself, and remind their kids to take action on these, you know? And some parents will ask me the right questions and take notes on it, gather all the paperwork and information, or look online... it really depends.

There are clearly frustrations from both ends in ensuring there is a firm understanding of the costs involved with college. The disconnect between Cathy, the students, and their parents has created different perceptions of affordability, including how much students will be receiving through VR, and is contributing to families' ability to determine financial need.

Summary of Choice

Making the decision of which college to enroll appeared easy for the participants, especially when five participants only applied to one college. The challenges were with the acts of applying to their chosen college and getting their finances in order to be able to attend. The written portion of any type of application was difficult for the participants, but they were able to complete them by finding ways of getting help, even if it meant submitting partial or late applications in some cases. Similarly, participants generally did not know how they were going to pay for college. All were receiving VR support, but could not articulate exactly how much was being covered by VR. In addition, parents often ask Eve and Cathy questions related to financial aid, so families are not well informed in regards to the cost of attendance.

Conclusion and Summary of Findings

The nine student participant interviews and two staff participant interviews revealed that the college choice process for Deaf students at XSD vary. How they navigated the process depended on factors such as parent and sibling education, peers knowledgeable about college options, particularly Gallaudet University, and campus visits. During predisposition phase, participants were generally aspired to go to college at the encouragement of their families, but many showed a strong desire to attend college outside of California. For participants whose parents had not obtained higher education, their siblings had a strong impact on their decision to

attend college, but also with the act of applying to college. The search phase proved to be the most interesting as participants created their college choice sets. Just over half of the participants applied to only one college with two applying to more than one and two not yet completing any applications. The campus visits proved to be the deciding factor in deciding whether to attend RIT/NTID or Gallaudet. Only one participant applied to CSUN and without having visited its campus. The inability of participants to explain the difference between community colleges and four-year institutions was a surprising finding of the study, but did not appear to affect the participants' college decisions. Two staff worked closely with the participants in assisting them throughout the process, but it was clear they impacted the participants' college choice set and encouraged them to choose a plan and stick with it. They also refrain from providing too much assistance as both believe students need to navigate the process independently and ask for help when needed. Finally, the choice stage showed participants had difficulty completing college and scholarship applications due to struggles with writing. This resulted in some late application submissions, but participants were still accepted to colleges with all making a decision on where to pursue higher education. The cost of attending college was not a strong factor for participants because of VR support and scholarships offered by Gallaudet, which affected their perceptions of the true costs involved. Through community cultural wealth, participants utilized various capitals as they navigated the college choice process and overcame barriers that may have prevented them from going to college.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter will summarize the study and provide an interpretation and discussion of the findings along with implications for future practice, policy, and research. The research questions that guided the study were: 1) What factors shape Deaf student college choice? and 2) How does a residential school for the Deaf shape Deaf students' perceptions of college? Using Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-stage model (predisposition, search, choice), studies have looked into how different student populations navigate the college choice process, but no research has applied the model to Deaf students. This study highlights the importance of understanding how Deaf students go through the process and the various factors influencing their desire to go to college through to their final college choice.

Summary of Findings

Predisposition

It is easy to aspire to go to college and those aspirations can be formed by the act of seeing someone graduate from college. Findings showed that participants generally developed their aspirations from their families. For some participants, parents had a strong influence on encouraging them to go to college, particularly those parents with a background in higher education. Conversely, for parents who had never taken a single college course, the role of pushing the participants to go to college was with the siblings who had experience with college. A noteworthy finding was that for the two White participants, their college aspirations extended beyond their goal of obtaining a baccalaureate degree; they also had an interest in attending graduate school. The findings align with Pitre (2006) who found that White and African

American high school freshmen have similar aspiration rates despite differences in high school academic success. Likewise, the participants dreamed of going to college even when they realized their academic struggles. Aspiration capital helped them look past barriers and aim to pursue higher education. They also had strong desires to attend a college outside of California, which they viewed as an opportunity to experience living in a different environment. This perception is likely the result of knowing that two of the “big three” colleges with large Deaf student populations, Gallaudet and RIT/NTID, are located on the East coast, which affected the creation of their college choice set during the search phase.

Search

During this phase, a significant finding was the participants’ perceptions of community college. Many saw it as a place for additional work or classes and not as an avenue towards transfer to a four-year university. It can be concluded that transfer is not something that is frequently discussed with students at XSD. From the perspectives of the two staff members who worked closely with the students, it appeared they tried to put the participants on a particular track; either a four-year university or a community college, but not both. This “either-or” mindset is limiting the students to being informed of all possible options for college.

Visiting prospective college campuses proved to have a tremendous effect on the participants’ considerations of which to attend. Many participants had an opportunity to visit either Gallaudet or RIT/NTID, or both, through the summer exploration camps, that both universities offer to Deaf students with expenses covered by VR. The campus visits turned out to be the deciding factor for several participants after visiting both institutions. Through social capital, they realized their fit and ultimately chose Gallaudet. As students at XSD where they are

around other Deaf students and have full communication access, they knew this to be the environment needed to learn and grow as a college student.

Choice

As discussed in the literature review, McDonough and Calderone (2006) found that counselors were quick to recommend students from low-income families to attend community college due to concerns with affordability. This is contrary to the findings which showed affordability not being a concern for Eve and Cathy, who worked closely with the students. Instead, they encouraged the participants to attend a specific institution based on their academic goals. For the university-bound participants, it was generally a choice between RIT/NTID and Gallaudet because Eve and Cathy also knew those two colleges as being the best options for Deaf students, regardless of cost of attendance. Eve and Cathy knew participants were receiving VR, but parents seemed to have concerns with financial aid. Many were unclear how much aid their child was receiving through VR, and like the participants, did not have a complete understanding of how tuition and other costs were going to be covered. When students do not formally open a case with VR until they are 16 years of age, this can cause a delay in parents receiving financial aid information, which in turn, impacts their ability to save and plan for their child's college education.

Implications and Recommendations

Implications for Practice

Findings clearly showed XSD as a school where students feel they have access to their language and culture. They thrived being around others who embraced their Deaf identity, which allowed them to grow and connect with peers, teachers, and staff. Participants who transferred to

XSD were able to easily make the comparison between the two different school settings, from mainstreaming to a school for the Deaf , and showed a strong preference for the latter. Likewise, participants who grew up attending XSD had similar feelings because they are reminded of their Deafness everyday living in a hearing-dominant world. Participants' Deaf identity was at the forefront of their mind as they contemplated where to go to college. Their schooling experiences at XSD, in addition to campus visits, contributed greatly to which colleges they considered, even if it required moving to the East coast to attend Gallaudet University. It is recommended that XSD consider three C's to ensure its students are prepared and enrolled in a postsecondary institution that fits their goals: campus visits, curriculum redesign, and creating a college-going culture.

Campus visits. Campus visits played a vital role in helping the participants narrow their options, specifically between RIT/NTID and Gallaudet. Just as Nora (2004) found, students who “fit psychosocially with their college would be more satisfied with their choices and the ensuing college experience” (p. 192). Satisfaction of their college experiences would subsequently increase their chances of persisting (Nora, 2004). Many participants of the study received funding through VR to be able to attend summer exploration camps at both institutions that triggered their psychosocial thoughts and feelings, which then allowed them to finalize a college choice. It was interesting to note, however, that no visits to CSUN or any community college were arranged. Although the majority of the participants expressed an interest in attending college outside of California, XSD should consider reaching out to CSUN to have their students visit its campus for it can help them determine their “fit.” Similarly, such visits need to be organized for community colleges that have large Deaf student populations. Eve shared that

some local community colleges come to XSD for their annual “Career Day,” however, the representatives from those colleges are hearing and information is presented to students through an interpreter. Such an approach to learning about various community colleges is probably ineffective. Students need to physically see campuses and, if possible, meet current Deaf students at those colleges to get their input on their experiences as a student.

The campus visits are essential in students envisioning for themselves if they could enroll at those prospective colleges. Yet, it was not occurring for participants interested in attending a community college. Aside from nearby BCC, none of the three community college-bound participants had visited a community college with a large Deaf student population. With more than half of the participants being the only Deaf member of their families, the responsibility is with XSD to provide information on community college options. It is recommended that XSD arrange campus visits to community colleges like MVCC and PGCC, especially when community college is a more affordable option should financial concerns arise from students and their families during the search process.

Curriculum. Participants shared being in the right environment at XSD, but it is evident changes need to occur at the school to streamline the college choice process and ensure students are prepared to enroll in college before graduating. Reviewing the curriculums of the Career Prep courses may be a way to initiate discussion and collaboration between different stakeholders. This could include the superintendent of XSD, teachers, parents, Eve and Cathy, current students, and former graduates of XSD who are currently attending or have graduated college. Student input is critical in gaining a better understanding of the challenges they face, particularly with the search and choice phases of the process when XSD is more involved.

Recent graduates of XSD who are currently in college can also provide valuable feedback in terms of what they wished they better understood before beginning college.

Stakeholders should also consider formulating a complete list of college-related tasks that covers what students need to accomplish for each academic year of high school. For instance, during their first year of high school, in addition to the tests on discovering their strengths students take during CP1, they can also be asked to research the websites of different four-year universities and community colleges to learn what majors are offered and the cost of attendance. Since many participants of the study showed a desire to attend a college with other Deaf students, names of those colleges should be exposed to students early. In addition, findings showed writing to be a struggle for many participants in completing scholarship and college applications. Students at XSD are learning to improve their writing skills in their English courses, but perhaps specific assignments need to be created and added to the list of college-related tasks to prepare students to conquer the essay portion of applications. The checklist of tasks students need to complete throughout high school may be a challenge for transfer students, which seems to be a common occurrence at XSD since five of the nine participants had transferred to XSD with four transferring during their junior year. However, with more structure, students can benefit from knowing the steps they need to complete to reach their designated goal of enrolling in college.

College-going culture. Along with structure, XSD could improve on creating a stronger college-going culture on its campus. Corwin and Tierney (2007) define college culture in high school in which the school, “cultivates aspirations and behaviors conducive to preparing for, applying to and enrolling in college” (p. 3). Moreover, they suggest that a strong college should

be “inclusive and accessible” to all students. They highlight five areas schools need to incorporate to build a college-going culture: academic momentum; an understanding of how college plans develop; a clear mission statement; comprehensive college services; and coordinated and systemic college support (Corwin & Tierney, 2007).

First, students can gain from *academic momentum* by taking Advanced Placement or dual enrollment classes to earn college credit and give them a taste of the rigor that comes with taking college courses. Offering such courses would require XSD to establish partnerships with local community colleges, which can lead to creating an XSD to community college pathway for its students. With that, XSD must understand how students *develop college plans*. As noted in the findings, all participants aspired to go to college for various reasons and XSD needs to capitalize on those aspirations by expecting that they will enroll in college, whether it be a four-year university, community college, or career technical college. Corwin and Tierney (2007) note that students do not always follow through on their aspirations, so XSD must provide appropriate support to guide them towards enrolling at an institution that fits their needs and goals.

A clear college *mission statement* can also assist in creating a strong college-going culture. The mission statement should include goals, benchmarks, and an action plan that helps students progress towards college enrollment, which can be embedded with curriculum development as previously mentioned. The mission statement needs to be communicated so that everyone in the XSD community knows the school’s expectations. XSD also needs to provide *comprehensive college services* that align with the mission. Applying to college is a complex, yet individualized, process. It is critical that students are provided with information and resources, particularly with financial aid, to assist them through the process, which Corwin and

Tierney (2007) describe as being “best tailored to specific grades and should be consistently offered throughout high school” (p. 5). First-generation students, and in XSD’s case, Deaf students from hearing families with limited communication need extra support.

Finally, through *coordinated and systemic college support*, stakeholders at XSD “need to be actively engaged in developing and realizing college goals” (Corwin & Tierney, 2007, p. 6). Coordinated activities such as “Career Day” that XSD already hosts each year, campus visits, information sessions and workshops, and partnerships with community colleges and universities are all significant in successfully helping students transition from high school to college.

Implications for Policy

As noted in the findings, two major policies were formed, but had not yet gone into effect during the study. First, Gallaudet decided to impose a restriction on the number of students a school sends to its DYF program during each summer. With a school now only allowed to choose four students to participate in DYF, it will certainly pressure those schools in creating criteria on which students to choose. This poses a challenge for schools with large Deaf student populations like XSD. Students may have to choose between attending DYF or EYF and not both. In addition, it will be interesting to see if schools prioritize low-income students who otherwise would not be able to afford visiting Gallaudet or RIT/NTID. Perhaps students who have already visited the schools through sports and extracurricular activities will be less likely to be chosen to attend. However schools decide to proceed in enforcing the rule, it will have an impact on students and their families to be able to visit campuses which proved to be a critical component of the college choice process for the participants in this study.

The second policy involved the amount of funding VR can provide for Deaf students choosing to attend universities like RIT/NTID or Gallaudet, both of which are private out-of-state institutions and require students to find housing. Prior to this new policy, students had the option of using funds from FAFSA toward tuition or room and board. Often students would use it to cover room and board expenses, and VR would then cover their tuition. Now, any funds received through FAFSA must be used for tuition only. VR cannot cover any fees for room and board, which leaves the student with finding ways to pay to live independently. This new rule can have a tremendous impact on how students and their families plan and save for college. Considering that findings showed participants making decisions to go to college and where on a relatively last-minute basis with little to no understanding of how to pay for school is alarming. In addition, state regulations only allow VR counselors to officially open cases with students once they turn 16 years of age, essentially giving them just two years to help with transition planning. Some parents are not receiving financial aid information until those last two years leaving them little time to find sources of funding whether it be through savings or loans.

It is likely both policies will create more pressure on students and their families, in addition to staff like Eve and Cathy, to better prepare students as they transition to college. The long-term effects of these new policies might not be clear for a few years, but XSD needs to take the lead in avoiding any issues from arising.

Further Research

More research is certainly needed in the area of college choice for Deaf students. Deaf students have a range of schooling experiences and studies should examine how those experiences impact the process. Schools for the Deaf are one such setting; however, with the

majority of Deaf students in a mainstreamed environment (Holcomb, 2013), it is critical that studies are done to better understand the college choice process of this particular student population. In this study, results showed the lasting impact transferring from a mainstreamed school to XSD had on some participants, which became an important factor when considering where to go to college. It would be interesting to discover the significance of this factor with Deaf students in mainstreamed settings.

There are undoubtedly a range of people who can impact a student's college choice process from their own families to teachers to people they meet during campus visits. While the role of parents was touched on in the predisposition and choice stages for this study, their perceptions are integral to better understanding their involvement with students as they go through the process of deciding to pursue higher education. Studies that focus on parents can contribute to learning how to better support them and the kind of resources they need. In addition, this study did not look into teachers at XSD and their role in the participants' college choice process. Findings revealed some tension between English teachers and the two staff participants as to whose responsibility it is to provide help for writing essays as part of completing applications for scholarships and colleges. More research into the perspectives of teachers can contribute to painting a more complete picture of how all parties involved impact students' college choice navigation.

Since some students at XSD are there from pre-kindergarten through the twelfth grade, it offers the prime opportunity to track them from when they start thinking about college through to their final decision of which college to enroll. Research should be done on such students to gain a better understanding of how they go through the entire process. This can include learning how

their perceptions of college change over time and the different people involved in the development of those perceptions. Another study can address the effects of the college-going culture at XSD on the college choice process. In addition, research should be done on any intervention strategies XSD decides to implement to improve college accessibility for its students such as classes or workshops focused on increasing financial aid awareness for college. There are many possibilities for further research and schools for the Deaf like XSD create opportunities for longitudinal studies.

Limitations

As outlined in chapter three, this study had several limitations. Unforeseen conflicts with scheduling of interviews was a significant limitation since only one round of in-person interviews were done with the student participants. In addition, interviewing the two staff participants face-to-face was not a viable option and instead required a videoconferencing application. More rounds of interviews would certainly help in revealing deeper, detailed information on the participants' experiences with the college choice process.

Another limitation of the study was the sample. Specific criteria were used to select the student participants, and with the exception of one participant, only those who were at least 18 years of age were intentionally chosen to avoid issues and delays with obtaining parental consent. This narrowed the potential participants for the study. Incorporating juniors in the study would likely reveal interesting results. In addition, the in-person interviews took place days before the participants' graduation from XSD. Had several rounds of interviews taken place, they would have been spread out over the span of a few months. Translations of the interviews can be viewed as a limitation as well. Unlike transcriptions, which is an exact written

representation of every word or sign, translations from ASL to written English was necessary for data analysis. Much effort was put into creating the most authentic translations possible, but it is not an exact representation of the thoughts and feelings shared by the interviewees. One such example was trying to translate the participants' racial and ethnic identities. There is one sign in ASL that can translate to either Mexican, Latina, Latino, or Hispanic, but because of the significance in ensuring I followed their identity, I asked participants to spell it out. In many other cases, however, I did not ask participants to spell out signs to allow them to express themselves naturally.

Conclusion

How students navigate the college choice process varies across all student populations, including Deaf individuals. It can be viewed as a layered phenomenon in which different individual and institutional factors impact the process. It is clear from this study that Deaf students go through the process in a unique way, one that prioritizes their needs as Deaf individuals where access to language and culture are crucial. The institution they attended as high schoolers, a school for the Deaf, played a vital role in providing guidance to students in choosing a college that fit their needs and goals as Deaf students. Additionally, because of the financial support Deaf students receive through VR, the participants generally did not prioritize affordability in deciding where to enroll in college, further showing the significance of finding a college with other Deaf students on its campus.

This study also showed how important it is to recognize the different identities and experiences Deaf people have that contribute to their career and educational decisions. It is essential young Deaf adults are given the knowledge, tools, and resources to resist oppression

and navigate a society that benefits those who are White and hearing. They, too, have the right to aspire to go to college and make that dream a reality.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Instruments/Protocols for Student Participants

Script for Consent

Hello, my name is Nick Zerlentes and I am currently a student at CSUN. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting research on college choice. More specifically, I am interested in learning more about the college choice process of deaf and hard of hearing high school students. If you agree to participate, I have about 15 questions I would like to ask that may take about one hour of your time. This session will be recorded and will only be used by me. After I no longer need the video for my research, it will be deleted from my computer. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may skip any question that you do not want to answer. All information shared by you will be strictly confidential and be used only in my final report I am to turn in to my professor. I want to thank you for your time and participation in this study. Do you have any questions?

Introduction

Can you please provide me with your name, age, race/ethnicity, and if you identify as deaf or hard of hearing.

Perceptions and Purpose of College

1. Do you want to go to college? Why or why not?
2. What are some colleges you would like to attend?
3. Why do you want to go to (name of college student shares)?
4. What do you think you will like about college?
5. What do you think will be challenging about college?
6. If you need help with academics while in college, what will you do?
7. How do you plan to pay for college?

Institutional (Internal) Support and Influences

8. Who is helping you with finding information about the colleges? Who is helping you with the application process?
9. What information do your teachers share about college?
10. What information does your counselor share about college?

Personal (External) Support and Influences

11. Who do you currently live with? How do you communicate with them?
12. How do (who you live with) feel about you going to college?
13. Are any of your friends planning on going to college? Where?
14. How do your friends feel about you going to college?
15. Do you think your deafness will have an impact on you when you go to college? Why or why not?

Closing Question

16. If for some reason you decide not to attend college or you realize college is not for you, do you have another plan (or a plan B)?

Appendix B

Data Collection Instruments/Protocols for Staff Participants

Script for Consent

Hello, my name is Nick Zerlentes and I am currently a student at CSUN. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting research on college choice. More specifically, I am interested in learning more about the college choice process of deaf and hard of hearing high school students. If you agree to participate, I have about 10 questions I would like to ask that may take about one hour of your time. This session will be recorded and will only be used by me. After I no longer need the video for my research, it will be deleted from my computer. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may skip any question that you do not want to answer. All information shared by you will be strictly confidential and be used only in my final report I am to turn in to my professor. I want to thank you for your time and participation in this study. Do you have any questions?

Introduction

Can you please provide me with your name, job title, age, race/ethnicity, and if you identify as deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing?

Postsecondary Education Background

1. Where did you go to college? What is your highest degree of attainment?
2. Can you recall why you chose to go to college?
3. Did you consider attending any other colleges? Why those colleges?
4. What influenced your final decision?

Perceptions of Students' College Choice Process

5. How do you directly support students as they begin to think about college?
6. What information do you share to them?
7. Why do you think the students are choosing to go to college?
8. Do you make any suggestions based on your own experiences in college?
9. What do you think students think about as they figure out where they should go to college?
10. What questions do students ask about college?

Closing Question

11. Is there anything you think you or the school could do differently to better support students during this college choice process?

Appendix C
Informed Adult Consent Form

California State University, Northridge
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

The College Choice Process of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

You are being asked to participate in a research study. *The College Choice Process of Deaf Students at a Residential School for the Deaf*, a study conducted by Nick Zerlentes as part of the requirements for the Ed.D. degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM

Researcher:

Nick Zerlentes

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

18111 Nordhoff St.

Northridge, CA 91330

(818) 677-2403

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Faculty Advisor:

William Garrow

Department of Deaf Studies

18111 Nordhoff St.

Northridge, CA 91330

(818) 677-5717

william.garrow@csun.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to explore the factors deaf and hard of hearing students consider when beginning to think about potential colleges to enroll.

SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements

You are eligible to participate in this study if you identify as deaf or hard of hearing, are currently a junior or senior in high school, and intend to go to college after graduation. As a staff member, you are eligible to participate if you work closely with deaf students in preparing them for college.

Time Commitment

This study will involve approximately 1 hour of your time for each interview requested.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures will occur: You will be interviewed for approximately one hour. You may be asked to participate in subsequent interviews, if needed.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS

Subject Benefits

You may not directly benefit from participation in this study.

Benefits to Others or Society

A greater understanding of how deaf and hard of hearing students navigate the college choice process.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study, but your contribution to this study will be greatly appreciated as it has the potential to benefit future deaf and hard of hearing students.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. **If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately.** The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Subject Identifiable Data

All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed at the end of data collection.

Data Storage

All research data will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected. The audio/video recordings will also be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected; then transcribed and erased at the end of the study.

Data Access

The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

Data Retention

The researcher intends to keep the research data until the research is presented and then it will be destroyed.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep. **Participation in this study is voluntary.** You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

I agree to participate in the study and I agree to be audio/video recorded.

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Researcher Signature

Date

Printed Name of Researcher